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EVALUATIVE CONCEPTS AND OBJECTIVE VALUES: RAND ON MORAL OBJECTIVITY*

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I. Introduction

Those familiar with Ayn Rand's ethical writings may know that she discusses issues in metaethics and that she defended the objectivity of morality during the heyday of early noncognitivism.[1] But neither her metaethics, in general, nor her views on moral objectivity, in particular, have received wide study.[2] In this essay, my aim is to elucidate some aspects of her thought in these areas. That elucidation, I hope, will also exhibit her account of the objectivity of morality as innovative and plausible, though for reasons of space I will not mount a direct defense of the account here, but will focus on interpretive issues. There are two dimensions on which, I believe, Rand's account has something new to offer current discussions: first, in its conception of the way in which moral values serve a biologically based human need; second, in its conjunction of two ideas that have seemed hard to reconcile without appealing to a questionable nonnaturalism about values—the idea that moral concepts and judgments have an essentially practical or action-guiding function, and the idea that moral judgment can be objective in fundamentally the same way as science. I emphasize both of these dimensions in what follows.

Rand's account of moral objectivity depends on features of her general epistemological views, views that are also richer and more extensive than is usually recognized.[3] Specifically, the account of moral objectivity depends

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[1] See Ayn Rand, "The Objectivist Ethics," in Rand, *The Virtue of Selfishness: A New Concept of Egoism* (New York: Signet, n.d.), 13–39.

[2] The only book-length treatment is Tara Smith, *Viable Values: A Study of Life as the Root and Reward of Morality* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2000). My account of Rand's metaethics in this essay differs significantly from Smith's (and some of the issues I will take up lie beyond the scope of Smith's book).

[3] These can be found mainly in Ayn Rand, *Introduction to Objectivist Epistemology,* expanded second edition (New York: Meridian, 1990).

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on general views of hers about the nature of objective judgment. Further, the general norms or standards of objectivity that Rand puts forward furnish a useful template for understanding her approach to norms in other areas, including in morality. Thus, before proceeding to her metaethical views, I will explore some issues in her epistemology. That means I will aim to cover quite a bit of terrain and, as a result, will discuss Rand's views in perhaps regrettably broad terms. But given that Rand's defense of moral objectivity is so largely unfamiliar, a wide-angle shot of it may well be the best way to begin.

The next section introduces some terminology for thinking about questions of objectivity. Sections III and IV then focus on Rand's general views of the canons of objective judgment, including, in Section IV, a principal objection that her views may elicit, and that might seem to prevent her account of moral objectivity from even getting off the ground. Sections V and VI take up her account of moral objectivity. Section VII is a conclusion.

II. Conceptions of Objectivity—Some Preliminaries

In a helpful recent discussion, Brian Leiter contrasts two kinds of claims about objectivity. Claims about *metaphysical objectivity* concern whether (or in what respect or degree) "things are what they are *independent* of how we take them to be."[4] Objectivity in this sense comes to mind-independence. If I say that the facts in some domain are what they are regardless of anyone's beliefs about them, I am attributing metaphysical objectivity to those facts.[5] By contrast, claims about *epistemic objectivity* concern whether (or to what extent) "the cognitive processes and mechanisms by which we form beliefs about the world [are] constituted in such a way that they at least tend toward the production of accurate representations of how things are."[6] As this formulation makes clear, a cognitive process can qualify as objective even if it errs, provided that the error is not systemic—provided that, over time and all else equal, its continuation would tend to be self-correcting. The candidates for objectivity in this epistemic sense are not reality or a set of facts, but our methods for getting at the facts. By extension, one might characterize as "epistemically objective" those conclusions—the claims or bodies of theory—that emerge from epistemically objective methods. Although Leiter is not explicit about this, unlike "metaphysical objectivity," "epistemic objectivity" is a nor-

[4] Brian Leiter, "Introduction," in *Objectivity in Law and Morals,* ed. Brian Leiter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 2; emphasis in original.

[5] Metaphysical objectivity is not the same as what Rand calls the "metaphysically given." She contrasts the latter with the man-made. Thus, institutions of government are not metaphysically given, for instance, but once in place are metaphysically objective: they exist and are as they are whether or not a given person is aware of them, and whatever a given person might believe about them. See Ayn Rand, "The Metaphysical Versus the Man-Made," in Rand, *Philosophy: Who Needs It* (New York: Signet, 1984), 23–34.

[6] Leiter, "Introduction," 1.

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mative concept, a concept by means of which we evaluate cognitive processes and their products. Epistemic objectivity in a process or product of cognition is a form of cognitive success, and failures of epistemic objectivity constitute cognitive deficiencies, at least in those areas where we take it that objectivity might have been attained. In contrast, metaphysically objective facts are not on that account "successful" facts (what could this mean?)—they're just facts.

If one understands issues involving objectivity in these terms, then, for instance, the "objectivity of the natural sciences" would consist roughly in the epistemic objectivity of the methods of the natural sciences—the aptness of those methods for accurately representing metaphysically objective natural facts. The "objectivity of the social sciences" would consist roughly in the epistemic objectivity of the methods of the social sciences—the aptness of those methods for accurately representing metaphysically objective social facts (which, of course, in a broader sense of "natural," can also be considered natural, even if they are not reducible to the sorts of facts that the "natural sciences" study). In a parallel fashion, we might think of moral objectivity as consisting in the epistemic objectivity of certain methods of moral reasoning, where this is understood as the aptness of these methods (whatever they may turn out to be) for accurately representing metaphysically objective moral facts. Moral facts, in turn, might be seen either as a species of natural or social fact, or as a *sui generis* order of nonnatural, nonsocial facts—facts that in some way transcend or sit apart from the facts investigated in the natural and social sciences. But some defenders of moral objectivity would balk at this characterization of it. Some defenses of moral objectivity are *domain specific*: they deny that ethics attains objectivity by sharing those features which are widely held to make science objective, such as its accurately representing a mind-independent world.[7] According to domain-specific accounts, moral objectivity need not be modeled on scientific objectivity; it might, for example, require only that ethical claims be capable of intersubjective justification or that ethics have room for a distinction between being right and seeming right, even if objectivity in science would require more (or other) than the satisfaction of these criteria.[8]

As I will try to show, Rand views moral objectivity as continuous with, but not isomorphic to, objectivity in the natural sciences. Thus, the conception of moral objectivity envisioned in the last paragraph, which was modeled on Leiter's conception of epistemic objectivity, is not quite broad enough to encompass Rand's conception of moral objectivity. What it

[7] On the issue of domain specificity, see ibid., 2.

[8] For examples of domain-specific approaches, see, e.g., John McDowell, *Mind and World* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996); and Christine Korsgaard, "The Reasons We Can Share: An Attack on the Distinction between Agent-Relative and Agent-Neutral Values," in Ellen Frankel Paul, Fred D. Miller, Jr., and Jeffrey Paul, eds., *Altruism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 24–51.

omits is the distinctively evaluative nature of moral reasoning, which, for her, is not reasoning directed at a new set of facts—morally evaluative ones—but rather reasoning of a new kind—evaluative rather than investigational and explanatory—about (some of) the same sorts of facts that concern us in other departments of thought.[9] At the same time, the canons of objectivity that apply to such reasoning, in Rand's view, are of fundamentally the same nature as those that apply to scientific and other forms of reasoning. In this sense, Rand's conception of moral objectivity remains non-domain-specific. As a preliminary formulation, then, we might say that, for her, moral objectivity comes to the epistemic objectivity of certain methods of moral reasoning, where this is understood as the aptness of these methods for accurately *evaluating* what one morally should do, in view of certain metaphysically objective natural facts. This formulation will require modification later; in addition, we will see shortly that Leiter's characterization of epistemic objectivity—though, in the respect just indicated, too narrow for Rand to accept—also turns out to be, in a different respect, too broad for her to accept. For the time being, however, I will leave both this preliminary conception of moral objectivity and Leiter's conception of epistemic objectivity in place as rough orientations to the terrain ahead. (Hereafter, references to objectivity are to *epistemic* objectivity unless otherwise specified.)

I turn now to the epistemic foundations of Rand's metaethics, and then to the metaethics itself.

III. Rand on Objectivity

Rand rejects what might be called the self-transcendence model of epistemic objectivity. It has been common to view objectivity as demanding the transcending of obstacles that human nature throws in the way of cognition. Plato expresses this view insofar as he sees sense perception as a cognitive obstacle, a form of cognitive distortion.[10] More recently, this sort of view seems implicit in Thomas Nagel's conception of objectivity as the effort to see the world as if from no particular vantage point.[11] Nagel does not quite say, but seems to assume, that the view from where we are could not fail to be a "subjective" one. Though he lacks Plato's contempt for subjectivity thus conceived, he thinks we properly aspire to something more. In Rand's view, however, the ideal of a self-transcendent grasp of the world amounts to an aspiration to a magical kind of cognition, in which reality impresses itself on our minds by no identifiable means, and, like Potter Stewart spotting pornography, we know truth when we see it

[9] For this point, see Rand's discussion of moral evaluation in "What Is Capitalism?" in Ayn Rand, *Capitalism: The Unknown Ideal* (New York: Signet, 1967), 22; and in Rand, *The Romantic Manifesto,* revised edition (New York: Signet, 1975), 18.

[10] For example, in the *Phaedo,* 64e–65d.

[11] Thomas Nagel, *The View from Nowhere* (New York: Oxford, 1986).

