

ANIMALITY AND RATIONALITY IN HUMAN BEINGS: TOWARDS ENRICHING CONTEMPORARY EDUCATIONAL STUDIES¹

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ABSTRACT: “What is the nature of the beings that we are?” is perhaps the most difficult question. The difficulty lies in our being a natural animal in a normative environment. In harmony with John McDowell’s conception of a naturalism of second nature, this paper claims that we should not rest satisfied with the predominant scientific picture in which the seeming rift between our animality and our rationality is to be resolved by detailed studies of empirically knowable facts about our animal modes of existence. Instead, appreciating the *sui generis* character of a distinctive mode of human engagement with the world is a necessary clearing of the ground and an essential first step toward addressing meticulously the above difficult question on human nature. The paper suggests that the human sciences in general and education studies in particular should start off not with disclosed first-natural facts but with a sensitivity to second-natural backgrounds that set the stage for the first-natural facts.

KEYWORDS: Animality; rationality; human and non-human animals; concepts of nature, second nature, John McDowell, educational studies.

I. INTRODUCTION: A DUALIST SPLIT BETWEEN OUR ANIMALITY AND OUR RATIONALITY

Human beings are animals. They are a biological species that has evolved through a process of natural selection. In this respect, the human species is no different from

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non-human living beings, or at least from other animal species. Since Darwin (and Wallace), this view has gradually come to serve as a paradigm for our general understanding of ourselves, human beings. In the course of intellectual history, however, far more prevalent was the view that rational and thinking beings are outside the natural order.²

One of the biggest problems arising out of these opposing ideas is this: how to reconcile the causal character of human nature that operates in a mechanistic, physical world with human rational powers that are exercised as distinctively normative phenomena. As Meredith Williams puts it, “[t]he problem of how we can be both animals living in a causal world and agents acting through norms, principles, and rules in that same world persists.”³ A dualistic split between our animality and our rationality has been a focus of a great deal of work in many fields.

The predominant Darwinism in the intellectual scene has encouraged the belief that the split should be dissolved by reducing our rationality such as the intentional and the normative to our animality, i.e. the realm of mechanistic law. Hence, in innumerable empirical investigations, human rationality is explained exclusively in scientific terms.

There is some force in scientific inquiries into the nature of human beings, even if their “data-based” conclusion is that there is no such thing as human nature. Yet it would be a short step from the fact that Darwinian evolutionary naturalism is embraced widely enough to the conclusion that a thorough scientific and naturalist excavation will exhaustively reveal the significant dimensions of human beings as *rational animals*. For, what is distinctive about the nature of human beings is deeply imbued with the cultural. To make proper sense of this is an essential prerequisite of promising studies of the *nature* of human beings, natural or social scientific. Studies that lacks a sensitivity to the intrinsic embeddedness of the cultural and the natural in human beings imposes limits, from the outset, on what the studies can reveal. Of this Hilary Putnam nicely reminds us: “while biological evolution is Darwinian, cultural evolution is Lamarckian.”⁴ This is to mean that, while much of the way human beings are biological animals may be accounted for by empirical research into the likeness and sameness between human and non-human animals, much of the way we are rational agents needs to be illuminated in the light of “the inheritance of acquired characteristics”—such as languages and artifacts. This is a main reason why we cannot

² This still remains true in some contexts of contemporary religious life.

³ Meredith Williams, ‘Normative Naturalism’, *International Journal of Philosophical Studies*, vol. 18(3), 2010, p. 355.

⁴ Hilary Putnam, ‘Does Evolution Explain Representation?’ in his *Renewing Philosophy*, Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1992, p. 33.

rest satisfied with the scientific picture in which the seeming rift between our animality and our rationality is to be resolved by detailed studies of empirically knowable facts about our animal modes of existence. As expressed poignantly by Williams, “[t]he very distinction between nature and culture is irretrievably blurred in the case of human beings. We are naturally cultural beings.”⁵ In much of the work in empirical science, the issue of our rationality apparently has gone unaddressed rather than have been dissolved.

