

## EDITORIAL: NORM AND NATURE

There seems to exist an inherent tension between the concepts of ‘norm’ and ‘nature’. ‘Natural’ is that state of being which we find in reality, with all its particularities given or acquired under the contingent conditions. ‘Norm’ is the nature of a certain thing under its theoretical, i.e. perfect conditions, as it exists in its very definition. So what is ‘norm-al’ and what is ‘natural’ seem to have something in common as well as something divergent.

In his *Principia ethica* (1903) G.E. Moore introduces the term ‘naturalistic fallacy’<sup>1</sup> in order to describe a failed syllogism, starting with natural properties as premises and arriving at prescriptive assertions in its conclusion. This deficient syllogism from the state of nature to ethical norms, or from ‘Is’ to ‘Ought’<sup>2</sup>, has already been set out by David Hume (“Hume’s Law”) <sup>3</sup>. In this way, the terms ‘norm’ and ‘nature’ seem to contradict each other. However, a long tradition, before and after Hume and Moore, did not see norm and nature as such strong antagonists. On the contrary, especially in teleological metaphysics, ethical norms are strongly connected with man’s nature. Think of Aristotle’s concept of man, in which the soul is just a first perfection of the composite ‘man’<sup>4</sup>. This composite is furthermore oriented to performing its proper activities (in the end, contemplation, *theoria*), thereby fulfilling humanity and becoming a perfect being. In this perspective, analysing one’s own nature, is a first step in order to reach one’s perfection. In a theological framework, depicting man as a creation of God shapes the norms of human behaviour, namely as a wayfarer (*viator*) to God, and defines man’s own perfection as union with God. The Renaissance, Pico della Mirandola, e.g., rhetorically overemphasises man’s position in creation in order to point out his moral duties in the world. Pico’s idea that man is the only living being that can become whatever he wishes is no argument for arbitrariness in human behaviour but for man’s extra-ordinary position. Behaving like a beast makes man a beast, behaving

---

<sup>1</sup> Cf. <http://fair-use.org/g-e-moore/principia-ethica/>, §10

<sup>2</sup> Cf. <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/hume-moral/#io>

<sup>3</sup> cf. A Treatise of Human Nature, Book III, part I, sect. I, [http://www.gutenberg.org/files/4705/4705-h/4705-h.htm#link2H\\_4\\_0085](http://www.gutenberg.org/files/4705/4705-h/4705-h.htm#link2H_4_0085)

<sup>4</sup> Cf. De anima, II, 1, 412b5–6 and 412a27–8; cf. <http://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/soul.2.ii.html>

like God makes man god-like<sup>5</sup>. So, man's position of indetermination imposes on him the ethically demanding duty of behaving as his God-like nature is apt to.

This Special Volume of *PHILOSOPHIA* gathers articles that reflect on the connection between man's nature and his norms or moral duties in many different ways. It broaches the issue of nature and its epistemology, it considers more closely the relation between nature and ethics, and it considers recent theories of biology.

The contributions of Hristo Stoev and Tsvetelin Angelov delineate in the **first section** the general premises of the topic. In a thorough study of Husserl's critique of naturalism, **Hristo Stoev** lays out basic notions and contradictions as the one between natural and naturalistic attitude, and how are both shaping our conception of consciousness, and the following ethical implications. **Tsvetelin Angelov** explores the complex relation of nature as an objective reality and the transforming consciousness from a Kantian perspective.

A **second perspective** into the topic is provided by ethics. In his article *Contextual Morality in the Mahābhārata* **Patitapaban Das** investigates into the universal validity or obligation of morality in Hinduism, concentrating on the epic *Mahābhārata*. While there are realms of truth and falsehood in Hindu thinking, the sphere of humans is a middle realm in which truth and falsity are intertwined, which makes universally valid moral an almost impossible task. **Jamal Rachak's** *La Volonté chez Ibn Bāḡḡa (m. 1139). De la physique à l'éthique* investigates into Ibn Bāḡḡa's theory of the will and argues that Ibn Bāḡḡa exactly treads the path from nature to norm, or as Rachak puts it, from physics via psychology or epistemology to ethics. Ibn Bāḡḡa is concerned with the difference between human and animal acts, a difference he finds in the finality of human acts or their intentionality. The intentional object of his free will is, hence, man's final beatitude.

