Philippa Foot reasons in *Natural Goodness* that patterns of natural normativity may be transferred from observation and evaluation of natural goodness and defect in plants and animals to observation and evaluation of natural goodness and defect in humans, and that while human 'good' differs from botanical and animal 'good', there remains a common conceptual structure as we are all living things. This line of reasoning is seen in this essay question, using her example of an oak tree. However, there is a lot to be challenged in this reasoning, notably the use of language, the use of purpose, the 'leap' from the sub-rational to the rational, and the potential logical fallacies present. While Aristotle's ideas about purpose and goodness are clearly central to this debate, one can also use Wittgenstein, Geach, and Kant to explore weaknesses to her argument. The kind of argument she uses is of course central to this discussion, leaving more room for criticism and ultimately leading to the conclusion that, while thought-provoking and with merit, this kind of argument is sadly unconvincing for the objectivity of ethical judgements.

Before we explore the reasoning of the argument itself, we must first classify the kind of argument it is. As an a posteriori argument, this style of argument is based on experience, in this case experience of a 'good' oak tree's root system and of 'good' people. Although this style of reasoning is universally accessible, thus practically applicable to the world, it is also incredibly subjective, and therein lie many of the difficulties. The nature of experience is such that we attach our own interpretations and lenses to everything we view, so perhaps for an argument that attempts to argue for the *objectivity* of ethical judgements, a less subjective basis such as a priori reasoning - before experience, based on reason alone- might be more convincing. Descartes would support this view as he believed the senses could be deceptive, and thus weren't a reliable basis for philosophical arguments. Furthermore, the logic demonstrated here is deductive, so while it doesn't suffer the usual flaws of inductive arguments with inductive leaps to conclusions based on probability, its conclusion only remains logically necessary provided one accepts the premises. However, the premises we find here are a subject of great controversy, thus throughout this essay I will dissect some of the reasoning behind them, showing that by challenging the foundation of this argument, due to its deductive nature, it is rendered unconvincing for the objectivity of ethical judgements.

The entirety of this argument hangs on the idea that we can use words like good and bad to mean equivalent things when applied in different contexts, or as Foot says: 'The meaning of the words 'good and 'bad' is not different when used of features of plants on the one hand and humans on the other, but is rather the same as applied, in judgements of natural goodness and defect, in the case of all living things' (2001: 47). In her introduction, she makes an interesting reference to Geach's article 'Good and Evil', where he distinguishes between 'predicative' adjectives like colours, and 'attributive' adjectives like good, the former of which acts independently of what it describes, while the latter changes meaning dependent on its noun (2001: 2-3). This idea of the meaning of adjectives like good changing in relation to their object is key when evaluating the argument, as there is a clear change in object between the first premise and the conclusion from a tree to a human. Although Foot argues that both objects can be evaluated under a common conceptual structure as living things, that does not negate the change in object, thus the change in meaning of the attributive adjective. Even among plants, we would see this change as a 'good' oak tree's root system vastly differs from a 'good' cactus' root system, so perhaps Foot's view about goodness here is too general, missing the intricacy that this evaluation requires. Wittgenstein can also be used here with his idea of family resemblance: that there is no one common meaning of a word, but instead a 'complicated network of similarities overlapping and criss-crossing', and it is a mistake humans often make to look for the common 'essence' of a word (2001: 27, S66). With the specific example of good, he says it too 'must have a family of meanings', so assuming its unchanging nature is a very shaky foundation for an argument for the objectivity of ethical judgements (2001: 31, S77). We see this especially in the second premise - 'the word "good" doesn't change its meaning just because it's being applied to members of one species rather than another'- and thus this is for many too large an assumption to base an argument on.

