

Word and Nature

Conceptually engineering nature in naturalism,
and the activity of self-knowledge

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Abstract (187 words)

The meaning of nature that we have in naturalism is not the best possible one, and its shortcoming has partly to do with our understanding of naturalism itself and the commitments that we set thereby. This kind of naturalistic doctrine results in a philosophy that fails to perform its task of mediating between the scientific and literary cultures, as proposed by C.P. Snow (1959). Therefore, I aim to illustrate the shortcomings of conventional naturalism and its understanding of the meaning of nature, and to provide an ameliorative account of nature in a reformed naturalism. This reformed naturalism will provide us with a version philosophy possessing a better meaning of nature. As a result this kind of reformed naturalist philosophy will be able to mediate between the two cultures, resulting in an overall activity of critical self-knowledge. My primary methodology for revising “nature” is externalist framework for conceptual engineering proposed by Cappelen (2018), with some minor critical revisions. Other than a reformed version of naturalism, and a better meaning of nature, my project will also produce a series of strategies for better understanding the term nature in general.

1. Prologue: Self-knowledge and “nature” in “naturalism”¹

A. Two opposed attitudes to “nature”, The Two Cultures and philosophy

Compare two attitudes that one might take to the term “nature”. The first attitude towards “nature” could go something like this:

All, or at least most, human cultures possessing a language, across history, have developed or adopted a word that is more or less equivalent to “nature”, understood as either ‘the world, or some particular part of it unaffected by humans’, or some ‘essential characteristics of some individual thing’. These two meanings might not overlap in all languages,² but since these kinds of words arise almost universally across human cultures in history, we have a good reason to, at least initially, think that “nature” tracks some universally human disposition towards the world and the characteristics of the individual things within it. Usually, as applied to the world, “nature” tends to connote a pristine, or external condition thereof; while, when applied to individual things, it tends to similarly connote a set of inherent qualities that dictate how a thing tends to, or ought to, be when untampered. At any rate, culturally and historically we seem bound to use the term “nature”, and we cannot arbitrarily do away with it in our discourse.

The above attitude is, partly, my own attitude; call it the *historicist attitude*.

Now consider a second attitude, where historically developed language, and its accompanying cultural connotations are not valued to the same extent as above. For instance, consider the following excerpt from a popular, non-academic magazine’s article on Paul and Patricia Churchland:

“Paul and Pat, realizing that the revolutionary neuroscience they dream of is still in its infancy, are nonetheless already preparing themselves for this future, making the appropriate adjustments in their everyday conversation. One afternoon recently, Paul says, he was home making dinner when Pat burst in the door, having come straight from a frustrating faculty meeting. “She said, ‘Paul, don’t speak to me, my serotonin levels have hit bottom, my brain is awash in glucocorticoids, my blood vessels are full of adrenaline, and if it weren’t for my endogenous opiates I’d have driven the car into a tree on the way home. My dopamine levels need lifting. Pour me a Chardonnay, and I’ll be down in a minute.’ [...]”

¹ I will use “nature” and “naturalism” in double quotation marks, throughout, to denote the terms nature and naturalism stripped of their connotations. Take these to be the words “nature” and “naturalism” *simpliciter* – that is, stripped of their connotations and merely used in a referential capacity, picking out only themselves as words and nothing else in the world. Perhaps no word or term can exist simpliciter in this way, but this is what I intend to mean by “nature” and “naturalism” in this text, unless otherwise indicated. In particular, let me indicate already that in the latter case, “naturalism” will be always used to indicate a philosophical view, but the content and commitments of this view will be left vacant and open, and not predetermined in any way, whenever I write “naturalism”. Moreover, I will use the expressions *term* and *word*, alternatively to mean the same thing throughout.

² See the “Translations” offered in the English entry of “nature” here:
<https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/nature#English>.

When their children [...] were very young, Pat and Paul imagined raising them according to their principles: the children would grow up understanding the world as scientists understood it, they vowed, and would speak a language very different from that spoken by children in the past. [...] but then it occurred to Paul that if [his son] were to sit [...] with a friend his age they would barely be able to talk to each other. He suddenly worried that he and Pat were cutting their children off from the world that they belonged to. Better to wait until the world had changed, he thought.

Neither Pat nor Paul feels much nostalgia for the old words, or the words that will soon be old. They appreciate language as an extraordinary tool, probably the most extraordinary tool ever developed. But in the grand evolutionary scheme of things, in which humans are just one animal among many, and not always the most successful one, language looks like quite a minor phenomenon, they feel.”

(MacFarquhar, 2007)

In this second attitude the term “nature” is merely an arbitrarily chosen series of sounds or scribbles, and divorced from the tradition that has brought it into and maintained it in existence, the word “nature” does not mean anything. Even more severely put, “nature” does not exist out there as some entity, apart from the linguistic traditions that keep it in existence – “nature” is only a word. And if it is only a word, “nature” can be done away with if it does not suit our purposes, as language is after all *only a tool* in this second attitude. Call this second attitude the *eliminativist attitude*.

So, (1): Is language only a tool, and “nature” merely a disposable part of this tool?

Or, (2): Is there an abstract thought, concept, or idea of “nature” out there, to which this word – in any given version in a natural language – somehow always corresponds in virtue of some inherent disposition in humans?³

Or yet, (3): Is there some thing out there, after all, even somehow a material, physical or tangible thing to which “nature” tends to correspond to, due to some universally arising disposition towards the world, as displayed in human language?

I am in no position to adequately answer any of the above three questions at the moment, and indeed I will not be able to answer them conclusively at all in this thesis. What I can do, for now, is to indicate that following the historicist attitude I have to *prima facie* disagree with the implications of all three, but (3) seems to me the least unlikely. To understand what is at stake here, and what I propose to do about “nature”, let us briefly turn to another pair of attitudes, this time towards *culture*.

³ This would imply a form of Platonism about “nature”, or acknowledgement of the existence of abstract objects independent of humans and their mental capacities. Historically important and respected though this attitude might be, I can think of no way to prove or disprove its implications – these are more akin to a religious belief, and I do not mean this in a disparaging way. At any rate, language also holds a somewhat instrumental, and not primary role in Platonism, and history is certainly not of much interest; *ideas* or *eide* are what matters for this attitude, and these are undoubtedly beyond language and specific cultural history for the Platonist, and hence beyond the scope of my investigation, since what interests me here is the word “nature” according to the historicist attitude.

In his famous lecture, “The Two Cultures”, C.P. Snow consciously employs the rhetorical device of *dialectic*, distinguishing between two different cultures to problematize the gap in communication and understanding between thinking people, due to a variety of different attitudes to what matters in contemporary intellectual pursuits (1959, p. 8-9). There are the *scientists* (or scientific intellectuals), and the *literary intellectuals* (or traditional intellectuals). If we understand culture in general as the shared set of responses, behavior and language that characterize a group of people (p. 10, 12-13), then, according to Snow, due to the disparity in such attitudes between the above two groups, there have correspondingly arisen *two* distinct *cultures*. The literary culture is *stereotypically* pessimistic, technophobic, traditionalist and *passive*, in that it looks towards the past, holding on to the ways of life and the language passed down in whatever country it manifests in and taking in the world as it *appears to be*. On the other hand, the scientific culture embodies the stereotypes of optimism, progress – both as political emancipation and material enrichment – and technological innovation, in short it shapes the future by being *active*, seeking to understand how the world *really is*, and then molding it to humanity’s needs.⁴ This latter world, we often call “nature”.

Now, though Snow acknowledges that these are extreme stereotypes in a spectrum of varied and gradedly different attitudes (p. 5, 10-11), it is interesting to place the abovementioned attitudes towards “nature” in language in the context of these two cultures. And not only that, but let us also wonder where contemporary philosophy fits in this dialectic (Sorell 1991, Ch. 5). I would like to suggest that philosophy faces a dichotomy between the two cultures, and that this is so irrespective of whether we wish to call ourselves analytic or continental philosophers (Critchley 2001).

The historicist attitude towards “nature” seems to align itself with literary culture, while the eliminativist attitude seems to pull towards scientific culture. Furthermore, one can witness in these two attitudes and two cultures an ongoing debate between *idealism* and *empiricism*, from the history of philosophy. This debate, very broadly construed, is an age-old disagreement between more mind-dependent, *a priori*, contemplative methods of philosophizing, usually independently of science; as opposed to sense-based, empirically-driven, *a posteriori* ways of philosophizing that seek not only to follow, but also emulate science. Though one has to also note that idealism and empiricism have often been intertwined in complex ways. Thus, by pointing out these two ways of philosophizing, I am only making a very general statement regarding the historical relationship of philosophy with science. I am not saying that all philosophers can be readily classified as either empiricist or idealist – that would be overgeneralizing. Sometimes philosophy has been closer to the science of its time, and other times it has sought to be autonomous and distinct from what is then deemed to be science.

It has become commonplace to remark that the latest incarnation of empiricism, “*naturalism*” has been widely acknowledged as *the* reigning philosophical ideology, or

⁴ To further illustrate what these cultures are supposed to be about, let me say that Snow also mentions that traditionally prestigious cultural items such as “novels, history, poetry, plays” are purvey of literary intellectuals, though the scientists can pride themselves on being more rigorous and intensive in their intellectual pursuits and arguments (p. 12-13).

orthodoxy, at least in analytic philosophy (De Caro and Macarthur 2004b).⁵ In more recent years though, it has not only been idealist rivals from outside that have challenged the orthodoxy of “naturalism”; proponents of *liberal naturalism*, who advocate for a re-examination of “naturalism” in view of its restrictive philosophical commitments have also shaken the reign of conventional “naturalism” (ibid). “Naturalism” is nowadays very much a contested *term of art*, with even adherents of it being unable to authoritatively assert what counts as “naturalism” and what does not. To the extent that it remains the orthodoxy, “naturalism” is a term to contest and vie for, because it has *positive* or *honorific* connotations for the views it describes (De Caro and Voltolini 2010, p. 70-71; Papineau 2020).

Philosophy – especially analytic philosophy – has been very much in the business of attempting to make our language and terms clearer to us, and therefore, we have good reason to believe that it might be of help in adjudicating between the two attitudes to “nature”. If so, given the context of the dialectic of two cultures, it is inescapable that we have to confront the orthodoxy of “naturalism” and investigate where philosophy ought to stand – to say whether and *how* “naturalist” philosophy stands to *bridge* the two cultures and contribute to the aforementioned gap in understanding (Sorell, op cit, p. 5). Consequently, two issues arise: First, we have to investigate what the doctrine of “naturalism” entails. Secondly, we have to relate this to the above gap between the two cultures, and see if a form of “naturalism” is tenable in this context.

These are no small tasks, and not ones that this thesis aims to conclusively solve or answer either. Rather, what I have to propose is that we examine the role that an understanding of “nature” can bring to the table for the interest of undertaking the above tasks. In this way we both properly situate the question of “nature” in language in a more specifically focused and relevant contemporary context, but also – as I hope to show – we contribute to an improved self-reflective attitude for “naturalism”. To that end, we need to find a way to *talk about* “nature” in “naturalism” in a better way, one more conducive to the ongoing, overall self-knowing mental activity of all of humanity. In the greater context that I mentioned, this will involve accomodating the historical attitude to “nature” in “naturalism”. Philosophy, according to reformed naturalism, will not be philosophy in the conventional sense, but instead a broad category of activities, mediating between the two extremes of a spectrum formed by the other two groups of activities self-knowledge (or cultures), science and traditional culture.⁶

⁵ Jaegwon Kim (2003) is very often cited as the originator of the statement that “naturalism” is – or *was* – the reigning *ideology* in analytic philosophy (e.g. Rouse 2007; Verhaegh 2018). For a discussion as to whether this really is the case for analytic philosophy, to the extent of being an essentially defining characteristic thereof, see Glock (2008, ch. 5.3).

⁶ I will say more in Chapter 5 about what science and literary culture are in my view. For now, we may understand science in the conventional sense, as the group of natural, formal, and social sciences, with the latter (social science) being closer in the spectrum to philosophy. Philosophy, in turn, we can understand, for now, as a distinctively normative and critical group of activities, ranging from law to academic philosophy, to art criticism – even including media studies, and gender studies. Then, I understand literary culture – somewhat differently, yet similarly to C.P. Snow – as the more spontaneous, unregimented, non-academic activities that we traditionally associate with culture. Thus, traditional-literary culture can range from visual art, literature, poetry, theatre, but also – *crucially* – folk ways of knowing, e.g. folk beliefs, cooking traditions, mythology etc. These are also

B. Conceptual engineering, the Mapping Sequence and reformed naturalism

I have set the stage for my project in a rather ambitious way, but I have not made clear what I intend to do precisely that will result in a way of understanding “nature” more conducive to self-knowledge. Before I go on to present the layout of my project, let me attempt to explain what I have just said above.

“Naturalism” is partly a doctrine about *how we should* philosophize. That said, as a form of empiricism, “naturalism” allies and identifies itself with the scientific culture (or simply *science*), so its adherents feel confident that they can say what the world is actually like, i.e. in an ontological sense, to answer the question ‘What is nature?’. That is so, because “naturalism”, as I will show, employs a limited meaning of “nature”, signifying *the world as it really exists*. But this is not the term “nature” appropriate for philosophy – it is the meaning of “nature” preferred by science. Thus, the question of “nature” in language feeds back to what philosophy (aka “naturalism”) perceives its role to be in the two cultures. Namely, “naturalism” misunderstands its role, and unlike science, it has neither its own exclusive (scientific) language, nor is it designed to know what the world *is* like. Those things are the purview of science. So, if philosophy is to identify as science, we might as well abandon any hope of bridging the two cultures through philosophy, or indeed salvaging anything from literary culture. This is detrimental for philosophy itself, because its role is neither to tell us what the world is like, *nor to tell us how it appears to us to be* – literary culture tells us the latter. Philosophy should make neither ontological, explanatory statements like science does, nor should it indulge in the free-play of phenomenological descriptions of literary culture. Philosophy *should* be akin to *skepticism*, constructively doubting what both cultures say, and in doing so bridging them through its critical discourse.⁷

In order to accomplish the above task – that is, to accommodate the historicist attitude to “nature” in “naturalism”, thus promoting self-knowledge while respecting both the scientific and literary cultures, and bridging them – I will present, defend and rely on a total of four elements:

- (I) Herman Cappelen’s *Austerity Framework* for terminological revision (2018)
- (II) A unified theory of the *metaphoric content* of “nature”, resulting in *The Mapping Sequence of Strategies* for “nature” (or the Mapping Sequence, for short)
- (III) A revised position within “naturalism” (call this *reformed naturalism*)

demanding intellectual activities in their own ways, but not rigorous and regimented in the way that the opposite extreme of activities is. Thus, the spectrum of activities of self-knowledge that I propose aims to capture, in a rough way, *all* of our mind-dependent activities with which we come to become familiar with the external world.

⁷ For a similar proposal see Maddy 2017. In general, I will employ the terms *phenomenology* and *phenomenological* to indicate simply discourse about how things *appear* to human beings in literary culture, without imposing on them the rigorous methods of philosophy and science. Thus, I will *not* be referring to the historical way of doing philosophy whose originator is Edmund Husserl, which – very roughly speaking – seeks to critically understand our subjective, first-person, sensory experiences in terms of objective (or intersubjectively reproducible), third-person explanations. See Zahavi 2018, for a contemporary introduction to the latter topic, which I will not directly and explicitly touch upon further in this thesis.

(IV) A new preferred, Kantian meaning for “nature” in reformed naturalism
(*chaotic nature* ruled by *necessity*, opposed to *freedom and normativity*)

Perhaps not all four of these elements will prove as successful, or important in the above feat that that I have set out to achieve, but I will return to this matter in the Epilogue. For now, let me briefly say a bit more about the above elements, and how I plan to utilize them in the following chapters to serve my goals.

As I mentioned earlier, the task of attempting to clarify language is not new to philosophy;⁸ recently this tendency has seen a popular revival in academic philosophy, in the form of what has been variously called terminological *revisionism*, *conceptual ethics*, or most famously, *conceptual engineering*.⁹ Cappelen’s Austerity Framework (ibid) will be my favored way of approaching this task of revising the term “nature” to suit my goals, and I will present and defend my choice in Chapter 2, along with a discussion of metaphors. This discussion of metaphors will culminate in a unified theory of metaphoric content, which will be useful, since I will argue that the best way to understand the term “nature” is to paraphrase its meaning through a series of strategies. I will properly introduce and defend these strategies – i.e. the Mapping Sequence – in Chapter 3, followed by an initial investigation of the *topic of nature*, to prepare the ground for my further investigation of “nature” in “naturalism”.¹⁰

In Chapter 4, I will begin by providing a sharpened characterization of a conventional set of positions within “naturalism”, which I will call *classical naturalism*. This characterization will be cashed out as a set of commitments, understood as *family resemblance traits* uniting this set of conventional positions. I will argue against adopting the characteristic commitments of classical naturalism, on the grounds that they lead to a *scientific* and *reductive* doctrine for philosophy.¹¹ In addition, I will demonstrate that adherence to classical naturalism leads to a detrimental oversight of the term “nature”. Building on classical naturalism’s drawbacks, I will arrive both at a set of potential commitments for a reformed naturalism, designed to better serve my goals, as well as a new preferred meaning of “nature” for this reformed naturalism.

In Chapter 5, I will further develop reformed naturalism, arriving at a specific position, which I will defend and contrast with a different family of positions within “naturalism”, *liberal naturalism*, and other alternatives to classical naturalism. Then, I will conclude my defense of reformed naturalism and my preferred meaning of “nature” by reprising the greater issue of philosophy’s role in mediating between the two cultures.

⁸ Avoiding discussions about language in philosophy is indeed harder to do than finding such examples; one can easily mention anything from Plato’s dialogues, to post-Fregean philosophy of language; or more literary minded – perhaps more obfuscating than clarifying – specimens (e.g. Derrida 1972; see also Eagleton 1983, Ch. 4).

⁹ See Burgess, Cappelen and Plunkett 2020 for a recent collection of papers on this topic; see especially Cappelen and Plunkett 2020, for a wide-ranging introduction.

¹⁰ I use the word “topic” in a technical sense here, following Cappelen. This is akin to the “nature” simpliciter sense that I mentioned earlier, but not quite the same. Topic is overall meant to convey the continuous semantic link that a particular word has had with its users, independent of changes of sense and reference. I will say more on this in Chapter 2. As for “nature”, see Hepburn 1967 for an introduction to the history of this term in philosophy.

¹¹ I will explain at length what I mean by the adjectives *scientific* and *reductive* in Chapter 4. For now, we may understand these adjectives as describing a version of philosophy that aligns itself too much with science.

Thus, I will attempt to show that reformed naturalism can result in a version of philosophy that leads to a balanced *activity of self-knowledge*, wherein philosophy, science and literary culture all perform the tasks respectively suited to them, and interact harmoniously, among other things improving our understanding of language, and in particular the term “nature”.

Chapter 2. Conceptual engineering and methodology

Introduction: terminological revision, CE and metaphors

Much of Herman Cappelen's recent work (2018, 2020a, 2020b; Cappelen and Plunkett 2020) has centered on clarifying and providing an account for the topic of terminological revision, which could be applicable within all of philosophy – and in all of thinking and human discourse in general. Cappelen calls this “conceptual engineering”, though at various times he seems to have misgivings about branding his subject thusly.¹² As Max Deutsch suggests, this topic is “variously otherwise known as *revisionism*, *explication* and *ameliorative analysis*” (2019, p. 574), while others have preferred to label this activity “conceptual ethics” (Burgess and Plunkett 2013 a, b). I will be confining myself to Cappelen's conceptual engineering in this thesis (henceforth ‘CE’). That said, Cappelen himself is not stringent in the terminology used for this topic, since “expressions do not come with fixed meanings” and the topic itself concerns the revision and contestation of terms (Cappelen and Plunkett 2020, p. 2). That is, the very term for this activity of terminological revision is itself up for revision. What's more, historically speaking, terminological discussion has certainly been around in philosophy since the time of the Sophists, Socrates and Plato; and in more recent times, it is fair to say that Rudolf Carnap's works on the aforementioned “explication” of terms, and the exegesis and developments surrounding it, form a prominent example and inspiration for this kind of topic of terminological revision.¹³

In what follows, I will be taking Cappelen's 2018 book, *Fixing Language* (henceforth ‘FL’), as the basis for the methodological side of my project to revise the term “nature” in the context of philosophical “naturalism”.¹⁴ In FL, Cappelen argues both for a comprehensive account, attempting to provide a unifying description of what he considers to be past examples of CE, but also offers his own proposal for doing CE, the “Austerity Framework” – I will be mostly working with the latter. Indeed, I will begin by examining and explaining my understanding of the Austerity Framework; then, I will give some reasons as to why it is suitable to my project of revising “nature” in “naturalism”; finally, I will argue that in order to fully grasp the various meanings of “nature”, one has to take into account the *metaphors* associated with “nature”, which *prima facie* contradicts the Austerity Framework. To be clear, though I will be taking the above Framework provided by Cappelen as the point of departure for my project, I will neither be following it religiously, nor providing an exegesis thereof. And though my

¹² This will become clearer in the extended quote by Cappelen himself, which I provide on page 2 of this chapter.

¹³ For the case of “nature” in particular, in the Sophists, see Guthrie 1971; many of Plato's dialogues center on discussions that are at least in part terminological, see for instance the discussion of “virtue” in the *Meno*, and its epistemological implication, or the recurring debate on “justice” in the *Republic* – whose alternative title is indeed “On Justice”. For Carnap's own presentation of his views on ‘explication’ see Carnap 1950, 1963; Brun 2016 provides a useful introduction (and perhaps an update) on ‘explication’. Cappelen acknowledges his debt to Carnap, but also to Sally Haslanger's work (e.g. 2000, 2020), among others (FL, p. ix-x).