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but can never manage to say how we recognized it.[12] But if anything lacks objectivity, according to Rand, it is the sort of unaccountable truth claim made by someone who purports to know something but cannot say how. There is no need to idealize such invocations of cognitive magic, she thinks, if we reject the idea that our active involvement in a cognitive process must distort its results. For then we can regard objectivity not as a process of getting around the obstacles that human nature throws in the way of the needed magical deliverances, but rather as a process of exploiting the cognitive resources that human nature puts at our disposal, in just those ways in which they are (biologically and psychologically) suited to being exploited. Broadly speaking, objectivity will be a matter of adhering to cognitive methods tailored to our distinctively human cognitive needs and capacities. In this section, I will elaborate this broad characterization, with attention to one central demand of objectivity (as Rand conceives it) that may raise both general concerns and concerns about the prospects for moral objectivity. Let us begin, however, by exploring Rand's views about the source and structure of norms of objectivity, for these norms will serve as a useful reference point in working through her views about the source and structure of moral norms.

In one respect, Rand's conception of epistemic objectivity is narrower than the conception that Leiter's formulation (discussed in Section II) suggests. Whereas Leiter's formulation makes no distinction between the automatic and the volitional aspects of cognition—between, for example, the way in which our sense organs function and the way in which we reason—in Rand's use of the term only the volitional aspects of cognition can be assessed for epistemic objectivity. As she views it, epistemic objectivity is not merely normative but *prescriptive:* it concerns, as we might put it, not the mechanisms and processes of cognition in general but specifically its *methodology,* that is, those component processes that are at least potentially under the subject's conscious control. One reason for this narrowing is that Rand considers skeptical doubts about the reliability of the automatic aspects of cognition self-undermining, whereas the existence of a sphere of cognitive autonomy or volition, within which the subject can regulate his or her own cognitive activities, does not undermine worries about reliability, but is precisely what generates such worries.[13] Although a person's sensory capacities or memory can, of course, become impaired, and thereby impair cognition, specifically *epistemic* failures, in Rand's view, are failures within the sphere of our cognitive autonomy. Some of these, presumably, are all but unavoidable: we overlook things, we hit the wrong key on the calculator, and so forth. But the

[12] For the point about Rand, see *Introduction to Objectivist Epistemology,* 79–80. For Justice Potter Stewart's statement that he knew hard-core pornography when he saw it, even though he might never succeed in defining what it was, see his concurrence in *Jacobellis v. Ohio,* 378 U.S. 184 (1964).

[13] Rand, *Introduction to Objectivist Epistemology,* 78–79.

central threat to the reliability of cognition in its autonomous aspects lies elsewhere, namely, in the lack of adequate cognitive methods (either general methods or methods of specialized inquiry). We need canons of epistemic objectivity in order to remedy this deficiency.

Perception, for Rand, is an aspect of the life-functions of certain living organisms and is thus subject to biological norms. Our perceptual capacities can function well or poorly in a biological sense. But there are no *cognitive* norms for perception, in her view; perception fulfills its cognitive function just in case it functions well in a biological sense (e.g., we do not need a methodology for seeing material objects lying before us, though we need one for understanding what we see).[14] Conceptual thought, however, is subject to cognitive as well as biological norms. Our conceptual capacities can be in biologically good order and yet not deliver cognition. Rand's explanation for this is that, beyond the stage at which we form our earliest, perceptually-based concepts (such as those for perceivable entities like chairs or dogs), our conceptual capacities do not function automatically, nor have we any built-in grasp of how to utilize them properly, since such a grasp would itself have to be held in conceptual form and thus result from the right use of those very capacities. There is a distinction to be drawn, then, between the right and wrong *use* of our conceptual capacities that is not reducible to the distinction between their being healthy or impaired (biologically excellent or defective). Norms for the right use of our conceptual capacities fall into two broad categories, in Rand's view: norms for *concept-formation* and norms for *conceptual judgment* (roughly, for epistemic justification, i.e., for certifying a judgment as warranted). Her conception of epistemology is broader than prevailing conceptions in that it encompasses the delineation of both types of norms.

But what is the standard of "right use" here? Rand says that "the rules of cognition must be derived from the nature of existence and the nature, the *identity,* of [man's] cognitive faculty."[15] Cognitive norms, as she views them, are teleological norms; their *telos* is cognition, knowing. We formulate them by asking how we must use our cognitive faculties, given their nature and the nature of reality, if we are to attain knowledge.[16] Settling

[14] We may also need *instruments* for seeing them, of course (a microscope, a telescope, corrective lenses), and (in some cases) a methodology for using these instruments. But Rand's point is that we need no methodology for using our eyes.

[15] Ibid., 82.

[16] The content of Rand's norms of objectivity depends on the end or *telos* to be reached and on the nature of the means at our disposal for reaching that end—the nature of a human being's cognitive capacities. But in a sense it is not just the means (the norms of objectivity) but the end they serve (knowledge) whose specification would have to depend on us. For how exactly are we to think of the end of acquiring "knowledge"? What counts as success here? Rand seems to think that epistemology assumes this end, and perhaps helps specify its satisfaction-conditions precisely. But she does not seem to view the delineation of the end as a wholly epistemological matter. Fundamentally, it would seem that this has to be a matter for ethics, which prescribes the basic ends of human action. Since, as we will see below, it is our needs as a certain kind of living organism that set the standards for moral

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this requires settling certain issues in metaphysics, as well as settling certain questions about the nature of our cognitive capacities. On the metaphysical side, Rand defends particularism; she holds that, apart from our minds, only particulars exist—that there are no abstractions or universals inherent in reality. Her particularism is promiscuous: it admits not only particular entities but also particular property- and relation-instantiations (the roundness of this particular ball, or the nutritiousness of this particular apple). Conceptual thought, then, does not disclose abstract features of reality but serves as "a cognitive device of man's type of consciousness," a device that we need because "the range of what man can hold in the focus of his conscious awareness at any given moment, is limited."[17] According to Rand, "[c]onceptualization is a *method* of expanding man's consciousness by reducing the number of its content's units," and thus "*concepts represent condensations of knowledge,* which make further study and the division of cognitive labor possible."[18] Broadly speaking, the normative standards for concept-formation must consider which procedures of conceptual classification are cognitively productive; as Rand puts it, "[t]he requirements of cognition determine the objective criteria of conceptualization."[19] Not all classifications will serve equally well; at the same time, there are bound to be options, between which we must simply choose.[20]

Classification is therefore not a *subjective* process, according to Rand—there are standards by which to evaluate our classificatory preferences—but neither are conceptual classifications correct because they reflect a mind-independent conceptual order, *intrinsic* in reality as such. Rather, correct conceptual classifications are, as she puts it, *objective*—correct as evaluated by a nonarbitrary standard whose grounds lie in the *functional nature* of the process of conceptualization, that is to say, in what concepts do for us and in the cognitive need they fill. More broadly, objectivity, as Rand conceives it, is a matter of adherence to cognitive norms—norms governing our cognitive methods—derived in the manner indicated above. She contrasts her conception of objectivity with two archetypical views of concepts and conceptual thought that have been influential historically (and continue to have influence). What she calls *intrinsicism* sees conceptuality as a feature of reality, rather than of our methods of cognition, and sees conceptual thought as a fundamentally passive process of receiving conceptual content. Intrinsicism denies that the process of receiving concep-

evaluation, on Rand's view, it would seem to be those needs that should most fundamentally determine the content of the end of acquiring knowledge. The end might be seen as that of attaining the full range of conceptual knowledge that human beings need in order to live fully human lives (an end whose attainment would, of course, require cooperation and a division of cognitive labor).

[17] Ibid., 67, 63.

[18] Ibid., 64, 65; emphasis in original.

[19] Ibid., 72.

[20] Ibid., 73–74.

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tual content has any distinctive nature—asserting that it is receptivity and nothing more—in order to preserve its cognitive character, that is, its standing as a source of knowledge about a mind-independent world. What she calls *subjectivism* sees conceptualization as an active process but takes the objects of conceptual thought to be constituted by our conceptual framework. Subjectivism denies that conceptual thought yields knowledge of a mind-independent world, in order to give due recognition to its active character, its dependence on our activity and on the nature of our cognitive equipment. In contrast, Rand's conception of objectivity seeks to reconcile the active character of conceptual thought with its cognitive character, by jettisoning the assumption that cognitive success requires self-transcendence.

What, then, does objectivity look like in more detail, according to Rand? One of its central demands, she argues, is the systematic integration of our thinking into a unified whole. Integration functions to ensure the consistency of our thinking; to ensure that conclusions reached in one area are not cast in doubt by those reached in other areas, and to modify them when they are cast in doubt.[21] But integration presupposes material to work on, and objectivity's other central demand concerns the source and initial justification of such material. This demand grows out of a certain kind of epistemic foundationalism that Rand embraces, which is summarized in the following passage from her writings:

> Concepts are the products of a mental process that integrates and organizes the evidence provided by man's senses. . . . Man's senses are his only direct cognitive contact with reality and, therefore, his only *source* of information. Without sensory evidence, there can be no concepts; without concepts, there can be no language; without language, there can be no knowledge and no science.[22]

Objectivity, for Rand, depends on respecting the foundationalism implied here, both in concept-formation and in judgment. In regard to concepts, "one must be able to retrace the specific (logical, not chronological) steps by which they were formed, and one must be able to demonstrate their connection to their base in perceptual reality."[23] Finding these connections is not a simple matter of finding referents for every concept, or evidence for every judgment, in perceptual reality; Rand is explicit that many concepts (perhaps most) either lack perceptual referents altogether or have referents that can be perceptually identified only by the inter-

[21] Ayn Rand, *For the New Intellectual* (New York: Signet, n.d.), 125–26; Leonard Peikoff, *Objectivism: The Philosophy of Ayn Rand* (New York: Meridian, 1993), 118–28.

[22] Ayn Rand, "Kant Versus Sullivan," in Rand, *Philosophy: Who Needs It*, 90; emphasis in original.

[23] Rand, *Introduction to Objectivist Epistemology*, 51.