The **third part** of the special issue is dedicated to a variety of physical perspectives of the 'norms of normality'. In this issue you will find the third, conclusive part of **Valentin Velchev's** *opus magnum*, *Contemplation on "The Grand Design"* a detailed and ambitious debate on the relation between science and religion. After discussing the general

---

<sup>5</sup> Cf. [http://www.brown.edu/Departments/Italian\\_Studies/pico/oratio.html](http://www.brown.edu/Departments/Italian_Studies/pico/oratio.html), § 5

framework and the tensions of the problem in the first part (PHILOSOPHIA 10 / 2015 ), and after his analysis of their implication in the microcosm of the human being (PHILOSOPHIA 11 / 2016), V. Velchev now turns to the macrocosm, the formation of the Solar system, the stars and the galaxies. With a rare scrutiny and dedication, he poses once again the universal question if the universe was created with a universal plan, or appeared as an accidental occurrence. **Boryana Angelova-Igova**, on the other hand, turns to the dimension of the human body. In her *Norm and Nature in the Invention of the Athlete-Machine* she traces the mechanization of the human body back to its philosophical origins in R. Descartes, and then considers the development of this mechanistic approach to the body as an instrument of labour in the industrial era, and as a means of sport achievement in our modern times. Yet another perspective into the theme 'normal vs. marginal' is undertaken by **Massimo Perrone**. His article *In the Margins* studies the peculiar images in the margins of manuscripts, and the possible reasons for their sometimes monstrous, unrelated to the text appearance. Was the scribe bored so that he scribbled in the margin? Did those images bear a metaphorical or allegorical sense? The contribution is garnished with numerous attractive illustrations.

E-journal PHILOSOPHIA offers texts also for the readers who might be less tempted by the problematic of Norm and Nature. Two articles contribute for the decentralization of the Eurocentric philosophical discourse. **Dijana Nikolova** studies the very notion of non-European, i.e. the uncivilized barbarian. Her text will appear in two consecutive issues of the journal. In the present first part D. Nikolova how this ancient but still painful stereoptype was born, analysing texts written by western travellers, historians, writers, philosophers and political thinkers. **E. Ofuasia** and **O.G. Ojo**, in their article *On the Gettier Problem and Yorùbá 'Epistemology': Analytic Forays into Ethno-Philosophy*, start from a prevailing problem in contemporary analytical philosophy, known as the 'Gettier' Problem. The Gettier Problem challenges the common analytical position that knowledge is 'justified true believe'. The authors refer to Yorùbá 'Epistemology' or grammar in order to show that the position of justified true believe and its challenges occur in Western epistemology, while Yorùbá 'Epistemology' gives other criteria for knowledge, which avoid the problem discussed by Gettier.

**N. Avramov**, in his essay *Kant's Concept of Organism as a Limit of Meaning*, offers an original reading of Kant's concept of organism in order to define its possible meanings, and thus, to get a glimpse into the question towards the meaning of being itself. **K. Viglas**, in the study *Chaldean and Neo-Platonic Theology*, investigates into the role Chaldean theology played in Neo-Platonic theology. More precisely, Viglas argues that Neo-Platonism took over the Chaldean prefix "En", which was used as denoting 'God', into its system, known to us as 'The One' ("hen"), giving Chaldean theology a long history through Neo-Platonic philosophy.

We wish our readers pleasant read in this rich variety of engaging philosophical texts.

**Dr. Thomas Jeschke**

**Dr. Evelina Miteva**

*Thomas-Institut, University of Cologne*