¹⁴ Cappelen has also recently offered a more general “Master Argument” for CE (2020a), however I will here focus on his views in FL, given that, in my understanding, Cappelen 2020a repeats these views without significant alterations. In addition, I believe that Cappelen's particular views on how CE should be practiced are more readily accessible in FL than in the “Master Argument”.

approach to the Austerity framework will be mostly instrumental – making the best of it that I can for the purposes of my project – I will also seek to give sound arguments and reasons whenever I (seem to) deviate from it. Purpose and methodology are mutually influential; hence I will try to be fair to both my project and Cappelen’s Framework.

A. Cappelen’s Austerity Framework

Cappelen himself offers a concise “Overview of the Positive Theory” of his Framework (FL, p. 53-54). I propose to go through this Overview, in groups of several components at a time, offering explanations where needed:

“(i) A theory of conceptual engineering should be based on a metasemantic theory. The metasemantics gives an account of how semantic values change over time. The metasemantics is distinct from the metasemantic superstructure (our beliefs about the semantics). [...]

(ii) The framework I propose is externalist. It treats all semantic change as analogous with reference change. [...]

(iii) What changes when we engage in conceptual engineering are extensions and intensions of expressions, and various external factors determine how that change happens. [...]" (ibid)

Let us start with (iii). To begin with, I take it that CE according to Cappelen primarily involves “meaning change” over time (p. 3, 62). *Meaning* (or semantic value), in turn, is to be understood in terms of extension and intension, and so meaning change is equivalent with change in extension and intension. A term’s *extension* (or reference), then, is the set of “things that a predicate picks out (or applies to, or is true of) relative to a particular circumstance of evaluation ([i.e.] worlds, world/time pairs [...])”, while its *intension* corresponds to “the set of things that the predicate picks out relative to each circumstance” (p. 61-62). Cappelen “start[s] with the minimal assumption that predicates have intensions and that a theory of meaning (or a semantics) will at least specify an intension for each predicate.” (p. 62). The predicate (or representational device) that I will be concerned with is the term “nature”, of course.

Now, given (i), semantic externalism (or *externalism*, for short) is a ‘metasemantic theory’, because it “is a theory about what makes it the case that expressions have the semantic values that they have” (ibid). ‘Externalism’ means that “the external environment that speakers are in partly determines extensions and intensions. The relevant elements of the external environment include experts in the community, the history of use going back to the introduction of a term, complex patterns of use over time, and what the world happens to be like (independently of what the speakers believe the world is like)” (p. 63). Moving on in the Overview, Cappelen says:

“(iv) The kind of thing philosophers and psychologists call ‘concepts’ plays no role in my theory. There’s no psychological or individualistic thing or event classifiable

as a ‘concept’ that’s changing or being engineered. So ‘conceptual engineering’ isn’t a great label [...].

(v) Conceptual engineering understood within this externalist framework is a process we have little or no control over—and it’s also not transparent to us when we engage in it. [...]

(vi) The process governing particular changes is typically incomprehensible and inscrutable. [...]

(vii) Since the theory doesn’t appeal to concepts, it does not recognize incoherent or inconsistent concepts. [...]” (p. 53)

If one seriously considers what ‘concepts’ are in philosophy and psychology, then it becomes unclear whether we can talk so freely about these things, as if they were merely an equivalent term for ‘words’ as many philosophers seem to do¹⁵. Are they associated with particular brain states? Are they common among different people? It is hard to tell, so it is best to avoid talking about them so freely (Machery 2009). Thus, I take (iv) as an advantage of Cappelen’s Framework. As for (v) and (vi) – which follow from ‘externalism – since these two points have drawn considerable criticism upon Cappelen’s positive account, to the effect that CE is rendered a pointless pursuit (e.g. Deutsch 2019, p. 577; Ball 2020, p. 254; Schroeter and Schroeter 2020). In a response to critics, which draws from his work after FL (2020a), Cappelen proposes a three-stage conception for CE:

“(i) The assessment of representational devices,

(ii) Developing proposals for how to ameliorate representational devices.

(iii) Efforts to implement the proposals in (ii).” (2020b, p. 602)

Given Cappelen’s externalism, he admits that the third stage is very difficult indeed, but he insists that the first two stages are still under our control. Moreover, Cappelen thinks that this *lack of control* is, all things considered, a good thing, given that:

“If the meaning of words were easy to control, then English would immediately explode (or implode). There are too many speakers (literally billions, in billions of contexts) with indefinitely many inconsistent preferences, intentions, assessments, goals, plans, and strategies. If English were easy to change, it would collapse. We speakers are fickle, inconsistent and contentious. Our languages are stable and conservative. The latter is in part what makes the former possible.”

(ibid)

Before I move on to the last three points of the Overview, I should stress an important element of Cappelen’s account associated with point (vii) above. Despite not endorsing concepts [see (iv)], Cappelen traces the worry that concepts are ‘incoherent or inconsistent’ to troublesome elements explainable through the externalist view of language endorsed above; these elements are: “(i) inconsistent beliefs, evidence, and

¹⁵ See Thomasson 2020 for an example of rather loose talk about concepts, cf. Haslanger 2020, a notable proponent of CE who takes a more agnostic and careful stance towards concepts.

conceptions, (ii) inconsistent introductions, (iii) metasemantic messiness.” (FL, p. 86). As such Cappelen acknowledges that our *natural languages*¹⁶ operate in all sorts of chaotic and suboptimal ways for us as speakers, yet fixing our concepts – if such exist – is neither the solution, nor a viable option, really. This brings us to what *does* seem to be viable and work well in language and CE:

“(viii) Topic continuity is compatible with changes in extension and intension—the semantic values of ‘F’ can change, whilst we continue to talk about F. Furthermore, the constraints on topic continuity are not fixed, but essentially contested. [...]

(ix) Topic continuity is to be sharply distinguished from the exploitation of what I call ‘lexical effects’: the non-cognitive, non-semantic, non-pragmatic effects of words. [...]

(x) Conceptual engineering, on the view I propose, changes the world, not just the meanings of words.” (FL, p. 54)

The first things that I should explain in these last three points, are *topic* and its related notion of *topic continuity*. Cappelen invokes the notion of topic in order to address a worry raised by P.F. Strawson in response to Carnap’s proposal (e.g. 1950, ch. 1),¹⁷ to the effect that philosophical problems arising from the usage of “concepts in non-scientific discourse” can be dealt with by appealing to the more sophisticated use of terms in science.¹⁸ Strawson’s worry is that by undertaking Carnap’s proposal, we are not really addressing the problematic usage of terms in everyday, natural language, but we are rather “*changing the topic*” (Strawson 1963, p. 505; FL, p. 98). Cappelen finds that this worry is also implicit in Haslanger’s ameliorative work on race and gender; Haslanger phrases a very similar, if not identical, worry, by saying that “Revisionary projects are in danger of providing answers to questions that weren’t being asked”. Yet, looking at the same page from which this sentence is taken, Haslanger provides us also with the key to Cappelen’s answer to Strawson’s worry. It is “precisely because our ordinary concepts are vague [...] [that] there is room to stretch, shrink, or refigure what exactly we are talking about in new and sometimes unexpected directions” (Haslanger 2000, p. 34; FL, *ibid*).

For Cappelen, this can be expressed by admitting that the topic of a given term is “more coarse-grained” than its extensions and intensions; therefore, even though the extensions and intensions of a term can change, there can still be topic continuity. The reason that this is so, hinges exactly on the distinction between *theoretical* and *non-*

¹⁶ I use the term ‘natural languages’ for the sake of convention and intelligibility, but not uncritically so – I am aware that this particular term is not neutral with respect to the subject matter of “nature”, yet I cannot find a better term in current usage for what I am saying above. Perhaps ‘inherited lay languages’, ‘non-scientific languages’, or ‘informal languages’ would be more accurate, but none of these terms has the currency that ‘natural languages’ has.

¹⁷ This the work that Carnap himself cites as the authoritative statement of his view in his response to Strawson in the same volume (Carnap 1963, p. 933; Schilpp 1963).

¹⁸ As mentioned earlier, following Cappelen, I take it that when philosophers talk freely about ‘concepts’ they roughly mean ‘terms’ or ‘representational devices’

theoretical components of the term to be revised.¹⁹ Explicitly talking about a term's extension and intension is theoretical talk; these are philosophical terms of art. Unless we are unusually sophisticated people, professional philosophers, or linguists, we do not normally go about discussing what a term picks out or what its intension is etc. However we do have an intuitive, pre- or non-theoretical understanding of the term's topic (i.e. what it is about); according to Cappelen, – we can see this in action when we can assert that we are “talk about the same topic”, or “saying the same thing” (FL, p. 108).

The *contestation* involved in the ongoing dialogue, and communicative efforts, regarding what can be considered same-saying about the topic of a certain term, is *both* what brings together this term's various meanings, but also the *essential* activity that defines what a term means, and how it is revised. This latter insight regarding contestation explains to some extent what Cappelen means by (x) – our words and their meanings do not exist in some quasi-Platonic, Fregean third realm.²⁰ Instead, meaning change in CE involves tangible features of the world: contestations over word usage.

This leaves (ix), the *lexical effects* of a given term, which are by Cappelen's own admission *not* something that we know much about, and indeed gaining knowledge about them is a largely empirical matter of linguistic studies (p. 130). Cappelen provides some illustrations of these “non-cognitive, non-semantic, nonpragmatic effects of words”, by appealing to our understanding of the affective, emotive, or even unintended aspect of terms, as evident in names, pejoratives, branding and brand names, and metaphors (p. 123-124). What one's attitude is, towards these lexical effects, plays a great role in Cappelen's typology of CE within the Austerity Framework (FL, Ch. 13). More on this in part C. of the present chapter, when I present said typology and discuss my own intended treatment of lexical effects according to the Framework, especially as they pertain to metaphorical content.

Before I turn to the reasons for using the Austerity Framework (B.), let me conclude by emphasizing two last aspects of Cappelen's Positive Theory, which are not apparent from the above Overview. First, I would like to explore Derek Ball's remark that in addition to externalism, Cappelen's Framework also depends on another pillar, “speech act pluralism”; I understand this to be “the idea that one typically says many things by an utterance, including things that go beyond the proposition semantically expressed” (Ball, p. 246). Ball gets at this idea of speech act pluralism by quoting a passage where Cappelen alludes to his earlier work with Ernest Lepore, “Insensitive Semantics” (Cappelen and Lepore 2005); the quoted passage reads:

¹⁹ Notice the similarity here between ‘theoretical’ and ‘non-theoretical’, and ‘scientific’ as opposed to ‘non-scientific’, ‘ordinary’ or ‘everyday’ terms. This simultaneous distinction and relation will be of great relevance to my understanding of “nature” as both a philosophical and a ‘lay’ term – that is, as possessing both ‘theoretical’ and ‘non-theoretical’ components.

²⁰ That is, the notion that words and their meanings (or ‘concepts’ for those who use this term) are situated neither in the external, physical world, nor in our heads, but rather in some – unfathomable to me – ‘third realm’. Perhaps this is a rather hasty reading of what Frege might have meant, but this is not a thesis attempting to explain Frege's work.

“What we say goes far beyond the proposition semantically expressed. What we say (or one of the propositions we say) when we utter a sentence can be true even though the proposition semantically expressed is false.” (FL, p. 139)

Now, indebted though I am to Ball for pointing this out, I would like to argue that invoking ‘speech act pluralism’ in the context of my project will be overly restrictive, and so I will pursue a broader reading of Cappelen that does not depend on the above interpretation of this second pillar. Call this the ‘Commitment to Meaning Pluralism’. If we look at the cited page more closely, Cappelen arrives at this Commitment by appeal to the coarse-grainedness of topic, which he invokes in the context of explaining how meaning change has occurred with respect to the term ‘family’ – “what it takes to be a family at *t* is different from what it takes to be a family at *t**”, yet we are talking about family at both times (ibid). As for why my interpretation of the above, as a Commitment to Meaning Pluralism, is broader and less restrictive, notice that Ball’s understanding of speech act pluralism concerns utterances and speech acts, whereas in my project I am concerned with the *usage* and various meanings of “nature” in general. Thus, in the Commitment proposed, I aim to expand Cappelen’s pluralism about the meaning of a term to *any* usage, be it written, uttered, or otherwise.²¹

Finally, I would like to point out that from Cappelen’s Framework, there follows a dismissal of appeals to a concept’s, or term’s function or purpose (FL, Ch. 16). Since accepting this feature of the Austerity Framework will involve my providing reasons for my endorsement of said Framework, I will carry discussion of this “Dismissal of Conceptual Function” over to the following section of this chapter.

B. Reasons for endorsing the Austerity Framework and a disclaimer

“Why call this framework ‘the Austerity Framework’? What’s so austere about it? It is austere in that it appeals to fewer theoretical entities than alternative frameworks for conceptual engineering. It’s widely agreed that expressions of the kind I talk about have extensions and intensions. The kind of externalism I advocate is not universally endorsed, but the core elements of it are widely endorsed. So the core components of the theory are few and relatively noncontroversial. Most of the competing theories will incorporate them. The advantage of this lack of commitments is that I need not take on board a theory of what concepts are. There are [sic] a plethora of options for thinking about concepts. I think that all of the options are problematic, so by avoiding talk about concepts I don’t need to fight those battles. Many of the alternative accounts of conceptual engineering not only assume that there are concepts, but also claim that concepts perform functions. That requires an additional theory of how to

²¹ In the relevant literature, ‘utterances’ certainly pick out both spoken and written sentences; however, ‘speech acts’ tend to implicate spoken utterances (hence ‘illocutionary force’ etc.). Cappelen and Lepore seem to have such spoken utterances in mind (e.g. 2005, Ch. 12), thus, I deem it safer to explicitly expand their notion of ‘speech act pluralism’ in the above way, so as to avoid this gray area in the literature.

identify, individuate, and change these functions. My view bypasses all that very messy terrain.” (FL, p. 54)

Utilizing the Austerity Framework, the project to revise “nature” bases itself an established semantic theory – externalism – but also, following Cappelen, there is no need to provide and defend a theory of concepts. This project simply has to do with words and what they mean. That said, detractors of externalism might find a great deal of what will be said in the following chapters problematic. According to externalism, the term “nature” and its usage and meaning – even in “naturalism” – are largely determined by external historical-cultural factors. There is not sufficient space to adjudicate the debate surrounding externalism, though there are worthwhile arguments to be made in favor of internalism too (e.g. Ludlow 2014).²²

Having said that, aside from the advantages mentioned above by Cappelen, there are two other reasons to endorse the Austerity Framework and externalism. The first, reason has to do with reflexivity given the subject matter of my project. Of course, one does not have to endorse the views that one examines. However, in this particular project, the aim is not only to investigate “nature” in “naturalism”, but also to critically revise *both* terms with respect to one another. Following Strawson (1985, Ch. 4, esp. p. 78-79), I take it that there is at least a parallel between semantic externalism and “naturalism”. Let me explain; for now, I take it that a basic version of naturalism will treat language like any other phenomenon and object in the world, as dictated by our best science. Therefore, if externalism is the view that meaning in language does not arise mysteriously but is somehow dependent on the speech communities to which we belong, then, it is a view congenial to “naturalism”.

The above provides some initial motivation to adopt the Austerity Framework. A more important reason has to do with defending the historical attitude to “nature” in language, as described in the Prologue. The Austerity Framework’s externalism helps in this, since natural languages in this view are not “fickle, inconsistent and contentious” – like their speakers – but instead, “stable and conservative” (op cit, p. 12). I find the underlying tug of war, or dialectical, perception of language rather truth tracking, or at least balanced. And related to the subject matter, “nature”, which is a very prevalent and persistent, yet infamously elusive term, I find the idea that language is relatively determinate or unchanging to be an encouraging factor in this project, if true.

A last point that I would like to discuss in defense of my adoption of the Austerity Framework, as the methodology for this project, is the issue of the “naturalist” context for my project of revising “nature”. As I mentioned at the closing of the previous section, there follows a Dismissal of Conceptual Function from the Framework. Let me elaborate on what this means, and how it is *prima facie* troublesome, but surmountable, for my project. First, on the ‘Dismissal of Conceptual Function’: Cappelen does not think that words or terms have aims or purposes – it is the people who use words and terms that have such aims and purposes (FL, p. 180). Therefore, properly speaking, other than

²² The very fact that we, as individual speakers, can reflect on the terms that we employ, and make adjustments in our speech – however minimal, or ineffective for communication in most contexts – is reason enough to at least consider alternatives to externalism. Unfortunately this is not the place to do so.

being about its topic (as we have already seen on page 4, in A.), a term fulfills no other function (p. 186). Moreover, given the Commitment to Meaning Pluralism, there is constant and ongoing contestation about what any given term means, and this contest is among innumerable candidate meanings (p. 187). The function of a word only enters into this contestation on the level of the people lobbying for a certain meaning, and then, these people do not only have to contend with what other living speakers would like to say by using said word, but also, more crucially, with the externalist conventions of the language itself.

As a result, my bid to revise “nature” in “naturalism” certainly appeals to a function that I would like “nature” to perform; but this is only at the level of picking a certain meaning that best suits my preferred view of “naturalism”. At this point, one can raise the worry that simultaneously conceptually engineering both “nature”, and “naturalism” is a recipe of disaster, given that there are too many moving parts. My answer is that as regards “naturalism”, I am conducting what David Chalmers calls “thesis engineering” (2018, p. 10-11). That is, I am not revising “naturalism” *per se*, but rather I am picking and defending a certain type of “naturalist” thesis composed of an array of old and relatively stable terms. To be clear, I am not revising “naturalism” at the level of ‘meaning’, but instead I am contesting what it entails as a view, or thesis. Namely, I will be arguing for a particular thesis of “naturalism” (reformed naturalism), allowing for a view of “nature” that will be both more representative of humanity’s place in the world and its capacities, as well as more suited to the critical tasks of philosophy in the activity of self-knowledge.²³

C. Metaphors and conceptually engineering “nature”

Judging from his discussion of metaphors, as part of the lexical effects of a term, Cappelen does not seem to like any of the accounts of metaphor on offer. He is rather quick with both Donald Davidson’s account of metaphor (Davidson 1978; FL, p. 124-126), as well as George Lakoff’s notion of *framing*, or “non-literal effects of combinations of expressions” (Lakoff 2004; FL, p. 126-128) – though, as we have seen, Cappelen does seem to see at least *some* validity in these views, and in metaphors in general, as an illustration of lexical effects.²⁴

Before I go on to say how I will attempt to get to a better understanding of the lexical effects of “nature” and what I plan to do about them, let me elaborate a little on how I think metaphors relate to the meanings of “nature”. When I say that “nature” is through and through metaphoric, or that it has got metaphoric content that can become more readily intelligible to us through paraphrase, I do not mean that “nature” is always a metaphor in one word, or that it is straightforwardly similar to metaphors. “Nature” is after all but a single word, while metaphors are extended figures of speech, involving many words arranged in phrases, or complete sentences. Thus “nature” does not seem to be like metaphors at all, *prima facie*.

²³ I will say more on these matters later, especially in Chapter 5.

²⁴ That said, nowhere in FL does Cappelen say what would be a good account of metaphor for him. Following Hill 2016, I will place Cappelen’s opinions on the matter of metaphor with reference to his position on the debates surrounding context and metaphor – the ‘Context Wars’ (Hill, 5.2).

That is, until we attempt to make sense of what “nature” might mean in a given discourse. In the Mapping Sequence of Strategies for “nature”, which I will present and defend in the following chapter, I will try to show that we can learn many things about the meanings and lexical effects of “nature” by asking certain questions, or following certain *strategies*, as I would like to call them. Thus, from this single, albeit rather vague and elusive, word, “nature”, we will get a great amount of useful information for how we relate to the world and to ourselves as individuals. I do not think that this is due to some obscure or spooky reasons, but rather for the simple reason that “nature” has come to have some very specific, historical meanings in our natural languages. Now, as to *why* and precisely *how* it has come to have these meanings and lexical effects on us – that is indeed the mystery. Following Cappelen, we can say that such meaning change is ultimately *inscrutable* to us, and as of yet we know very little about lexical effects.

What does matter, and what I would like to investigate, is that “nature” *does appear* to us in a certain way; it does certain things to us as a word, making us relate to the world and ourselves in certain ways, or it somehow represents these relations that we have to the world and ourselves. I thus understand the *metaphorical content* of “nature” in a rather literal or etymologically driven way. From the Greek *metapherein*, I understand the metaphorical content of “nature” to be what is *conveyed* in this word.²⁵ It would seem then, that all I will be doing is exploring the culturally and historically determined intensions and extensions of “nature” in a rather eccentric way. If so, then it does not sound as if I will be breaking any of the conditions for CE set by Cappelen so far, though one might ask how I will gain access to said intensions and extensions. At this stage, one might also well wonder though how exactly what I have just said relates to established theories of metaphor. One might further wonder what it is precisely that I aim to do and how it relates to Cappelen’s Framework. Let me address these three worries in turn.

As I said earlier, “nature” cannot be a metaphor in the conventional way, but rather it conveys some metaphorical content about how we relate to the world and ourselves.²⁶ Out of the four types of accounts of metaphor offered by David Hill, one may most closely identify this kind of content as a hybrid between that of “Semantic Twist Accounts” and “Pragmatic Twist Accounts”:

“[Semantic Twist Accounts] hold that metaphor results from the interaction or interanimation of words and word meanings as they are brought together and act

²⁵ For those critically disposed, one can identify this as the “Heideggerian ploy” (Jay and Botstein 1978), which one can often encounter in Heidegger himself, but also in the works of his famous student, Hannah Arendt (e.g. 1958), among others. However, one can also say that lengthy acquaintance with any natural language, especially our native language, might predispose us to the habit of mind of construing the meaning of words through their etymology – patently false though this habit might be. e.g. ‘Philo-sophy’ does not necessarily mean ‘the love of wisdom’. Phrased this way, perhaps the naturalistically minded may also see this as some cognitive bias, afflicting all people with respect to their native natural languages, though I have no official evidence for this.