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position of other concepts (she gives the example of "furniture," whose instances can be perceived but are recognized as furniture by being recognized as tables, chairs, and so forth).[24] Thus, different concepts will, in her view, be "based" in perception in different ways. In the formation of psychological concepts, she argues that the "basing" involves a recognition of intentionality—that, for instance, to see is to see *something*.[25] In other cases, she argues, the "basing" may advert to ways in which a concept facilitates theoretical generalization and explanation, or mathematical computation, bearing on our ability to comprehend (and act in) perceptual reality.[26]

Rand, then, can allow quite intricate ways of basing concept-formation and judgment on perceptual evidence. If such "basing" is central to objectivity, then exploring her conception of moral objectivity must involve exploring how her "basing" requirements apply to moral evaluation. (A wider treatment of her views would also consider the role of the demand for integration; however, I set this aside for another time.) But before getting to that, let us now take up an important objection to the "basing" requirements themselves.

IV. Rand, McDowell, and the "Myth of the Given"

I can present the objection by briefly rehearsing some arguments of John McDowell's. The "basing" requirements, it might be objected, are just Rand's resurrection of the infamous "Myth of the Given." The "Myth of the Given"—or, as McDowell calls it, the "dualism of [conceptual] scheme and Given"[27]—is the view that the epistemic justification of an empirical belief is, in the last analysis, a matter of its being warranted by experience, where experience is seen as the raw material for concept-formation but as being, in itself, conceptually unstructured. How do those who view epistemic justification in this way view the concepts employed in empirical thought? McDowell suggests that they must take the view that the content of an empirical concept is fixed by the justificatory relations that hold between bits of the Given and predications of the concept, which in turn are fixed by what bits of the Given the user of the concept initially forms the concept to refer to. The same conception of empirical warrant, then, plays into the dualism's account of the epistemic justification of empirical beliefs and its account of the content of empirical concepts. In McDowell's view, however, the dualism's conception of empirical warrant rests on a confusion.

[24] Ibid., chapter 3 and passim.
[25] Ibid., 29–30.
[26] Ibid., 148–49, 304–6, and chapter 7, passim.
[27] McDowell, *Mind and World*, 4. Below, I will refer to the dualism of scheme and Given as simply "the dualism."

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Unlike coherentists, such as Donald Davidson, McDowell does not propose to do without the idea of empirical warrant, for this idea, he thinks, is presupposed in the idea of an empirical belief. We cannot reject it, therefore, without undermining the intelligibility of this latter idea.[28] Where the dualism goes wrong, McDowell suggests, is not in invoking the idea of empirical warrant but in supposing that there are justificatory relations spanning the boundary between the "conceptual sphere" and the raw, conceptually unstructured material of experience, and therefore that, as McDowell puts it, "the space of reasons is . . . more extensive than the space of concepts."[29] In McDowell's view, however, the apparent plausibility of the dualism's expansive view of the space of reasons depends on a failure to see that "a bare presence cannot be a ground for anything[,]"[30] because "we cannot really understand the relations in virtue of which a judgment is warranted except as relations within the space of concepts: relations such as implication or probabilification [and so forth]. . . ."[31] A "bare presence" is all an experience could be, on the dualism's conception of experience. But relations bearing on epistemic justification are relations between pieces of propositional content. This seems clear if we think about what sort of thing justifications or reasons are: *considerations* that give rational support or, as Stephen Darwall calls them (in discussing practical reasons), *dicta*—statements in a language or the propositions expressed in such statements.[32] Bare presences are precisely not *dicta* and thus are not the type of thing that could figure as a term in a *justificatory* relation. According to McDowell, therefore, the dualism's attempted expansion of the space of reasons fails.

McDowell argues that it is possible to retain the idea of empirical warrant while jettisoning this way of construing what such warrant amounts to. We can do this if we allow that experience itself comes "equipped with conceptual content."[33] He elaborates:

> In a particular experience in which one is not misled, what one takes in is *that things are thus and so. That things are thus and so* is the content of the experience, and it can also be the content of a judgment: it becomes the content of a judgment if the subject decides to take the judgment at face value. So it is conceptual content. But that things are thus and so is also, if one is not misled, an aspect of the layout of the world: it is how things are.[34]

[28] Ibid., 14–18, esp. 18.
[29] Ibid., 6.
[30] Ibid., 19.
[31] Ibid., 7. One judgment "probabilifies" another if the truth of the first would make the truth of the second more probable.
[32] See Stephen L. Darwall, *Impartial Reason* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1983), 31.
[33] McDowell, *Mind and World,* 25.
[34] Ibid., 26; emphasis in original.

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McDowell's view is not idealism, because although it claims that the world is nothing over and above the totality of "thinkable contents," it does not claim that the world is nothing over and above *thinking*.[35] The world is independent of our thinking, in his view, and empirical justification demands that we square our beliefs with an independent reality, since it demands that we square our beliefs with experience. But his view does share, with coherentism—and in opposition to the dualism—the premise that epistemic justification is always a matter of how one piece of propositional content stands with respect to others. In that sense, as McDowell points out, his conception of justification is Neurathian: it sees justification as proceeding always from within our going conceptual scheme and framework of beliefs.[36]

The "dualism of scheme and Given," as McDowell presents it, is based on an internalist conception of epistemic justification, according to which what makes it the case that a belief is justified is a *rationale* for the belief that could, in principle, be the believer's reason for holding it, and that, if it were, would justify the act of believing. McDowell shares that internalism and, therefore, does not challenge it. What he challenges is the dualism's conception of what could qualify as a rationale, specifically, the view that experiential inputs from outside the conceptual sphere could be part of such a rationale. Now, like the dualism, an externalist conception of justification could make room for justificatory linkages that extend outside the conceptual sphere. But since externalist accounts of epistemic justification do not construe justifications as *reasons for belief*, such a view would not be vulnerable to the charge that it had illicitly extended the space of reasons beyond the conceptual sphere. In order to reject an externalist view that incorporated justificatory linkages extending outside the conceptual sphere, McDowell would have to attack not the appeal to extra-conceptual justificatory linkages, but the underlying externalist picture of epistemic justification.[37] I will not pursue the issue of externalism further here, however, because I believe that Rand's views of epistemic justification are largely internalist, and that where they diverge from

[35] Ibid., 28.

[36] Ibid., 52–53. McDowell's explicit reference to Neurathian reflection comes in his discussion of practical thought (see ibid., 81), but the earlier passage I cite here seems to make a similar point in criticizing Gareth Evans's conception of "non-conceptual content."

Otto Neurath (1882–1945) was an Austrian philosopher of science and Vienna Circle member who likened scientific progress to the attempt to rebuild a boat while at sea. Just as the boat could only be rebuilt plank by plank—not all at once—since those aboard would need somewhere to stand while they worked, so our beliefs about the world can only be revised in stages, since it is only by holding some part of our worldview fixed that we gain grounds for challenging and improving other parts. "Neurathian reflection" refers to such staged belief revision and stands opposed to the project of finding external justificatory grounds for our worldview as a whole.

[37] Two forms of externalism need to be kept apart in this context. One is externalism about justification, which is the position I discuss in the text. The other is externalism about *knowledge*, which denies that justification is a necessary condition of knowledge.

standard forms of internalism, it is not just by pulling in externalist elements. Instead, I want to suggest a fairly modest defense of Rand's epistemology against the charge that it buys into a myth about given-ness. Other, more aggressive lines of defense may be available to Rand, but this one is modest in that it concedes a good deal of the framework from which the "myth" charge derives—but, crucially, not all of that framework. Besides being modest, it also strikes me as being correct.

The dualism maintains that conceptually unstructured experience constitutes the ultimate rational ground for epistemically justified empirical beliefs. If experience is to play this role, it must be capable of figuring into a person's reasons for believing something: it must be possible for a person to hold a belief because he sees (extra-conceptual) experience as warranting it. In order for that to be possible, however, it would seem necessary for the contrast between the Given and our conceptual scheme and beliefs to be an object of some form of direct acquaintance. For, otherwise, it would seem impossible to appeal to elements of the one in order to launch (or, looked at from the opposite direction, to terminate) a justification of elements of the other. Suppose, then, that you acquire the belief, "The house key is on the kitchen table," upon going into the kitchen and looking on the table. How is an appeal to the Given to proceed? What you see before you are things that you immediately recognize as falling under various concepts—the concepts "table," "key," and so forth. Is it that, in some sense, you have the experiential elements and the conceptual overlay or structuring both in view at once? If so, then this contrast must present itself even to someone whose capacity to recognize justifications is as limited and undeveloped as could be, since the justifications at issue here are those which are supposed to supply the rational ground of all the more sophisticated empirical justifications a person might later come to recognize. It seems dubious, however, that any such contrast presents itself to direct acquaintance, for it is not as though the Given and the conceptual overlay sit next to one another, like two contrasting patches of color on a fabric. Whatever distinction there is to be made between them is a fairly advanced and abstract one.

It seems unlikely that Rand would want to claim that we are directly acquainted with the contrast between scheme and Given. The type of acquaintance involved here would have to be partly introspective, since (according to the dualism) a conceptual scheme is something constructed by our minds. But Rand regards introspection as a relatively difficult and highly fallible process. Moreover, she thinks that, as a psychological matter, many people remain unaware of the distinction between perceptual input and the conceptual processing of such input; as a result, they "treat . . . the first-level abstractions, the concepts of [perceivable] physical existents, as if they were percepts. . . ."[38] Yet surely even such people are able

[38] Rand, *Introduction to Objectivist Epistemology*, 76.

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to grasp elementary empirical justifications. It is hard to see how Rand could think that people could remain unaware of the distinction between scheme and Given if she thought that it were one that we could be directly acquainted with at a relatively early level of cognitive development. Indeed, according to Rand, we see the world *through* our conceptual scheme; our conceptual scheme is part of our *means* of cognition and not, except in special cases, the *object* of our awareness. On this view, one would expect the scheme/Given distinction to be more elusive than evident.

