

CHAPTER FOUR

Non-Natural Goodness

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Introduction

I want to consider the idea of the good. The idea I mean is the one that opens up practical thought: thought of what to do and how to act. Knowing what to do is knowing what is good to do; it is knowing what to do so as to act well. My theme is that ‘good’: the formal object of practical knowledge, what practical knowledge as such knows.

I want to consider the proposal, put forth by Foot and Thompson, that this ‘good’ is a certain natural goodness. That is a thesis of logical form: the goodness known in practical knowledge, it asserts, is a *physis*, a certain natural life.

A form of thought is revealed to be the logical form of the good as it is shown to sustain all practical knowledge. Therefore, in order to discuss Foot and Thompson, we go through a sequence of forms in which goodness is thought. This will let us see how familiar ways of understanding the good go wrong because they think it through a form that cannot sustain itself; it will let us place Thompson’s proposal in relation to these. Eventually, it will show her

proposal to be flawed, too: the goodness thought in practical thought is no natural goodness.

The logical form in which good first appears is the representation of means. This form is quickly seen to be subordinate to one that represents an end in itself. That is life; the idea of the good is the idea of life. The form in which life first appears is the representation of natural life. This may suggest that practical thought is thought of a natural life, and that is Foot's idea. Yet it will emerge that practical thought is no thought of any nature, and human life no natural life.

This may seem absurd. Does not the human being eat and excrete, breed and die? Yes. But to say that this shows that human life is a certain natural life is as convincing as to argue that life is a certain chemical process on the grounds that it proceeds through chemical reactions. True, chemical reactions take place as a cell divides. But that activity of the cell lies beyond what can be understood through laws of chemistry, and it does so by virtue of the logical form of its principle. The question as to whether human life is a certain natural life is not decided by observing that humans eat and breed. The only way to answer that question is to clarify the idea of the good of practical thought.

The idea of the good is the idea of life. Yet the good known in practical knowledge is no natural goodness. That good is justice, and it is love. 'Justice' and 'love' signify life that is not natural. The life of justice negates natural life, but does so abstractly, or by abstraction. The life of love concretely and thus perfectly negates natural life; thereby it reveals itself to be the truth of life, or *the* life. However, the positive articulation of the human life, the non-natural life, *the* life, is for another occasion.

The Good as Means

We see things coming to be and ceasing to be, according to principles, mechanical or chemical, which do not reveal what happens according to these principles as good. Nor therefore as bad. Good and bad get no purchase.

But now I think 'It is good to do A because ...', where doing A is a means to whatever fills the blank, which thus I represent as an end. This thought represents the end as a principle of goodness of the means I take to it: the means is good because it serves that end.

Outside its nexus to the end, the means is something's happening as it does or being as it is; good and bad do not apply. The end opens up the contrast of good and bad; it draws the means into the sphere of thought of the good.

The power of the end to turn something that is as it is into something that, being a certain way, is good, failing to be that way, bad, resides in its own, the end's, goodness. It is because and insofar as the end is good that it is a principle of the goodness of the means.

That power of the end is not a power to provide a redescription of something that, underneath this description, remains as it is. The description is a form of explanation, a form of explaining why something is as it is or happens as it does. When I am cutting a slice of bread because I am making a sandwich, then I am cutting in the way in which I am, therein cutting well, because the slice so cut makes for a good sandwich. The means's being as it is is explained by its being good, good for the end, in being that way.

I introduced means through a form of practical thought: 'It is good to do A because...'. Yet means are ordered to ends outside practical thought, too: in operations of life. What I said applies there: what outside the nexus of means to ends is something that happens as it does is turned into something that may be going well or badly. Mark the talk of error in the duplication of a chromosome.

The defining character of this form of thought is that a means is not an end, not insofar as it is a means: to represent something as a means to a certain end is not, not therein, to represent it as an end. If a means is represented as an end, then that will be a further thought. So the end is an external end: something other than what promotes it. Conversely, the means is an external means.

Here we encounter a first distortion of the idea of the good. When we limit practical thought to thought of means, then thought of something as good is the thought of it as serving an external end. That is consequentialism. (As utilitarianism, it has a further side: its determination of the good as pleasure. I turn to that later because the idea of pleasure belongs with the idea of life.)