A satisfactory comprehension of the animal-rational relation in human beings is of more than theoretical interest to those engaged in studies of human nature. It will, I argue, shed thought-provoking light, especially, on the enterprise of *education* in human life. For it is education in the widest sense that makes us human beings that lead a radically different mode of life from that of, for example, “anthropoid” higher primates. The present sciences of our animal behavior and brain functioning can surely provide us with important insights concerning not just our animal nature but our rational nature. Still, it does not follow that those sciences of sequences of bodily movements and causal activities of the brain open up a whole window into the nature of human beings as rational and cultural entities. Guided and informed exclusively by insights drawn from the scientifically evidence-based literatures whose overwhelming emphasis is on our animal nature, we might be in danger of losing sight of the rational side of our nature that is distinctively to be exercised by way of education.

What is at stake here is a conception of nature. The trouble comes when we try to understand the idea that we are rational animals along with a certain understanding of nature which has enjoyed a continuing influence both in and out of academia as well as both in and out of the West, namely the modern conception of nature. My main aim in this paper is to urge that John McDowell’s “radical rethinking of nature,”⁶ with which I sympathize, invites us to notice the essentially important role education plays in human modes of living. To amplify the claim that it is unduly restrictive to identify the realm of nature with the realm of law brings us to the proper acknowledgement that empirical or “scientific” research should not exclusively be privileged in the study of education, though, as is often referred to, the discipline of education currently goes in the opposite direction driven by the hegemony of “scientism.”⁷ This in no way

⁵ Williams, ‘Normative Naturalism’, p. 370.

⁶ John McDowell, *Mind and World*, Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1996, p. 79.

⁷ See, for example, Emery J. Hyslop-Margison and M. Ayaz Naseem, *Scientism and Education: Empirical Research as Neo-Liberal Ideology*, Dordrecht: Springer, 2010. Ironically, however, a polar opposite to such scientism has also been another dominant strain in educational research, i.e. broadly social constructionist accounts (of, for instance, knowledge, meaning and reality). I think neither is a promising line to take. But, in this paper, the former, a scientism in education, is the focus of my attention.

implies, however, that philosophical thinking is in intrinsic opposition to empirical or “scientific” investigations, but instead suggests that the former should be open to the latter. If taken seriously, the line of thinking I will be trying to bring out can contribute to opening up an inclusive terrain on which educational issues can be addressed more fully and indicating a possible direction of research for philosophy in the study of education in the scientific climate.

II. A DIFFERENCE IN KIND OR DEGREE THAT EXISTS BETWEEN HUMAN AND NON-HUMAN ANIMALS?

Wittgenstein remarks: “If a lion could talk, we could not understand him.”⁸ To this remark, Alasdair MacIntyre makes a reaction with some disagreement: “About lions perhaps the question has to be left open.”⁹ MacIntyre’s reaction is based upon his view that whether we can understand a living creature is a matter of where it is located in the phylogenetic tree. He therefore agrees with Thomas Nagel that we do not know what it is like to be a bat¹⁰; and argues, drawing on a number of empirically grounded work, that “some of the greatest of the recent interpreters of dolphin activity would be or would have been able to understand them” if they could speak.¹¹

What MacIntyre announces his skepticism about is a supposed demarcation line between human beings and non-human living beings. Rather than being concerned with what makes the human species special, MacIntyre proposes to pay more serious attention to what we *share* with other animal species. His suggestion depends for its rationale upon the fact that human rationality, which is often taken to be a distinguishing feature of humans, is built on our animal nature. He thus claims:

To acknowledge that there are these animal preconditions for human rationality requires us to think of the relationship of human beings to members of other intelligent species in terms of a *scale or spectrum* rather than of a single line of division between ‘them’ and ‘us’.¹²

It is obvious that MacIntyre here casts doubt on the view that congratulates humanity on its difference from the non-human animals. He challenges the primacy of the differences over the likenesses between human and non-human animals to the effect that *homo sapiens* is, first and foremost, a genetic, biological species that has evolved

⁸ Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, trans. G. E. M. Anscombe, Oxford: Blackwell, 1958, p. 223.

⁹ Alasdair MacIntyre, *Dependent Rational Animals: Why Human Beings Need the Virtues*, Chicago, Ill: Open Court, 1999, pp. 58-9.