²⁶ Note that there will be some similarity between what I say and the work of George Lakoff and his associates on metaphorical *framing* (e.g. Lakoff and Johnson 1980; Lakoff 2004). I will return to this similarity in the next chapter. Cappelen incidentally disagrees with Lakoff’s theory, but once again, he provides no arguments for this (FL, p. 127)

on each other in the settings provided by particular utterances made on particular concrete occasions.” (2016, 4.1)

Harold Skulsky (1986) calls the above “metaphorese”, thus understanding metaphorical content of such figurative speech as having essentially ad hoc meaning. For instance, imagine someone saying, “Greece is a cruel mother that neglects its own children”. Following the Semantic Twist interpretation, we can say the speaker puts together the terms Greece, and mother, thereby mutually altering the meaning of both terms, in order to say something about how the government of this country treats its citizens.

On the other hand, Pragmatic Twist Accounts:

“[...] maintain that when we resort to metaphor, we use words and phrases with their standard literal meanings to say one thing, [...] yet we are taken to mean [...] something entirely different. [...] Metaphor is a genre of deliberate and overt suggestion, one by means of which speakers commit themselves to, implicitly vouch for the truth of, the things they suggest. Paraphrase is an effort to get at what is metaphorically suggested by putting it (or some part of it, or some approximation to it) directly into words, thereby explicitly saying (more or less fully and more or less accurately) what was implicitly vouched for by the original metaphorical utterance.” (ibid, 4.2)

This latter type of accounts, then, focuses on the ability of the listener to paraphrase the metaphorical content in more readily intelligible speech. As one might remark, this latter account is remarkably similar to how I interpreted the previous example of Greece as a cruel mother. The difference is that given the same example, a proponent of a Pragmatic Twist account would not emphasize how the words are put together in an unusual way, which mutually changes their meanings – as the Semantic Twist proponent would. Instead, the Pragmatic Twist adherent would emphasize that in this situation, what is required is the listener’s cooperative understanding, who must not take Greece literally to be a mother, but should instead paraphrase the statement in order to make sense of it in literal terms, e.g. “The conditions in Greece are so disfavorable that its citizens must leave against their will in order to survive”.

I believe that it is possible to mix these two accounts in order to help understand whatever non-evident meaning is conveyed by “nature”. Mixing the two accounts, what my unified account of metaphoric content for “nature” amounts to, then, is that: *whenever “nature” is uttered, it requires the charitable cooperation of the listener in order to convey its meaning through paraphrase, because without this critical interpretative help its full meaning will go unnoticed.*

This should answer the first two worries raised above; let me explain how. Access to historical intensions and extensions of “nature” in the upcoming Mapping Sequence will simply be gained by critically asking the right questions to what our literary culture has already provided us with; i.e. a wealth of meanings of “nature” embedded in natural language. This kind of meaningful metaphorical content is to be paraphrased in a way that parallels and fuses the semantic content described in the above two accounts of metaphor, as I have formulate it above. Two things have to be taken on faith for now,

though they will be proved later in the process of my project: first, that “nature” tends to go unnoticed in the above way; and second, that the questions or strategies that I will be proposing are the right ones. The proof will be in the pudding. Relevant examples will also be provided in the next chapter, along with the Mapping Sequence itself.

Now, for the third worry we should return to Cappelen’s work. Cappelen discourages *lexical effect-exploiting* CE (FL, Ch. 11). That is, CE that is indifferent to topic continuity and communication, and instead aims to make words achieve certain desired outcomes by taking advantage of said words’ lexical effects (p. 149). An example given for this type of CE is the usage of the indubitably charged term “rape”, to mean something that falls outside the legal or conventional definition of rape. People who encounter this revised usage of “rape” without due warning about its new meaning will most likely think of the ‘pre-revision’ legal or conventional meaning, and hence they will be talking about a different topic than those aware of the revision. The severity of the term “rape”, along with the above lack of ‘same-speaking’ would very likely lead to some serious misunderstandings and lapses in communication, to say the least (p. 132-133).

Now, as I have said so far, I neither think that I can directly detect nor exploit lexical effects by teasing out the metaphorical content of “nature” through my strategies to paraphrase its meaning. Meaning has to do with extensions and intensions, and so these are the things that I intend to deal with for the most part. The main lexical effect of “nature” that I am aware of is its normative pull (or normativity). There is something that we identify as *the course of nature*, which is associated with the related term ‘necessity’. I will return to and explain what I mean later in my project, and indeed make use of this lexical effect of the *normativity* of “nature”. Two things to note though, in closing, are:

First, that if “nature” typically goes unnoticed, as I asked us to assume, there should be drastic consequences if such lexical effects are exploited. People will be unaware that there is some form of manipulation in the way that they relate to the world, merely because they do not notice the term “nature” and its effects.

And second, that even if such lexical effects of “nature” *can* be detected, it is doubtful by Cappelen’s own terms that one can successfully manipulate them on a large scale by implementing related strategies. Doing CE successfully means changing the world, and so it is doubtful that one could change how people talk about “nature” at will or overnight.

Chapter 3. The topic of “nature”

Introduction: “nature”, lay and philosophical

Philosophers who endorse and discuss “naturalism” do not live in a vacuum; such philosophers are not insulated from the meanings (i.e. extensions and intensions) of the word “nature” employed in previous philosophical and lay talk, and the historical meanings of “nature” accrued in the natural language employed by both philosophers and laypeople.²⁷ Indeed, though in their academic capacity philosophers employ technical, theoretical terms (or terms of art) – whose meaning is highly specific, and sometimes given strictly *by stipulation*, which goes against the lay meaning of such terms²⁸ – philosophers are, nonetheless, also simultaneously members of the lay linguistic community, and they employ lay meanings of terms *in tandem with* terms of art, *even in* their philosophical talk.²⁹

Now, I would like to argue that even though the term “nature” is no longer a term of art in philosophical talk pertaining to “naturalism”, “nature” is still a central and very important term in such philosophical talk. Moreover, following Cappelen, philosophers endorsing and discussing “naturalism” are *not in control* of what the term “nature” means in their talk, and indeed, by employing the term “nature” (and its correlates, such as “natural”) they express through their utterances multiple meanings, besides the meaning that they wish to employ (FL, p. 139; see also Lepore and Cappelen 2005). However, even within Cappelen’s Austerity Framework, the above assertion is not necessarily uncontroversial; given Cappelen’s externalist metasemantic theory, we might expect that experts³⁰ might have at least some control on what “nature” means. A closer reading of Cappelen dispels this objection; Cappelen himself dismisses the possibility that there are such “safe spaces” within talk, where experts can exercise absolute control over a word’s meaning, and he is indeed doubtful that such experts can be found in the first place (FL, 7.4). Cappelen even dismisses the possibility that one can “define” the meaning of a word by stipulation; according to him, the most an author can do is to plead for the reader’s charity in interpreting a term in a certain way – to paraphrase Cappelen, there are no safe spaces where we have control over what our words mean (FL, p. 75-76). To this, I would like to add that in the case of talk about “naturalism”, even if we were to accept definition by stipulation in this weak sense, the problem is exactly that such stipulation is not be found in works about naturalism, given that “nature” is not a philosophical term of art therein. That said, I plan to investigate what *is* after all said of

²⁷ I will confine my discussion here to philosophers and laypeople, leaving aside non-lay academics from other fields, who surely also employ the term “nature” in their own particular way. As we will see though, this separation between philosophy and other academic fields might be eventually unfeasible, given that “naturalism” in some of its forms entails a reduction of all academic fields into one unified scientific and holistic pursuit of knowledge.

²⁸ See for example Bennett and McLaughlin’s discussion of the term “supervenience” as a term of art given purely by stipulation, and then subsequent usage in the philosophical community (2018, 2.1-2.2).

²⁹ Compare the above discussion of “supervenience” with van Riel and Van Gulick’s discussion of “reduction” as a term of art that is indeed influenced by its meaning in natural language (2019, Introduction).

³⁰ In this case those holding the authority to stipulate the meanings of terms of art in philosophical discourse about “naturalism”.

“nature” in talk of “naturalism”, as I would like to argue and demonstrate that “nature” is indeed a key term in talking about “naturalism”.

In order to prepare the ground for this investigation of “nature” in “naturalism” (from Chapter 4 onwards), in the present chapter I will do the following. I will first present and defend some strategies, with the intention of showing how one can navigate the plurality of meanings that “nature” can take on, by paraphrasing its metaphorical content. Then, I will look at some past overviews of meanings of “nature”, so as to survey, to some extent, what “nature” has meant historically, which will prove useful in subsequent chapters. Given the vintage and wide usage of the term “nature”, it is indeed on such overviews that I propose to depend on; because gaining some grasp of *all* the possible meanings of the term “nature” would be nigh unmanageable – so my survey will not be, and cannot be, by any means, exhaustive. To conclude, I will return to Cappelen’s Austerity Framework and explain how all of the above meanings are united in the ‘topic’ of “nature” (C.).

A. The ‘Mapping Sequence’ of strategies for meanings of “nature”

The following strategies are presented in something resembling a step-by-step process or ‘mapping sequence’, which as I indicated earlier, I hope to apply in following parts of this work. The order of these strategies is primarily meant to facilitate the following exposition of them, but it is *not* crucial or determinant in their application later – in applying the sequence I might start my way from a later strategy and work my way to a prior or later step. In addition, though related, these strategies are meant to be applicable on their own as well. Thus, in every step, I will provide an explanatory and demonstrative presentation, and then a defense, producing some further discussion and justificatory remarks, for each strategy. In addition, each strategy will come with its own name that I have devised, indicated in italics at the beginning of each step. As we will see, there will be some challenges and worries to overcome for my mapping sequence, both from the Austerity Framework itself, as well as some inherent in the topic of “nature” itself. To conclude this section, I will present the sequence in abbreviated form, so as to simplify its application in the following chapters.

i. Lay Lexical Strategy

Presentation: If philosophers are not insulated from lay talk and the historically accrued meanings in the natural language that they employ, then, we ought to begin by simply looking at the entries (or lexical items) listed in an ordinary dictionary aimed at competent speakers of the natural language in question. At this stage, I have no particularly sophisticated method to propose, other than picking the lexical item(s) that seem applicable. The short accompanying definitions and example sentences, and phrases should help. So, here are the entries on the noun “nature” from a popular lay dictionary:

“1a: the inherent character or basic constitution [...] of a person or thing: essence; ‘the *nature* of the controversy’

b: disposition, temperament; ‘it was his *nature* to look after others’;
‘her romantic *nature*’

2a: a creative and controlling force in the universe b: an inner force (such as instinct, appetite, desire) or the sum of such forces in an individual

3: a kind or class usually distinguished by fundamental or essential characteristics; ‘documents of a confidential *nature*’; ‘acts of a ceremonial *nature*’

4: the physical constitution or drives of an organism; especially: an excretory organ or function —used in phrases like ‘the call of *nature*’

5: a spontaneous attitude (as of generosity)

6: the external world in its entirety

7a: humankind's original or natural condition b: a simplified mode of life resembling this condition; ‘escape from civilization and get back to *nature*’

8: the genetically controlled qualities of an organism;
‘*nature* ... modified by nurture’

9: natural scenery; ‘enjoyed the beauties of *nature*’” (Merriam-Webster, n.d.)³¹

Looking at the above entries, if one were to talk about “nature” in the context of a discussion in environmental ethics or ecology, for example, it is likely that one would want to stress entries 2, 4, 6, 7, or 9. But, once again, if we follow Cappelen, unavoidably the context of what they say will determine the range of senses that are indeed relevant. As a result, a speaker who is not careful with what they say, even in a discussion regarding environmental ethics, might be understood as employing other, perhaps undesirable, meanings of “nature”, such as 1 or 3.

Defense: At this stage, one can complain about many things, such as the lack of distinction between sense and reference in the definitions, the circularity of some of the definitions (e.g. 7a and 9), or the lack of example sentences for all entries. Moreover, it can be objected that this first strategy does not seem at first to narrow down the meanings of “nature”, or that examining the definitions does not separate sense from reference, and thus makes meaning hard to grasp. To the first set of complaints, I respond that this is a lay, and not academic, dictionary and hence some general understanding is the goal, and not complete semantic clarity – if such is ever achievable. To the second set of complaints, I respond that it does provide *some* meanings of nature, however faulty, and that distinguishing sense and reference at this point is not necessary; the strategies to follow will deal with this issue. At this stage we are only

³¹ I have slightly modified the entries from Merriam-Webster’s website (<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/nature>), omitting one cross-reference. Definitions are provided right after the numbers of the entries, and example sentences, and phrases are within single quotation marks, where originally provided. I will return to this dictionary entry every time that I apply these strategies.

interested in getting a hold of some lay meanings of “nature”, so as to know, vaguely, what it might be that we are talking about, that is, locating the lexical item in question.

ii. *Individual-or-World Strategy (or Usage Strategy)*³²

Presentation: Having collected some lay meanings of “nature”, I take it as rather self-evident that it is useful to know if we are talking about the “nature” of a single object or “nature” in a collective, abstract sense; this is of course not a profound point – this is quite explicitly a strategy that intends to get at *how things appear to us as human observers*. In talking about “nature”, are we talking about one thing, or many things? The shorthand that I employ for this – as is evident from the name of the strategy – is either to say that a usage of “nature” designates an *individual*, or a *world*, respectively. Another pair of terms that I will use to point out the selfsame distinction, in a quick way, will be to say that a given meaning of “nature” is a *nature of x* or *predicative*³³ meaning, in case it refers to what appears to be an individual, while I will reserve the terms *cosmos* or *cosmological* meaning, in case many things collectively seem to be picked out by a meaning of “nature”.

Defense: As stated above, this strategy is intentionally very superficial and seeks to do justice at the phenomenology of things, *not to how they actually are*. For that reason, any objections about this strategy being incorrect on mereological, or other metaphysical grounds would be beside the point of this strategy. What this strategy is designed to do is to make explicit a trait of the term “nature” that manifests in any of its meanings, and so a prima facie merit of this strategy is that unlike i., it does not apply to any word whatsoever, but to the term “nature” specifically. Still, those who find Quine’s works – such as “Speaking of Objects” (1957) and “Ontological Relativity” (1968) – compelling, may challenge this assertion. Looking at the term “nature” with an intention to examine its deep, ontological meaning, regarding the above problem of individuation as opposed to collectivity, is bound to seem like looking at a term from an alien language, and expecting that ostensive definitions (i.e. definitions given by pointing out examples of its usage) will yield some insight as to what this alien “nature” is about. They will not. So, superficiality works, in this case. However, given that Quine’s meaning of “nature” will be central to the naturalist part of this thesis – and perhaps representative of a certain position in “naturalism” in general – I propose to label the worry raised above, for further use, as the *Individuation Worry*. My response to this worry, so far, is semantic, and not metaphysical. To review, this strategy is designed to help us deal with the two main philosophical varieties of the term “nature”: the individual, predicative one, indicating the essence of something; and the cosmological, collective and abstract one.

³² I am indebted to the philosophical dictionary entry on “nature” in Blackburn (2005, p. 248) for this strategy.

³³ I am well aware that a predicate can apply to more than one object; in this case I simply wish to draw a distinction between what seems to be a usage of “nature” that attributes a particular feature or set of features to whatever it is said of (hence ‘predicative’), as opposed to its other apparent, ‘cosmological’ sense – that is, as opposed to the usage of “nature” that implies that a collective entity or ‘cosmos’ is designated.

iii. Contrast Term Strategy³⁴

Presentation: If we are not certain what a particular usage of the term “nature” means, then it might be useful to begin by investigating *what it does not mean*, that is, what it excludes. Thus, we might expect that by process of elimination the meaning that we are looking for will become clearer. This process of *exclusion*, or *contrast term strategy*, can also be envisaged in terms of “cutting logical space” (Yalcin 2018, p. 36; Haslanger 2020, p. 239-241). That is, given that we have adopted an externalist metasemantics, where what we mean by a word is not determined at will, by us as individual speakers, but instead depends on a *common ground* that we share with other speakers,³⁵ then it makes sense to assume that by using the word “nature” in a certain context, some possibilities of what we might mean are excluded. Assume that in the previous step (ii.), we have a lay meaning that talks about an individual (or uses “nature” in a predicative meaning). So, for instance, we can take entry 1b and its example sentence from the dictionary (op cit, p. 2-3), “it was his nature to look after others”. By saying “nature” in this context, one evidently does not mean some kind of *pretension*, *disingenuous attitude*, something *extrinsically imposed*, through *nurture* or *culture* to this individual. Hence, we have a number of reasonable candidates for what we might *not* mean in a given case, and so it is reasonable to assume that we have made some progress in understanding a certain meaning of “nature”. From these contrast term candidates, I propose to pick the one that most succinctly encapsulates what the group of candidates loosely picks out (i.e. their extension). In this example given, either nurture or culture would serve.

Defense: To this, one might object in at least two ways. First, words do not work by exclusion; we usually simply know what a word in a sentence means by looking at it, if it is inscribed, or we readily understand the same word by simply listening to a sentence, if it is uttered. This follows from assuming *semantic competence* in the externalist-contextualist framework employed by Cappelen (FL, Ch. 6);³⁶ which is to say, that if indeed share a natural language with others, we are expected to understand what words mean in a given context, otherwise one is expected to ask for an explanation, whenever possible. To this first objection, I respond that we are exactly dealing with a case where “nature” is not readily understood – we are indeed attempting to construe what is meant by a given usage of “nature”. Furthermore, no explanation is to be asked, and so we need to do the best we can without the other speaker’s assistance to figure out what “nature” means. Second, one might object that even if we apply this strategy we end up not with one contrast term, but many candidate contrast terms, and that the subsequent choice among the candidates is to some degree arbitrary, and for that reason unhelpful. To this second objection, I respond, first of all that our externalist metasemantics again justify this choice, as some degree of ‘competence’ is presupposed of us. And then, even if the

³⁴ This particular strategy, I owe to Hepburn 1967, though the practice of using a ‘contrast term’ to indicate what one means by nature is certainly older than that; see for example the ‘nomos’-‘phusis’ (‘law’-‘nature’) antithesis employed by the ancient Sophists (Guthrie 1971, Ch. IV). I will go on to argue that we might perhaps need to revisit this ‘nomos’-‘phusis’ antithesis so as to improve our understanding of naturalism, which, as I will argue currently rests on a ‘mythos’-‘phusis’ antithesis. Following this process of revisiting Ancient Greek antitheses, we might also want to examine ‘techne’, and ‘eleutheria’, as contrast terms to ‘phusis’/‘nature’.

³⁵ See Stalnaker 2002.

³⁶ Elsewhere, Cappelen gives the case of seeing a word and knowing what it means by simply looking at a sentence.

choice is arbitrary, that is precisely what our externalist framework of a natural language implies – some meanings are preferred over others, in certain situations. At any rate, this is not the ultimate strategy, but merely a step in a mapping sequence to understand “nature”. Moreover, though this contrast term strategy, based on exclusion, might not seem specific to “nature”, I plead that it is indeed specific to the understanding of “nature” that I seek to establish through this sequence of strategies, and that as we have seen, its commonplace character is indeed what lends it legitimacy.

iv. *Basic Substitution Strategy (or Auxiliary Terms Strategy)*³⁷

Presentation: Building upon strategy iii., given that we now have a ‘contrast term’ for “nature”, we can now apply the ‘exclusion’ process in reverse, and arrive at a term that could stand in for “nature” in the particular meaning that we are examining. Following through with the previous example given, let me provide a sentence where nurture features in the sense that we have seen: “it was only by nurture that he could bring himself to ignore insults”. In this case, we certainly do not mean that this person held this attitude by *innate character, disposition, birth, or endowment*. Consequently, we can say that if nurture is the contrast term to “nature”, “nature” can be understood as endowment or birth.³⁸ I call these the *auxiliary terms* of “nature”. We have made progress, since if we now look at the word “nature” in a sentence and do not immediately understand its meaning, we can substitute it with its auxiliary terms, which we might hopefully understand effortlessly.

Defense: At this stage, we seem to really start grating against Cappelen’s externalist framework, given that we seem to understand “nature” in terms of its intension or sense, and not what it refers to or picks out (i.e. its extension) (cf. FL, Chs. 5 and 6). Call this the *Idle Internalism Challenge*. There are a few things that I have to say to this. To begin with, I plead that we have already made a step towards establishing what the extension of “nature” is (namely in ii.). In the example discussed we are clearly talking of an individual, not a world. We should hold steadfastly to this distinction on pains of falling prey to the Individuation Worry (op cit, p. 4). Given that we cannot change the “metasemantic base” of how meaning is grounded, at will, since we are externalists following Cappelen, it is reasonable that after we establish – even at this superficial level – the extension of “nature”, we should move on to explore the “metasemantic superstructure” of “nature”, i.e. “beliefs, hopes, preference, intentions, theories, and other attitudes about meanings and reference” regarding “nature” (FL, Chs. 5.2-5.3 and 6.4). What I am proposing is different from the very similar, yet metasemantically

³⁷ I acknowledge the debt, as well as the similarity, that this step in my sequence of strategies has to David Chalmers’ “method of elimination” and “subscript gambit” (2011, passim). I will explain the relevance of this similarity in the main body of my text.