If Rand does not think we have the distinction between scheme and Given in view all at once, is it possible that she thinks we learn to make a kind of Gestalt shift, from a conceptually structured experience of the world to one that is all Given and no conceptual structuring? That also seems very unlikely. Consider what, by her lights, would have to be involved in our being able to make that kind of Gestalt shift. Rand thinks that to remain on the purely perceptual level (her term for the stage of our cognitive development that precedes our having any explicit concepts) is to be without the subject-object distinction; this is the position that she thinks animals and very young children are in.[39] It is also the position in which she thinks adults remain in experiencing the "emotional meaning" of music—a position in which we cannot tell what is objectively attributable to the music and what depends on us.[40] But is it conceivable that we could lose (and regain) the subject-object distinction in adult perceptual experience by an act of will? That seems flatly inconceivable, and I can see no reason to ascribe such a position to Rand. What seems true, and what it seems more likely that she herself believes, is that the development of our conceptual capacities irrevocably transforms adult perceptual experience, and, specifically, transforms its *form.* Phenomenologically, there seems to be no psychological distance at all between seeing something and seeing it *as* a table, once one has the concept "table"; even when we cannot quite make out exactly what something is (something off in the distance, say) we see it, for example, as *something up there on the hillside.*[41]

To my mind, the view that makes most sense, and that it also makes most sense to ascribe to Rand, is that—rather than something that we are directly acquainted with—the distinction between the conceptually unstructured Given and our conceptual scheme is a theoretical one. That is not, of course, to impugn it. I do not have any very precise criterion in mind for what counts as a theoretical concept. But what I mean to suggest is

[39] Rand, *The Romantic Manifesto,* 55.

[40] Ibid.

[41] A further point, which I do not have space to develop here, is that Rand views *human* perceptual experience as *implicitly conceptual* from the very first. See, for instance, *Introduction to Objectivist Epistemology,* 5–7. Her idea that there are implicit concepts requires analysis, but that she sees the need to describe perception in such terms suggests how far she is from the dualism of scheme and Given that McDowell attacks.

that the idea that, before we begin acquiring any concepts, we have a conceptually unstructured form of perceptual awareness, is one that we arrive at not by having or recalling perceptual experiences matching this description, but, rather, in the course of building up a theoretical account of how we think. It is something that we infer, after having built up a fairly sophisticated conceptual framework for raising and addressing questions about human cognition. If this is correct, then the idea of the Given has an epistemic status analogous to that which Rand assigns to the concept of a sensation. Percepts, she says, are automatic, neurological integrations of sensations. But "the knowledge of sensations as components of percepts is not direct, it is acquired by man much later; it is a scientific, conceptual discovery."[42]

To treat the distinction between scheme and Given as a theoretical one is to eschew the idea that epistemic justification has inputs from outside the conceptual sphere. If this is how Rand views the scheme/Given distinction, then she can agree with McDowell that what forms the starting point (or the terminus) of epistemic justifications is not something outside the conceptual sphere, but just some such conceptually structured bit of perceptual content as *that the house key* (or maybe only *a key*) *is on the kitchen table.* McDowell says that perceptual experience is "equipped with conceptual content."[43] Rand, perhaps, would not say just this—it depends on how we take the notoriously ambiguous term "content." Since McDowell regards experience as passive,[44] to say that it has conceptual content is to locate the source of its conceptuality outside of our minds, on the side of the object rather than of the subject. If those are the only possibilities, then we must locate conceptuality in what we experience in order to reject the view that there are conceptually unstructured experiential inputs to justification. But, for Rand, awareness always involves not only a subject and an object but a *form,* which depends on both. Rand denies that conceptual structuring is inherent in *what* we perceive. This denial, however, need not commit her to recognizing conceptually unstructured justificatory inputs, for she can maintain, and I believe does maintain, that adult perceptual experience has an *ineliminably* conceptual (or conceptualized) form.

But can Rand exclude conceptually unstructured inputs from her account of epistemic justification consistently with her theory of concept-formation? Her theory holds that perceptual input is the conceptually unstructured raw material for concept-formation or, more precisely, for the formation of our most basic concepts; other concepts, she thinks, are formed by conceptualizing already conceptualized material—by engaging in "abstraction from abstractions," as she calls it.[45] If McDowell is right, however,

[42] Rand, *Introduction to Objectivist Epistemology,* 5.
[43] McDowell, *Mind and World,* 25.
[44] Ibid., 10–13.
[45] Rand, *Introduction to Objectivist Epistemology,* 19.

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abstractionist theories of concepts like Rand's must explain the content of basic empirical concepts in terms of the justificatory relations between bits of the Given and predications of these concepts.[46] In that case, Rand's theory of concepts would commit her to the very conception of justification that I have suggested that she can (and should) avoid.

It is significant, I think, that in Rand's view, early-stage concept-formation is not a deliberate process. The acquisition of language obviously depends on guidance from current speakers, but the psychological side of the process, the side that allows language to be used with understanding, unfolds more or less automatically, she believes.[47] In the initial stages of conceptual development, we do not seek out a conceptual perspective but fall into one. What must this seem like to the subject? If Rand is correct that concept-formation is a process of classifying things according to observed similarities, but that the nature of this process is not transparent to the subject from the outset, then it is plausible to suggest that in the early going, we find ourselves confronted by the impression of a wholly external sort of normativity—the impression that certain things *just are* all of a kind and *just do* belong together under the same concept or term. On the picture I am suggesting, we do not (initially) see ourselves as having put them together but as recognizing them for what they are; matters of classification do not seem to depend on us—they seem to depend entirely on the way things are in the world.

I am suggesting, in effect, that McDowell's description of how perceptual experience works is a correct description of how it seems to work pre-reflectively. That is, pre-reflectively, perception seems to be "saddled with conceptual content" right from the start, where the "start" is the point at which we begin learning language. But I also want to suggest that this account of how things pre-reflectively seem can cohere with Rand's account of how things actually are. According to Rand, classificatory normativity is not wholly external to our minds, nor is conceptual content there for the perceptually experiencing whether or not we ever experience it. Its being right to classify certain things together as "chairs" or "keys" or "dolphins" depends both on mind-independent facts about those things and on facts about our means of cognition, such as that certain ways of classifying (but not others) facilitate the expansion of knowledge through generalization. Classifications are not right in themselves—intrinsically right—but right relative to the goals of cognition. Similarly, "conceptuality" is not there in the world apart from our experience but rather is a property of our developed perspective on the world. But even assuming Rand is right in all this, as I think she is, nothing in what she says about concepts requires us to conclude that the nature and mechanics of con-

[46] McDowell, *Mind and World*, 19.

[47] Rand, *Introduction to Objectivist Epistemology*, 150–51; see also ibid., 144–45, and Ayn Rand, "The Comprachicos," in Rand, *Return of the Primitive: The Anti-Industrial Revolution*, ed. Peter Schwartz (New York: Meridian, 1999), 54–55.

cepts and concept-formation are transparent to the subject all along. What is, psychologically, a process of mental sorting can seem initially to be a process of coming to know a presorted world. It is, I suggest, this apparent presortedness and the normativity it entails that anchors our initial conceptual classifications. There need be no thought to the effect that *these* bits of conceptually unstructured experience justify the predication of, and thereby help to constitute the content of, *this* concept.

V. Evaluative Objectivity and the Structure of Norms

The model of objectivity as self-transcendence suggests that we find out what is (objectively) morally good by detaching moral reflection from the context of our own aims and interests—by reflecting *on* our aims and interests, impartially considered as those of one person among others, rather than *through* those aims and interests. Because Rand rejects the general self-transcendence model of objectivity, she also rejects this model of moral objectivity. What, then, does she put in its place? In general, moral objectivity will involve forming and deploying moral concepts according to the general canons of objectivity adumbrated in Section III. In considering these canons of objectivity, I have focused on the basing requirements, and I will continue that focus in taking up Rand's views about moral objectivity. Besides being integrated with one another and with other knowledge, Rand holds, moral concepts and judgments must conform to the basing requirements in order to attain objectivity and thus earn their place in our conceptual schemes, theories, and practical activities.[48]

In the last section, I suggested one fairly modest way of defending the basing requirements from the charge that they themselves are based in a myth about the given-ness of conceptually unstructured perceptual data. Even if Rand is not vulnerable to this objection, though, one might wonder how the basing requirements can come into play for moral concepts. On the face of things, fitting moral concepts to the basing requirements—giving them the right sort of connection to their "base in perceptual reality"[49]—seems fairly daunting. For it is not even clear where in the perceptually given environment we could find a basis for these concepts. If we set aside our own responses, and consider only what is available perceptually, it seems clear that moral concepts do not refer to anything that we can directly observe in perception, although of course they may *apply* to such things. This seems to be agreed on all sides. G. E. Moore, for instance, thought that goodness could be predicated of things that we

[48] This is implied, for instance, by her view that objective moral judgment must employ a standard derived from mind-independent facts of reality. See Rand, "What Is Capitalism?" 22.

[49] Rand, *Introduction to Objectivist Epistemology*, 51.

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perceive, but insisted that it could not itself be perceived.[50] His answer to the question of how we gain moral knowledge sometimes seems to appeal to a quasi-perceptual process that delivers abstract knowledge, without the involvement of the sense organs.[51] But Rand would consider the appeal to such a process just another invocation of the magical.