Consequentialism is no conception of the good at all. We see this as follows. The end is something other than the means to it. Only because it is other is it able to draw the means into the sphere of the good. Yet this power of the end resides in its being good in turn. And there is no way, within the present form of thought, to comprehend the end to be good except by conceiving it as a means to a further end. Outside its nexus to a further end, the alleged end

is something that is as it is and comes to be according to principles that grant no purchase to ideas of good and bad. Within thought of external ends, there is no conceiving anything as an end in itself.

Conversely, within thought of external means, there is no conceiving something as a means in itself. For there will always be conditions under which alone a means is as it must be in order to serve the end. And when we explain why these conditions obtain according to a form of explanation that does not provide for ideas of good and bad, then we do not explain why the means is as it is by its being good. And then the end does not explain, but merely furnishes a description of something that, beneath that description, remains as it is. We think an end as an end only as we explain why the means to it is as it must be by that means's goodness. And so we do, and do only, as we understand the means to be an end, an end, then, of a further means.

Within thought of external ends, external means, nothing is represented as in itself end, nothing as in itself means. We can retain the idea of an end as an end only by conceiving it as a means. We can retain the idea of a means as a means only by conceiving it as an end. That yields a double regress, which shows that thought of means and ends is not sustained by that form of thought alone.

The Good as Life

Inner Process, Organism

This is what we saw, thinking the good as means: an end is an end only in being a means; a means is a means only in being an end. That is a double regress. It is that within thought of means. Yet we may think it again, now thinking it not through that form, but as articulating a different form. The good thought according to that different form is this: a totality in which every element is means and end, is means in being end, and end in being means. Every element of such a totality is the end of every other, and is that in being a means to every other. This is the regress returning to itself.

As the chain of means returns to itself in a circle, any condition of the purposiveness of any means is provided from within the circle. Thus the circle repeats itself, not *per accidens*, but through itself. It is the renewing of itself: rise and decline of the phoenix in every moment immediately identical.

I call this the inner process. An element of the inner process is purposive not through the work of anything external to the process, so it has no determinacy

outside its purposiveness; it is in itself means. If we call what is in itself means 'tool' or 'organ', then a totality of such means is organism. The term 'organism' so introduced is a logical term, it signifies a logical form: the inner process.

Outer Process

The inner process is called inner in distinction to the outer process. This further determines the idea of the organism: it determines the organism as body in distinction to soul.

As inner process, the organism is a totality of elements each of which is means to, and end of, each. As outer process, the organism is one not only as a unity of elements; it is one in the manner of opposing itself as a whole to what it is not. It opposes itself to what it is not by acting as a whole, realizing an end, which thus is an end of it as a whole. There is no such end in the inner process. There the organism *is* end, which end is its own means. Here the organism *has* ends, for which it requires means from what is not it. Thus the organism is twofold. It is unity of its organs as the principle of what *each of them* does. And it is unity against what it is not in what *it as a whole* does. As unity of elements, the unity is real only in its elements. As unity against what it is not, the unity is a reality of its own.

A unity of means, each of which is nothing but means, in virtue of being, as such, the end of each, I called organism. That same unity, acting as a whole against what it is not, I call animal. The term 'animal' so introduced is a logical concept signifying a logical form: the outer process.

In the outer process, the animal relates to what it is not, in such a way as to overcome that opposition, taking what it is not inside it, turning it into an element of its inner process. That relation of the animal to what it is not in the outer process is total: it is opposition to *the other*, not difference from *something other*. The animal has always already subordinated everything that it is not to itself; it relates to everything in the form of the certainty that it is a means to it, the animal. In its outer process the animal demonstrates the truth of that certainty.

The inner process is a chain of means returning to itself. The outer process returns to itself, too, but in a different way. In the outer process, the animal turns what it is not into itself in such a way as therein to reconstitute its opposition to what it is not. The animal uses itself as means, indeed, uses itself up, in such a way as, therein, to re-produce itself. The outer process repeats itself like a

task one confronts again precisely as one has discharged it. It is the renewing of itself: self-dissolution and self-production in every moment immediately identical. In the outer process, the animal acts as a whole. Therefore, it is body and soul.