³⁸ Being a native speaker of Modern Greek, with all its historical baggage, perhaps I am misled in applying this sense of ‘birth’ to “nature”. ‘Phusis’ also appears to me to be at least etymologically related to ‘phuomai’ (‘to grow’, hence ‘to grow out of’, ‘to be born’). I do not point this out to say that I am in good company in making such an interpretation, but Aristotle and other Ancient Greek writers also repeatedly made this etymologically driven interpretation. See W. Charlton’s commentary on the *Physics*, (1970, p. 91). There might be a cultural-historical root to this (mis)interpretation.

pointless, internalist “method of elimination” and “subscript gambit” proposed by Chalmers (2011), wherein to adjudicate over a disagreement one eliminates the operative term *x*, disambiguating *x* into *x*₁ and *x*₂, and then proceeds to show to elucidate the disagreement in question.³⁹ While my mapping sequence also dwells at this step on the sense of “nature”, it is again not the final step, and neither do I propose that understanding the intension of “nature” will yield a metasemantic shift in reference, which is the goal of ‘conceptual engineering’ in Cappelen’s sense. Yet given that we have *no control* over that eventual goal, we should attend to what we *can* know about “nature”. In this case, having the auxiliary terms of “nature” leads us a step closer to that knowledge of the meaning of “nature” that we would like to attempt to change.

v. Auxiliary Labeling Strategy

Presentation: Having arrived at some auxiliary terms for a given meaning of “nature”, the next step is to *label* said meaning of “nature” so as to be able to refer back to it with greater ease. For example, resuming the case we have been examining so far, individual “nature” contrasted with ‘nurture’ and understood as innate character, disposition, birth or endowment, we can label this particular meaning *dispositional nature*.⁴⁰

Defense: To begin with, I would like to plead that judgement of this particular step be withheld for the moment being, as strategy v. is designed to support the remaining strategies. That said, within the Austerity Framework, the main worry arises from the Commitment to Meaning Pluralism, if we take it to be one of the two pillars of Cappelen’s proposal for conceptual engineering (Ball 2020, p. 246). Call this the *Pluralism Worry*. If one says many, not necessarily intended, things by an utterance, then how can we isolate and label just one of the meanings that “nature” appears to have in a given utterance? My response to this worry, for now, is that this labeling strategy is only applied in a provisional, practical spirit, and *not* with the intention to state that such and such a label *exhausts* the potential meanings of “nature” in said utterance. As we will see, any given so labeled meaning of “nature” will overlap – in a way that I will explain below – with other meanings of “nature”. To be clear, labeling a meaning of “nature” does *not* entail a stipulative definition; instead it entails reflecting upon the associated auxiliary terms of this meaning, and picking one of them as a practical label.

³⁹ Cappelen already gives a detailed account of why we should not adopt these strategies if we follow his Austerity Framework (FL, Ch. 17), so I will not discuss Chalmers’ account in greater detail.

⁴⁰ Notice that this is another meaning favored by the Ancient Greek writers in many of their texts, in fact ‘phusis’ in many translations appears not as ‘nature’, but ‘character’ or ‘disposition’. Plato’s *Republic*, for instance, includes many examples of such a usage.

vi. *Metaphorical Effect Strategy*

Presentation: Once we have labeled a given meaning of “nature”, I propose that we examine its figurative meaning, and namely, any metaphor that such a usage of “nature” might involve. I would like to argue that part of the meanings of “nature” that we *can examine* with non-empirical means – that is, by applying this series of strategies – involve its peculiarly metaphorical content, which manifests itself differently given the particular usage to which “nature” is put to, as well as the environment or context of such usage. Let me try to be a bit more concrete; let’s take the example case that we have been examining so far, what I have called dispositional nature; or “nature” understood as birth or endowment, whose contrast term is culture or nurture. Disposition can be further associated with behavior, *being disposed to do something*, therefore the operative metaphor in the predicative meaning labeled dispositional nature is one of *action*. Action in turn implies that whatever this dispositional nature is predicated of is treated like a single, *living* individual. Whether it is wrong or right to do so, merely from our usage of “nature” in natural language, we seem to be culturally attuned to breathe life into objects in order to understand them.⁴¹ This will be just one, among many competing metaphorical understandings, or underlying metaphors that will surface with each of the meanings of “nature” examined. I should also mention here the similarity that this strategy bears to George Lakoff’s conceptual frames, or “conceptual metaphors” (e.g. “ARGUMENT IS WAR”, Lakoff and Johnson 1980). Lakoff and his associates also argue that metaphors constitute a “folk geometry, folk kinematics, and folk dynamics” (Hill 2016, 5.1), which aid us to construe and navigate the world mentally. I do not have the space or resources to argue that human beings do in fact, and universally, navigate and represent the world in their metaphors, but at the very least the meanings of “nature” that we use seem to indicate something about how we relate with ourselves and the world. That is, how things *appear* to be to us, or what we take for granted, both in ourselves as individuals, and in the world surroundings us.

Defense: The above is admittedly neither a parsimonious, nor simple explanation of what goes on with the metaphorical ‘lexical effects’ of “nature”, if such exist. But my point is, that if we want to pursue an understanding the meanings of “nature” along non-empirical lines, these critical, contemplative strategies might be the only way to do so. In this sense, I would like to insist that I am still working *within* Cappelen’s Austerity framework, given that his externalist metasemantics allows that our meanings are affected by our environment – and in this case I would like to argue that our linguistic environment extends to the culturally and historically embedded metaphors that we can trace in the term “nature”.

⁴¹ Perhaps this is similar or related to John Searle’s less poetic notion of “functions” that humans impose on the external, physical world in order to comprehend and make use of it (see 1995, Ch. 1)

vii. *Mapping Strategy*

Presentation: The last strategy in my sequence of strategies – unlike what its name might suggest – does not employ any visualizations to map the meanings of “nature” so far explored. Mapping the metaphorical content and other information – such as contrast terms, auxiliary terms, and whether a meaning is cosmological or predicative – that we will have collected through the previous strategical steps of the mapping sequence will be compared, with the intention of detecting overlap or similarities between meanings, as well as differences. Perhaps seemingly distinct meanings will involve similar metaphors, or yet, the metaphors involved will interact in interesting ways and suggest an intelligible, unified whole for literary culture, as seen through a philosophical focus. This metaphorically imbued culture embedded in “nature”, might turn out to be a *second nature* – to use the term recently revived in academic philosophy by John McDowell (1994).⁴² The Mapping Sequence, therefore ideally aims to be cumulative, eventually examining the meanings examined in the overviews in the following section of this chapter (3.B.), as well as the meaning of “nature” in “naturalism” in subsequent chapters, in conjunction. Thus, I hope to arrive at a helpful way of distinguishing the various meanings of “nature”, with the goal of suggesting some ways of pursuing the meaning of “nature” that seems to be most suited to the version of ‘naturalism’ that I will argue for, taking into account the aforementioned possibility of a second nature.

Defense: To be sure, this strategy does not go by the book in following Cappelen’s Austerity Framework; however, I do take seriously the genealogical, or historical tendency suggested by Cappelen’s externalist framework and his chastisement of Chalmers’ “ahistorical internalism” (FL, Ch. 17.4).⁴³ Moreover, let us revisit the ‘Idle Internalism Challenge’, that is, the need to not only provide an account of the intensions or senses of “nature”, but rather to be able to trace the extensions or references of “nature”. My ‘mapping sequence’ is indeed intended to be mentalistic, but I urge that we should not fear the charge of “pernicious mentalism”. That is, faced with a naturalist impulse to ‘deflate’ an “overpopulated universe” – in more literal terms: ‘decreasing the amount of things that we take into account in our ontology’ – and its connection to Cappelen’s externalism, I would like to argue that it is crucial to first gain a grasp of the purely mental, culturally shared content of the term “nature” in a systematic way, as proposed in my sequence of strategies. For this, I will need to argue in the following

⁴² According to the entry in the Online Etymology Dictionary, the expression second nature dates back to the “late 14c., from Latin *secundum naturam* ‘according to nature’ [...], literally ‘following nature;’ from medieval Aristotelian philosophy, contrasted to phenomena that were *super naturam* (‘above nature,’ such as God’s grace), *extra naturam* (‘outside nature’), *supra naturam* (‘beyond nature,’ such as miracles), *contra naturam* ‘against nature,’ etc.”(n.d.). Thus, McDowell’s recent usage of second nature is looser and different from the traditional usage, though clearly related. My own understanding of this term is, as mentioned, that it describes the world of culture, especially literary culture, as derived from and belonging to “nature”, in the sense of spatio-temporal existence, but somehow also external to it, or appearing to be so. This point anticipates my own preferred meaning of “nature”.

⁴³As to whether this charge of “ahistorical internalism” is valid, I do have my doubts; Chalmers (2011) does explicitly mention that sometimes words matter to us, implying that our choice of words and their origin might indeed matter to him after all. Chalmers’ notion of bedrock concepts also possibly alludes to such an understanding of a linguistic common ground, (Stalnaker 2002), in the sense of shared assumptions about semantic competence.

chapter (4.), that “nature” remains a central term for ‘naturalism’. Furthermore, I will need to show that what “nature” picks out (i.e. its extension) is central for the doctrine and program of naturalism. Call this the *Centrality and Content of Nature Challenge*. I submit that the result of my ‘mapping sequence’, when applied to the meaning of “nature” in naturalism will be key in answering the above challenge.

Having concluded my presentation and defense of each step, here is the process that I propose in abbreviated form, to simplify future application:

The Mapping Sequence of Strategies

i. Lay Lexical Strategy:

- “Choose the most appropriate entry of “nature” from the dictionary.”⁴⁴

ii. Individual-or-World (or Usage) Strategy:

- “Does this meaning (or usage) of “nature” seem to pick out an ‘individual’ or a ‘world’? That is, is “nature” ‘predicated’ of something, or describing a ‘cosmos’ in this usage?”

iii. Contrast Term strategy:

- “What terms does the chosen meaning of “nature” exclude?

Select the most representative of the excluded terms as the ‘contrast term’.”

iv. Basic Substitution (or Auxiliary Terms) Strategy:

- “What terms does the above contrast term exclude?

These are the ‘auxiliary terms’ that “nature” can be ‘understood as’ in this usage.”

v. Auxiliary Labeling Strategy:

- “Looking at the auxiliary terms, devise a ‘label’ for this meaning of “nature”.”

vi. Metaphorical Effect Strategy:

- “What is the operative metaphor (if any) in this labelled meaning of “nature”?”

vii. Mapping Strategy:

- “Compare the ‘information’ (usage, contrast term, auxiliary terms, operative metaphor) collected about this meaning of nature to the ‘information’ about other meanings.”

I will now proceed to examine some overviews of meanings of “nature” by other authors, which will hopefully contain some information needed for future application of the above sequence.

⁴⁴ op cit, p. 23

B. A survey of meanings of “nature” and their metaphors

In this section, I will be attempting to give a condensed account of the history of the term “nature” in past forms of “naturalism” in philosophy, by drawing on past overviews of this term. This will be a history involving a wealth of metaphorical content that can be utilized so as to interpret the term “nature” more reflectively, as hinted already in strategies vi. and vii. of the Mapping Sequence.⁴⁵ The prehistory of “naturalism” I am about to outline and survey ranges from the beginnings of Western philosophy with the so-called ‘Pre-Socratics’ and ends around the early 1950s, when contemporary “naturalism” begins to be a prominent doctrine in analytic philosophy. Two of the main overviews that will play a prominent role both in this section, as well as in Chapter 4, are R.G. Collingwood’s “The Idea of Nature” (1945), and Pierre Hadot’s “The Veil of Isis” (2004). Both of these texts trace a strain of changing, yet recalcitrant metaphorical content – including analogies, metaphors and antitheses-contrast terms – or embedded in the term “nature”, throughout the history of Western thought, thus helping us to place “naturalism” in a coherent narrative, paralleling the rough story about a struggle between empiricism and idealism that I mentioned in the Prologue.

Let us start from really early times. As Terence Irwin suggests, perhaps an alternative term for the Pre-Socratics would indeed be students of nature or naturalists,⁴⁶ or as Aristotle calls them *phusiologoi*, comparing their rational explanations, to Hesiod’s school of theologians or mythologists, who instead concerned themselves with poetic accounts about the gods (Irwin 1989, p. 20-21, 224-225). Now, unfair though it might be, *mythology*, or *myth* in this case as the prima facie contrast term to “nature”, seem to pertain to the irrational,⁴⁷ but is also related to the unreal or the supernatural. So, we can label this meaning of “nature”, *nature as rational reality*. It seems like a self-evident label, but one should not be so quick to assume that reality ought to be rational, or depend on rational cognition or construal – perhaps that would be to presuppose part of the cultural baggage that we are attempting to investigate. At any rate, what I have been saying also coincides with Collingwood’s “Greek view” of “nature”, wherein the operative metaphor is that “nature” is an “organism”, which is “not only alive but intelligent” (1945, p. 3, 8).

⁴⁵ That said, I will not be applying all of the aforementioned sequence to the overviews below, as this would make the discussion unnecessarily repetitive and unwieldy. Instead, I will be seeking to collect some of the above information – i.e. usages, contrast terms, auxiliary terms, operative metaphors – wherever it is available, to make use thereof in the following chapters. Once again, “nature” is not a standalone, one-word metaphor, but instead, this metaphorical content is an aid that we can use so as to talk more reflectively about this term.

⁴⁶ We can readily see how ‘naturalists’ is a confusing – if not anachronistic – term in the present context of writing on contemporary naturalism in philosophy, so I will not use it myself. Other than ‘students of nature’ or ‘phusiologoi’, another term that is perhaps more felicitous than ‘Pre-Socratics’ is ‘Ionians’ (Collingwood, e.g. p.29). All of the above terms are controversial for different reasons, ‘Pre-Socratics’ makes these thinkers antecedent to Socrates, when some of them were his contemporaries; ‘phusiologoi’ indicates they only discussed ‘nature’ etc. So perhaps this is a moot point.

⁴⁷ One after all often still marvels at the ingeniousness of mythologies from all over the world to this day, so at least an aspect of ‘rationality’ is involved in such mythologizing, even if it is “only” storytelling. I take it that telling a coherent story requires us to conform to epistemic norms at least in part.

We could also say that nature as rational reality is directly linked to yet again a different meaning of “nature”, *essential nature* (or *nature as essence*). This is a tricky point to make in the context of the *monistic* views allegedly held by many of the Pre-Socratics, but I derive this distinct meaning by applying my ‘Individual-or-World Strategy’. It seems that, if we follow Irwin’s Aristotelian-sounding reading (1989), when the Pre-Socratics associate the “nature” of a thing with its matter (hule) or basic subject (hupokeimenon), they lapse from speaking of a cosmological meaning to a predicative meaning, they speak of an individual and not a world. Now, according to a more recent account (Schaffer 2018), monism covers a variety of views, and what they share is that they attribute “oneness”, that is they “count” a particular “target”, according to a specific “unit”, as one. The way that these various views of monism differ from one another is that they are about different targets, and may possibly also use different units (Schaffer 2018, 1.1). To come back to the case of “nature”, I take it that the Pre-Socratics’ target was the world and that their unit was its hule’, hupokeimenon, or “nature”; in this sense the Pre-Socratics counted the world as one because they thought that all of the world is made of one hule, or “nature”. I further take it that a world is made up of many individuals; hence, all individuals in the Pre-Socratics’ monist view are also made of one “nature”. Therefore, in the Pre-Socratic view of “nature” we cannot differentiate between the “nature” of an individual and that of a world, and as a result it is also difficult to see how essential nature, and nature as rational reality can be distinguished in the Pre-Socratics’ view. This is the tricky point that I was alluding to above.

Moreover, given the above point, it is hard to see how and whether the Pre-Socratics could differentiate between natural, and artificial, non-natural things (cf. Collingwood, p. 29-30). Following the rationale of the above paragraph, all individual things would be natural, as they would be made of one “nature”. For that reason, both nature as essence, mentioned previously, as well as another meaning, that of *nature as the non-artificial*, are to be properly detected in other, non-monist Ancient Greek philosophers, and not in the Pre-Socratics.

Aristotle was not a monist, in the sense that I have mentioned, and he explores several meanings of “nature”. Aristotle is very explicit that *not* all things are natural, “some things are due to nature; for others there are other causes” (*Physics*, II.1, 193a, 10).⁴⁸ Some auxiliary terms for “nature” – i.e. terms that we can substitute for “nature” as similar in meaning – in this view are *original creative force*, nativity, or birth, what natural things have as the “source of their making” (*Physics*, II.1, 193a, 30). Indeed, these auxiliary terms point towards the meaning of “nature” that Aristotle himself favors over others that he surveys; this favored meaning is that “nature” is “innate impulse to movement” (Ross 1923, p. 70), or “the essence of things which have a source of movement in themselves” (Collingwood, p. 81).⁴⁹ Humans are, for instance, natural things if we follow Aristotle’s favored meaning, but beds are not.⁵⁰ This is a rather

⁴⁸ References to the *Physics* draw from Charlton 1970.

⁴⁹ Both W.D. Ross and Collingwood are here referring to *Metaphysics*, V.4, 1015a. I take it that a similar meaning is also arrived at in the *Physics*, and that Aristotle’s favored meaning of “nature” was consistently the abovementioned.

⁵⁰ I take this example from the *Physics*, II.1, 192b-193b.

peculiar point on several accounts. First, notice that the contrast term for “nature” here seems to be *techne* (that is, art or the artificial), and by extension that which is in general affected, or ‘made’ by humans – Collingwood also suggests *bia* (i.e. force or violence) as a contrast term (ibid). In a strict ontological sense beds are not made by humans; ‘beds’ are simply wood that humans have shaped into a certain form. Beds *are* wood – albeit pieces of wood that have undergone *bia* or *techne*, *apparently* separating them from “nature”. Aristotle would accept that wood is a natural thing, but not beds – but are not ‘beds’ and ‘wood’ different names for the same object in the ontological sense? This what a modern reductive naturalist might say in this case. But, at the heart of Aristotle’s understanding of “nature” there is a key notion of the role of appearance as a form of self-evidence, that is, in my scheme an acknowledgement of traditional culture:

“That there is such a thing as nature, it would be ridiculous to try to show [...]. To show what is plain by what is obscure is a sign of inability to discriminate between what is self-evident and what is not – [...] a man blind from birth would have to make inferences about colors. For such people discussion must be about the words only, and nothing is understood.” (*Physics*, II.1, 193a, 3-8)

I draw attention to this passage, not to mention some particular metaphorical content of “nature”, but rather to make a methodological point about discussing “nature” that I endorse in Aristotle’s discussion. Given what I have said earlier – in the Prologue and in defending strategy ii. – philosophy is not entitled to ontological statements, like science. “Nature” as a term is useful to us in describing how things *appear* to us, *self-evidently*, and not how they actually *are*. For that reason, “nature” is not only a word among others, though that may be true in the deeper metasemantic sense. So, in the context of this inquiry we must understand what is, and has been, meant by “nature”, not whether the reference of this word is true; that is, whether “nature” actually picks out something in the world. Hence, I once again emphasize that metaphorical content is useful in structuring and interpreting the historical-cultural second nature of “nature”. Elsewhere, Aristotle makes what I take to be, yet again, a similar point by quoting Empedocles:

“Of nothing that exists is there nature, but only mixture and separation of what has been mixed; nature is but a name given to these by men.”

(*Metaphysics*, V.4, 1015a)⁵¹

Again, no metaphor is at play here; metaphorical content is a tool for us to critically interpret the term “nature” related to how the world appears to us. My project thus affirms the above statement by Empedocles; “nature” is only a word, but in our historical understanding of the world it has had an outsize role, which we should not neglect.

To resume then my survey of meanings of “nature”, Aristotle has provided us with evidence for two already mentioned meanings, nature as the non-artificial, and essential nature, which can be both derived from his preferred meaning. These meanings both share the metaphor of *nature as a living entity* as their focus, and they sharply contrast

⁵¹ Empedocles Fr. 8 in Diels 1903. This translation of Aristotle’s version of this fragment by Empedocles is drawn from Ross 1924.

with what Collingwood calls “the Renaissance view”, wherein “nature” is seen as “a machine”, “devoid of both intelligence and life” (1945, p. 5). These two metaphors can be further compared to Hadot’s account. In his text, Hadot suggests three overlapping metaphorical ways of speaking about “nature”, which have shaped all of Western thinking about “nature”: (1), “veiled image of Nature, represented as Artemis/Isis”; (2) Heraclitus formula, “*phusis kruptesthai philei*”; and (3), the notion of “the secrets of nature” (2004, p. 1). The veiled image of Nature forms the basis of the metaphor that Hadot goes on to investigate; this adds a nuance to the above metaphor of nature as a living entity, according to Hadot, it is a specifically *female* gendered living entity. This simultaneously implies an anthropomorphism of “nature”; humans seek to understand the world denoted by “nature” by analogy to an outside fellow human. Yet, as we will see this anthropomorphism also comes with the drawbacks and troubles inherent in the interactions between humans.

To see how this is the case, let us turn to the remaining two metaphors that Hadot proposes to trace across history, by relying on this central metaphorical image of *nature as living and female, human-like entity*. First there is Heraclitus formula, “*phusis kruptesthai philei*”. According to Hadot, this formula has been variously reinterpreted from its originally intended meaning – “what is born tends to disappear” (p. 7) – and from these reinterpretations the notion of a *secret of nature* has emerged, given that the formula eventually took on the meaning “nature loves to hide” (see Hadot, Part III.). Now, to discover these secrets of nature, Hadot proposes two dialectically contrasting attitudes toward “nature”, the *Promethean* and *Orphic* attitudes. The Promethean attitude sees “nature” as a threatening force and as a set of resources to be exploited, and it is driven by “the desire to help humanity” – just as the mythological figure of Prometheus was, whom it is named after. Yet, through “blind development of technology and industrialization”, the Promethean attitude runs the danger of damaging both our relationship with “nature” and “nature” itself. On the other hand, the Orphic attitude seeks to respect “nature”, of which it seeks to preserve a “living perception”, and hence extract nature’s secrets without recourse to force and exploitation; the Orphic attitude’s drawback is its tendency to lead to a certain brand of “primitivism”, by which we might understand a correspondingly blind technophobic attitude. (p. 98) Moreover, Hadot stresses that:

“[T]he same person can, simultaneously or successfully, have several apparently contradictory attitudes with regard to nature. When a scientist is carrying out an experiment, his body perceives the earth, despite the Copernican revolution, as a fixed immobile base, and he may perhaps take a distracted glance at the sun’s “setting”. The Orphic attitude and the Promethean attitude may very well succeed each other or coexist or even combine. They nevertheless remain radically and fundamentally opposed.” (ibid)

Again, our phenomenological understanding of “nature” can run counter to our more sophisticated ontological knowledge.⁵² Our received, traditional and conventional views of “nature” overlap with our scientific knowledge – this is where I propose that philosophy should intervene, and critically mediate both of the above. What’s more, this last part explains what I meant when I previously mentioned that the two attitudes are *dialectically contrasting*. To give an example illustrating Hadot’s point about these two attitudes we may consider the example of physics as a science. In its experimental form, where it is perceived as interfering with “nature” and seeking to wrest its secrets through violence it is considered by Hadot as emblematic of the Promethean attitude (see Part V. 10.). At the same time, in its theoretical, abstract and discursive form, physics is simultaneously seen as representative of the Orphic attitude (Part VI. 13.).

