

Parisa Moosavi

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AREAS OF INTEREST

- AOS Ethics, Philosophy of Biology, Philosophy of Artificial Intelligence
AOC Applied Ethics, Logic, Philosophy of Science, Philosophy of Technology

EMPLOYMENT

- 2019-2020 Post-Doctoral Fellow in *Ethics and Artificial Intelligence*, Department of Philosophy, York University

EDUCATION

- 2019 PhD, Philosophy, University of Toronto
 Dissertation: *From Function to Flourishing: Neo-Aristotelian Ethics and the Science of Life*
 (Supervisors: Sergio Tenenbaum and Denis Walsh)
- 2012 MS, Science and Technology Studies, Virginia Tech
- 2012 MA, Philosophy, Virginia Tech
- 2007 MS, Artificial Intelligence, Sharif University of Technology
 Thesis: *Incorporating Intrinsic 'Emotional' Dispositions in Machine Learning*
- 2005 BS, Computer Engineering, Shahid Beheshti University
 Thesis: *An Ontology for Psychological Disorders*

PUBLICATIONS

Journal Article:

- 2019 "From Biological Functions to Natural Goodness", *Philosophers' Imprint*, Vol. 19, No. 51, 1-20.

Book Chapters:

- Forthcoming "Is the Neo-Aristotelian Concept of Organism Presupposed in Biology?", in *Aristotelian Naturalism: A Research Companion*, ed. Martin Hähnel, Springer (accepted February 2019).

- 2018 “Neo-Aristotelian Naturalism and the Evolutionary Objection: Rethinking the Relevance of Empirical Science”, in *Philippa Foot on Goodness and Virtue*, ed. John Hacker-Wright, Palgrave Macmillan, 277-307.
- 2017 “On the Relevance of Evolutionary Biology to Ethical Naturalism”, in *The Ethics of Nature and The Nature of Ethics*, ed. Gary Keogh, Lexington Books, 37-50.

Translation:

- 2009 Carl Mitcham. *Thinking through Technology: The Path between Engineering and Philosophy* (University of Chicago, 1994). Persian translation (with Mostafa Taqavi and Yasser Khoshnevis), Iran Daily Publishing (reprinted by Soroush Publishing, 2015).

WORK IN PROGRESS

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| Revise and Resubmit | Paper offering a novel form of neo-Aristotelian naturalism (<i>Philosophy and Phenomenological Research</i>) |
| Under Review | Paper on why neo-Aristotelian naturalism is a form of ethical naturalism |
| Under Preparation | “Can Artificial Machines Have a Natural Good?”
“Can Artificial Intelligence Master Moral Deliberation?” |

HONORS AND AWARDS

- Jan 2020 APA Graduate Student Travel Stipend
- Jan 2018 APA Graduate Student Travel Stipend
- 2017-2018 Doctoral Completion Award, University of Toronto (CAD 23,600)
- Jan 2017 APA Graduate Student Travel Stipend
- 2016-2017 Superior Graduate Course Instructor Teaching Award, Faculty of Arts & Sciences, University of Toronto
- 2016-2017 Centre for Ethics Doctoral Fellowship, Centre for Ethics, University of Toronto
- 2016-2017 Ontario Graduate Scholarship (CAD 15,000)
- 2015-2016 Philosophy of Science Award, Department of Philosophy, University of Toronto
- 2012-2013 Best essay on Theory of Scientific Change, Institute for History and Philosophy of Science and Technology, University of Toronto
- 2012-2017 Jackman Junior Fellowship, Faculty of Arts & Sciences, University of Toronto (CAD 35,000)

PRESENTATIONS

Invited Talks:

- 2020 “Can Artificial Intelligence Master Moral Deliberation?”, School of Historical, Philosophical and Religious Studies, Arizona State University, February 2020.

- 2020 “Natural Goodness without Natural History”, Department of Philosophy, University of Cincinnati, January 2020.
- 2020 “If Non-Sentient Organisms Can Have Rights, Why Can’t Robots?”, *Ethics of AI in Context* Speaker Series, Centre for Ethics, Toronto, January 2020.
- 2019 “On the Moral Psychology of Intelligent Machines”, Cognitive Science Speaker Series, York University, Toronto.
- 2019 “Can Artificial Machines Have a Natural Good?”, the UQAM Workshop on Functions, the University of Quebec at Montreal.