A chimpanzee grasps a strawberry. In its grasp, the chimpanzee is articulated: it is torso, arm, hand. I call the parts into which an animal is articulated according to its outer process its members, in contrast to its organs, the parts into which it is articulated according to its inner process.

The chimpanzee as a whole grasps the strawberry. No part of it does, even while its members move in a coordinated way. It follows that the principle of its grasp is not the principle of any one of its parts, nor a conjunction of such principles. Its members are determined to act as they do not by any part of the chimpanzee, but by it as a whole. So the principle of the grasp of the chimpanzee, which is an act of it as a whole, is itself an act of the chimpanzee as a whole.

That act, since it is the principle of unity of the movement of its members, is not articulated, but simple. In this act, the chimpanzee is not articulated into members, nor indeed organs. In this act, the chimpanzee acts as simple unity. The act in which the animal acts as a simple unity is consciousness. The term 'consciousness', so introduced, is a logical term. It signifies a logical form: the outer process.

Sensory consciousness is perception, desire, feeling of pleasure. I will say a word about pleasure, because I will need it later. Pleasure is the consciousness of the purposiveness of the outer process for itself, its consciousness of itself as going well. That consciousness of its going well is internal to its going well. Thus pleasure is self-consciousness of the outer process, sensory self-consciousness. This is captured by Kant's definition of pleasure as the consciousness of the causality of a state to maintain itself in that state (KU, §10/AA 5, 220). The state, pleasure, has a causality that acts so as to maintain that state of pleasure, which state, as pleasure, is a consciousness of this causality, which is to say that it is self-consciousness of that state and its causality.

The animal as simple unity is soul. Wittgenstein understands this. On the one hand he remarks that a soul that is not simple would not be a soul (TLP, 5.5421). On the other hand, he says that the image of a human soul is the picture of a human being (PU, Part II, iv and BPP, §281). This also applies to chimpanzees. Seeing the soul is seeing the animal act as a whole. Therefore,

we see the soul in the articulation of the animal according to its outer process: its articulation into members. Precisely therein we understand the soul to be simple.

That does away with the mystery of consciousness. That mystery is a reflection of the attempt to think consciousness through a logical form that is inadequate to it. No description of whatever happenings in an animal's organs will ever yield comprehension of how it should be that, in virtue of those, an animal sees, hears, feels. For no part of an animal can be that through which it acts as a whole. Aristotle insists that it is the animal that sees, not any part of it, its eye, say. The point is not only that it is the animal as a whole that sees, but that seeing in particular and consciousness in general is the animal's being one and a whole. The animal as a whole sees the strawberry; the animal as a whole grasps the strawberry. It grasps it as articulated, or body; it sees it as simple, or soul. The animal in its outer process is body and soul.

Something may be good for an end an animal pursues. As that pursuit is an element of the outer process, and is pursuit of an end only as an element of this process, what is good or bad for an end of an animal therein is good or bad *for that animal*. The animal is an end.

What furthers an end that does not return to itself – an external end – is good for that end and in this sense relatively good. When something is good for an animal, it may seem that what is so good is relatively good. After all, it is good for something, for that animal. Yet that is wrong. What is good for an external end is relatively good because the representation of something as good for such an end does not provide for the comprehension of that end as good. It raises, but does not answer the question after the goodness of the end. Conversely, what is formally its own means is not relatively good. The outer process is that form of end. Hence what is drawn into it, made a term of it, is absolutely good. When we move from 'good for that end' to 'good for that animal', we do not move from one thing relative to which something may be good to another. We transcend relative goodness. The animal is an absolute end.

The good, thought in practical thought, cannot be an external end. It must be an absolute end. It may be the outer process. There are two ways of understanding the relation of the outer process to practical thought, utilitarianism and Hobbes.