¹⁰ MacIntyre, *Dependent Rational Animals*, p. 58.

¹¹ MacIntyre, *Dependent Rational Animals*, p. 59.

¹² MacIntyre, *Dependent Rational Animals*, p. 57, my emphasis.

through the mechanism of natural selection, whose activities are basically conditioned by our animal bodies, even though those activities do not directly issue from the genetic program.

The chief target of attack in MacIntyre's argument is a sort of recent philosophy that sees the nature and use of language as *a/the* central theme in philosophy. The philosophers who endorse the idea that language is always *in medias res*, MacIntyre says, are Wittgenstein, Austin, Quine, Davidson as well as Husserl, Heidegger and Gadamer.¹³ He is highly critical of a conclusion these philosophers tend to reach. For MacIntyre, their conclusion is that:

because nonhuman animals do not possess language, or at least the requisite kind of language, they must also lack the capacity or ability or power in question. So it has been argued variously that nonhuman animals cannot have thoughts, must lack beliefs, cannot act for reasons and in their encounters with the objects of their experience must be innocent of concepts.¹⁴

To put it another way, it is only human beings that possess conceptual capacities—e.g. the capacity for having thoughts and/or belief, the ability to act for reasons and so on. This idea that human beings occupy a distinguishingly special place in the animal kingdom is precisely what MacIntyre castigates.

MacIntyre, for example, presents Heidegger's discussion as an object of critical reflection. He refers to Heidegger's enigmatic expression: "The human being is 'world-forming'..., the stone is altogether 'without world'..., and the animal is 'poor in world.'"¹⁵ For Heidegger what non-human animals lack, MacIntyre expounds, is "not language itself, but the conceptual capacity that makes language possible," namely "what Heidegger calls 'the as-structure.'"¹⁶ This as-structure encapsulates Heidegger's central thesis that the world is revealing through the revelation of linguistic and conceptual powers. To put it the other way round, the world we human beings look at never voluntarily presents itself to animals: "The lizard lying on the rock may have some awareness of the rock, but not *as a rock*."¹⁷ On Heidegger's view:

Hence animals cannot attend to beings, for beings are not presented to them. And since to form a world and to have a world requires such presentation, animals are poor in world, not utterly without world, as the rock is, but possessing only a deprived and impoverished form of experience.¹⁸

¹³ MacIntyre, *Dependent Rational Animals*, p. 12.

¹⁴ MacIntyre, *Dependent Rational Animals*, pp. 12-3.

¹⁵ MacIntyre, *Dependent Rational Animals*, p. 43.

¹⁶ MacIntyre, *Dependent Rational Animals*, p. 46.

¹⁷ MacIntyre, *Dependent Rational Animals*, p. 44, emphasis in original.

¹⁸ MacIntyre, *Dependent Rational Animals*, p. 45.

MacIntyre finds this view of Heidegger (and of his English-speaking analytic counterparts) defective in two ways. These two are closely connected.

First, MacIntyre's criticism is directed at Heidegger's treatment of "the entire realm of nonhuman animals as homogeneous"¹⁹ under the assumption that there is no or little important difference between non-human species in any relevant sense. This assumption stands in marked contrast to MacIntyre's scientific attention to the phylogenetic tree, i.e. the "scale or spectrum" in the living world. For MacIntyre Heidegger's assumption is nothing but confused and misleading, the assumption that there are deep and critical differences between human and non-human beings while there is little difference between non-human species.

Second, MacIntyre criticizes Heidegger's (and others') account of the distinctive essence of human beings as world-disclosing for falling short of an adequate scientific picture of the human condition. On MacIntyre's view, an infelicitous disregard for empirical inquiry on the part of Heidegger and the kindred philosophers distracts their attention from the fact that the human species is not as different from non-human animals as they assume with regard to the fundamental traits of the bodily dimensions that enable the exercise of powers, capacities, and sensibilities that MacIntyre's opponents ascribe only to human beings. The point MacIntyre tries to make is that our acquiring language/concept-using abilities and capacities by no means leads us beyond the animal kingdom. He puts this point as follows:

our whole initial bodily comportment towards the world is originally an animal comportment and that when, through having become language-users, we under the guidance of parents and others restructure that comportment, elaborate and in new ways correct our beliefs and redirect our activities, *we never make ourselves independent of our animal nature and inheritance.*²⁰