From an Aristotelian view, the word 'good' means fully actualised in relation to the four causes, especially that of the final cause ('the end, that for the sake of which a thing is done'), for example an eye capable of sight is good as its final cause (or its telos) is sight. (Falcon 2022) As he thought everything had a different telos, it follows that for Aristotle what is good also changes when we move from a tree to a human. While trees have a simpler purpose of growth and reproduction, humans are rational beings, capable of self-development to achieve eudaimonia- the highest human good, also called human flourishing or living well-brought on by a process of developing virtues like wisdom, courage, and patience. While kindness isn't explicitly one of his main virtues for humans, the same logic applies when considering that sort of quality, so for him it could for example be objectively true that a good human is wise. He thinks that things in nature are objectively good when they fulfil their telos, and thus he would agree with the statement about a good tree having deep roots as that fulfils its purpose of growth by accessing water and providing a sturdy base, although he would still take issue with the idea that 'good' doesn't change across species. However, the same process of evaluating goodness via the four causes still remains for him, similar to that of Foot's 'common conceptual structure' of natural normativity for living things. Nevertheless, this idea of good in relation to purpose is still open to criticism, especially when looking at organisms from a human perspective- are we simply reading purpose when there is only function, what works for survival? And what when we apply a different purpose or context to the oak tree - for example when hard rock makes deep roots impossible and broad roots are preferable, or when we have a small plot for the tree, and shallow, smaller roots are the only thing that fits our purpose? In terms of objectively good humans being kind, we also find problems in that maybe being overly kind and self-sacrificing isn't good for the individual. Therefore, one cannot say with certainty that the statements like 'a good oak tree has deep roots' is objectively true, especially as this argument is based on our subjective experience of and interpretation of nature.

The difference in final cause isn't the only thing that separates us from animals and plants: for Kant, our rationality raises us to a higher moral standard than that of sub/non-rational organisms. Consequentially, a good human is so vastly other from a good oak tree that the cross-species use of the term 'good' is a logical error, rendering the second premise of the given argument unconvincing. As rational beings, Kant believes we have the capacity to use reason to find an objective moral law, based on categorical imperatives (absolute, binding moral commands) that we discern using the three formulations. An objectively good human is then one who acts only out of good will- the intention to obey the moral law- and does their duty by acting morally according to this good will, regardless of emotion or consequence, rather than just being kind. Based in a priori reasoning, Kant's argument is perhaps more convincing for the objectivity of ethical judgements as it is grounded in reason, rather than our subjective experience of and analysis of nature, and it addresses the issue many would take with being grouped with animals and plants in ethical evaluation based on natural normativity- that as rational creatures, humans have a different standard of good.

Another logical problem with this style of argument is that is looks at certain parts of an organism then moves to the whole and says, 'this makes a good X as a whole'- also called the fallacy of composition. We can easily recognise a good human eye or plant root system when they fulfil a desired purpose of sight and support respectively (to take an Aristotelian view), but to then look holistically and evaluate the goodness of an entire organism based on one characteristic is fallacious as living organisms are much more complex than that. When we the enter the murky waters of the collection of natural defects and goodness that make up an organism, it becomes incredibly hard to draw a line and provide one characteristic that makes an objectively good specimen, even if we assume that plants, animals, and humans can all be evaluated under the same conceptual structure, which as I have established already is a hugely contested view. Even then, with plants and animals we tend to analyse parts in terms of effective function, which is completely different from many people's approach to human morality, in that with Aristotle's Virtue Ethics we evaluate qualities of character, and with Kant we evaluate intention. To take the same view with humans would be seen by many

to be objectifying, and not appropriate for discussion of morality. Thus, the logic demonstrated in the argument based on the leap from parts to whole is deeply problematic, rendering it unconvincing.

To conclude, there are clearly many problems with the logic demonstrated in the given argument, and as it is deductive in nature, the issues I have raised with the premises, especially that of trans-species application of the word good, mean the conclusion too can be rejected. As an a posteriori argument, it also remains less convincing because of the unreliable basis in experience, whereas the universal nature of reason as the basis of Kant's a priori argument makes the latter a more convincing argument for the objectivity of ethical judgements. Even if we agree with Foot about a commonality in analysing properties and operations in living things under natural normativity, the problem remains that the change in the meaning of the word 'good' from one to the other makes it incredibly difficult to see how we can base an objectively good human on the basis of a good root system of an oak tree, and that is without considering whether it is even possible to reach objective truth! Ultimately, it is hard to see how a posteriori deductive arguments based in the idea of natural goodness like the example could remain convincing for the objectivity of ethical judgements, in face of the criticisms I have raised.

Word Count: 1855

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