The animal is an absolute end. One may think this means that it is an end that it is absolutely good to promote. Or, an animal's pleasure is an absolute end. One may think this means that it is good to bring about pleasure. Yet this is the opposite of what it means. An end one promotes is a relative end. The recognition that the animal is an absolute end is the recognition that it is not that. The idea that it is good to benefit animals and to bring it about that there be pleasure arises when the logical nexus of the animal and its pleasure to the good is apprehended, while the understanding of the good is limited to it as an external and hence relative end. Utilitarianism reduces the animal and its pleasure to a relative end of mine. As I am the shepherd of the cosmos, the cosmos is mine.

That is the first way of relating the animal and its pleasure to practical thought: as something that it is good to promote. The second way, articulated by Hobbes, represents practical thought as the self-consciousness of the outer process, indeed, as its consciousness of itself as absolute end.

The absolute goodness of pleasure is thought in practical thought not when pleasure is made the content of a practical thought that, formally, is an external end. It is thought in practical thought when the self-consciousness of that process is not only feeling, but thinking, if the consciousness in which the outer process sustains itself is not only sensory, but intellectual. This is how Hobbes conceives practical thought. We see this in three fundamental ideas of his.

The first is that a man only ever does voluntarily what is for his own good (*De Cive*, ch. I, VII). That means, the formal object of practical thought is what is good for her who thinks that thought. This identifies practical thought as self-consciousness of the outer process. For, what is good for the animal is, formally, that animal's outer process. So what an animal thinks, thinking what is good for it who thinks that thought, is its outer process.

Second, Hobbes presents as the first law of reason the command that one do what preserves one's life (*ibid.*). This says the same as the line above about voluntary action. Anything an animal does in doing which it conforms to its outer process is purposive to that process; hence in the animal's doing it the outer process is purposive to itself, and that is, preserves itself. Hobbes's law of reason thus expresses self-consciousness of the outer process.

Third, Hobbes lays it down that everyone has a natural right to everything because everything may be a means to the preservation of her life, which the

law of reason commands her to pursue (*ibid.*, VIII–X). Now, the outer process is the animal's opposing itself to what it is not. That is a total relation, as we have seen; in it the animal relates to everything. The relation is the animal's certainty that everything is a means to itself. Hobbes's natural right is that certainty in the form of a thought.

Hobbes's law of reason, Hobbes's natural right, are practical thought understood as self-consciousness of the outer process. Its expression in language would be 'I'. This 'I' would be a concept, for it expresses what repeats itself and is always the same, over and over again. At the same time, it would be the consciousness of an individual animal. That consciousness of the individual would not be singular; it would not contrast with 'you'. Practical thought as self-consciousness of the outer process is no consciousness of a manifold with respect to which it is singular. It is solipsistic in the sense that its logical form precludes the consciousness of another. In Nagel's words, it is not a consciousness of myself as one "among others equally real" (Nagel 1978, 14). The consciousness of the fly on the part of Charly, our cat, is not a consciousness of something equally real. On the contrary, Charly is the certainty of the nothingness of the fly, the truth of which certainty she demonstrates in crushing the fly. The consciousness one human being has of another in practical thought, according to Hobbes, is like Charly's consciousness of the fly.

In order to express practical thought as understood by Hobbes we could, next to 'I', use 'the good'. Indeed, the most enlightening form of expression would be a notation that blends the words 'good' and 'I' into one another. 'I am I' means 'I am good', which means 'the good is good'. Hobbes's practical thought is self-consciousness of the animal as absolute end, and thus as the good itself.

Utilitarianism represents the animal and its pleasure as an external end. That makes no sense. Hobbes conceives practical thought as self-consciousness of the outer process. That makes sense. On that account, Hobbes's doctrine is infinitely superior to utilitarianism. Yet what Hobbes presents as the good is evil. Practical thought according to Hobbes is the certainty that I am the good; I am the true centre of what is; what is, as such, is for me. From time immemorial, that has been recognized as the expression of evil itself. Yet while we know that Hobbes expounds no idea of the good at all, but speaks the voice of evil, we do not thereby see how the good can be understood otherwise than as the outer process of life.

The Genus Process

In its outer process, the animal negates its opposition to what it is not in such a way as to re-instate that opposition: turning itself into a means, using itself up, it re-produces itself. In this way, the individual animal repeats itself in its outer process. So the outer process is the sustaining of the individual. Precisely for that reason, the coming to be of an individual animal is not a term of that process. Yet an individual animal cannot come from anything less than itself. Hence, while an animal is not made by an animal – the concept of making belongs with the outer process – an animal comes from an animal. Following Hegel, I call one animal's coming from another the genus process (Enz. / GW 20, § 35).