I am convinced by MacIntyre's first objection I have just sketched; but I am less persuaded by the second point he raises. That is, the diversity and complexity of living beings, as MacIntyre warns us, resists the simple categorization as 'non-human animals': to put it in Peter Singer's words, "[t]he term 'animal'—even in the restricted sense of 'nonhuman animal'—covers too diverse a range of lives for one principle to apply to all of them."²¹ I also see little value in setting philosophical thinking about human nature apart from empirical research into the living world. Yet MacIntyre's overwhelming emphasis on our animal nature, I shall contend, misses the point of Heidegger and his English-speaking analytic counterparts, the point that rational-

¹⁹ MacIntyre, *Dependent Rational Animals*, p. 45.

²⁰ MacIntyre, *Dependent Rational Animals*, p. 49, my emphasis.

²¹ Peter Singer, *Practical Ethics*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979, p. 103.

conceptual capacities are the distinguishing mark of thinking and minded beings. I do not mean to denigrate the animal character of human beings but MacIntyre's obsession with our animal nature, in my view, obscures, rather than illustrates, the significance of the continuity and difference between human and non-human animals. For, the similarity and distinction between "human animality" and "animal animality" is much more subtle than the scientific image; because the quest to understand human animality necessitates an appreciation of the background of human embodiment and engagement in it, and scientific investigations into animal animality often presuppose what might be called "animal humanity." Hence the critical importance of *philosophical* work.

No doubt, the scientific picture of human beings, validated by Darwinism and the phylogenetic tree, has had a beneficial influence on the development of academic research as well as of our everyday life. For instance, the scientific assumption that the same physical components at a biochemical level in different living organisms lead to the same or highly similar effect at their symptomatic and behavioral levels justifies the use of animals in experiments. Animal experimentation has certainly enhanced human flourishing and alleviated their suffering, say, by identifying a particular substance as carcinogenic and even by discovering that doses of a particular substance improve their *emotional* health. There is a grounding assumption here of the kind Singer depicts:

if forcing a rat to choose between starving to death and crossing an electrified grid to obtain food tells us anything about the reactions of humans to stress, we must assume that the rat feels stress in this kind of situation.²²

It is true that scientific knowledge about lower-level (physico-chemical) components of reptiles and small mammals tells us much about humans. And yet, it is also true that sometimes scientific knowledge as to our biological makeup says remarkably little about human nature and the human condition, let alone about a path of human flourishing. This is simply because explanatory reductionism does not work for our higher-level behavior such as our thinking and judgments. Our mindedness at the behavioral level surely has a biological basis, but two points should be made about this. In the first place, a common feature at a biochemical level may well have many different effects not just between members of our species and members of other species, but even among human individuals. In the second place, there would not be much point in reversing the order of explanation. Putnam, in a co-authored paper with Martha Nussbaum, remarks:

Putnam does not believe that even all *humans* who have the same belief (in different cultures, or with different bodies of background knowledge and different

²² Singer, *Practical Ethics*, p. 57.

conceptual resources) have in common a physical-cum-computational feature which could be “identified with” that belief. The “intentional level” is simply not reducible to the “computational level” any more than it is to the “physical level.”²³

This irreducibility can be explained through attention to what is considered “natural” in the world in which human beings live. For the interweaving of our animality and our rationality makes us more than purely physical entities that are supposed to be thoroughly analyzed by scientific studies of the physical configuration of animals including our own species. To appreciate such a more nuanced picture of humanity without throwing out the baby with the bath water, it helps to attend to McDowell’s argument on two sorts of the concept of nature: “mere’ nature” and “something whose realization involves transcending that.”²⁴

III. TWO KINDS OF THE CONCEPT OF NATURE

To Wittgenstein’s aphorism, “If a lion could talk, we could not understand him,” McDowell states: “we should add that if we could not understand him, that ought to undermine our confidence that we were entitled to suppose talking was what he was doing.”²⁵ What he tries to reject is an *anthropomorphism* which is often blended with the modern conception of nature. Such a dominant conception of nature has distorted and impoverished our view of humanity by excluding one of the two conceptions of nature from view, as a result of which many fail to acknowledge the sense in which our animality and our rationality inextricably intertwine.