The above quote by Hadot also reminds us of the abovementioned Commitment to Meaning Pluralism, proposing that in a given proposition we mean several things at the same time, even things that we do not intend to mean. Thus, as I proposed earlier when defending strategy viii., the meanings of “nature” may overlap and be related to one another; I suggested that a non-empirical way to investigate the relationships between our various meanings of “nature” – and by extension their lexical effects – is to explore the metaphors that are operative in such meanings. Compared with Hadot’s anthropomorphic view, Collingwood suggests that our operative metaphor for “nature” has differed across the ages. So far, we have mentioned Collingwood’s Greek and Renaissance views; the former of these is recognizably like Hadot’s proposed metaphor, as it envisions “nature” as an “organism”, which is “not only alive but intelligent” (Collingwood, op cit, p. 12). So, even though this metaphor lacks the nuances of Hadot’s main metaphor, it is still akin to it and the other Ancient Greek meanings that rely on the overarching metaphor of ‘nature as living entity’. Furthermore, it is also compatible with the anthropomorphizing implied in Hadot’s metaphor; in Collingwood’s own words, the Greek view is based on “an analogy between the world of nature and the individual human being” (p. 8), or “the analogy between the macrocosm nature and the microcosm man” (p. 9).

That said, Collingwood’s “Renaissance view”, wherein “nature” is seen as “a machine”, “devoid of both intelligence and life” (p. 5), sharply contrasts with any of the above meanings that have ‘nature as living entity’ as their metaphorical basis. Yet, given that the Renaissance view is structured around “the analogy between nature as God’s handiwork and the machines that are the handiwork of man” (p. 9), therefore suggesting an instrumental understanding of “nature”, one could argue, following Hadot, that the underlying metaphor has not changed, but merely that our “attitude” has shifted from an Orphic one, to the Promethean. Whatever might be the case, for our purposes, we can distinguish two very distinct ways of talking about “nature” – one that accords it a certain *autonomy* as a living entity (the Greek-cum-Orphic view), and another that views it as a passive, lifeless object to be treated instrumentally (the Renaissance-cum-Promethean view).

⁵² Remember that I do not use the term phenomenological to refer to the critical philosophical approach to first-person experience, but rather to indicate how things appear to us unreflectively.

Yet, the “Modern view”, proposed by Collingwood, “owes something” to both the Greek and the Renaissance views, and it is characterized by “process, change and development” – in a word it is “evolution”⁵³ (p. 9-10). I would like to argue that it is in this Modern view where we should look for “nature” in “naturalism”. This view “is based on the analogy between the processes of the natural world as studied by natural scientists and the vicissitudes of human affairs as studied by historians” (p. 9).⁵⁴ That is, I would like to argue that “nature” in “naturalism” is underpinned both by a history of past meanings and metaphors, but also its own new scientifically inspired metaphors for “nature”. One of these metaphors at the heart of naturalism, according to Collingwood, is *nature as history* (p. 176-177). This metaphor can be interpreted in at least two ways. First, one may interpret this metaphor as an appeal to recognize the historicity of science; this is not an uncontroversial move within “naturalism”, as we will see. The second, more obvious way to interpret Collingwood’s metaphor is to read it as an appeal to the historicity of “nature”. Even if this latter interpretation is closer to Collingwood’s intended meaning, one has reason to doubt that natural history – characterized by unforeseeable necessity – and human history – characterized by free action – are similar processes. Are these processes orderly or chaotic? I will argue that much rests on this distinction, in how we understand “nature”. Although metaphors can overlap, as we have seen in Hadot, and as Cappelen’s Meaning Pluralism suggests, I will suggest that “naturalism” currently rests on an outdated aversion with respect to the supernatural (constituting a “nature” vs. “myth”, or a ‘phusis’ - ‘muthos’ antithesis), and that ‘law’ or ‘normativity’ ought to be contrasted to “nature”. Once again, the law-bound view of “nature” is the scientist’s view; the philosopher does not challenge this view’s veracity. There are of course laws of “nature” in science, and they are for the most part efficacious, for science’s purposes, and even truth tracking, in general. Yet, such a law-bound meaning of “nature” is not adequate for philosophy’s skeptical and normative task – we cannot envision our freedom to act as similar to the necessity of “nature”. Instead, laws for the philosopher should delineate human freedom, and nature has to appear to us – for all philosophical intents and purposes – as chaotic and necessity-bound.

C. Recapitulation and conclusion: ‘non-human nature’ and ‘contestation’

As I argued earlier in this chapter, philosophers’ contemporary employment of the term “nature” – as in the case of discourse endorsing and discussing “naturalism” – is constantly informed by lay and historical meanings of “nature”. To this end, I first presented and defended a ‘mapping sequence’ of strategies, so as to systematically treat such meanings of “nature” in “naturalism” (A.). Then, to provide some support and background for the application of the above ‘mapping sequence’ in the following chapter

⁵³ I understand the term evolution as change that involves some form of traceable process, whereby the earlier stages of a thing, object, phenomenon, or entity are replaced by later stages or parts of the same, which can relate with a degree of certitude to the former. In short, my understanding of evolution is that involves some kind of change that we can track through time, by means of some principle of identity. This kind of change also often has positive connotations, such as adaptation in adverse conditions, or improvement upon the original object.

⁵⁴ The Modern view is largely an amalgamation of Collingwood’s own Hegelian views, and Whitehead’s and Samuel Alexander’s views of “nature”. See Whitehead 1920; Alexander 1920.

(4.), I provided a survey of philosophical meanings of “nature”, utilizing overviews of said meanings by Aristotle, Hadot and Collingwood (B.). I would now like to close this chapter by making some remarks on a particular lay meaning of “nature” that we should not overlook in what follows, and then some remarks on the theoretical-methodological framework by Cappelen, which I have taken as my starting point.

First on the lay meaning that we should not overlook, I propose to revisit an unconventional text by Corliss Lamont, who suggests that its seeming success, contemporary “naturalism” suffers from a serious oversight. As Lamont puts it:

“[...] naturalist metaphysics puts constant emphasis on the fact that the great realm of Nature constitutes the totality of things and is man’s sole and sufficient home. Naturalism makes a point of showing that man and his mind are evolutionary products and just as natural as atoms, stars, trees, tigers, or anything else. It resolutely opposes all the traditional dualisms that have created an unbridgeable gap between man and the rest of nature or between life and inanimate existence.

[...] the naturalists, in their perennial struggle against the old ontological dualisms, have tended to overlook or under-stress certain aspects of the wholly natural dualism between man and non-human nature.” (1947, p. 597-598)⁵⁵

This lay, purposefully superficial, phenomenological, or *apparent* meaning of “nature” is indeed absent from the survey of philosophical meanings we have just undertaken; even Aristotle, who recognizes a meaning of nature as the non-artificial, considers humans to be natural (pp. 12-13). Yet, I urge that we should keep this latter, lay meaning of *non-human nature* in mind in our discussion of “naturalism”, exactly because of the abovementioned naturalist tendency to overlook it. To put it in terms of metaphors, I will urge that in the context of “naturalism”, and indeed the reform of naturalism, we will need to revisit the old Sophist *physis - nomos antithesis* (Guthrie 1971), which separates the realm of law from the realm of nature, as McDowell would put it, along the same lines as this meaning of non-human nature. I will further argue that this *physis - nomos* (or nature - norm) antithesis is to take the place held by a *physis - muthos* (or nature - supernatural) antithesis in currently conventional, or classical, naturalism.⁵⁶

As for adhering to Cappelen’s framework, I would like to make two clarificatory remarks regarding what I have been doing in this chapter, and how I will proceed to investigate “nature” in “naturalism”. First, the broader *topic of nature* that I have been proposing fits in with what Derek Ball calls Cappelen’s defense of “undisambiguated terminology” (2020, p. 255), as opposed to Chalmers’ “method of elimination” and “subscript gambit” (op cit, p. 7, 9). That is, the various meanings of “nature” that I have, and will proceed to, examine, all fall under the same heading of the topic of nature, because as we have seen in the previous chapter (2.), topics are more coarse-grained

⁵⁵ Lamont said this in the context of urging an aesthetic appreciation of “non-human nature”, but his point is still apt in what I am discussing here.

⁵⁶ This shift can also be expressed as a change in contrast terms; from holding ‘the supernatural’ to be the contrast term of “nature”, to holding ‘norm’ or ‘normativity’ as the contrast term of “nature”.

than their meanings, since we can trace them back to the same, original lexical item – that is, the undisambiguated term “nature” – and still claim to be talking about the same thing by employing ‘disquotational speech’. Thus, what I have been doing is to investigate how in particular we can talk about the same topic of nature by examining various kinds of information (contrast terms, metaphors etc.) about the original term “nature” – or in McDowellian terms, the second nature of “nature”.

Now, secondly, as suggested by the wealth of meanings that I have investigated, as well as the shift from a *physis* - *mythos* to a *physis* - *nomos* antithesis that I proposed above, *contestation* regarding meaning will be central in my project to revise “nature”, while undertaking to argue for a reformed version of “naturalism”. Even though we may mean many things simultaneously by the term “nature”, this unity under a single topic of nature inevitably brings about contestation regarding what we *would like to*, or *should* mean by “nature”. To be clear, in this specific context of “naturalism”, this is not an appeal to the function of the term “nature” in “naturalism”. Instead, what I propose is that we should first understand what “naturalism” means, and what it *can* mean, examining concurrently what these interpretations of “naturalism” imply for the meaning of “nature”. Then, picking the version of “naturalism” that is most desirable, to go on to contest – *but not change* – the meaning of “nature” accordingly. Indeed, I will argue that contestation of “nature” takes priority over contestation of “naturalism”. This is not a matter function, but rather *constitution* of “nature” in the constitution of “naturalism”. In order to change “nature” in “naturalism”, we need to change (part of) the world – in effect we need to change “naturalism”. But in order to change “naturalism”, we need to know what it is.

Chapter 4. Classical naturalism

Introduction: “nature” in classical naturalism, towards alternatives

So far, I have discussed my preferred methodology in revising the term “nature” (Cappelen’s externalist CE), my view on metaphors and some strategies for approaching the topic of nature by paraphrasing its metaphorical content, as well as a very general and limited historiography of said topic, involving some ways of *talking about nature*.⁵⁷ But the question remains, as to what “naturalism” is, in which I seek to revise “nature”.⁵⁸ In other words, what does it take to be a “naturalist”? Or, what does “naturalism” entail?

In this chapter, I will seek to answer these questions, concerning one extreme, in the spectrum of “naturalism”, the subset of views I call *classical naturalism*; then, I will investigate the meaning of “nature” in this form of naturalism; and finally, I will show that classical naturalism is deficient. Specifically, I will:

A. Seek to understand what classical naturalism entails, by assembling its various components, and their respective commitments. I will further argue that varieties and components of “naturalism” ought to be understood based on the notion of *family resemblance* – that is, various naturalisms do not share one common trait, but instead many overlapping similarities.⁵⁹ Classical naturalism will turn out to be a subset of positions, among many other types of “naturalism”, and I will try to pinpoint what is characteristic of this particular type of naturalist doctrine.

B. Examine the meaning of “nature” in classical naturalism by appealing to the strategies from Chapter 3, as well as Hadot’s and Collingwood’s ways of talking about nature. “Nature” will prove to be a central, yet underexamined term in classical naturalism. This kind of lack of regard for the term “nature” will partly motivate a shift to an alternative form of “naturalism” – indeed, it will be shown that a metaphorically richer notion of “nature” is incompatible with classical naturalism.

C. Assess a number of advantages and disadvantages of classical naturalism, studying its problematic and motivations, and proposing some alternative naturalist positions based on the areas where there are drawbacks. Opting for a different form of naturalism will rest on the grounds that classical naturalism is *reductive* and *scientistic* – in general, it overlooks, discards and oversimplifies many respectable forms of understanding, in favor of ways of knowing and knowledge strictly derived from a limited range of sciences.

Eventually, my goal will be to motivate that we take up an alternative “naturalist” position, *reformed naturalism*, so as to be able to hold a better, revised meaning of “nature”, while holding on to whatever advantages classical naturalism has.

⁵⁷ I will from now on employ this phrase in a technical sense, to denote how the term “nature” is employed.

⁵⁸ Henceforth “naturalism” in double quotation marks will denote the naturalist doctrine and all its forms *in general*, i.e. the ‘topic’ of naturalism, if you will, following Cappelen. Given what I have said in Chapter 2 about ‘thesis engineering’ in Chalmers’ sense, as opposed to CE, the components of this topic are part of a ‘thesis’ that I am engineering, and hence they are less amenable to change than those of the various meanings of “nature”.

⁵⁹ See Fogelin 1976 on this Wittgensteinian notion of ‘family resemblance’.

A.i. What is (classical) naturalism? Assessing and defining naturalism

To begin with, we ought to be aware that attempting to grasp what “naturalism” is, we risk “getting bogged down in an essentially definitional issue”, as David Papineau puts it (2020). Instead, Papineau proposes that we assess the cogency and tenability of philosophical commitments that are characteristic of “naturalism”, and avoid seeking to define what would count for someone to be a “fully paid-up naturalist”. To some extent, Papineau’s proposal has been challenged, on the grounds that, in order to see whether alternatives to conventional naturalism, such as *liberal naturalism*,⁶⁰ are possible, and indeed do not fall under the heading of *supernaturalism* – which charge I will explain shortly – we need to have a minimal notion of what naturalism is. Call this *minimal naturalism*. Mario De Caro and Alberto Voltolini, for instance, propose a “constitutive claim of contemporary naturalism”: “that no entity or explanation should be accepted whose existence or truth could’ contradict the laws of nature, insofar as we know them” (2010, p. 71). Failing this “constitutive claim” would render a position supernaturalist. Moreover, De Caro and Voltolini suggest that it is urgent to be able to assess whether some position is “naturalist” or not, since “naturalism” has acquired the status of a “positive term”, or even an honorific, in contemporary analytic philosophy (ibid). Others yet, have proposed that we view “naturalism” as “cluster concept”; that is, as a set of necessary and sufficient conditions, which, upon being met, confer a view with the characterization of “naturalism” (e.g. Stone 2013; Giladi 2014).

Out of the above three ways of interpreting “naturalism” – Papineau’s cogency and tenability assessment; De Caro and Voltolini’s “constitutive claim”, or minimal naturalism; and “cluster concept” definitions – I will employ a variant of minimal naturalism. Papineau’s proposal, although useful for what I am about to say in that some assessment of classical naturalism will be required in C., it does not seek to find what is characteristic of “naturalism”. On the other hand, the cluster concept proposal is too demanding an overall inflexible for what I am attempting; “naturalism” cannot conform to necessary and sufficient conditions. However, the way that De Caro and Voltolini have presented this way of defining-cum-assessing a position as “naturalism, leaves them open to the charge that they are ‘cherry picking’ among possible naturalist commitments, so that liberal naturalism can be characterized as “naturalism”, or at least not supernaturalism. Having said that, De Caro and Voltolini *do* proceed to offer more substantial characterizations of what they call “scientific naturalism”⁶¹ (i.e. a stricter, more scientific naturalism) and supernaturalism, assigning two additional claims to each. I will revisit De Caro and Voltolini’s text, both in later parts of this chapter, as well as the next one, and explain more.

The main strength of De Caro and Voltolini’s text is that it is applicable to various forms of “naturalism”, showing what these views have in common that characterizes them all as “naturalist” – among other things, and most crucially, the “constitutive

⁶⁰ Liberal naturalism is a host of different views that differentiate themselves from classical naturalism. I will say more about what characterizes these views towards the end of this chapter, as well as in the following chapter.

⁶¹ “Scientific naturalism” – also employed in the works co-authored by De Caro with David Macarthur – is a term strongly related to what I have called classical naturalism. If I understand it correctly ‘scientific naturalism’ is either interchangeable with classical naturalism, if it is also a loose term for a subset of views; or it is indeed one position among the subset of classical naturalism. Beyond these possible relations, I doubt that there are any significant differences among these terms that will disrupt the discussion that follows.

claim”. Now, as already announced, I intend to show that we may relate various forms of “naturalism” based on the Wittgensteinian notion of family resemblance. I think that this is an improvement upon De Caro and Voltolini’s proposal for two reasons. First, I intend to show that various forms of “naturalism” are not strictly related through merely one trait, or a limited range of identical traits, but rather through a multitude of shifting similarities. Secondly, and corollary to the first reason, my interpretation of “naturalism” is open ended, and thus avoids the charge of cherry picking. The set of commonly held similarities among forms of “naturalism”, in this proposal, is an evolving one. Different “naturalist” positions are linked by different kinds of features, and this is essentially in keeping with the spirit of “naturalism”. Because as I understand it, “naturalism” entails at core a keeping with the ‘scientific spirit’ in philosophy, and if science is an evolving set of practices, then philosophy following science should reflect this flexibility.

In tandem with the flexibility conferred by the family resemblance interpretation, we should also keep in mind some more rigid presuppositions about what we take “naturalism” to be. In emulating science, “naturalism” is both very *local* in its implementation – it usually comes in the form of *naturalizing projects*⁶² – yet also, at heart, *universal* in its ontological grounding that motivates its ambitions. In more concrete terms, I take “naturalism” – and the various positions that stem from it – to be a normative *research program* in philosophy. This program of local, naturalizing projects relies upon a particular ontology of everything that exists in the world, as dictated by science (“nature”, according to science). That is, our philosophical activities and findings should be informed, where relevant, by the ongoing findings of what we take to be science.

The above statement perhaps simplifies the matter of “naturalism”, and it also includes certain provisos about science that might not be uncontroversial for all adherents of “naturalism”. However, the point of this chapter, once again, is to show what the advantages and disadvantages of *classical naturalism* are, and relating this to the meaning of “nature” held therein, to motivate a shift towards alternative forms of “naturalism”. In this sense, what I call ‘classical naturalism’ is meant to be illustrative of both the excesses – and hence disadvantages – of “naturalism”, as well its advantageous benefits or strong points. Moreover, remember that classical naturalism in itself is *not* meant to be one position, made up of a rigid set of philosophical commitments, but rather *a subset of many positions* that share in said commitments that prove either excessive, or beneficial. As such, further discussion of “naturalism” in general, and its other possible types, as alternatives to classical naturalism, will have to wait until section C. of this chapter.

⁶² ‘Naturalizing projects’, or simply ‘naturalizing’ will be a central issue in what I am about to say about classical naturalism, so I can offer no satisfactory definition here, and the issue will be discussed at length in section C. For now, we can understand ‘naturalizing’ as ‘bringing into accord with, or making respectable to, with the findings of science’. This is only a partial and faulty understanding though, so more will be said in the appropriate context.

A.ii.1. An initial characterization of classical naturalism

Not to overdo it with the notion of family resemblance, but it follows from the above view that, if various kinds of “naturalism” can be understood as related through family resemblance, then so should the subset of positions contained within classical naturalism. In order to investigate what traits might qualify as such family resemblances for positions within classical naturalism, I propose the following table of components and commitments (Figure 1.):

Component	Commitment(s) to
Ontological naturalism	(1) anti-supernaturalism (2.a) physicalism (2.b) an unwillingness to accommodate common or folk understanding of human experience
Methodological naturalism	(3) philosophy as continuous with science (rejection of an autonomous philosophy) (4) the scientific spirit (5) conducting empirical research
Epistemological naturalism	(6) a disavowal of a prior philosophy (7) the view that there is no genuine knowledge outside natural science (aka scientism) (8) privileging the theoretical terms of the natural sciences

[Figure 1. A list of components of classical naturalism and their commitments]

This is a list that contains potential family resemblance traits specifically for classical naturalism, which I have compiled after studying some relevant overviews of “naturalism”.⁶³ Mutatis mutandis and by extension, if the above hold true in said capacity, then we may also be able to say something about the traits common to forms of “naturalism” in general. Now, let me explain the contents of the above table, so as to show how it amounts to a set of family resemblance traits for classical naturalism.

⁶³ See Stroud 1996; De Caro and Macarthur 2004b, 2010b; Glock 2008; Audi 2014; Clark 2016; Papineau 2020; for relevant overviews of “naturalism”.

A.ii.2. On the components of classical naturalism

We may begin with the three components of classical naturalism that I have listed. Granting that we can distinguish between an *ontological naturalism*, and a *methodological naturalism*, is fairly uncontroversial. Barry Stroud succinctly puts it:

“There is naturalism as a view of what is so, or the way things are, or what there is in the world. And there is naturalism as a way of studying or investigating what is so in the world.” (1996, p. 22)

It is *epistemological naturalism* that seems more difficult to justify in the above table, given that, among other things, it is rather similar-sounding to the description given above for ‘methodological naturalism’. Hans-Johann Glock offers this explanation:

“One reason why naturalists prefer [...] [epistemological naturalism] (apart from the obvious one of insulating their ontological claims from direct philosophical criticism) is that it defuses a potential conflict between ontological and metaphilosophical [alias methodological] naturalism. Instead of pronouncing on what exists *ex cathedra*, on the basis of *a priori* contemplation, naturalism follows the lead of science. The question of what exists turns into the question of what science reckons with. This idea goes back to Quine, whose naturalistic ontology rests on the conviction ‘that it is within science itself, and not in some prior philosophy, that reality is to be identified and described’”(2008, p. 138)⁶⁴

Glock’s explanation complements the above insight by Stroud; epistemological naturalism links ontological and methodological naturalism – our beliefs and knowledge (epistemology), about *what is so* (ontology), are intimately tied with the way that we study the world (methodology). It is possible that one might object that epistemology is precisely a topic to be naturalized – that is, that our beliefs and knowledge should accord with what is so, according to science (specifically the natural sciences), as was paradigmatically proposed by Quine (1969). Thus, it can be objected that having a separate epistemological naturalism, which is closely related with methodological naturalism, only confuses matters. Although I maintain that said distinction *could* (and perhaps should) be made, I am happy to accommodate this objection for the sake of simplicity (see Figure 2.).