What if we bring our own responses back into the picture? In Rand's view, it is through our own pleasure-pain and emotional responses that we first become aware of normative issues.[52] In that respect, the role of these responses in the formation of normative (but not yet moral) concepts bears a certain resemblance to the role of perception in the formation of cognitive concepts. Through these responses, the world strikes us as *normatively valenced* (that is, as containing things that are good and bad, things that are worthy of being sought or avoided). The philosophic question these responses raise is how to understand them. Physical pleasure and pain, Rand claims, are the forms in which we experience the immediate beneficial and harmful effects of their sources on our physical well-being.[53] They are sources of normative information, albeit limited in their reach. But Rand denies that they supply an adequate foundation for *moral* concepts, as opposed to a rudimentary generic concept of one's good.[54] Emotional responses she views as the affective form in which we experience our own (sometimes implicit) evaluations (thus fear, she holds, is the form in which we experience the judgment that something is to be avoided on account of its dangers). Emotions cannot be treated as even limited purveyors of normative information, she argues, except when we can be sure of the evaluations that underlie them.[55] The world strikes us through our emotions as being normatively valenced, because we make implicit evaluations before we realize that we are doing so, and before we are in a position to reflect critically on the concepts and standards by means of which we do so. Unlike our early conceptual framework for perceptual judgment, Rand regards our early evaluative framework as demanding more cognitive work to structure appropriately and, accordingly, as far more error-prone.[56] Whereas our early perceptual concepts

[50] G. E. Moore, *Principia Ethica* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1903), 38–39, 41.
[51] Ibid., 16–17.
[52] Rand, "The Objectivist Ethics," 18; Rand, *Introduction to Objectivist Epistemology*, 228–29.
[53] Rand, "The Objectivist Ethics," 18–21.
[54] This is clear both from her rejection of hedonistic standards of moral judgment in "The Objectivist Ethics" (see 32–33) and from her comments during a workshop on her ethical theory attended by a group of university faculty in the late 1960s, a recording and transcript of which are part of the collections of the Ayn Rand Archives at the Ayn Rand Institute (Irvine, California). She is asked whether moral evaluation is reducible to a process of gauging the long-range consequences of alternative choices on the basis of the amount of physical pleasure and pain that they would be likely to yield. Her answer is that such calculations could not give rise to the idea of morality. The workshop was one of a series covering both ethics and epistemology. The relevant material occurs on pages 11–14 of the transcript of Workshop #4.
[55] Rand, "The Objectivist Ethics," 30–31.
[56] See, e.g., ibid., 31.

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are a basis from which to move forward, whatever minor corrections they may require, an implicit, emotionally articulated evaluative framework may demand substantial reflection and reconstruction.

It is not apparent, then, how perception or anything analogous to perception in its concrete immediacy—such as pleasure/pain responses or emotional responses—could provide a foundation for moral concepts and judgments. In bringing out Rand's views about this, I will first argue that she considers the teleological structure exhibited by her norms of *objectivity* (and by other cognitive norms that she would endorse) to be characteristic of all norms, including moral norms. That argument will occupy the remainder of this section. In the next section, I will explore her conception of (teleological) moral norms in greater depth. There I will focus on how she thinks the *telos* of moral norms should be established, and then on how moral norms thus conceived stand with respect to the basing requirements.

The teleological structure of cognitive norms is not atypical, in Rand's view, but is characteristic of all genuine norms, including moral norms. When something is evaluated, Rand maintains, it is always appropriate to ask for the standard of value; and objective evaluation, she holds, is always a matter of assessing something by an appropriately chosen standard.[57] In this sense, she views properly formed normative concepts as *teleological* concepts. For something to be good (for instance) is for it to satisfy the relevant standard of value, which in some way specifies what the evaluated object should be or attain. This, Rand thinks, provides a clue to how normative discoveries, beyond those enabled by physical pleasure and pain responses, are made. One finds out what is good by applying the relevant standard of value to the case being judged. Rand calls this process teleological measurement.[58] As long as the standard and its criteria of application are sufficiently determinate, questions about what is teleologically good will have objective answers, answers that can in principle be discovered, not magically, but by the application of a specific method of discovery. This may seem like a pretty big "as long as," though. How optimistic can we be about the prospects for determinateness? One point that Rand makes is that what teleological measurement aims for are ordinal rather than cardinal judgments—judgments of better and worse that facilitate choice.[59] That relieves some of the pressure for determinateness or, more precisely perhaps, gives us an understanding of what determinateness in teleological measurement should mean that offers grounds for optimism about attaining it. Further, sometimes, of course, making standards more determinate is just a matter of getting clearer about what we want—say, from a set of student papers. But the more

[57] See, e.g., Ayn Rand, "The Shanghai Gesture, Part II," *The Ayn Rand Letter* 1, no. 14 (April 10, 1972): 62–63; and Rand, "What Is Capitalism?" 22.
[58] Rand, *Introduction to Objectivist Epistemology,* 32–34.
[59] Ibid., 33.

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sway we give to what we want, the more we open up another source of worry about objectivity—a worry not about lack of determinateness in our standards but about arbitrariness.

How would Rand address these worries? If we are interested in teleological evaluation, the first question is really where to get nonarbitrary standards for it. Determinateness is no virtue in standards picked out of thin air; it would hardly reassure one's students to tell them that one will assign grades to papers according to a rule based on the order in which they end up stacked in one's mailbox on submission. What does Rand say about the provenance of teleological standards? She says at one point that the standards for evaluating inanimate objects are "determined by the particular purpose for which one evaluates them."[60] On its face, this may seem like an endorsement of a fairly extreme relativism about standards, a relativism that reinforces the worry about arbitrariness. But the relativistic reading of her point is hasty, for she does not say that we get to pick the purpose for which we evaluate things, or get to pick it arbitrarily. Further, elsewhere she says that in evaluating human activities in (to use a quaint, early American term) the *useful arts,* such as medicine or manufacturing, the correct standards depend on the constitutive aims of these activities.[61] Evaluation in the useful arts is relative to purposes, but it is not up to the evaluator to decide arbitrarily what purposes a manufacturing technique is to be judged by, so that one might, for example, legitimately say that a good agricultural technique was one that wasted time. More generally, when we judge something "good of its kind"—good farming, good automotive manufacturing, a good pen, a good reading lamp—it is not up to the evaluator to set the standards, and even where those standards require significant interpretation (raising our other worry, about determinateness), we must hold our interpretations answerable to something beyond themselves. We might call this sort of evaluation "functional," meaning evaluation with respect to the function (or in the case of activities like farming, the aim) that a kind of thing has and that helps constitute its identity as that kind of thing.

It seems to me that the statement above that raised concern about relativism can just as easily be read to embrace functional evaluation for inanimate objects. Rand *does* apply this form of evaluation to one category of inanimate objects, namely, works of art. The purposes by reference to which art is to be evaluated as *art,* she argues, are not those that we might happen to bring to the judgment of an artwork but, rather, depend on the psychological function that the creation and experience of art has in our lives.[62] Further, as we have seen, she applies the same functional, teleological form of evaluation to another category of human artifacts that are

[60] Ibid., 51.

[61] Ayn Rand, "Who Is the Final Authority in Ethics?" in Leonard Peikoff, ed., *The Voice of Reason: Essays in Objectivist Thought* (New York: Meridian, 1990), 18.

[62] Rand, *The Romantic Manifesto,* 42; see also chapters 1–3, passim.

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of central concern within her thought, namely, to concepts themselves. Concepts, in Rand's view, are functional devices whose purpose is to expand the range of human cognition (and action) beyond the perceptually given environment—to enable us to think about and act with a view toward that which is not perceptually present (including importantly, in the case of action, desired future states of affairs). We (epistemically) justify a given concept, in her view, by showing that it is needed for these ends. Thus, for Rand, the epistemic assessment of concepts involves a process of "teleological measurement" broadly similar to that employed in the other forms of assessment mentioned above. Indeed, it is such functional teleological assessment that underlies Rand's basing requirements for concepts. Concepts, in her view, need to be connected in certain ways to perceptual data because their cognitive function is to enable us to organize and make inferences from perceptual data. (I am admittedly condensing and oversimplifying a good deal here.)

I think that Rand considers all objective evaluation to be both teleological and (more specifically) functional; that, at least, is how she treats every case of evaluation that I am aware of her mentioning. It is of particular interest to note, here, that this is the approach she takes to moral evaluation. It is in a discussion of the objectivity of moral evaluation that Rand refers to teleological evaluation in the useful arts. She *analogizes* moral evaluation to teleological evaluation in the useful arts, suggesting that it, too, is a form of teleological evaluation.[63] The question of what is the morally right way to live a human life is no less amenable to objective resolution, she maintains, than the question of what is the right way to cure an illness or build an automobile.[64] In some sense, despite clear differences, the questions are analogous. Why is this? In a general way, the actions of any living thing can be evaluated teleologically by reference to the requirements of its particular form of life, since any life-process must be carried on in a certain way, appropriate to the nature of the particular living thing in question, in order to be sustained. Now Rand's analogy to medicine and manufacturing refers specifically to the *moral* evaluation of *human* actions, not to the generic biological evaluation of the actions of living things. But Rand's aim is to assimilate moral evaluation to biological evaluation, by arguing that moral values are needed in the life of a human being. Thus, elsewhere, she treats moral values teleologically. The proper standard for assessing moral values, she argues, is to be drawn from "the function of moral values in human life."[65] If moral values have a biologically related function, then in principle they are amenable to objective, functional assessment analogous to the functional assessment of medical or manufacturing techniques and to the functional assessment of artifacts.

[63] Rand, "Final Authority," 18.
[64] Ibid., 18–19.
[65] Rand, *The Virtue of Selfishness,* x.