Towards the end of the last section I assert that “[t]his irreducibility [from our higher-order behavior to our first-order physical states] can be explained through attention to what is considered ‘natural’ in the world in which human beings live.” To spell this out in some detail, it is of the highest importance to figure out the sort of life human beings live, namely our being a *natural* animal in the world filled with meanings. This delicate issue is to be illuminated with reference to McDowell’s exposition of the two kinds of the concept of nature.

McDowell, along with a common-sense view, takes it that “modern science has given us a disenchanted conception of the natural world.”²⁶ The image of “the disenchantment of the world,” one well-known notably through the work of Max

²³ Hilary Putnam and Martha Nussbaum, ‘Changing Aristotle’s Mind’, in *Words and Life*, eds. H. Putnam and J. Conant, Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1994, p. 47, emphasis in original.

²⁴ John McDowell, ‘Two Sorts of Naturalism’, in his *Mind, Value and Reality*, Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1998, p. 173.

²⁵ McDowell, ‘Two Sorts of Naturalism’, p. 170.

²⁶ McDowell, ‘Two Sorts of Naturalism’, p. 174.

Weber,²⁷ has come to be accepted widely in our ordinary lives (at least in a secularized context of liberal democracy). This image, McDowell claims, “marks a contrast between two kinds of intelligibility: the kind that is sought by (as we call it) natural science, and the kind we find in something when we place it in relation to other occupants of ‘the logical space of reasons’, to repeat a suggestive phrase from Wilfrid Sellars.”²⁸ It has been alleged in modernity’s thinking that what the former makes comprehensible is almost exclusively identical with the world of nature, and what the latter engages in is the world of meaning. We must face, however, a difficult task, which is perhaps the most difficult task of all intellectual inquiries: “What is the nature of the beings that we are?” The difficulty lies in appreciating the sense in which human beings are natural animals in a normative environment.

The most straightforward version of the attempt to reconcile the fact that human beings are on the evolutionary path and the fact that we do not live in a meaningless natural world is to “domesticate” the latter kind of life within the sphere of the former one—distinctively by natural-scientific terms. This direction of thought is what McDowell dubs “bald naturalism,”²⁹ and it fails, as we have seen, to provide all satisfying answers to the questions about our higher-order behavior such as thinking, intending and judging. It is to be noted, however, that rejecting bald naturalism does not amount to signing up for preposterous kinds of idealism or constructivism that claim we make the world. It can seem here that we are still troubled by the age-old question of how the human mind can be in touch with the external world. Put in contemporary terms in the Anglo-American tradition of analytic philosophy, it may seem that we are still left with “the unattractive choice between coherentism and the Myth of the Given.”³⁰

The remarkable feature of McDowell’s views is not to rest content with the seeming reasonableness of a third way. Such a third option is to show something of the ways that the things themselves (i.e. what natural sciences aim to make apprehensible)

²⁷ Weber originally borrowed this phrase from Friedrich Schiller (Max Weber, *Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, translated, edited, and with an introduction by H. H. Gerth & C. W. Mills, London: Routledge, 1991).

²⁸ McDowell, *Mind and World*, p. 70.

²⁹ McDowell, *Mind and World*, p. 73.

³⁰ John McDowell, ‘Responses’, in *Reading McDowell: On Mind and World*, ed. N. H. Smith, London: Routledge, 2002, pp. 291-2. Putnam elucidates central aspects of both of these positions: “Coherentism (represented by Donald Davidson) says that nothing can justify a belief except another belief, and simply accepts that experiences do not justify beliefs, although beliefs about experiences do,” and the Myth of the Given “posits that justification begins with some sort of brute confrontation with something ‘outside the space of reasons’, an unconceptualized experience (Gareth Evans and Christopher Peacocke are contemporary representatives).” (Hilary Putnam, ‘McDowell’s Mind and McDowell’s World’, in *Reading McDowell*, p. 175).