As I mentioned before, classical naturalism is meant to designate the most extreme kind of naturalist positions, which owe a blind allegiance to a certain received view of science, favoring the natural sciences especially. At the moment, this might seem to verge on caricature, but I promise that fairer treatment will be given in C. For now, the focus is on sharpening the commitments of “naturalism” so as to give a sense of what is characteristic of one extreme of its variants. What is more, there can be no picking and choosing among the components of “naturalism” at this stage, given that this could run

⁶⁴ Glock is here quoting Quine 1981, p.21. In the above citation I insert “[alias methodological]” because Glock says that: “Metaphilosophical naturalism, for its part, is also known as ‘methodological naturalism’, since it concerns the topics, procedures and results of proper philosophizing, and entreats philosophers to emulate the methods of the special sciences” (ibid).

the risk of a supernaturalist view emerging from some of classical naturalism’s traits. For instance, a partial reading of the commitments (or traits) of methodological naturalism, while omitting ontological and epistemological naturalism and their commitments, could produce a view akin to that of Alvin Plantinga (e.g. 1993), theistic naturalism, which is an exemplary supernaturalist position.⁶⁵ Therefore, the following table, fusing methodological and epistemological naturalism, along with the proviso of *not picking and choosing among the components*, can be seen as steps to safeguard that the desired family of classical naturalist positions will emerge from the traits listed below:

Component	Commitment(s) to
Ontological naturalism (‘what is so’)	(1) anti-supernaturalism (2.a) physicalism (2.b) an unwillingness to accommodate common or folk understanding of human experience
Methodological-cum-epistemological naturalism (‘how we know what is so’)	(3) philosophy as continuous with science (rejection of an autonomous philosophy) (4) the scientific spirit (5) conducting empirical research (6) a disavowal of a prior philosophy (7) the view that there is no genuine knowledge outside natural science (aka scientism) (8) privileging the theoretical terms of the natural sciences

[Figure 2. An updated table, fusing methodological and epistemological naturalism]

A.ii.3. On the commitments of classical naturalism

The commitments in each component of classical naturalism are also linked to each other. First, let me discuss the commitments of ontological naturalism, and then, move on to those of methodological-cum-epistemological naturalism. I should first say more about (1), *anti-supernaturalism*, which on the face of it seems rather uninformative. We can understand (1) as a negative commitment to oppose the existence of supernatural or ‘spooky’ entities (Papineau 1.1). This is a more controversial trait to

⁶⁵ I owe this example to Stroud 1996.

ascribe to classical naturalism than we might initially think, because a scientific view of the world does not automatically compel us to discard the supernatural. We can refer to Plantinga's case of theistic naturalism again – where God and whatever other theologically derived entities exist in the realm of the supernatural, parallel to that of “nature”. Hence, science and scientifically minded philosophy have no say over the supernatural, but only the natural.⁶⁶ This should clearly be unpalatable to the classical naturalist, and we can see why if we look at (2.a), the commitment to *physicalism*.

According to Papineau, physicalism can be understood as the dictate that “there is nothing except the physical” (2020, section 1.1) – wherein *the physical* is understood in a negative sense, as the non-mental and non-vital (ibid, footnote 3). Similarly, physicalism can be formulated as:

“[...] *the view that the world is the way physics says it is*. That is to say, it is within physics and physics alone that one can find a true account of reality.”
(Ney 2018, p. 259)⁶⁷

Classical naturalism adopts a literal and narrow-minded interpretation of the above formulations of physicalism, and thus both the supernatural, as well as many other entities and everyday features of our world are *reduced* to their physical instantiations-qua-features. Take this as a first gloss of what naturalizing (or naturalizing projects) entail. The above interpretation leads to the corollary commitment (2.b), *an unwillingness to accommodate common or folk understanding of human experience*. This is my attempt to capture the strict end of what Kelly James Clark distinguishes as “strict and broad naturalism” (2016, p. 4). That is, classical naturalism does not keep apart its ontological commitments from its methodological-cum-epistemological ones, and hence, our experience and understanding of the world, in any context, have to conform to a narrow reading of what physics tells us there is. To give an example, for classical naturalists, mental things, such as desires or needs simply do not exist, strictly speaking. Instead, there is only electricity and neurons acting and reacting in certain ways so as to give us the illusory impressions that we call desires or needs by convention.⁶⁸ For the interests of this investigation of “nature” in classical naturalism,

⁶⁶ Audi 2014 makes a similar point by attempting to distinguish an undesirable, in his view, “philosophical naturalism” (“the view that nature is all there is and the only basic truths are truths of nature”, p. 15) from a desirable “methodological” or “scientific naturalism” (“the view that causes and explanations of natural phenomena should be sought in the natural world”, p. 16) – where “methodological” and “scientific naturalism” mean, as we see above, something different than what I, and De Caro and his associates, have respectively meant by these terms.

⁶⁷ Both Alyssa Ney, whom I quote above, as well as Papineau, have argued extensively as to how we might have a commitment to physicalism without being ‘reductive’, or ‘scientistic’ by disentangling our ontological naturalistic commitments from our methodological ones (e.g. Ney 2008, 2018; Papineau 2001) – but this is not what I am looking to do here. Once again, I am here seeking to reconstruct what is characteristic of the extreme end of naturalist positions, ‘classical naturalism’.

⁶⁸ This is recognizably akin to the position called ‘eliminative materialism’ in philosophy of mind, adopted partly in Quine 1960, as well as in the earlier works of Feyerabend (1963) and Rorty (1965), and coined by Cornman 1968. I owe this information to István Aronyos’s entry on PhilPapers (n.d.). Paul and Patricia Churchland have also

we can foresee that many of the meanings that we tend to associate with “nature” – and perhaps the term “nature” itself – will be disregarded in classical naturalism, as part of the folk experience of the world.

Furthermore, having assumed the fused version of the methodological-cum-epistemological component of naturalism, the remaining commitments or traits, (3) to (8), seem also to relate to one another in significant ways. In addition, we can already see what traits are characteristic of the advantages, and which of the disadvantages of classical naturalism. (3), *philosophy as continuous with science*, or (*rejection of an autonomous philosophy*), and (6), *disavowal of a prior philosophy*, certainly seem to be related commitments. If by ‘prior philosophy’ we mean a *first philosophy*, in the sense that philosophers such as Aristotle and Descartes thought of philosophy as not only as autonomous, but indeed determinant of science; then, this still leaves room for a second philosophy, or “philosophy as an underlaborer of science”, in Hume’s words. In effect, (6) turns out to be rather akin to Carnap and the other logical positivists’ view of philosophy,⁶⁹ and it is much less restrictive of philosophy than (3), which is identifiable as Quine’s view, and which seeks to ‘reduce’ philosophy to science. This gives us a first clue as to how classical naturalism can be characterized as reductive. We may then also altogether drop (6) as too mild for the kind of extreme naturalism that I am trying to characterize here. Similarly, (4), a commitment to *the scientific spirit*, understood as the idea “that any philosophical investigation, even a second-order logical or conceptual one, should proceed in a scientific spirit, guided by the same ethos and methodological principles” (Glock 2008, p. 160), is also simply too mild and general for this purpose. There can be a scientific philosophy merely in the sense of being argumentative and methodologically rigorous, without actually emulating the natural sciences. The example of much of modern analytic philosophy attests to this – be it non-empirically dependent metaphysics or philosophy of mind; or in the application of thought experiments, especially in ethics.⁷⁰

Thus, (7), *the view that there is no genuine knowledge outside natural science (aka scientism)*,⁷¹ is the commitment par excellence of classical naturalism. Commitments (5), towards *conducting empirical research*, and (8), towards *privileging the theoretical terms of the natural sciences*, follow from (7), (3) and (2.b); because classical naturalism now equates philosophy with science, and this ties it both to the empirical methods of the natural sciences, where relevant – hence (5) – and also obliges philosophy to bring its theoretical terms in line with what is respectable to a narrow interpretation of the natural sciences – hence (8). As a result of this discussion, we can further simplify the table of family resemblance traits for the subset of positions of classical naturalism:

famously defended this position (e.g. 1984, 1986). That said, I am here attempting to illustrate the wider set of naturalist traits or commitments that leads to such a position, among others.

⁶⁹ See also Maddy 2007 for a more recent version of a similar proposal for a second philosophy.

⁷⁰ For some examples in each of these areas see Fine 2011; Chalmers 1996; and Parfit 1984.

⁷¹ I borrow this definition of scientism from Glock 2008, p. 138.

Classical naturalism's commitment(s) to
(1) anti-supernaturalism
(2.a) physicalism (2.b) an unwillingness to accommodate common or folk understanding of human experience
(3) philosophy as continuous with science (rejection of an autonomous philosophy)
(5) conducting empirical research
(7) the view that there is no genuine knowledge outside natural science (aka scientism)
(8) privileging the theoretical terms of the natural sciences
(9) fusing ontology, epistemology and methodology

[Figure 3. A simplified list of family resemblance traits for classical naturalism]

In this last table (Figure 3.), I have kept the same numbers for the commitments, so as to avoid confusion in future discussion with what has been said hitherto, and I have also added an additional, perhaps excessive, commitment (9), to *fusing ontology, epistemology and methodology* as a reminder of the simplification implicit in the above table. However, it is also prudent to remark at this point that by collapsing the previous distinction of separate components, each with their own commitments, the above list of commitments is only useful insofar as identifying classical naturalism. And thus, we should bear in mind that we will later need to revisit Figure 1., so as to establish the more general family resemblance traits for other forms of “naturalism”, and to see what potential advantages should to be preserved in such alternative forms.

B.i. Towards criticizing classical naturalism's “nature”

So far I have been reconstructing a rather extreme set of commitments (or traits) to characterize classical naturalism. But I have not explained in detail what motivates holding the above commitments – I will do so in the final section of this chapter. But before I proceed to give the more scientific and reductive end of “naturalism” – that which culminates in classical naturalism – its time of day, let me proceed a little longer in the critical spirit that I have been pursuing so far.

It would be pointless to start citing passages that include the term “nature” in writings that bear a family resemblance to classical naturalism, in the hope that in doing so I can gradually criticize the meanings of “nature” employed therein. Instead, what I would like to argue for is the following:

If, 1) some of the noteworthy naturalizing projects – e.g. the attempt to naturalize epistemology inspired by Quine 1969 (e.g. Kornblith 1985); the Churchlands’ naturalizing project in the philosophy of mind (e.g. 1984, 1986); or, the more recent polemic effort to naturalize metaphysics by James Ladyman and his associates (Ladyman et al 2007) – bear a family resemblance to classical naturalism, i.e. if these philosophical positions share some of the family resemblance traits listed in Figure 3.

Then, 2) we can say of such naturalizing projects that they are part of classical naturalism, or at the very least they approach their views sketched out above.

Hence, 3) we can talk of their views of “nature”, or how they ‘talk about nature’ in a more or less collective way, and we can compare the above with how Hadot and Collingwood, respectively, talk about nature, as well as apply the strategies presented in Chapter 3 to said classical naturalist meanings of natures.

Therefore, 4) we can see how the commitments of classical naturalism clash with more metaphorical interpretations of “nature”, and see how and why it would be better to adopt a reformed view of naturalism, that is, to adopt a position more similar to liberal naturalism. My way of revising “nature” in “naturalism” is thus, once again, to adopt a different view of “naturalism”, because classical naturalism, as we will see, is problematic. My point here is to criticize a tendency in classical naturalist views, and not to criticize particular philosophers.

B.ii.1. Applying the ‘mapping sequence’ to scientific “nature”

Classical naturalists’ meaning of “nature” is supposed to be science’s meaning of “nature”; and although such philosophers are not uncritical of this ‘received view’ of “nature”, given that philosophers are rarely uncritical of anything in principle, it is also not too harsh to say that given the above list of commitments – especially (2.b) – they tend to purposefully disregard the cultural-historical, or folk understandings of “nature”. But as I have so far argued, given the externalist metasemantics that I have adopted following Cappelen, classical naturalists have *no control* over the meanings of their words. And they are beholden – if not more – to their cultural-historical ‘natural languages’, *including* the metaphorical meanings of “nature” embedded therein, as they are to their conscious and overt allegiance to science.

The meaning of “nature” in classical naturalism is thus both too broad, and overdetermined, but also too narrow and restrictive. Let me elucidate this remark, by revisiting the abbreviated ‘sequence of strategies’ from the previous chapter:

*The Mapping Sequence of Strategies*⁷²

i. *Lay Lexical Strategy:*

- “Choose the most appropriate entry of “nature” from the dictionary.”

ii. *Individual-or-World (or Usage) Strategy:*

- “Does this meaning (or usage) of “nature” seem to pick out an ‘individual’ or a ‘world’? That is, is “nature” ‘predicated’ of something, or describing a ‘cosmos’ in this usage?”

iii. *Contrast Term strategy:*

- “What terms does the chosen meaning of “nature” exclude?

Select the most representative of the excluded terms as the ‘contrast term’.”

iv. *Basic Substitution (or Auxiliary Terms) Strategy:*

- “What terms does the above contrast term exclude?

These are the ‘auxiliary terms’ that “nature” can be ‘understood as’ in this usage.”

v. *Auxiliary Labeling Strategy:*

- “Looking at the auxiliary terms, devise a ‘label’ for this meaning of “nature”.”

vi. *Metaphorical Effect Strategy:*

- “What is the operative metaphor (if any) in this labelled meaning of “nature”?”

vii. *Mapping Strategy:*

- “Compare the ‘information’ (usage, contrast term, auxiliary terms, operative metaphor) collected about this meaning of nature to the ‘information’ about other meanings.”

The first question to ask, about the classical naturalists’ meaning of “nature”, is “What does it pick out? What is its extension?” – thus, we should begin from strategy ii. Now, the first issue we face is that classical naturalism blurs the lines between the predicative and individual usages of “nature”, and this is both an advantage and a drawback.

As David Macarthur remarks, it is the hallmark of post-17th century science that humans are now seen as part of “nature” (2004, p. 29), and this is certainly something that classical naturalists would happily agree with. To put it simply, the nature of something (its individual nature) is what it is because it is part of “nature” (the cosmos). “Nature” thus hardly excludes anything, except for the supernatural, which is a category of things relevant only to religiously inclined philosophers. For the rest of us, “nature” –

⁷² Remember that although these strategies are presented as a sequence, we may begin from any step therein, and work towards previous or following steps. Selective use of the sequence is also a possibility, if not the optimal way of applying my ‘sequence’.

if we are to follow the classical naturalists – is *too broad*, since it picks out all that really exists. And if we proceed to strategy iii., the contrast term for “nature” would be the *unreal*; the *nonexisting*; or most drastically, *nothing*.⁷³ So what could the scientists, or the classical naturalist philosopher-scientists mean by “nature”; what it could it be understood as? (see strategy iv.). At this point, instead of insisting on running up against the limits of language, as a Wittgensteinian might put it, I urge us to take an informative intermission by looking at the following passage by Mill, which closes and summarizes his essay on “nature”:

“The word Nature has two principal meanings: it either denotes the entire system of things, with the aggregate of all their properties, or it denotes things as they would be, apart from human intervention.

In the first of these senses, the doctrine that man ought to follow nature is unmeaning; since man has no power to do anything else than follow nature; all his actions are done through, and in obedience to, some one or many of nature’s physical or mental laws.

In the other sense of the term, the doctrine that man ought to follow nature, or in other words, ought to make the spontaneous course of things the model of his voluntary actions, is equally irrational and immoral.

Irrational, because all human action whatever, consists in altering, and all useful action in improving, the spontaneous course of nature:

Immoral, because the course of natural phenomena being replete with everything which when committed by human beings is most worthy of abhorrence, any one who endeavoured in his actions to imitate the natural course of things would be universally seen and acknowledged to be the wickedest of men.”

(*Three Essays on Religion*, “Nature”, p. 103)

Following Mill’s first sense, we can say that classical naturalism’s “nature” is a *total nature*; in this sense, “nature” is *overdetermined*, because *nothing that exists* could count as not being part of “nature”. Notice, however, that there is a metaphor implied, at least in Mill’s passage; we cannot help but “*follow nature*” in the first sense, yet if we do “follow nature” in the second sense, we are – supposedly – acting in a profoundly inhuman way. Classical naturalism’s meaning of “nature” cannot accommodate a distinction between human and nonhuman nature – to recall Lamont’s observations (op cit, p. 37).

Compare the above with the following excerpt from Macarthur:

“Although few now accept the idea of nature as a mathematically describable mechanism, many take modern science to have at least shown that nature is, at base, norm-free: purposeless, valueless, meaningless.” (ibid)

⁷³ I partly owe this last contrast term to Niels van Miltenburg, from a casual conversation on this topic.

As Macarthur goes on to argue both in this article, as well as in another one that I will examine in the next section (2004, 2010), classical naturalism⁷⁴ cannot accommodate human norms, or more abstractly normativity, and that we should hence adopt a form of liberal naturalism. This is precisely my own proposal for revising the term “nature” as well – that we should change our position in “naturalism” so as to make room for explaining ‘normativity’ with respect to “nature”. Inspired by W.K.C. Guthrie’s version of Sophist terminology (1971), I propose that we should put aside the *physis* - *muthos* antithesis (nature vs. the supernatural or myth) upon which classical naturalism rests, and to focus on a *physis* - *nomos* antithesis (nature vs. law or normativity), coupled with a *physis* - *eleutheria* antithesis (nature vs. freedom). Call the classical naturalist meaning of “nature”, *nature as law-abiding truth*, and the new meaning of “nature” upon which I would like to shift focus to, *chaotic nature ruled by necessity*. Let me explain my reasoning for this proposal.

As I mentioned in the Prologue, my plan for reforming “naturalism” relies on establishing an overall Kantian activity of *self-knowledge*, where reformed naturalism will guide philosophy into an appropriate mediating role between the two cultures – i.e. between science and traditional-literary culture. I will elaborate and defend this proposal in 5.B., once I have concretely established my position in reformed naturalism. For now, I should explain why freedom and law have to go together. Here, I am following a Kantian argument, to the effect that in order to pursue our freedom to act and think effectively, we have to know our limits as human beings, and as such, we have to know the norms or laws delineating the boundaries of our capacities to think and act. In this Kantian spirit, although we *are* part of “nature” in the classical naturalist’s sense, we should not think of our law-bound freedom to act and think as similar to the vicissitudes of “nature”. “Nature” in this Kantian-reformed naturalist meaning is driven by a chaotic – that is, lawless – necessity, a force that is unknown to us, and even to our best science, and so we as beings who know the laws that govern our capacities should consciously disavow such a “nature”. As I will go on to show in the next chapter, this kind of self-knowing meaning of “nature” also equips reformed naturalist philosophy, among other things, with the critical ability to mediate between the meanings of “nature” itself, as they are found in the languages of science and literary culture, respectively.

Thus, to resume explaining my earlier remark, classical naturalism’s meaning of “nature” is not only too *narrow and restrictive* simply because it disregards the host of metaphorical, folk meanings of “nature”, but rather it is problematic in this way because it fails to diagnose its own limitations in accommodating the pervasively human, non-natural (or human-natural) notion of normativity, as paired with freedom in the above sense. This notion of normativity can be found in anything from our everyday rules and laws regulating our behavior, to the principles of logic and mathematics, and even rationality itself – our epistemic norms in current terminology. By identifying itself with science, classical naturalism seeks to eliminate these useful norms, and instead leads to follow a boundless and perversely rationalized form of necessity. Thus, for instance, our

⁷⁴ ‘Scientific naturalism’ in Macarthur’s terms, which perhaps does not exactly denote the extreme kind of naturalism that I have been characterizing, but still think it is a kind of naturalism tending towards classical naturalism.

behavior is not regulated by critically refining our own complex system of time-honored moralities – but instead in a scientific spirit, our moralities are discarded wholesale for whatever latest findings from evolutionary biology have to tell us about how other, less rational species of primates conduct their social lives.⁷⁵

I would furthermore like to suggest, following Ross, Ladyman and Spurrett (2007, p. 3-4), that by ignoring its very own tendency towards ‘folk metaphysics’ via its unexamined use of language, and in particular its ignorance of metaphor in its usage of the term “nature”, classical naturalism risks going against science itself. That is, as Ross, Ladyman and Spurrett argue, ignorance of metaphorical meaning runs the risk that classical naturalism falls into the “containment metaphor”. The operative metaphor in classical naturalism’s meaning of “nature”(see strategy vi.) is a spatial one, which, as the above authors contend, very much goes against what most up to date physics says – it is simply not the case that the world is made up of ‘things’ at its most fundamental level.

B.ii.2. Towards a reflective way of talking about nature in “naturalism”

Not all self-described “naturalist” philosophers are ignorant of metaphor, or the multiple meanings of “nature”⁷⁶; this has not been my point. What I have been arguing against is the tendency towards the scientific and reductive end of “naturalism”, classical naturalism; and what I would like to urge, as an antidote, is to adopt a position more similar to liberal naturalism, so that we may accommodate an awareness about the metaphorical, folk content of “nature”, which will allow us to have a better understanding of the relation of *normativity* to “nature”. I will elaborate on this proposal in the following, closing section of this chapter. For the moment being, let me end this discussion of the meaning of “nature” in “naturalism” – classical naturalism included – with some remarks on hitherto ways of talking about nature in this context; pointing out both their advantages and disadvantages for my project.