The appellation is apt because the process is generative: it constitutes generality. On the one hand, the process distinguishes one individual from another as one comes from *another*. Yet both are, precisely in one *coming from* the other, the same. In this way, sameness in many – generality – is constituted not by an external comparison, but by the logical character of the process. The process, by its form, distinguishes what repeats itself and remains the same from what changes and is always other: the genus from the individual.

One animal comes from another. That means, one animal ceases in another. That is one thought. The animal that – unintelligibly – gave birth but did not die, the universal mother, would not be distinguished from its genus; therefore, neither would be its offspring, which would be accidents of the universal mother, folded into her process, not individuals. This does not mean that giving birth and dying must coincide. Yet it shows why there is no obstacle to comprehending that an animal may in the moment of giving birth become nourishment for its offspring. Even where an animal goes on to live after having given birth, giving birth again, the individual expends itself in the genus process.

Just as an organ is its own means and in itself good only in and through the inner process of which it is a term, so the outer process is its own means and absolute end only in and through the genus process of which it is term. Considered in isolation, the outer process is the maintaining of itself of the individual. Yet the outer process is as such a term of the genus process, and as such a term it is consummated in generation, which is the demise of the individual. Since the individual animal is an end only as an element of the genus process, every act of an individual animal is both its preserving itself and its bringing itself to its end, and is the former in being the latter. The genus process is coming to be and ceasing to be of the individual in every moment immediately identical.

Life is outer process, and therein it is genus process. Perhaps, then, practical thought is consciousness of – not the outer process, but – the genus process. In consciousness of the genus, the individual may transcend its practical solipsism, or evil.

We have knowledge of the genus process of animal species, for example, the leaf cutter ant. Since, in the genus process, the individual relates to another as the same as itself, the genus process is socially articulated. Thus it will be possible to say of such individuals that they act as they should, or act well, in relation to another such individual, where the meaning of ‘ought’ and ‘good’ is provided by the genus process. And thus it may be that an individual animal acts well in bringing about its own demise, and not only in those cases in which it brings itself to an end in the act of generation. It may bring about its demise in a form of defence that belongs to the genus, as is the case with certain species of ants. One may be tempted to say that, in such a case, an ant does something that is bad for it, as it dies in the process. But this is wrong, for there is no meaning to the idea of something’s being good or bad for an animal outside its genus process. The individual animal has no good against its genus.

This seems to provide a way to transcend Hobbes. I may subordinate myself as individual, or outer process, to humanity, or genus process. Then the law of my practical thought is no longer Hobbes’s Law of Nature, which commands that I do everything that preserves my life. Rather, my law is that I do what is purposive to the genus process. That may require that I act against what, considered outside that process, would be my good. But I have no good against my genus.

Again, there are two ways in which one may try to conceive the genus process as the good of practical thought. The first is Anscombe and Geach, the second Foot and Thompson. First Anscombe.

Promising, she maintains, is a practice by which people can get other people to do things without needing to apply force. She describes that as “an instrument in people’s attainment of so many goods of common life” (Anscombe, 1969, 75), “a principle means by which human activities are promoted and human goods attained” (ibid., 76). When such a description holds true of a practice, then, she writes, it is necessary “that people should both actually adopt the procedure [...] and also treat this as a *rule*” (ibid., 75); she who fails to act in accordance with such a necessity therein fails to act well.

Anscombe's description of the practice bears a form that may equally be exhibited by a description of a practice of ants through which ant activities are promoted and ant goods attained. The ant, or the human being, that acts in conformity with the practice and thus its genus process acts well in the sense Anscombe gives to that term. The meaning of 'act well' is in each case specific to a certain genus process: ants act well in doing this, human beings in doing that, both according to their genus.

An account of acting well is given, in the same form, for ants and human beings. It follows that it is not internal to such an account that it pertains to her who gives it. It follows that it does not as such determine her to act. It is no practical thought. Anscombe's concept of acting well is not the one that is my topic.