and the human mind (i.e. what counts only in the world of meaning) jointly determine how things are. McDowell views Kant's position as unsatisfactory:

[H]is [Kant's] picture contains a version of the fully disenchanted item that lies at the end of Hume's path, something brutally alien to the space of *logos*. Thus the thesis that the world of nature cannot be constitutively independent of the space in which thought operates becomes the thesis that the world of nature is, transcendently speaking, a joint product of the structure of subjectivity and an ineffable "in itself" that is fully independent of that structure. This is quite unsatisfying.....³¹

Most unsatisfying is the implication that the *real* world of nature is still outside our reach, when the world of nature is conceived of as "a joint product" of the human mind and noumena. Frustration arising out of this epistemological chasm has given many philosophers the nerves, and it is precisely here that McDowell's "naturalism" has force. What he provides is an alternative account of what it is for human beings to be a natural animal in the world filled with meanings—without either placing us human beings outside the natural order or setting the "real" world of nature outside of and independently of "the space of reasons." The key is, McDowell argues, to see the deliverances of the senses differently. Both proponents of coherentism and those of the Myth of the Given believe that the deliverances of the senses are nothing other than events in the causal structures of the world, and thus they are unconnected with the logical space of reasons that is *sui generis* to human beings. McDowell takes issue with this view, and tries to make it clear that the deliverances of the senses are conceptually structured, i.e. their occurrences are *within* the purview of the space of reasons. Therefore, our conceptual powers are always already involved in experience, experience which enables human beings to live their lives. McDowell's philosophical project, in other words, is to give organized expression to what Kant calls "spontaneity," with a recognition of its passiveness. For to have the capacity for spontaneity is exactly what makes the human species human beings. In the words of McDowell, "[t]he faculty of spontaneity is the understanding, our capacity to recognize and bring into being the kind of intelligibility that is proper to meaning."³² To dispel the above unattractive choice, McDowell elaborates the point that spontaneity "characterize[s] the workings of our sensibility as such."³³ The whole point here is: The workings of our sensibility are penetrated to a greater or lesser degree by spontaneity.

³¹ McDowell, 'Two Sorts of Naturalism', p. 179.

³² McDowell, *Mind and World*, p. 71.

³³ McDowell, *Mind and World*, p. 71.

If this is right, the effect is pervasive. This is both because human spontaneity makes a human as purely physical a human *qua* human, and because it demands an attentive revision of a starting point for scholarly inquiry into the above difficult question, “what is the nature of the beings that we are?” in general, and education studies more specifically. The remaining chapters grapple with these two issues.

IV. SECOND NATURE TO HUMAN BEINGS

If to have the faculty of spontaneity means to be capable of understanding and judgment, the human species is born *without* that faculty. Put the other way round, they *acquire* the capacity in the course of their lives. In this respect, it may be possible to say that newborn babies are purely biological entities. However, this assertion is likely to arouse a sense of unease or discomfort, and that kind of sense can, I think, be justified for two interlocking reasons. The first is that the world babies are born into is not a meaningless natural world but a world saturated with meanings; the second is thus that the newborn begins, from the very moment of birth, to learn living a human mode of life. Of course they cannot learn such a human mode of life for themselves. They learn what they need to live *qua* human being through *education* in the broadest sense of the term, both formal and informal.

In this way, human infants gradually develop the capacity for spontaneity. Given the fact that the vast majority of the human kind have concept-employing, language-using abilities, the process of acquiring these capacities could be seen as part of the *natural* course of their development. This gives McDowell grounds for his strenuous effort to resurrect the Aristotelian notion of “second nature,” the sort of nature which the human species is not born with but the acquisition of which makes it possible for them to become “natural” human beings. To put it in the phrase we introduced, human animals are not born as the inhabitants of the space of reasons, but they become so. In a controversial sentence, McDowell claims: “they [human beings] are born mere animals, and they are transformed into thinkers and intentional agents in the course of coming to maturity.”³⁴ MacIntyre, for example, accuses McDowell of undermining the importance of the continuity between human beings and non-human animals by placing too much emphasis on the contrast between them:

It has been my claim that on the type of view taken by Gadamer³⁵ and McDowell this transformation may be in danger of becoming unintelligible, that it is only

³⁴ McDowell, *Mind and World*, p. 125.