Refereed Talks:

- 2020 “Neo-Aristotelian Naturalism as Ethical Naturalism”, Eastern APA (Colloquium), Philadelphia, January 2020.
- 2019 “The Good of Non-Sentient Organisms and the Moral Status of Robots”, The 4TU.Ethics Conference on the 'Ethics of Disruptive Technologies', Eindhoven, Netherlands.
- 2019 “Neo-Aristotelian Naturalism as Ethical Naturalism”, Canadian Philosophical Association Congress, Vancouver.
- 2018 “Natural Goodness and Biological Goodness”, Eastern APA (Symposium), Savannah.
- 2017 “Virtue, Natural Goodness, and Biological Functions”, *Virtue, Skill, and Practical Reason* Conference, Cape Town, South Africa.
- 2017 “Reconciling Neo-Aristotelian Ethical Naturalism with Biological Functions”, Canadian Philosophical Association Congress, Toronto.
- 2017 “On the Concept of Organism in Biology: A Step toward a Biologically-Grounded Ethical Naturalism”, Eastern APA (Symposium), Baltimore, Maryland.
- 2016 “Can the Biological Accounts of Function Be Applied to Human Morality”, the Fourth European Advanced School in the Philosophy of the Life Sciences (EASPLS 2016): *Function and Malfunction in the Biological and Biomedical Sciences, and the Social Sciences*, Klosterneuburg, Austria.
- 2016 “Neo-Aristotelian Naturalism and the Dilemma of Natural Normativity,” Pacific APA Pacific (Colloquium), San Francisco.
- 2015 “On the Relevance of Evolutionary Biology to Ethical Naturalism,” Canadian Philosophical Association Congress, Ottawa.
- 2015 “On the Relevance of Evolutionary Biology to Ethical Naturalism,” *The Ethics of Nature – The Nature of Ethics* Conference, University of Manchester.
- 2011 “The Pragmatic Condition on Epistemic Justification,” Annual Meeting of the Virginia Philosophical Society, Williamsburg, Virginia.
- 2011 “Fuzziness and Probability in Controversy: A Socio-Historical Perspective,” Annual Meeting of the Society for Social Studies of Science, Cleveland, Ohio.
- 2011 “Outside Authority of the Abstract: A Case Study in the History of Logic and Mathematics,” *The Outside Authority* Graduate Conference, Virginia Tech.

- 2011 “The Problem of Technology Control in the Age of Information Technology,” International Biennial Conference of the Society for Philosophy and Technology (SPT2011), Denton, Texas.
- 2010 “Making Science More Social?” Accepted for Presentation in RPI/MIT/Cornel STS Conference: New Directions in Science and Technology Studies.
- 2008 “Adaptive Hope as an Emotion for Reinforcement Learning Agents,” (with S.B. Shouraki and M. Feyzbakhsh) in Proceedings of the IEEE International Conference on Distributed Human-Machine Systems (DHMS 2008), Athens.
- 2008 “A ‘Doubt’ Driven Method for Adapting the Exploration Rate in XCS,” (with S.B. Shouraki), Accepted for Presentation in 9th International Conference on Artificial Intelligence and Soft Computing (ICAISC 2008).

Commentaries:

- 2020 (Upcoming) Brian Cantwell Smith, *The Promise of Artificial Intelligence*, Author Meets Critics session at the Centre for Ethics, Toronto, April 2020.
- 2019 Tiger Zheng, “Starting the Path to Virtue on the Right Foot”, Annual Meeting of the Canadian Philosophical Association, Vancouver.
- 2016 William Horner, “Toward an Ecological Libertarianism,” University of Toronto Graduate Conference on *Reason and Agency*, Toronto.

TEACHING

Primary Instructor:

F 2019 S 2020	York University	Ethics and Societal Implications of Artificial Intelligence (x2)
S 2016 S 2017	University of Toronto	Bioethics (x2)
S 2015	University of Toronto	Introduction to Ethics
S 2012	Virginia Tech	Language and Logic

Teaching Assistant:

2012-2019	University of Toronto	Modern Symbolic Logic (x8) Probability and Inductive Logic (x4) Introduction to Ethics (x2) Business Ethics Practical Reason and Action Bioethics
2008-2012	Virginia Tech	Language and Logic (x3) Knowledge and Reality (x2) Modern Logic and Its Development On Darwin’s Origins Bioethics

2006-2007	Sharif University of Technology	Machine Learning Compiler Design
2004-2005	Shahid Beheshti University	Artificial Intelligence (×3) Compiler Design

GRADUATE COURSEWORK

<i>Philosophy</i>	University of Toronto (2012-2013)	Neo-Aristotelian Moral Psychology Rationality across Time and Persons Neo-Aristotelian Naturalism Teleology and Explanation Philosophy of Biology Deductive and Inductive Logic Topics in Philosophy of Science: Miracles The Theory of Scientific Change Normativity and the Will Collective Harm Skepticism: Ancient and Modern Kant's Critique of Pure Reason
	Virginia Tech (2009-2011)	Naturalizing Semantics Intermediate Epistemology Meaning and Intentionality in Early Modern Philosophy Metaethics Moral Reasoning Philosophy of Mind Symbolic Logic Intermediate Philosophy of Biology History of Philosophy of Science American Pragmatism
<i>Science & Technology Studies</i>		Introduction to Science and Technology Studies History, Culture, and Politics of Internet Technological Knowledge Philosophy of Modern Science and Technology History of Modern Technology New Communication Technology Alternative Perspectives on Technology and Medicine Contemporary Issues in Science and Technology Studies
<i>Artificial Intelligence</i>	Sharif University of Technology (2005-2007)	Philosophy of Technology
		Machine Learning Neural Networks Speech Processing Evolutionary Processing Signals and Systems AI planning Fuzzy systems Image Processing

RESEARCH ACTIVITIES

Research Intern, *State of AI Ethics* research project, Montreal AI Ethics Institute (July-August 2019).