In “Mind and World” (1994), John McDowell has famously argued – in a very similar vein as I have – against what he calls “bald naturalism”, and in favor of a liberal naturalism, or a “naturalized Platonism”; and this book has been the inspiration for much of the subsequent work on alternative, or reformed forms of “naturalism”.⁷⁷ More specifically, what motivates McDowell’s proposal is a therapeutic attempt to dissolve a puzzle between “falling into the Myth of the Given”, or conversely “frictionless spinning in the void”. In less idiosyncratic terms, McDowell’s central issue in “Mind and World” has to do with providing a theory that properly accounts for the place of the human mind

⁷⁵ Admittedly this is an oversimplification, but I think that my caricature captures some of the spirit of the likes of E.O. Wilson (1975) or Michael Ruse (1986). For a detailed discussion and refutation of such Darwinian ethics see Sorell (1991, p. 162-167).

⁷⁶ The abovementioned work by Ross, Ladyman and Spurrett is ample evidence of that. See also the insightful introductory piece by Matthew H. Slater and Andrea Borghini, on Plato’s phrase ‘carving nature at its joints’ in the homonymous collection (Cambell, O’Rourke and Slater 2011).

⁷⁷ However, McDowell did not coin the term liberal naturalism. This should be attributed to P.F. Strawson (1985). As for works inspired by McDowell in this vein, see De Caro and Macarthur (2004, 2010), Macarthur (2004, 2010, 2019) etc. Again, bald naturalism, I take it is at least related to what I have called classical naturalism.

in “nature” – that is, how we can reconcile our sense-perceptions, which we share with other animals, with our mental activities, which are unique to us as a species. That said, McDowell attributes a peculiarly outdated way of talking about nature to bald naturalism, that we would do well to avoid, as it oversimplifies and misleads our perception of the meaning of “nature” in conventional forms of “naturalism”. More specifically, McDowell talks throughout of a “disenchanted nature”, “emptied of meaning” by the natural sciences (e.g. 1994, Ch. 4).

In the place of that anti-scientific and outdated way of talking about nature, I would like to suggest that something altogether more banal, though potentially just as harmful, tends to happen when “naturalists” talk about nature. In particular, “naturalists” – and perhaps even classical naturalists in their less folk-bashing moods – are happy to make use of old metaphors and ways of talking about nature (e.g. “carving nature at its joints”; “torturing nature”; “writing the book of the world”), but these are conventional usages that they do not literally endorse.⁷⁸ One could say, that these figurative expressions are ‘not the naturalist’s own words’ or ‘language’, to stress the point. Hadot’s remark about overlapping “contradictory attitudes with regard to nature” can be extended to the point that I am making here (op cit, p. 34). Although the *nature as a woman* metaphor argued for by Hadot still holds sway, it is merely a *culturally* ‘received view’ of “nature”; I very much doubt that this strongly gendered and arguably chauvinistic and discriminatory view of “nature”, is one that modern day scientists and philosophers would endorse upon critical reflection.⁷⁹ Thus, this unreflective attitude to the metaphorical side of “nature” is potentially harmful because it both occludes important semantic and terminological distinctions, as I have been so far arguing; but it also makes us naïve about our own folk metaphysics, which we would do well to be aware of and take into account, as Ross, Ladyman and Spurrett suggest, and as is the proper “naturalist” attitude in the ‘scientific spirit’.

In this sense, I would furthermore remark that what Collingwood calls the Modern view of “nature”, if contemporary “naturalism” is to be identified as part thereof, *literally* “owes something” to its predecessors, down to the figurative language that it employs on a regular, non-theoretical basis. I am not saying that “naturalism” as it is actually practiced nowadays would collapse if this figurative language were to be eliminated, but rather that it can do even better, by being more reflective about the use of such language. As I hinted in section B. of the previous chapter, Hadot’s remarks about overlapping metaphors (or meanings) of “nature”, is relevant in this case too. In particular, I would like to urge again that the *nature as process* metaphor operative in the Modern view, and supposedly in classical naturalism too, does not necessarily imply an orderly nature, ruled by laws – quite the opposite; as I suggested again a few

⁷⁸ See the title of Sider 2011 for one such reference to “writing the book of the world”, or John Dupré’s treatment of Francis Bacon’s phrase “torturing nature” (2010, p. 289).

⁷⁹ As Blackburn (2016) notes, “Different conceptions of nature continue to have ethical overtones: for example, the conception of ‘nature red in tooth and claw’ often provides a justification for aggressive personal and political relations, or the idea that it is women’s nature to be one thing or another is taken to be a justification for differential social expectations. Here the term functions as a fig-leaf for a particular set of stereotypes, and is a proper target of much feminist writing”. For a wide ranging introduction and survey of such cultural meanings of “nature”, as well as feminist and environmentalist critique thereof, see Soper 1995.

paragraphs back, in order to understand the relation of normativity to “nature” we should shift to a *chaotic view of lawless nature*, as contrasted to *law* or *normativity*. Explaining this rather Kantian or Hegelian-sounding meaning of “nature” will be part of the task of the next chapter, where I develop and defend my own view of *reformed naturalism*.⁸⁰

On another promisory note, in the spirit of Collingwood, we can say that a proper way of talking about nature in the modern era is still in the making – and such a way of talking will need to combine both the *actual* scientific image of the world (as opposed to the received one), as well as to incorporate our spontaneous, cultural-historical languages and ways of ‘talking about nature. Hopefully, the reformed versions of “naturalism”, which I will investigate below, can aid in this task of combining the truth-seeking tendency of science proper, along with our haphazard and faulty historical culture, corrected by our humane, rational concerns. This is the task of the broad group of intellectual activities that will make up philosophy as I envision it, and not as it is currently practiced. I will attempt to hint at what this group of activities might be like in the next chapter, though I should also say that for the interests of this thesis I can only talk about the place of philosophy as conventionally understood in this overall scheme that I will hint at.

C.i. Motivations for and advantages of naturalism

As promised, I will now discuss the motivations of “naturalism”, and in particular those of classical naturalism. Hence, I will attempt to draw out what is advantageous and should be preserved in reformed variants of this philosophical doctrine. But before I do so, let me quickly note a metaphor that I have so far been using myself. I have been proposing that classical naturalism lies on one end of a spectrum of “naturalist” views, with reformed naturalism – including ‘liberal naturalism’ and other such alternative views – lying at the other end. Of course, convenient though this spatial metaphor is, it is also a bit misleading. Seeing how I have endorsed a Wittgensteinian family resemblance notion upon which to base my understanding of “naturalism” and its variants, adopting a reformed view of “naturalism” is not a matter of moving anywhere. It is a matter of changing our mind about what “naturalism” should stand for; and then, picking among the family resemblance traits – or commitments in this case – the ones that we should keep, and the ones that we should discard. This kind of ‘eugenics’ is certainly unthinkable and inhuman elsewhere in life, but it could very well be our operative metaphor in working with our philosophical positions, on this family resemblance model.⁸¹ Moving along, let us first look at Figure 1. (See p. 42) By examining the above table, and after I have discussed the advantages and disadvantages of classical naturalism, I hope to arrive at a new table of family resemblances for ‘reformed

⁸⁰ I say that this is a Kantian or Hegelian-sounding meaning, because these philosophers famously contrasted “nature” to *freedom*. Thereby “nature” stood in for necessity, which incidentally is yet another notion to be found in the Ancient Greeks, the antithesis between *eleutheria* and *ananke* (freedom vs. necessity); call it the physis - *eleutheria* antithesis.

⁸¹ Overtaking the ‘thesis *engineering*’ metaphor proposed by Chalmers 2018 (after Cappelen) too.

naturalism’, upon which I will base my own alternative view of “naturalism” in the following chapter.

To begin with, even though I have argued against overemphasizing (1), ‘anti-supernaturalism’, given that identifying “naturalism” with ‘anti-supernaturalism’ occludes the relation of “nature” to ‘normativity’ in way that I will develop further in the next chapter, I do nonetheless think that it is an advantageous trait to be preserved in “naturalism”. The main, negative motivation behind upholding this commitment, is that ‘supernaturalism’, following De Caro and Voltolini, not only implies an ontological commitment “allowing for the existence of any entity unaccountable by science”; but most crucially, this further amounts to an *irrational* epistemic commitment to some form of “special cognitive powers” needed to grasp such “noncausal and supernatural entities” that are unaccountable by science (2010, p. 74). Thus, anti-supernaturalism should be upheld as a commitment to *rationality*, understood as an adherence to sound epistemic norms, values and criteria of thinking, argumentation and reasoning.

This commitment to ‘rationality’ is also tantamount to upholding a properly construed admiration for science, through a re-examined commitment to ‘the scientific spirit’, (4). Such a renewed admiration of science should be tempered, however, by reflection upon what De Caro and Macarthur have called “The Great Success of Science Argument” (2004b, p. 5). As we will see, this is both partly a good and bad motivation for “naturalism”. Clark offers a detailed account for what amounts to The Great Success of Science Argument, which I will quote at some length:

“Privileging science has much to commend it: there is no other domain of human inquiry that has been so remarkably successful in understanding the world and achieving rational consensus. [...] Science or scientific inquiry offers what religion promised but has failed to offer: a method of inquiry for attaining rational consensus.

More than consensus, though, science also seems to be uniquely capable of attaining the truth: the universal law of gravitation, for example, or our sun-centered planetary system, or the age of the universe. [...]

Finally, commitment to scientific modes of inquiry brings to Naturalists a certain open-mindedness: one should follow science wherever it leads, even if it challenges or contradicts some of one’s fundamental and cherished assumptions about the nature of reality. A scientific Naturalism may claim that nature is all that exists but also hold that nature is whatever will be disclosed by the ideal natural sciences. Since contemporary science is not, at least as far as we can tell, the ideal science, at this point in human history we may know very little about nature. So the scientific Naturalist remains open to understanding nature as science continues to disclose it.” (2016, p. 3-4)

‘Achieving rational consensus’, ‘capability to attain truth’ and ‘open-mindedness about the world’, are things to be admired in science, and consequently emulated in

philosophy; for this there is hardly any doubt in my mind.⁸² However, as we have seen previously (in part A.ii.3. of this chapter), commitments (4), and (7), i.e. ‘scientism’, are not unrelated – the degree to which we are willing to submit to criticism our admiration and emulation of science is a crucial matter in adopting an adequately reformed naturalism. For reasons that I will explain in the following subsection, ‘scientism’ exaggerates and misconstrues The Great Success of Science Argument.

Turning to commitment (2.a), I urge that ‘physicalism’ is not at all something to avoid, if kept within its proper bounds:

“[Physicalism] is an ontological, rather than a methodological position. It claims that everything is physically constituted, not that everything should be studied by the methods used in physical science” (Papineau 2001, p. 3)

As Papineau goes on to explain, the exaggerated understanding of ‘physicalism’ that we previously encountered is tied to a problematic understanding of the ‘unity of science’, which in itself dates back to logical positivism. I will say more on this in the following sections, but what we should bear in mind for now, is that what made classical naturalism unattractive as a set of views, was the lack of keeping apart the various philosophical components of “naturalism”. As I will argue ‘scientism’ and wrongly construed ‘reductionism’ go hand in hand.

Regarding what remains to be said of the advantageous side of an emulation of science, I believe that commitments (5), conducting empirical research, and (6), disavowal of a prior philosophy, can also be restituted as traits to be preserved in a properly reformed naturalism. (5) simply amounts to the culmination of the empiricist strain in philosophy, and it has been attempted with some interesting, and not necessarily ‘scientific’ or ‘reductive’ results in Experimental Philosophy (see Knobe 2007) – though objections have of course been raised, which I cannot discuss at length here (e.g. Cappelen 2012, ch.11).⁸³ As for (6), I have already given us reason to think that it is not as restrictive a commitment as one would initially think; though as will see below, in discussing philosophy’s problems, we should be cautious of not exaggerating the implications that “naturalism” has for philosophy. In sum, philosophy should not be thought of as the ‘queen of the sciences’ in some outsized idealist way, and we should not be afraid to leave our ‘non-empirical armchair’, when appropriate; yet at the same time, we should not think that philosophy has nothing unique to offer, or that it cannot preserve some autonomy from science in its theoretical inquiry, if properly construed and carried out.

⁸² Lest I be accused of a shaded reading of Clark’s text, I should add that she goes to criticize naturalism and its scientific motivations rather strongly.

⁸³ See also Williamson 2007, ch. 7, for a lucid discussion of the potential role of evidence in philosophy.

C.ii. Some disadvantages: On naturalism's scientism and reductionism

Let us now revisit Figure 3. (See p. 47) I have intimated that these are some traits that we should avoid in a reformed naturalism, and now I will say why that is the case: I have already dealt with commitments (1), (2.a) and (5), and I have argued that they are both advantageous and characteristic of “naturalism”, and thus should be preserved in a reformed naturalism. I will now deal with the remaining traits and relate them to the twin pitfalls of classical naturalism, which I hinted at earlier, reductionism, specifically its being reductive, and scientism; the latter of these pitfalls is already presented in abbreviated form trait (7) in the above table, but now I will treat it in greater detail.

Tom Sorell has offered the classical work on discussing and refuting scientific tendencies in contemporary philosophy, “Scientism” (1991). In particular, Sorell argues against “naturalism” on the grounds that it does not offer satisfactory solutions to the “old problems of philosophy”; such as how we arrive at our beliefs and whether they are justified, that is, “epistemological skepticism”, in “traditional epistemology”; problems surrounding free will, such as weakness of the will (*akrasia*); and questions of self-knowledge, such as the age old Socratic questions – i.e. open questions, or ‘what is x’ questions (Sorell, p. 128-130). Sorell’s primary targets in this respect are Quine (1969) and Hillary Kornblith (1985), and Patricia Churchland (1986), whom he all accuses of advancing *replacement theses*, to the effect of bypassing the above old problems of philosophy and replacing them with new ones inspired by science (p. 133-134).⁸⁴ Sorell further refutes the above philosophers’ naturalizing projects on further individual grounds; however this is not relevant for the current purposes, so I will skip over such details.⁸⁵

The central problem in this naturalizing tendency then, is that scientism in this form deprives us of wisdom, or uniquely humanistic understanding, which can only be arrived at, among other things, by working with the perennial puzzles of philosophy. By wisdom, or humanistic understanding, I here mean the kind of critical insights that only philosophy – both in my own broad sense, and the more conventional academic sense – can provides us. They are the kind of insights that philosophy can contribute in being critical of both science and literary culture (as we saw in the Prologue), in short, wisdom and humanistic understanding are the result of a skeptical mediation between the two cultures. Philosophy should neither accept science’s contributions as complete and

⁸⁴ That said, Sorell admits that not all problems of philosophy are perennial, and he offers five conditions to diagnose whether a problem fall into this category or not (p. 129). Moreover, he agrees to an extent with Churchland, in that ‘folk psychology’ should be *revised*, but *not* eliminated – much as I have been insisting in the case of the various ‘folk’ theories endemic in our metaphors about “nature”.

⁸⁵ Among other things, Quine is accused of “taking an empirical approach to knowledge as granted” without offering further argument, and thus fails to address basic epistemic questions (p. 130-132); Kornblith’s additional arguments in support of a naturalized epistemology, from evolutionary theory, and from ‘charity’ fail because they are, respectively, too general, and attributing too much rationality to agents (p. 134-135); and Churchland’s attempt to eliminate ‘folk psychology’ fails because it does not offer a satisfactory account of the multiplicity and complexity of ‘folk psychologies’ and their co-evolution with, and usefulness for, science itself (p. 141-142, 144, 146-148).

unquestionable, but it should also not fall into the trap of exaggerating the value of folk and artistic expression and understanding. A question also remains, as to the existence of such old problems unique to philosophy. In this respect, I will not entirely follow Sorell, but instead say that that philosophical problems – be they old or new – admit of a variety of solutions, some more characteristic of philosophy, and other more akin to science or literary culture. The key thing here is philosophy’s unique skeptical task in the scheme of intellectual activities that I have proposed. Acknowledging this task would be a good reason for us to abandon (3), philosophy as continuous with science (rejection of an autonomous philosophy), because the task of science is separate, and it is to offer explanatory, ontological statements, which philosophy is not entitled to make itself, but only to challenge. As we have seen, commitment (6) already gives us the sufficient deflationary bite needed for reformed naturalism to qualify as “naturalism”, and this commitment also supports the continuity, but distinctness among the three groupings of my intellectual scheme (science, philosophy, and traditional-literary culture).

Thus we are left with commitments (2.b), an unwillingness to accommodate common or folk understanding of human experience; (8), privileging the theoretical terms of the natural sciences; and (9), fusing ontology, epistemology and methodology. I have already argued against (2.b) to some extent, in that we are simply not in a position to disregard the folk content of our metaphors – especially those surrounding “nature” – because doing so is both harmful and disadvantageous in the ways discussed earlier. I wish to now make a broader case against the reductive tendency driving all three of the above remaining traits of classical naturalism.

We can first say, following Raphael van Riel and Robert Van Gulick (2019), that the notion of *reducing* in philosophy is closely tied to its meaning in natural language, ‘bringing back’. In reducing one thing *x* to another thing *y*, we are seeking to bring *x* back to a supposedly more basic form, *y*. To use a classic example, if we have some sensation – e.g. pain – then we can trace this sensation to whatever produced or caused it, which according to the classical naturalist would be a physical brain state; in short sensations can be reduced to neurological brain states, i.e. our brains are explained in physical terms (Smart 1959). Thus the sensation in question can be reduced to a state of whatever thing exists physically and undergoes the processes required for us to have such sensations – i.e. our physical brains and bodies. Van Riel and Van Gulick go on to say that such attempts usually presuppose a rather hardline position in the question of the *unity of science* (5.4); that is, for example it presupposes holding the view that the natural sciences – in particular physics – are more basic than the other sciences. In being reductive in this way, we presuppose that the things we are reducing *are nothing more than their more basic forms*. To go back to the example of sensations and physical brain states – the reductive classical naturalist’s claim is that these sensations are merely our shallow understanding of the underlying, more basic physical brain states. Hence, the assumption of the hardline reductionist – in our case of the classical naturalist – is that whatever can be known or said outside e.g. physics, is unnecessary in the more fundamental, scientific-physicalistic description of the world. Hence, if this superficial, reducible thing is discardable in some sense, because physics has given us a more basic

understanding of *everything*. One can recognize an overlap here with what Papineau earlier warned against in the case of physicalism (op cit, p. 56).⁸⁶ The mere fact that the world ultimately, and physically, is a constituted in a certain way, tells us nothing about how the world *appears* to us or how we actually experience it. If reductionism cannot account for how we experience the world, and can only provide explanations in physical terms, then it is highly doubtful that we can get at the full gamut of *reasons* that compel us to act from such a limited explanations. Accounting for how we do and should act or think, based on rational constraints, then lies outside of the purview of science, and philosophy should step in to take up this critical task. Thus (8), and (9) are clearly traits that we do not want to keep. Privileging the terms of science is simply not going to do the work required for philosophy’s critical and skeptical task, however much it seeks to remain naturalistic and respect the domain of science. Moreover, we should keep apart ontology, epistemology and methodology, precisely because these are specific to each group of intellectual activities. Fundamental ontology is in the purview of science, whereas epistemology is precisely where philosophy excels by applying its skeptical methods on the two cultures.

Reductionism of this sort, however, can also be seen as part of a more harmless general tendency towards simplification in one’s theorizing. This usually manifests itself in the employment of Ockham’s Razor, which I understand as ‘the imperative to abstain from multiplying entities without necessity’, but also similar and more up to date exhortations for ‘intellectual economy’, e.g. Schaffer’s “Laser” (Schaffer 2015). Thus from this rather unfortunate tendency to be ‘reductive’ in classical naturalism, we can still derive an advantageous characteristic trait for a reformed naturalism, (3)*, “a drive for intellectual economy”, to borrow Robert Audi’s words (2014, p. 17). Thus from the preceding discussion, we arrive at the following table of proposed family resemblance traits for reformed naturalism:

Component	Commitment(s) to
Ontological naturalism	(1) anti-supernaturalism (2)* physicalism (within its bounds)
Methodological naturalism	(3)* a drive for intellectual economy (5) conducting empirical research
Epistemological naturalism	(4)* ‘the scientific spirit’ (as an adherence to epistemic norms of rationality) (6) a disavowal of a prior philosophy

[Figure 4. A list of components and commitments for reformed naturalism]

⁸⁶ The classic case of such naturalizing efforts in contemporary philosophy, is to be find in the philosophy of mind, in arguments for reducing ‘sensations’ to ‘brain processes’ in Place (1956) and Smart (1959).

I will discuss the above in greater detail in the following chapter, where I will propose my own particular view of reformed naturalism, so as to serve the revised meaning of “nature” that I have previously outlined.

C.iii. Towards some alternative types of “naturalism”

As a preamble to my own proposal for a reformed naturalism, I suggest to examine some alternative types of “naturalism” proposed by Macarthur (2010) and P. Kyle Stanford (2016). These alternatives to classical naturalism are respectively based on questioning the notions of the ‘unity of science’, which we have already seen, and ‘scientific realism’, which loosely understood, is the idea that our best scientific theories describe the world as it really exists.