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But if this is Rand's aim, then her analogizing moral evaluation to functional, teleological evaluation in the useful arts may seem peculiar. In effect, that analogy treats moral values as analogues of medical or manufacturing techniques. One can see some of the point of this analogy easily enough: elsewhere, Rand describes ethics as a science of method, and in another place she analogizes it to engineering.[66] The moral values promulgated by an ethical theory function as methods for attaining a certain end, in her view, and in this respect they *are* analogous to medical and manufacturing techniques. But the biological basis that Rand seeks for them—their grounding in the needs of human beings as a certain kind of living thing—may seem to render the functionality of moral values (if Rand is correct in ascribing a kind of biological functionality to them) quite different from the technical functionality of medical and manufacturing techniques, but similar to the functionality of the parts and systems of living things. The analogy to medicine and manufacturing highlights the artifactual nature of moral values and virtues—their status as human contrivances. That status may seem to stand in tension with the biological status that Rand also wants to claim for them. Moral values, on Rand's conception of them, seem to be both artifacts of human culture—ways of conducting ourselves that we devise—and subject to biologically based norms of assessment. It may seem problematic to accord moral values both statuses, since the teleology of human artifacts seems to be driven by the purposes for which *we* create them, whereas biological teleology is independently given.

But surely this dichotomy is too stark. In the first place, it may not be true that the functions of artifacts are always as closely tied to the intentions of their designers as the foregoing comments imply. Although a tight connection is often assumed,[67] there are arguments in the literature on artifact functions suggesting that artifact "functions" (in at least one sense of this multifaceted term) may depend not only on the intentional causes of the design and production of artifacts but on the intentional causes of their continued reproduction, and that the bearing of the latter can sometimes be to pull function and designer's intent apart from one another.[68] Leaving that aside, the creation of artifacts (and thus the functions intended by their creators) is clearly driven in significant part by recognized biological needs. Sometimes these needs are clearly grasped and artifact functionality is precisely targeted; other times, perhaps, the relevant needs are grasped only inchoately and we grope around. That, I believe, is the situation Rand finds in regard to moral values: that an

[66] Rand, *Introduction to Objectivist Epistemology,* 36; Rand, *The Romantic Manifesto,* 169.

[67] See, for example, Paul Sheldon Davies, *Norms of Nature* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2001), chapter 1.

[68] For an account of artifact functions according to which this is the case, see Beth Preston, "Why Is a Wing Like a Spoon? A Pluralist Theory of Function," *Journal of Philosophy* 95 (1998): 215–54.

inchoate awareness of our need for them has driven the creation of moral codes and theories, but that we have groped around without a clear view of this need's nature and source.[69] In any event, though, there is no inconsistency in the supposition that although we have a biologically based need to shape our moral characters in certain ways, we must identify and respond to this need by our own wits and choices, through the delineation and adoption of a code of moral values.[70] The question we will need to raise is not how moral values can be both artifactual and biologically based, but rather what makes the biologically based need for moral values—if such a need can be established—decisive for their evaluation. What makes a standard of moral value based on such a criterion objectively correct, by Rand's lights? I take this up toward the end of the next section. First, though, I turn to a sketch of Rand's argument that moral values *do* have a biologically based function—that we need them in order to live.

VI. Moral Objectivity and the "Function of Moral Values"

In a discussion of the role of art in moral development, Rand gives the following general characterization of the normative function of morality:

> [M]orality is a normative science—i.e., a science that projects a value-goal to be achieved by a series of steps, of choices—and it cannot be practiced without a clear vision of the goal, without a concretized image of the ideal to be reached. If man is to gain and keep a moral stature, he needs an image of the ideal, from the first thinking day of his life to the last.[71]

What the realization of moral values "gains and keeps" for a person, in Rand's view, is what she calls a *moral stature.* One's stature, of course, is one's standing, usually one's height (physical stature) or one's standing in a profession (professional stature) or in some other endeavor. Some dictionaries link these nonphysical senses of the term with reputation gained by virtue of achievement or growth within a field, or simply with achievement or growth itself. It is clear from her fiction and nonfiction writings that moral stature, in Rand's sense, is a function of a person's own choices

[69] Rand does not think moral values are unique in this regard. She thinks the same is true of both art and (perhaps to a lesser extent) government, and her arguments concerning the proper standards for evaluating art works and institutions of government run parallel to her argument concerning the proper standard of moral value. See Rand, *The Romantic Manifesto,* 42; and Ayn Rand, "The Nature of Government," in Rand, *The Virtue of Selfishness,* 125–34.

[70] Indeed, it is precisely this dual status that, for Rand, gives rise to issues of *objectivity* in regard to moral values. It is the combination of dependence on choice and choice-independent grounds of assessment that generates both a need and a source for a standard of moral value, and the corresponding need and possibility of making epistemically objective evaluations.

[71] Ayn Rand, "Art and Moral Treason," in Rand, *The Romantic Manifesto,* 147.

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and does not depend on reputation, but it does seem to depend on achievement and growth. To develop a moral stature is to become a certain kind of person, a person distinguished by the sort of character he or she has formed. And although Rand does not ascribe to art a primarily didactic function, she does see art as an important source for "learn[ing] the concept of moral values and of a moral character in whose image [one] will shape [one's] soul."[72]

How, though, can moral character have a biological function for us? In outlining Rand's argument here, I will focus on three of the character virtues that she emphasizes in her discussions of substantive moral theory: rationality, productiveness, and pride.[73] Each of these deserves much fuller treatment than I can give it here, but what I will say should suffice to indicate the central idea behind Rand's claim that moral values have a biological function. Roughly, Rand understands rationality as a commitment to using and developing one's intellectual capacities to their fullest, facing facts and refraining from magical or wishful thinking, and not acting on unconsidered desires or emotions. She understands productiveness as involving "the consciously chosen pursuit of a productive career, in any line of rational endeavor, great or modest, on any level of ability. It is not the degree of a man's ability nor the scale of his work that is ethically relevant here, but the fullest and most purposeful use of his mind."[74] Pride, for Rand, centrally involves "moral ambitiousness," pri-

[72] Ibid., 146.

[73] Although, in some places, Rand distinguishes between moral values and moral virtues, there is a wider sense of the term "moral values" in her writings that includes the moral virtues. In this essay, I employ the wider sense, since the distinction between virtues and (in the narrower sense) values has no bearing on the arguments I make. In the narrow sense, moral values are the ends attained by moral virtue. Thus, for example, Rand designates "rationality" as a moral virtue and "reason" as the corresponding moral value, since one values reason by developing and practicing the virtue of rationality. A person of good moral character values reason (values his mind) and nourishes and protects that value through rationality. However, in a larger sense, rationality is itself a moral value, for Rand, since in deliberately practicing rationality one makes rationality one's end. The wide sense of "moral values" is in play, for instance, in Rand's discussions of the role of art in moral development in her book *The Romantic Manifesto,* and in her discussion of moral objectivity in her essay "What Is Capitalism?" See Rand, *The Romantic Manifesto,* 146; and Rand, "What Is Capitalism?" 21–22.

[74] Rand, "The Objectivist Ethics," 29. The qualifiers "productive" and "rational" are clearly intended to constrain what forms of activity can satisfy the requirements of this virtue, so that, for instance, earning a living as a drug dealer would presumably not count. Although I cannot argue the point here, it seems to me that Rand's criteria for the rationality and productiveness of a "line of endeavor" would primarily involve consideration of whether one's activity contributes to the fulfillment of a genuine human need (including needs for pleasure and recreation, and "spiritual" or psychological needs such as those to which the fine arts respond)—whether a need of one's own or, through the division of labor, of others. Much further work is needed here to unpack Rand's conception of productiveness, but this at least indicates the direction in which I think Rand would argue in order to exclude activities such as drug dealing or organized crime from the scope of the virtue of productiveness. For further discussion, see Rand, *For the New Intellectual,* 130; and Tara Smith, *Ayn Rand's Normative Ethics: The Virtuous Egoist* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), chapter 8.

marily in the form of a commitment to the consistent, uncompromised development of rationality and productiveness; it is what might be called a second-order virtue that one maintains by always according first-order virtues such as rationality and productiveness primacy over other considerations in deliberating about what to do.[75]

Rand outlines her view of the role of moral values in human life as follows:

> Just as man's physical survival depends on his own effort, so does his psychological survival. Man faces two corollary, interdependent fields of action in which a constant exercise of choice and a constant creative process are demanded of him: in the world around him and in his own soul (by "soul," I mean his consciousness). Just as he has to produce the material values he needs to sustain his life, so he has to acquire the values of character that enable him to sustain it, and that make his life worth living.[76]

According to this passage, moral values ("values of character") have two broad functions. They enable one to sustain one's life, and they make one's life worth living. Developing and maintaining moral virtue involves "a constant exercise of choice and a constant creative process" in a person's own soul. The passage claims, first, that this inner process is an enabling condition of the "constant exercise of choice and [the] constant creative process" that is required of a person "in the world around him" to "produce the material values he needs to sustain his life." That is, rationality and productiveness, in Rand's view, are needed in order to produce the material values that our survival depends on, and they qualify on that account as human virtues.[77] Her discussion of these virtues

[75] A number of Rand's moral virtues have this second-order status, not only pride but also integrity and justice, both of which "operate" on and thus presuppose other, first-order virtues. Integrity involves the refusal to sacrifice one's convictions, including one's moral convictions, to the wishes or opinions of others; justice involves (among other components) judging other people by objective moral standards. See Rand's discussion of these virtues in "The Objectivist Ethics," 27–30; and *For the New Intellectual,* 128–31. See also Peikoff, *Objectivism,* chapter 8.

[76] Ayn Rand, "The Goal of My Writing," in Rand, *The Romantic Manifesto,* 169.