³⁵ McDowell refers to his main debt to Gadamer’s work for his articulation of the essence of a distinctive mode of human engagement with the world, in marked contrast to forms of behavior of non-human animals that are mostly governed by their biological imperatives (McDowell, *Mind and World*, especially pp. 115-119).

because some of what McDowell calls “mere animals” are already guided by a kind of practical reasoning that is exhibited in their taking *this* to be a reason for doing *that*, one that is to be characterized by *analogy* with human understanding, that some of the prelinguistic conditions necessary for the development of human rationality—conditions satisfied by members of some nonhuman species as well as by human beings—are satisfied.³⁶

Yet, this criticism discredits nothing central to McDowell’s contention that the space of reasons of which human beings are inhabitants is qualitatively different from the environment by which the lives of non-human animals, according to their respective biological capacities and constraints, are largely structured and conditioned. It is also to be remembered that McDowell’s line of argument by no means neglects the fundamental forces of our biological origins that are shared with other species, especially with some higher primates. McDowell therefore takes care to avoid the pitfall of making his second nature account look mysterious and supernatural:

Second nature could not float free of potentialities that belong to a normal human organism. This gives human reason enough of a foothold in the realm of law to satisfy any proper respect for modern natural science.³⁷

A principal source of criticism (of the MacIntyrian sort) lies in the way that the “transformation” from human animals to human beings is to be understood. The word “transformation” gives us an inkling that there is a cut-off point between human animals with only first nature and human beings with second nature. Still, there is no such cut-off point, as I have tried to show. From the moment of birth and, in fact, before that, human individuals live in the world of second nature, as it were, since babies are thrown into a world abundant in meanings.³⁸ Even though newborn babies and very young children have yet to be fully aware of the meaningfulness of the world, such a world of meaning and only such a world is the place where they can live their lives as human beings.

Reiterating this never diminishes the part our bodily components play in the lives of human beings. Paul Standish argues that the Wittgenstein’s opaque phrase, “If a lion could talk, we could not understand him,” “testifies to the essential role of the

³⁶ MacIntyre, *Dependent Rational Animals*, p. 60, emphasis in original.

³⁷ McDowell, *Mind and World*, p. 84.

³⁸ In this sense, as David Bakhurst puts it, “[t]here is a touch of tongue-in-cheek in his [McDowell’s] talk of ‘the brutes’ and so on.” (David Bakhurst, *The Formation of Reason*, Malden, Mass: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011, p. 95.

human body in the nature of our thought.”³⁹ The premise endorsed by MacIntyre and many scientists that the human species is a genetic creature and is at a stage of biological evolution is of course correct. Our bodies are biologically convergent in that, for instance, no one can be 3 meters tall, see 5 kilo meters ahead, or live for 200 years, and this kind of initial conditions of our bodies is certainly not entirely unrelated to the world of meaning for human beings. This is not to imply, however, that the world of meaning, if any, for other higher animals whose physical bodily features are very similar to those of human beings, is a close resemblance of the world of meaning human beings live in. In the latter world, not only are there (natural) things and their causal mechanisms, but also there are names and categories of them as well as negation, contradiction, abstract relations, fictitious beings, and so on and so forth. As noted earlier, a proper understanding of this *sui generis* character of the world in which human beings live as human beings inclines us to recast an important element of scholarly inquiry into human nature, especially into education.⁴⁰

V. CONCLUDING REMARKS: A TENTATIVE SUGGESTION FOR A FUTURE DEVELOPMENT OF THE STUDY OF EDUCATION

This paper has been concerned with the question: “What is the nature of the beings that we are?” This is a perennial and unsettled question. Of course, I have no intention to claim that the argument in this paper provides a definite answer to such a seemingly intractable question. Nonetheless, the aim of this paper to provide the key to better understanding what it is to live in a *normative* environment as *natural* animals, in my view, is of great help for further progress in future studies of this difficult question.