Anscombe knows this. She distinguishes two forms of necessity. She says it is necessary that people (or ants, for that matter) act in a certain way, since thereby human (ant) activities are promoted and human (ant) goods attained. Yet that this is so, she says, does not show that it is necessary to act in this way. So there is: *it is necessary that people so act*, and: *it is necessary so to act*. The second phrase expresses a necessity thought in practical thought. For it is subjectless and provides no space for a variable of which human beings or ants may be values.

After she has explained that it is necessary that human beings conform to the practice of promises, Anscombe writes: "All this, it may be said, does not prove the *necessity* of acting justly in the matter of contracts; it only shews that a man will not act well [...] if he does not do so" (ibid., 75). It does not help if acting well is sanctioned by a tabu. "Not even this [that there is a tabu; SR]... proves the necessity of respecting this tabu" (ibid., 75). Again, she speaks of a necessity of respecting – in contrast to a necessity that people respect. Of that necessity, she says: "necessary [...] relates to the good of the agent, not, as before, to the common good" (ibid., 75).

Now how may it be necessary to act in the way in which it is necessary that human beings act? That is, how can it be the good of the agent to act as it is necessary that people act? The only sense that, so far, we can give to the idea of the good of the agent is that afforded by the idea of outer process. And that is ruled out now, because doing what it is necessary that people do may hinder the preservation of one's life.

Anscombe thinks that a human individual can have a higher purpose than the preservation of her life:

It is intelligible for a man to say he sees no necessity to act well in that matter, that is, no necessity [...] to take contracts seriously except as it serves his purposes. But if someone does genuinely *take* a proof that without doing X he cannot act well as a proof that he must do X, then this shews [...] that he *has a purpose* that can be served only by acting well, as such. (ibid., 76)

A human being can have a purpose which contains the genus process and is that through which acting in conformity with that process is, and is thought to be, good. Anscombe says nothing about what this purpose may be. She provides no indication of its logical form.

Nowadays, people here introduce the idea of value. A human being may value acting well. And she may understand that to be an objective value. That makes no sense. Either the value in question is an external end. But an external end as such is relative. Or the value is to reside in the life of her who honours that value, making it, as people are wont to say, rich and fulfilling. But then that value can only be a form of pleasure. Indeed, the values invoked are often quite transparently the finer pleasures of the well-to-do. Joseph Raz, for example, proclaims the objective value of Italian opera.

Peter Geach says the purpose of man is knowledge and love of God (Geach 1977, 21). That is better than Italian opera. Yet to understand that purpose is to know God. And therefore the formula does not help us. The formula in effect says that, did we understand the good, which contains the genus process as an essential means, we therein would know and love God. That is, the formula represents the objective of this essay as knowledge and love of God. I shall not object to that. Yet if at present our inquiry finds itself stalled, then this means we do not know nor love God.

Now let us turn to Philippa Foot, or, more precisely, to Foot as understood and presented by Thompson. Thompson asserts that there is and can be no transition from theoretical knowledge of the genus in, *it is necessary that Fs do A*, to a practical thought: *it is necessary to do A*. Rather, a thought of the form: *it is necessary to do A*, is as such knowledge of the genus process, and vice versa. As Anscombe's step is eliminated, so is God (Thompson 2004 and Thompson 2022).

When thought of the genus is self-consciousness of the genus, then the genus is who thinks and who is thought. The subject of the thought is originally general. The practical thought is humanity thinking humanity.

The idea of a general subject of thought has got a bad name because it appears to introduce a spooky entity: in addition to you and me, there is a further subject, a super-subject, the genus. This notion must indeed be rejected, but it is a weak objection to it that a super-subject is spooky. It must be rejected because it makes the genus external to the individual. Thereby it makes it unintelligible how the individual can belong, and know herself to belong, to the genus, and thus how the genus can be a genus. What is it to me if there is, in addition to me thinking what I do, a further subject, the genus, who thinks what it thinks? A ludicrous presumption of that super-subject to suggest that it is my genus!