[77] This claim raises some obvious questions about free-riding: for instance, about whether, if rationality and productiveness qualify as human virtues on this account, a person has a reason to be virtuous rather than to free-ride on the virtue of others. Although these issues are largely outside the scope of the present essay, the discussion in the text of Rand's conception of psychological survival is relevant to how she would address them. Reasons of psychological survival militate against free-riding and, in her view, undermine the appearance that free-riding could be beneficial to a person. I intend to address these matters in an article in preparation on John McDowell's criticisms of what he calls "neo-Humean naturalism" in ethics. For McDowell's argument about how naturalistic virtue ethics should and should not deal with free-rider problems, see his "Two Sorts of Naturalism," in Rosalind Hursthouse, Gavin Lawrence, and Warren Quinn, eds., *Virtues and Reasons: Philippa Foot and Moral Theory, Essays in Honour of Philippa Foot* (Oxford: Clarendon Press; New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 149–79.

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makes it clear that what is at issue is long-range survival, "throughout the whole of [a human] lifespan."[78] But Rand also sees moral values as having a psychological function, which is more complex and, in a sense, more important than their function of enabling the production of material values.

What does Rand mean by "psychological survival"? For any living organism with some form of consciousness, its consciousness will be the source of its actions. The actions of a conscious being will be governed by a system of motivation and reward that depends on its psychological capacities. The rewards will be that for the sake of which it acts—the end or goal of action—as well as the incentive for further action toward more of the same kinds of rewards. In nonhuman animals, of course, the pursuit of such reward-incentives, although purposive, is instinctual rather than intentional. In humans, it is intentional and runs through our conceptual capacities—our capacities for thought. In a generic (not strictly moral) and descriptive (not normative or evaluative) sense, the reward-incentives sought in purposive action are *values* sought by human beings and other species that engage in purposive action. From a psychological perspective, the pursuit and attainment of such reward-incentives—of values—is what the "life" of any living organism possessing consciousness consists in. Psychologically, for such organisms, the process of pursuing values just is the process of living. Rand notes that there is nothing biologically discontinuous about the purposive action of conscious organisms, in contrast with the nonconscious, merely vegetative action of plants, for instance. For in an even broader sense of the term "value," the life of a plant is also made up of value-pursuit. Although plants do not act purposively, they act goal-directly in a more general sense. Thus, we say that plants turn their leaves *in order to* expose them to sunlight. In Rand's view, the nutrients that plants draw from the soil and the sunlight toward which they turn their leaves qualify as plant-values, even though they are not objects of conscious or purposive pursuit.[79] Like the reward-incentives driving the actions of conscious species, they are the ends of the plant's action and (a central element in) the cause of its further action toward more of the same kinds of ends. Thus, they are values in the broadest sense of "that which one acts to gain and/or keep."[80]

Fundamentally, the survival of a plant consists in the maintenance, primarily through its own activities, of its capacity for (nonconscious, nonpurposive) value-pursuit. Something analogous is true for other kinds of living things: the survival of a human being or an animal consists, fundamentally, in the maintenance, primarily through its own activities, of its capacity for conscious, purposive value-pursuit—its capacity to

[78] Rand, "The Objectivist Ethics," 26.
[79] Ibid., 16–17 and 17n.
[80] Ibid., 16.

pursue reward-incentives. But Rand sees a central difference between the kind of self-initiated action required to maintain an animal's capacity to value and the kind of self-initiated action required to maintain a human being's. Self-maintenance, for an animal, consists in physical self-maintenance. Although animals can experience externally inflicted psychological damage (e.g., through psychologically taxing laboratory experiments), absent such damage the maintenance of an animal's capacity to value follows on the maintenance of its physical capacities; there is no such thing as *psychological self-maintenance* in the case of nonhuman animals; an animal's psychological capacities remain intact provided it obtains the nutrition, shelter, and so forth that it needs physically (and, again, absent external sources of psychological damage). But, for Rand, a human being's self-maintenance of his capacity to value is primarily a matter not of physical but of psychological self-maintenance. Even absent external psychological dangers (such as psychological abuse by other people), a human being, in Rand's view, must take certain kinds of psychological action—that is, must make certain kinds of *choices*—in order to maintain his or her capacity to value.

What does human psychological self-maintenance—the maintenance of the capacity to value—involve, according to Rand? Return to the point that our human incentive-reward system runs through our conceptual capacities. Every kind of conscious organism has a range of psychological rewards that its nature "fits" it to receive and enjoy. There is overlap, of course; a human being and a dog can both be incentivized by the smell of a juicy steak and rewarded by its taste. But Rand maintains that human beings have a distinctive need for rewards whose attainment and enjoyment calls upon the volitional exercise of our *conceptual* capacities, and, further, that we are psychologically debilitated by the absence of such rewards; without them, we experience the process of carrying on our lives as unhappy, as a burden, as a source of anxiety, as motivationally draining.[81] Let us call the rewards at issue here *conceptual pleasures.* In more familiar terms, the need for conceptual pleasure comes to the need to have one's life mean something or, as Rand puts it in the foregoing passage, the need for it to be worth living. I take it that what Rand means by "making one's life worth living" is not primarily making it a life that, considered third-personally, is worthy of being lived, but rather making it a life that the person living it experiences as a life worth living. For, as we will see below, Rand contends that the only normative standards that apply to living one's life are standards derived from the nature and requirements of the human life-process itself. To find one's life worth living, then, must be to experience the process of living—the activities that define and give substance to one's life—as intrinsically motivating, as a source of pleasure and fulfillment.

[81] Ayn Rand, "Our Cultural Value Deprivation," in Peikoff, ed., *The Voice of Reason,* 103–4.

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How, then, does Rand view the sources of conceptual pleasure? I do not have the space here to cover her views in detail, for on her account there are several important sources of such pleasure that need to be considered, including art, human relationships, sex, and certain forms of recreation, all of which importantly depend on our intellectual capabilities and are inaccessible (*tout court* or at least in the forms in which we experience them) to creatures lacking these capabilities.[82] But since my aim in this section is to sketch her account of the function of moral values, let me comment on the sources of conceptual pleasure that she sees as being most directly related to morality. Rand holds that the two primary sources of conceptual pleasure for a human being are precisely the "thinking and productive work" that make up the core of moral virtue.[83] These are our fundamental sources of meaning in life and of a person's sense of identity; further, because of the ways in which the other major sources of conceptual pleasure noted above depend on one's sense of identity, Rand sees the accessibility of these other sources of conceptual pleasure as depending on one's having fitted oneself for the primary sources. Fitting oneself for these primary sources of conceptual pleasure involves developing and sustaining the self-chosen commitment to the virtues of rationality and productiveness described above. It is by making oneself into a rational, productive person that one accesses the forms of conceptual pleasure on which the maintenance of a human being's capacity to value depends. The lack of these virtues leads to what Rand calls "value-deprivation":

> The choice to think or not is volitional. If an individual's choice is predominantly negative, the result is his self-arrested mental development, a self-made cognitive malnutrition, a stagnant, eroded, impoverished, anxiety-ridden inner life.[84]

What explains the connection Rand makes between rationality, productiveness, and other moral virtues, and conceptual pleasure? The moral virtues, for her, are self-chosen postures of mind—ways of functioning mentally in one's intellectual and practical lives. What moral virtue serves to do is to bring oneself fully into being as a human organism—to complete the human life-process which, unlike that of other species, does not

[82] The inclusion of art here tells us something important about the passage most recently quoted in the text. Rand describes the two fields of human action that she mentions—inner and outer—as "interdependent." The field of outer action centrally involves the production of material values, and it might be supposed that this field of action concerns itself exclusively with the provision of our physical survival. But works of art are material values that answer to psychological rather than physical needs. This, it seems to me, is a good example of the sort of interdependence that Rand sees between the inner and outer fields of action. Although I mention one other sort of interdependence in the text below, I defer fuller discussion of these interconnections to another time.

[83] Rand, "The Objectivist Ethics," 25.

[84] Rand, "Our Cultural Value Deprivation," 102.

unfold automatically in our case. There is a real sense in which a person who does not utilize his mind and his capacities for productive action fully or consistently is not wholly engaged in the process of living a *biologically* human life. The psychological depletion that Rand claims such a person would feel is the psychological correlate of the biological incompleteness of such a life. By contrast, the psychological fulfillment that she claims comes with the full use of our capacities (at least absent external misfortune) is the correlate of the biological completeness of the life-process. Of course, it is primarily for the psychological rewards of living that we do want to live; merely soldiering on as a physical organism has no independent value for us. Thus, the bearing of moral virtue on our long-range physical well-being can assume importance for us only once we have some reason to *care* about our long-range physical well-being. On Rand's view, it is the direct psychological rewards of moral virtue—the forms of meaning or conceptual pleasure that we access through the exercise of our rational and productive capacities—that lead us to care and thus that make a person's life "worth living."

I have only sketched a view that, of course, needs considerable elaboration and argument. My intent has been simply to outline the kind of biological functionality that Rand ascribes to moral values. According to Rand, rationality and productiveness enable the production of the material values that human beings need in order to survive; but they also enable the various forms of conceptual pleasure that our psychological survival depends on. Further, the requirements of our psychological survival are as much an aspect of our biological nature as a certain kind of living thing as the requirements of our physical survival are. In both respects, then, these aspects of human character have a biologically based function that provides a reference point for evaluating them as moral virtues (and for evaluating their opposites as vices). With this sketch in place, let us turn to the connection of this framework for moral evaluation with Rand's canons of epistemic objectivity.