Research Assistant to Andrew Sepielli on his book project, *Pragmatist Quietism in Meta-ethics* (2017).

Invited Participant, Summer seminar on *Virtue & Happiness*, Moreau Seminary, University of Notre Dame (June 2016).

PROFESSIONAL SERVICE

Peer review for journals: *Bioethics*, *Techné: Research in Philosophy and Technology*.

Peer review for conferences: University of Toronto Philosophy Graduate Conference (2013-2016), Virginia Tech Philosophy Graduate Conference (2008-2012).

Assistant Editor: PhilPapers' section on Practical Reason (2017-present).

Conference Organizer (with Damian Melamedoff): University of Toronto Graduate Conference on *Reason and Agency* (2016).

Reading Group Organizer (with Regina Rini): *Ethics of AI* Journal Group, York University (2020-present).

PROGRAMMING LANGUAGES

C#.NET, C++, MATLAB, Prolog, Pascal

REFERENCES

(All the reference letters can be obtained from placement.philosophy@utoronto.ca)

Sergio Tenenbaum (Supervisor)
Professor, Department of Philosophy,
University of Toronto
sergio.tenenbaum@utoronto.ca

Tristram McPherson (External)
Associate Professor, Department of
Philosophy, Ohio State University
mcperson.164@osu.edu

Philip Clark (Committee)
Associate Professor, Department of
Philosophy, University of Toronto
philip.clark@utoronto.ca

John Hacker-Wright (External)
Associate Professor, Department of
Philosophy, University of Guelph
jhackerw@uoguelph.ca

Denis Walsh (Supervisor)
Professor, Department of Philosophy,
University of Toronto
denis.walsh@utoronto.ca

Jennifer Nagel (Teaching)
Professor, Department of Philosophy,
University of Toronto
jennifer.nagel@utoronto.ca

Andrew Sepielli (Committee)
Associate Professor, Department of
Philosophy, University of Toronto
andrew.sepielli@utoronto.ca

From Function to Flourishing: Neo-Aristotelian Ethics and the Science of Life

Committee: Sergio Tenenbaum (co-chair), Denis Walsh (co-chair), Philip Clark (reader), Andrew Sepielli (reader), Tristram McPherson (external), Branden de Kenessey (internal)

Neo-Aristotelian ethical naturalism purports to show that moral goodness is an instance of *natural goodness* in human beings, where natural goodness denotes a kind of evaluation that applies to living things and their parts and aspects in virtue of their nature and based on their form of life. One of the main challenges facing this view concerns its commitment to a teleological conception of the nature of life that seems objectionably out of touch with the scientific understanding of life in modern biology. In this dissertation, I mend the relationship between neo-Aristotelian ethics and modern biology by way of three contributions:

First, I argue that contrary to what many advocates of the view have claimed, the science of biology is *relevant* to assessing neo-Aristotelian naturalism. I reconstruct the neo-Aristotelian argument for ethical naturalism in terms of the central claim that the ethical domain is continuous with the natural domain of life. I argue that this claim involves certain commitments about the nature of non-human organisms that are best investigated by consulting biology.

Second, I provide new foundations for neo-Aristotelian naturalism by engaging recent work on theories of evolutionary change as well as biological function and self-organization. I argue that although the influential and reductionist ‘Modern Synthesis’ theory of evolution does not support a teleological conception of a living organism, a recent and increasingly well-supported account of evolutionary change gives an explanatory role to the goal-directed properties of organisms and makes room for such a conception. Moreover, I argue that an important kind of biological function ascription, which tracks the contribution of a trait to the self-maintenance of an organism, presupposes the kind of teleology that underwrites the neo-Aristotelian concept of natural goodness. I appeal to the indispensable explanatory role of this kind of function ascription in biology to defend a neo-Aristotelian, teleological conception of the nature of life.

Lastly, I develop and defend a novel account of natural goodness that is distinctive for incorporating insights from evolutionary developmental biology. The standard neo-Aristotelian account defines natural goodness by way of generic statements describing what is ‘characteristic’ in the life of a species. I argue that this conception of natural goodness leads to the wrong assessment of a class of individuals whose uniquely adaptive adjustments during development sets them apart from other members of their species. I then propose an alternative account that avoids this problem. Instead of relying on generic statements about a species, my account defines natural goodness based on counterfactual conditionals describing the modal properties of a single individual. I argue that this account gives a conception of natural goodness that is more intuitively plausible and better suited to capture the diversity and plasticity distinctive of life.