Humanity thinking humanity is not a further subject, other than I. In order to see this, it will help if we first consider transactional self-consciousness. Suppose I think 'I sell you this apple' and you think 'I buy this apple from you'. This is a thought for two, as Fichte puts it (*Grundlage*, § 3f.). I know you to think what I do, not in a separate thought about you, but in thinking what I do. And vice versa. That knowledge – my knowledge what you think, your knowledge what I think – is the self-consciousness of the thought, which thought thus is originally ours and therein is mine and yours. The subject of the thought is a pair. That pair is constituted in thought, thought of the pair as pair, which as such is thought by each of its terms. The 'I think' of the transactional thought, its self-consciousness, is 'I – you think'; it holds together in one thought the pair and its terms.

Now just as there is transactional self-consciousness, there may be generic self-consciousness. Suppose I know everyone to think what I do, not in a separate thought, but in thinking what I do; everyone knows me to think what I do, not in a separate thought, but in thinking what they do. Then that knowledge – my knowledge what everyone thinks, everyone's knowledge what I think – is the self-consciousness of the thought, which thus is originally everyone's and therein is mine. The subject of the thought is a genus. That genus is constituted in thought, thought of the genus as genus, which as such is thought by any of its members. The 'I think' of that generic thought, its self-consciousness, is an 'I – everyone think'; it holds together in one thought the genus and its members.

In the first paragraph of the *Critique of Practical Reason*, Kant explains what a practical law is in this way: a practical law is known to bind universally (KpV, AA 5, 19). So it is internal to a practical law – it is its being a practical law – that it is known to bind. Since that belongs to its form, it is known in knowing the law. It is not a further thought I have about a practical law that people

know that law to bind them. Rather, I know that knowing the law. Thus it is right to say, unconditionally: the law is known to bind.

Kant says this before he says anything about the practical law. In this paragraph, he does no more than introduce the idea of general practical thought. He gives the idea of practical thought beyond Hobbes. Thompson asserts contra Kant that what is thought in such a thought by a human being is a certain natural life. He is with Kant, fully, in the conception of practical thought as generic self-consciousness. This introduces an incoherence.

The genus process is called thus because this process *is* the genus: the process is generative; it constitutes the genus. For it distinguishes by its form the individual from the genus, which genus therein is *its* genus and internal to the individual. Now the thought which is the self-consciousness of the genus *is* the genus; thus it is aptly called genus thought. The genus thought is generative; it constitutes the genus. For it distinguishes by its form the individual from the genus, which therein is *its* genus and internal to the individual. Yet in the genus thought the internality of genus is tighter than it is in the genus process. Here, the individual, namely, its self-consciousness, is originally the thought of its genus. As I put it: the 'I think' is 'I – everyone think'; it holds together in one thought myself and my genus. In formal mode: in the 'I' in which I speak myself as individual, I have always already spoken my genus. In material mode: I, precisely as individual, am genus.

This shows that the self-conscious genus is not a process. Its generality is not brought forth in a process that demonstrates the opposition of individual to genus by being the continuous discarding and replacement of the individuals. Rather, the generality of the self-conscious genus is constituted in thought that is the opposition of individual and genus. While the animal genus is real only in the individuals as their repetition, that is not true of the self-conscious genus. The self-conscious genus is its own reality as thought of the genus. Therefore, the individual does not need to demonstrate its generality by ceasing in another. The individual is itself genus; it needs no process for that.

Genus thought is to genus process as outer process is to inner process. The organism as inner process is a unity of organs, each of which is means to and end of each. This unity is real in the organs as the law of what each of them does. That same unity has a reality of its own as outer process, in which the animal acts as simple. The animal as simple unity is soul, and consciousness is the act in which the animal acts as simple unity. Analogously, the genus as process is the unity of individual animals each of which comes from and ceases

in another. This unity is real only in the individuals as the law of what each of them does. It has no reality of its own: in the genus process there is no act in which the genus acts as simple. By contrast, that same unity has a reality of its own as genus thought: in the practical thought of itself the genus acts as simple. The genus as simple unity is spirit; thought is the act in which the genus acts as simple unity.