In asking about the function of moral values, Rand assumes at least a loose shared understanding (among us as inquirers) of what moral values are, but not necessarily any shared agreement as to what the correct moral code is (if any). There needs to be some kind of shared understanding of what it is whose function is in question, or else we cannot even pose the question intelligibly. But if this shared understanding is to allow for variations among people's substantive moral views, pending the derivation of an objective standard for making moral evaluations, then our loose shared understanding must itself be a loose *functional* (rather than substantive) one. Rand's point of departure is the thought that moral values function to shape a person's character and thereby to shape a person's life. The question is then whether something with this narrow function has any wider function from which a standard of assessment might be drawn and, if so, what this wider function is. (Any code that we can

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adopt will function to shape our characters, but the question is whether we ought to shape them in a particular way, whether *shaping our characters* also has a function.) Rand's claim is that if moral values have no biological function—if there is no way in which we *need them* in virtue of our human nature—then there will be no objective standards available for assessing them. This is why she argues, in her essay "The Objectivist Ethics," that the derivation of an objective code of morality depends on an answer to the question of whether and why human beings need moral values.[85] It is the biological function of moral values, Rand claims, that properly sets the standard for what is to be counted as an objectively correct moral value to hold. Rationality and productiveness, for instance, are to be evaluated as objectively correct moral values—as genuine virtues—on the grounds of their contribution to our physical and psychological survival. Correspondingly, irrationality and slothfulness are to be evaluated as vices by the same standard.

But what anchors moral values to this particular teleology, to this particular standard of assessment? In effect, Rand is proposing a reconstruction[86] of the concept of a "moral value," on which a moral value is

(1) a value in the generic sense of "that which one acts to gain and/or keep";
(2) functional in the narrow, (relatively) uncontroversial sense of serving to shape the character of the person who espouses it; and
(3) functional in the wider sense of playing a certain kind of role in furthering the physical and psychological survival of the person who espouses it.

On this reconstruction of the concept, something that was either not characterized by (1) or not characterized by (2) could not qualify as a moral value at all. (To that extent, the proposed reconstruction substantially accords with ordinary usage and therefore cannot be accused of changing the subject.) Something that was characterized by (1) and (2) but not by (3) *would* qualify as a moral value but would be evaluated negatively, as a deficient or improper moral value (as morally bad). Something that was characterized by (1), (2), and (3) would be evaluated positively, as a proper or genuine moral value (as morally good). What we need to know is how Rand would justify this reconstruction of the concept of a "moral value," in terms of her canons of epistemic objectivity for concepts and, particularly, in relation to the basing requirements.

[85] Rand, "The Objectivist Ethics," 13–14.

[86] I draw the idea of viewing Rand's project as one of conceptual reconstruction from Harry Binswanger, "Life-Based Teleology and the Foundations of Ethics," *The Monist* 75 (1992): 84–103.

We have said that, for Rand, moral concepts do not have the kind of grounding in perception that our concepts for observables like tables and trees have, or even the extensively (and theoretically) mediated grounding that concepts in the natural sciences have. On her view, moral concepts need to be linked to perception in a different way from these others, corresponding to the difference in the nature of moral thinking noted in Section II above. Moral thinking serves to evaluate a certain class of natural facts—namely, certain human choices—rather than to disclose a set of moral facts. If Rand is correct, moral thinking, when objective, evaluates those choices in relation to the needs of the agent's physical and psychological survival. Now this way of viewing moral evaluation can be justified by reference to Rand's *general* view of evaluation as teleological measurement. That would make the connection of her standard of moral value, and of the corresponding conception of "moral values," to the basing requirements dependent on the connection of her general conception of evaluation (as teleological measurement) to those requirements. We can evaluate other things besides moral choices, and to have the idea of evaluating moral choices, we need to have the general idea of "evaluating" things, of gauging or measuring their value. Here, of course, we mean not gauging whether or not they are things we do in fact "act to gain and/or keep," but rather gauging *what* to act to gain and keep (and what not to). What, then, does Rand think is the "base in perceptual reality" of the idea of gauging *what* to act to gain and keep?

It may be helpful to bring out her view on this issue through a contrast with a line of argument that Christine Korsgaard sets out in taking up a very similar issue. Korsgaard argues that it is not the case that we have normative concepts because we have "spotted some normative entities, as it were wafting by";[87] rather, we have normative concepts because we have normative problems: we have choices to make and action to decide upon, and normative concepts are primarily tools for choosing and acting, rather than tools for investigating and theorizing about the world. Rand, I believe, would agree with Korsgaard about this. Rand maintains that a being that could only observe the world but could not respond to it in any way could form no normative concepts; it would not notice any normative entities wafting by (for there are none to be noticed), nor would it have any normative problems due to its utter lack of involvement in the world it observed.[88]

Korsgaard argues that we have normative concepts in virtue of our capacity to reflect on our actions.[89] It is our capacity to reflect that gen-

[87] Christine Korsgaard, *The Sources of Normativity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 44.

[88] This is part of the point of a thought experiment she proposes involving an "immortal, indestructible robot" incapable of being affected or changed. The robot, she argues, could have no values and no sense of good or evil. See Rand, "The Objectivist Ethics," 16.

[89] Korsgaard, *The Sources of Normativity,* 92–93.

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erates the normative problems that we fashion normative concepts in order to help us sort through and resolve. Thus, I can step back from what I am about to do—say, stop working for the day—and reflect on whether or not that is a good thing for me to do, whether or not it might be better to go on working a while longer. But this account of the source of our normative concepts is open to the objection that it treats reflection as something *sui generis* and unaccountable (and, indeed, Korsgaard argues precisely that since it is reflection that generates normative problems, reflection must supply its own internal standards for resolving these problems).[90] Rand, I think, would agree with Korsgaard that we have normative concepts because we have normative problems, but she would locate the source of these problems differently. Rand locates the source of normative problems not in reflection itself, but in that which prompts, and occasions a need for, reflection—for we do not reflect spontaneously but in recognition of some need (or apparent need) to do so. If I hesitate before stopping work, and reflect on whether I should, it is presumably my sense that something of consequence hangs on whether or not I stop that prompts me to reflect on whether it might be better to work a bit more instead.

Rand's view is that the idea of gauging what to gain and keep—the idea of practical deliberation—is grounded in facts about our nature as living things. A living organism faces an alternative between life and death the outcome of which depends, in substantial part, on its own actions. The maintenance of a living organism's life depends on what it acts to gain and keep, what values it pursues. The concepts and judgments through which these biological facts are expressed themselves satisfy the basing requirements if the biological sciences do so. But this biological context furnishes a standard for gauging what is *good for* a living thing; the good for a living thing will be that which is required by its nature for sustaining its life. Nonhuman organisms, of course, have no capacity or need to deliberate about their actions; it is only from our vantage point in studying and tending to them that questions about their good get raised. According to Rand, however, it is this same general biological context that supplies the basis, in our own case, for the idea of deliberating about what to act for. The "base in perceptual reality" for the idea of deliberation, of gauging what to gain and keep, is the alternatives that a human being faces between physical and psychological survival or destruction, which are grasped in the first instance as alternatives between both physical and conceptual pleasure and pain. This means that there is a "base in perceptual reality" for (but only for) a conception of evaluation as teleological measurement. Outside the context of human survival needs, Rand maintains, there is no basis for a concept of human practical good—good to be sought through action. That is, there is no concept of

[90] Ibid., 93.

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the good that can satisfy the basing requirements. Thus, the question of what is *morally* good must also, in Rand's view, be resolved according to what moral values a human being's physical and psychological survival depends on.

VII. Conclusion

This broad-brush account of Rand's metaethics has been aimed at elucidating how, in her view, moral values are connected to our survival, and how, for her, this connection secures the epistemic objectivity of moral evaluation. Certainly there is much more to be said on both of these fronts, even to elucidate her views fully, let alone to defend them adequately. But I want to close by indicating the sense in which, for Rand, morality is essentially practical or action-guiding.

Rand takes the needs of one's psychological and physical survival to be the fundamental source of all one's reasons for action. Life or death is the fundamental alternative each of us faces, and it is only in the face of that alternative that there is any need or context for practical deliberation and the evaluation of options concerning what to seek. The relativization of practical reasons to life-based needs means that for Rand there will be no practical reasons directing us to live. The use of our distinctive capacities can be a source of meaning and pleasure that make life a value to us; but that is just to say that we come to value our lives by living them, since to use our capacities is precisely to throw ourselves into the process of living a human life. There is no standpoint outside all the activities that make up our lives from which we can take up the question of whether or not to live, according to Rand. Living is in this sense an end in itself, on her view.

Rand says that the source of practical reasons lies in the *choice* to live. There is such a thing as letting the needs of one's survival, particularly of one's psychological survival, go—such a thing as not taking pains to attend to them. Practical deliberation, in Rand's view, responds to the *generalized* commitment to bring oneself fully into being as a human organism—the generalized commitment to set in motion the pattern of choices that is required to sustain one psychologically and physically.[91] That generalized commitment supplies a motive for filling in the details, that is, for finding out and doing what is required. Thus, practical rea-

[91] If my interpretation of Rand is correct, this generalized commitment is equivalent to what Rand calls the "choice to live." But it bears an interesting resemblance to the virtue of pride described in Section VI of the text. Pride, as Rand understands it, might be viewed as a more fine-grained, articulated form of that same comprehensive commitment to one's life. The choice to live, on my interpretation, would amount to the commitment to develop and maintain the kind of moral character one needs in order to live. Pride would be the commitment to live up to a (more) specific vision of what kind of moral character that is. But it might also be said that the choice to live amounts to a rudimentary form of pride—a generalized form of the commitment that characterizes someone with the full virtue.

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soning is largely constitutive reasoning—finding out what living a life geared to the needs of our physical and psychological survival consists in. What it most fundamentally consists in, according to Rand, is rationality and productiveness, for the reasons discussed in Section VI, as well as the practice of the other moral virtues that she defends on similar grounds. But this means, in her view, that a person who has any practical reasons at all will have (overriding) moral reasons. There will still be no unconditional rational requirements, requirements that could bind a person whatever his choices and values. The essential practicality of morality will lie not in its commanding us unconditionally but in our never having reasons to act immorally.

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