In keeping with McDowell’s conception of a naturalism of second nature, this paper has sought to indicate that there is no deductive relationship in the fact that human beings are natural animals in a normative environment. That is, it is not possible to reduce our higher-order behavior such as our thinking and judgments (i.e. our rationality) to our lower-order physical components (i.e. our animality), even though we human beings are evolved, biological creatures. Nor does our rationality

³⁹ Paul Standish, ‘The Vocabulary of Acts: Neuroscience, Phenomenology, and the Mirror Neuron’, in *Educational Research: The Attraction of Psychology*, eds. P. Smeyers and M. Depaepe, Dordrecht: Springer, 2013, p. 112, emphasis in original.

⁴⁰ I have elsewhere attempted to articulate the role of philosophical inquiry in and in relation to educational research (Koichiro Misawa, ‘Education as the Cultivation of Second Nature: Two Senses of the Given’, *Educational Theory*, vol. 63(1), 2013, pp. 35-49; Koichiro Misawa, ‘Cultivating the Ground for the Study of Education as an Interdisciplinary Enterprise: A Philosophical Perspective’, *Educational Studies in Japan: International Yearbook*, vol. 7, 2013, pp. 37-49; Koichiro Misawa, ‘Nature, Nurture, Second Nature: Broadening the Horizons of the Philosophy of Education’, *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, vol. 46(5), 2014, pp. 499-511.

justify the idea that the mind makes the world, even though we are rational beings. So, in the serious study of human nature, especially in the study of education, it is inappropriate to lean in the direction of scientism or to rush to the other end of the spectrum (i.e. in the direction of radical constructionism).

Crucial here is that the human species is not born with any sort of second nature, but, from the very moment they are born, they begin to live their lives in the world of second nature. Education in the broadest sense plays a large role in the course of natural development of the human individual to make it possible for her to live as a rational being. However, “the natural development” is an elusive account, for the naturalness of second nature remains equivocal. Second nature is natural for a human individual and otherwise she would not count as a member of the world of meaning; but, at the same time, second nature is not natural to the extent that it is not an innate part of our biological equipment. This equivocal character of second nature deserves more detailed attention, and I think a profound appreciation of its significance opens up an inclusive terrain on which educational issues can be addressed more fully and to which the *philosophical* study of education can make a massive contribution.

McDowell tells us little more than that any rational human being lives in the world of second nature or, as he would phrase it, in the space of reasons. This is a crucial insight but it is not the entire picture. Another part of the picture is how one comes to inhabit the world of meaning or the space of reasons. This issue attracts far less attention from philosophers including McDowell, mainly because for them this is an empirical matter of fact that falls within the field of empirical human sciences such as developmental psychology, but not within the sphere of philosophy. I am not denying that it is surely the subject matter of empirical studies how the child comes to acquire the capacities they are not innately equipped with. It is important, however, not to forget that the world into which an individual is initiated and educated is the world of second nature, which is also natural and malleable. This is to mean that the naturalness in the world of second nature is equivocal, too. In other words, the world of second nature is natural inasmuch as it exists prior to the existence of *any* human being; but, at the same time, future directions of the development of the world of second nature are not pre-determined, just as the first-natural endowment of the human infant never determines what kind of life they lead with their second nature. It is this malleable character of the world of second nature that is to be appreciated in every form of intellectual inquiry and discourse, both empirical and theoretical; and philosophical ways of thinking have force here, namely, in discussions of the dawning of rationality in human living and its place in nature. For, what kinds and degrees of

our first-natural dimensions and of the first-natural world rise to the surface rest largely on the context of the world of second nature.

Giving due recognition to this point would encourage those engaged with the study of education to broadly reconsider what their research is about, and thereby enable them to shed new light, with a more sophisticated awareness of the methods and approaches they employ, on a wide range of contentious issues to do with education—such as the issues of brain *vs.* person, nature *vs.* nurture, and the normative *vs.* the empirical. In brief, the human sciences in general and education studies in particular should start off *not* with disclosed first-natural facts *but* with a sensitivity to second-natural backgrounds that set the stage for the first-natural facts. To advance such a course of educational research, philosophers interested in education can and must do a great deal more than they now do.

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