What is the genus, which is the practical thought of itself? It is humanity, but this does not say much. Since the genus is the practical thought of itself, understanding what it is is self-clarification of practical thought. So we must press on. But we can already say of the genus, negatively, that it is not a certain natural life. It is not a certain life at all.

Anscombe describes the practice of promising as an element of a genus process. The form of her description is the same as that of an element of the genus process of leaf cutter ants. This character of her description settles it that the thought of the practice she expresses – her “it is necessary that people do...” – is no practical thought. For, it is internal to practical thought of the genus that she who thinks the thought belongs to the genus that she thinks. This shows that the genus thought in practical thought is no genus next to other genera. It is not a genus, but *the* genus. In this regard, it is like ‘being’. ‘Being’ does not signify a genus next to other genera, which is why Aristotle says that being is no genus (Aristoteles 1970, 68–69; 998b22–27 and 246–247; 1053b16–24). In that same sense, humanity is no genus.

This is what is right in the objection to speciesism. The objection is confused because it comprehends practical thought to be of an external end, and the objection is to limiting that end to members of a certain species. Why care only for human beings? Is not the worm worth just as much? Not these trees and that river bank? Why should the fly’s pain and the tree’s mutilation count less than the pain and the mutilation of a human being? Thus I open my heart and make it wide, and make it a home for the whole of nature. That idea is boundless narcissism. She who asserts it, representing the whole of nature as her own external end, declares her benevolent will the holy centre of the universe. Yet there is something right in this. Practical thought is not partial to one species over another. It is the thought of humanity, which is no genus next to other genera and in this sense is no genus at all, no more than being is.

When we consider the practice of promising as an element of a certain genus process, then that consideration does not reveal the necessity of doing anything. Anscombe recognizes this. The description, she thinks, can enter

practical thought through an aim I may have. Without that aim, there is no answer to the following questions: Why would I sacrifice myself at the altar of the species? Why would I countenance even the slightest diminution of my comfort, so that other members of the species attain goods and are furthered in their activities? These questions are not touched by appealing to the common good, for the common good, as it is revealed in the description of the practice, is practically inert. As Anscombe explains: when we ask after the necessity of doing something, we consider the good of the agent.

This shows the superiority of Hobbes's conception of the good over the idea of the good as genus process. Since the human individual is for herself genus, she has no genus above her. She cannot bow her knee to a genus; she is not internal means in the self-renewal of a genus process. She, as individual, is the absolute end. This is registered and at the same time distorted in the thought of that end as the preservation and comfort of an animal life. The human individual is absolute because she transcends the genus process and therewith the outer process: she does not bring forth her own generality in a demise of herself in which she recovers herself, namely her genus, in another individual. This insight is inverted when the individual asserts her absoluteness in such a way as to assert herself as outer process and natural life. Therein, we noted, Hobbes describes evil itself.

The attempt to understand the good of practical thought – the attempt to understand human life – through the logical form of the genus process fails because the genus thought in practical thought is no process. The good I think in practical thought is no animal life, no life of the flesh. It is the life of the spirit. That life is no genus next to other genera; it is not a life, but *the* life.

Is human life, the life of the spirit, another life than animal life, a life of the flesh? This is like asking: is the soul another thing than the body? What is always other in the inner process comes to be and ceases to be in eternal repetition (cells of my skin fall off and give way to new ones), is one and remains in the outer process in which the animal acts as simple and therefore as a whole. Analogously, what is always other in the genus process, comes to be and ceases to be in eternal repetition (individuals die and give birth to others), is one and remains in the genus thought, in which the genus acts as simple and therefore as a whole. The act in which the genus acts as a whole, human life, is no genus process. The act in which the genus acts as simple relates to the genus process as animal consciousness relates to its inner process: the unity of the inner process in its truth is the simple unity of consciousness. In the same way, every

relation of human being to human being in which they are terms in a genus process – parents to children, sister to brother, fellow to fellow in work – in its truth is the simple activity of the genus.

The act in which the animal acts as a whole is in turn a process, for it is opposition: of the animal to its world. The act in which the genus acts as a whole may in turn be a process, if it is opposition. Unfolding this opposition and its process, the life of the spirit, would be to speak of right and wrong, guilt and forgiveness, good and evil. But I must stop now.

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