David Macarthur has dealt with the *placement problem* – or placements problems in the plural – in a series of works (2004, 2010, 2019). The placement problem has to do with accounting for mental objects, phenomena or entities in the world described by the successful sciences. That is, Macarthur reprises a version of the main problem in McDowell’s “Mind and World”, as previously described. Thus, what is involved in *placing* the mental into the purely sense based, empiricist world of science, is an acknowledgement of the scientifically respectable origins of these mental activities. That is, one can offer various scientific explanations as to how our irreducibly complex mental abilities, and the mental entities that result from them are actually evolutionary products of our species’ physical adaptation needed for survival in the world. Such resulting mental entities can include “normative facts involving values, reasons and meanings” (2004, p. 30), but also, “intentional entities” and “mathematical entities” (2010, p. 138). Macarthur’s tactic in dealing with the placement problem has been to advocate for a version of liberal naturalism, wherein the above problem dissolves, by virtue of adopting a more open-ended understanding of “nature”, whose completeness is not exhausted by what the sciences have to say. The motivation for doing so, on Macarthur’s part, is that the abovementioned mental entities are both irreducible through scientific explanations – be they nomological, causal or statistical – but also indispensable, because pervasive, in our daily lives.

What renders Macarthur’s “Taking the Human Sciences Seriously” (2010) especially relevant in the current context of exploring alternatives to classical naturalism, is that in it he does not directly argue for a liberal naturalism per se, but rather for a process of broadening our understanding of “naturalism”, or what he calls “liberalization” (p. 127). Similar to what we saw in De Caro and Voltolini (2010) earlier in this chapter, Macarthur proposes that there is a minimal set of traits or commitments, or “Basic Naturalism”, to which one can adhere in order to qualify as “naturalist” and from there, by re-examining one’s understanding of what science is, one can arrive at a range of less and less restrictive options. The least restrictive of these options, Macarthur argues, is not only not subject to the placement problem, but also a better interpretation of the notion of science. To get a better grasp of Macarthur’s proposal, let us turn to each of the above elements in turn. First, Basic Naturalism’s commitments are:

1. *Anti-Supernaturalism*: A rejection of any commitment to the supernatural whether in the form of supernatural entities (e.g., God, Platonic Ideas) or supernatural faculties of mind (e.g., Cartesian transparency, mystical intuition).

2. *Human beings are part of nature and can be properly studied by the sciences*. There can be what Hume called a "science of man," a doctrine that leaves open the question whether scientific understanding can provide a complete understanding of the human.

3. *"The naturalist is one who has respect for the conclusions of natural science."*⁸⁷
(p. 124-125)

Then, from that minimal naturalism, three positions result out of a spectrum of possibilities:

"Extreme Scientific Naturalism treats physics as the only science worth taking seriously; *Narrow Scientific Naturalism* takes this attitude to the natural sciences as a whole; and *Broad Scientific Naturalism*, beyond the natural sciences, takes at least some human sciences – those that are pulling their explanatory weight – seriously, too." (p. 126)

Thus, Macarthur goes on to argue that the placement problem need not arise for Broad Scientific Naturalism (or Broad Naturalism for short), because a proper understanding of science would extend to the social sciences, and thus it is the preferable naturalist position among the three listed above. In addition to outlining these options, Macarthur's proposal is also relevant for my project because in this version of the placement problem, the targets to be naturalized are:

"[...] basic forms of normativity that are, arguably, indispensable, irreducible (to social conventions or natural facts), and pervasive aspects of human thought and talk. Reasons, meanings, and values are good examples of the relevant forms of normativity."⁸⁸ (p. 127)

Hence, the metaphorical meanings of "nature" which I wish to preserve, as well as the particularly normative content of human freedom, contained and contrasted in my favored Kantian interpretation of the term "nature", seem to be all accounted for within Macarthur's proposed version of "naturalism", Broad Naturalism.

That said, Macarthur eventually does not stop at Broad Naturalism; by suggesting that "naturalism" is a "normative doctrine", Macarthur goes on to propose that even Broad Naturalism is left with the unresolved issue of explaining in non-normative, non-scientific terms the "normative rationality", which is its driving commitment. This latter task of explaining "normative rationality" in such terms is unachievable without a nonscientific understanding of rationality; therefore according to Macarthur even Broad

⁸⁷ Emphases in the original. In 3. Macarthur quotes John Dewey (1944, p. 2).

⁸⁸ Macarthur qualifies this statement beforehand, by stating that simple rules of etiquette or rules of games are not the target here (p. 126-127).

Naturalism ought to be discarded in favor of the properly humanistic, liberal naturalism (p. 136-137).

Now, in the foregoing paragraphs I have only provided a very rough presentation of Macarthur's proposal for alternatives to classical naturalism; what is more, Macarthur himself does not provide an extended argument for what I deem to be the more contentious part of his claim, outlined in the preceding paragraph. In order to supplement these lacks, it will be part of my task in the following chapter to go beyond the above rough presentation, and not only critically examine Macarthur's proposal for liberalizing naturalism –situating my own version of reformed naturalism therein – but also to evaluate his claims that “naturalism” is normative in the aforementioned way, and that Broad Naturalism ought to be discarded in favor of liberal naturalism. As a preview of my own view, let me point out that I will take exception to the latter claim, and defend a version of Broad Naturalism.

In “Naturalism Without Scientism”, Stanford's proposal for an *integrative naturalism* bears some key similarities to Macarthur's view presented above, in that one of its central claims as an alternative to conventional or classical naturalism is its “insistence that all (good) evidence matters” (2016, p. 92). Stanford derives this integrative form of naturalism from Quine's philosophy, though he is careful to point out that despite his open-minded side, Quine often contradicted his own better insights:

This integrative conception of philosophical naturalism clearly owes an enormous debt to Quine: at its heart are such central Quinean insights as the fact that there is only a single, integrated project of inquiry into the world and our place within it, that this inquiry must seek to improve the “inherited world theory as a going concern” from within without automatically privileging some reliable sources of evidence over others, and that it will neither presuppose nor conclude at present that there are any distinctively philosophical routes to substantive knowledge about ourselves or the world. If all this is right, however, Quine himself stumbles badly when he famously suggests that epistemology should simply be assimilated to or replaced with empirical psychology [...] (p. 94)

This is, once again, the replacement thesis that we saw in our earlier discussion of Sorell's text – against this reductive strain in Quine's thinking, as well as in “naturalism” in general, Stanford defends a particular form of historically motivated *epistemic instrumentalism* about scientific theories. That is, the attitude that theories are mere instruments that we can entertain, because they are useful, but they do not ultimately represent or actually describe reality as it is. As others have pointed out (e.g. Stroud 1996), Quine was quite irritated by this kind of historicist tendency in the philosophy of science, which he perceived as a form of *relativism* detrimental to scientific inquiry, and so he would find the instrumentalism inspired thereby equally detrimental. Against intrumentalism's constantly doubtful attitude to scientific theories, Quine and others propose a *scientific realist* attitude – as understood at the beginning of this subsection.

However, as Stanford goes on to argue, following a set of remarks by Howard Stein (1989), the above confrontation between realism and instrumentalism is a moot and misleading one (p. 96-98). What seems to be characteristic of instrumentalists – i.e. that they merely entertain theories and consider them as plausible, or useful until proven wrong – is equally characteristic of realists; Stanford brings up the example of the contemporary view of Newtonian physics among realists to illustrate this. Scientific realists do not think that Newtonian physics are true, but they can nonetheless entertain them as a view, so as to make use of them in practical applications, or as a teaching aid. Thus, the key issue at stake between instrumentalists and realists is not the attitude of instrumentalism per se, but rather *to which theories it is applied*. As an interesting outtake of this point, it turns out that even epistemic instrumentalists have a hypothesis towards which they do not hold an instrumentalist attitude; namely what Quine called “bodies of common sense”, which is the hypothesis we commonly hold regarding “our understanding of the most familiar entities and events” (p. 99).

As such, Stanford’s proposed integrative naturalism consists of the commitments that we have:

“(1) abandoned the idea that there are distinctively philosophical methods of investigation that are independent from those of ordinary empirical inquiry,
(2) accepted that realism and instrumentalism are not best understood as distinctive philosophical views of theories or theoretical knowledge as such, but instead as cognitive attitudes that realists and instrumentalists alike take toward some particular theories or bodies of information about the world (e.g., Newtonian mechanics) and not others (e.g., Quine’s hypothesis of the bodies of common sense),
and (3) recognized that thoroughgoing naturalists will see the correct attitude to take toward any particular scientific theory as depending not only upon individualized consideration of the empirical achievements and further characteristics of that theory, but also on the historical record of our successive efforts to entheorize the world more generally, and perhaps further empirical evidence concerning ourselves as theorizers besides” (p. 100)

However, as Stanford points out, this may leave us with the worry that as philosophers we have nothing left to do. This is an unjustified worry, according to Stanford, because even if philosophy is reduced to a single Quinean inquiry continuous with science, there still remains a crucial task for philosophers: *constructive interpretation*. Stanford derives this notion from Ronald Dworkin’s work (1986), and through it he aims to bridge two opposing attitudes within the philosophy of science. These attitudes are the prescriptive one, the “Epistemic Police”, which, roughly speaking comes in to question and instruct the scientists on their faults and methods; and the descriptive one, the “Anthropology of Science”, which in a Kuhnian spirit aims to merely record how science is actually practiced, and how paradigms change (Stanford, p. 101-102). Constructive interpretation is meant to make science “the best it can be”, in Dworkin’s phrase (*ibid*), by seeking to maximize the desiderata of *fit* and *acceptability*:

“[...] a good constructive interpretation of science will seek to motivate, explain, and rationalize as much of what scientists themselves *actually* do (including much of what they say) as possible. But constructive interpretations also retain the freedom to ultimately exclude some parts of the preinterpretively identified object of interpretation as mistakes, because fit is not all that matters.” (p. 102-103)

I find the above application of constructive interpretation to be particularly suited to what I have to say in my own version of reformed naturalism, especially when combined with the abovementioned insights about instrumentalism’s reliance on bodies of common sense; combined too with the liberalizing attitude towards the interpretation of science, found in the preceding discussion of Macarthur (2010).

However, I have to stress again, that though the accounts presented above will be useful, they are not identical to my own. I will criticize some features of Stanford’s proposal of integrative naturalism, just as I will take issue with liberal naturalism in particular, as being too extreme in a sense that I will explain by reconstructing some disadvantageous traits of views tending towards that end, which is the opposite to classical naturalism. Ultimately, my view will depend on which version of naturalism gives us the best understanding of “nature” as outlined above, i.e. with contrast to normativity.

Chapter 5. Reformed Naturalism: a Better View of Nature

Introduction: revising “nature” revisited, some remarks

“Nature” in reformed naturalism will be both rather counterintuitive, but also commonplace enough to seem trivial, if left unexamined. In this chapter, I would like to unpack this statement bit by bit, as well as to revisit the components of my proposal supporting this terminological revision of “nature”, and the arguments for this proposal. First, I will make some more short preliminary remarks on these topics, and then I will announce a more concrete plan for this chapter.

The meaning of “nature” that I will propose suits best the task of philosophy is a broadly Kantian one, wherein “nature” is contrasted with both freedom *and* law. This is counterintuitive for a few reasons; we normally associate freedom with boundless action and lack of order and regulation, and we simultaneously think that “nature” has laws, implying that it is governed by some underlying *order*. By contrast, my Kantian understanding of *freedom* is that it is intimately tied with knowledge of the *normative* boundaries, workings and rules of human action and thought – that is, I place *law*, in the broad sense, outside “nature”. I propose that “nature” has to *appear* to us as a non-human and non-law-abiding, even *chaotic* entity;⁸⁹ hence it is a *phenomenological* meaning, in the sense that it has to appear to us this way, irrespective of how it might actually be. Remember that philosophy’s primary task, in the scheme that I propose, is to play the skeptic to both science and traditional culture. Thus, for philosophy, “nature” is chaotic *for all we know*; it should *appear* to philosophy this way, because its task is to *doubt*, not to state the world *is*. That is, such a “nature” might also follow some *necessary* course, which is – very crucially – ultimately unknown to us, and very much unlike our own norm-laden freedom to think and act. Laws of nature apply to the science’s meaning of “nature”, and for philosophy they are no more than a theory to be challenged, or at best *creatively interpreted* (Stanford 2016).

Yet, as modern science has made virtually universally known and accepted, humans are also part of “nature” in an *ontological* sense. Thus, the study of the laws (or norms) governing our thoughts, actions and being is both subject to the same scientific methods of investigation as the rest of “nature”, but also in virtue of being part of “nature”, we ourselves are equally chaotic and unpredictable. The key thing that separates us from the rest of “nature” is our *self-knowledge*,⁹⁰ or self-intelligibility

⁸⁹ This is what I have called the *operative metaphor* of “nature” in the revisory meaning. See strategy vi. in the Mapping Sequence of Strategies. To review, by this I mean that this is the central metaphor that we employ to identify this way of talking about “nature”. A different writer might call this a concept or a conception, but following Cappelen (FL), I can only talk about the word “nature” and no more. The operative metaphor is the figurative label that we attach to a certain meaning of “nature” to compare it to other meanings of the same elusive word.

⁹⁰ I understand *self-knowledge as an activity* throughout, following Edmundts 2017, though my understanding admittedly does not do justice to her careful exegesis of Kant’s notion. I also understand the self in self-knowledge in a very broad sense, encompassing the greater, conscious self of all of humanity, and not self in the individual sense.

through the symbolic discourse of *language*. This particular faculty gives us, at the very least, the impression that we have some special and intimate access to the laws regulating our inner workings as beings in “nature”. This kind of access or intelligibility we cannot fathomably claim to have of *any* other part of “nature”, since no other part of “nature” shares our own peculiar symbolic discourse of language.⁹¹ This latter bit about our difference with the rest of “nature” is the commonplace, seemingly trivial aspect of my revised meaning of “nature”. “Nature” in the most common, lay sense is almost always related to some non-human aspects of the external world (i.e. landscapes etc.).

Building on these more and less intuitive aspects of “nature”, my project to revise the term “nature”, in particular, is at once both essential, as well as instrumental and mutually supportive of the other elements of my proposal. These other elements are *The Mapping Sequence of Strategies* for “nature”, already presented and applied in the previous chapters; and my own version of a *reformed naturalism*, which I will properly present and argue for in this chapter. The former is my own concrete way to strive for the activity of self-knowledge through language, by examining the paraphrasable metaphorical content of the meanings of “nature”. The latter serves as a way to bridge this humanistic self-knowledge with the rest of “nature”, by way of incorporating science (i.e. the systematic knowledge of “nature”) into our more general philosophical view of the world – therefore “naturalism”. In this way this study of “nature” is one of the activities of philosophy in the spectrum of the activities of self-knowledge that I have proposed. To return briefly to Cappelen’s work, which provides the foundation for my entire project, the above components of my proposal can be seen both as ways to *assess* the term “nature”, but also parts of the strategies that *can* be taken to implement a revision of “nature”. As to the actual implementation thereof, I have no illusions as to that in the present context. However, *if* a revision of “nature” were to be implemented by applying the strategies that I have proposed, then it would have the best chance of *changing the world* – as Cappelen would have it in order to be successful CE – in the limited and presumably favorable conditions of the academic world, especially that of philosophy.

Having said that, let us turn back to the topic of reforming naturalism. In presenting my arguments for the above, in this chapter I will:

A. Present my own version of reformed naturalism, and compare it with other alternative views of “naturalism”. This will require that I characterize *liberal naturalism*, the other end in the spectrum of forms of “naturalism”, that is, the opposite of the classical naturalism examined in the previous chapter. My own view will be more similar to liberal naturalism, though it will avoid both extremes.

⁹¹ I do not preclude the possibility that other parts of “nature” (or natural beings) may have equally sophisticated discourses of their own, but we simply cannot know them in the same way as we know that our own species. Also note that I am aware of the seeming divergence of human natural languages, but as is common knowledge, despite such superficial difficulties, such natural languages are very much reciprocally inter-translatable *and* mutually intelligible in a way that interspecies discourse is *not*, at least at the time of writing this.

B. Defend and argue my version of reformed naturalism, claiming that it qualifies as the preferable form of “naturalism”, because it retains access to self-knowledge. In support of this claim, I will elaborate my view of “nature” and self-knowledge in reformed naturalism. The general idea is that though I acknowledge the domain of science and hitherto attempts to work within its constraints in philosophy, as exemplified in the better traits of classical naturalism, I also hold on to the hope that philosophy can and *should* do more, and that a renewed critical understanding of “nature” is a crucial part of this. Namely it can draw upon traditional-literary culture as well, in a critical spirit.

This traditional-literary culture, I would purposefully like to leave quite open-ended; though I will expand it from C.P. Snow’s original context (1959), so that it includes *not only* those intellectual activities conventionally seen as cultural (art, novels, poetry, history⁹² etc.), but also *folk* ways of knowing and reasoning, as well as non-scientific natural language content (e.g. metaphors). In general, this group of self-knowing activities will be characterized by less rigor, and more free-play than science and philosophy.

A.i. Towards a specific reformed naturalist position

To begin with, let us go back to the list of family resemblance traits, which I proposed a reformed naturalism should have, in the previous chapter:

Component	Commitment(s) to
Ontological naturalism	(1) anti-supernaturalism (2)* physicalism (within its bounds)
Methodological naturalism	(3)* a drive for intellectual economy (5) conducting empirical research
Epistemological naturalism	(4)* the scientific spirit (as an adherence to epistemic norms of rationality) (6) a disavowal of a prior philosophy

[Figure 4. A list of components and commitments for reformed naturalism]

All the above seem to me to be good commitments to have in my version of reformed naturalism, since they are both *prima facie* characteristic of “naturalism”, yet neither

⁹² This need not detain us here, but history is activity that is hard to pin down as belong to either one of the three self-knowledge groups (science, traditional-literary culture, and philosophy). C.P. Snow initially places it in literary culture (1959, p.13), but I disagree with his evaluation. I think versions of history exist in all three groups (e.g. folklore, history of ideas, historical notions in the social or natural sciences).

reductive, nor scientific in the way that classical naturalism's commitments were (Figure 3. See p. 47), and they also do not clash with my preferred, revised and metaphorical meaning of "nature", as sketched out earlier. Nevertheless, the above set of commitments also does not fully capture the character of my own, particular position in a reformed naturalism – these are good family resemblance traits for views that seek to avoid the twin pitfalls of classical naturalism (i.e. being reductive and reductive), but they are not sufficient for fully capturing my own view, as adumbrated so far. To this end, I propose to add a few additional characteristics to the above list, which, though not specific to "naturalism" in general, help to capture my own view. By method of elimination, the two elements of my view, other than reformed naturalism itself, which are not on the above list, but should be translated into commitments, are my preferred meaning of "nature", and The Mapping Sequence of Strategies. In addition, my own reformed naturalist view should not clash with Cappelen's Austerity Framework, since that would undermine the foundations of my entire project. Let us examine these three constraints, and attempt to come up with commitments for them in a revised version of the above table (Figure 4.). This should serve both as a step forward in presenting my view of a reformed naturalism, but it will also be a good moment to reflect on how the elements of my project hang together overall.

If we recall what I said in the Introduction to this chapter, much of my view has to do with the role of *language* in situating humans in "nature", in particular natural language and its historical-cultural content – or folk content, as some naturalists would have it. As such, it is unsurprising that the three above elements of my proposal are tightly enmeshed. Following Cappelen's externalist metasemantic framework, "nature" is not just a random series of scribbles or sounds, which is interchangeable with any other word; "nature" has a particular set of historically-culturally defined things that it picks out, whether we want it to or not. In addition, "nature" has a set of unique *lexical effects* that accompany its every usage in an utterance; these can range from how a word sounds to us, to its deeply complicated figurative applications. Context plays a role in such connotations, but change in the meanings of "nature" (i.e. change in extensions and intensions), as it is happening now, is largely *inscrutable* to us and we *lack control* over these processes. The best we can do is *ex post facto* historical or genealogical analysis, or lexicography.⁹³ Nonetheless, we should *keep trying* to get a grasp on the above process, and what the lexical effects of "nature" are, so that we may upon reflection implement, to whatever extent we can, the meanings that we prefer.⁹⁴

The Mapping Sequence of Strategies is my attempt both to get to know more about the *metaphorical* lexical effects of "nature" by paraphrasing them, through various related strategies, but also, in doing so, to identify and label particular meanings of "nature" by appealing to their respective *contrast terms* (or *antitheses*, in Sophist

⁹³ Such an attempt can be found in Lovejoy 1936, which serves both as an introduction to the history of ideas, but also as a classic work on "nature" in its own right.

⁹⁴ This is a very rough summary of the Austerity Framework, plus Cappelen's slogans for it (FL, p. 83). For a more detailed discussion and more references to Cappelen's text see Chapter 2 of this thesis.

terminology), and the resulting *operative metaphors*.⁹⁵ Now, the tricky bit is selecting what meanings are preferable to us and why. To this end, I have purposefully limited the scope of my inquiry to what meaning of “nature” would be preferable in “naturalism”, which in itself is already a very pertinent topic and doctrine, as we have seen – both to how we practice philosophy, but also for the term “nature” in contemporary philosophical talk too.

To make my task easier, I have somewhat simplified matters by identifying two extreme tendencies in “naturalism”, each with its own set of family resemblance traits, cashed out as commitments. Both of these tendencies are to be avoided, each for specific reasons, particular to its commitments. I have so far discussed one of these extremes, *classical naturalism*, and in the following subsection I will discuss the other, *liberal naturalism*. What marks my preferred meaning of “nature” as preferable, in the reformed naturalism that straddles these two extremes, is that it should lead to *self-knowledge*, yet should also remain naturalistic, by being in line with the relevant commitments of this reformed naturalism.

Thus we have reflected on how the elements of my proposal hang together, and so now we should figure out what commitments would best encapsulate them in my position in reformed naturalism. To coherently group these new, not specifically naturalist, commitments in the upcoming list of traits for my position, I propose to introduce a new component, *Metasemantics*, in keeping with Cappelen’s Framework. These are the commitments that I have about the semantics of my reformed naturalism. (7)*, a commitment to *externalism*, as summarized in the previous paragraphs, should do well to sum up my adherence to the Austerity Framework. Then, (8.a)*, can be a commitment to *critically discovering and respecting folk content*, including metaphorical content; and (8.b)*, *a focus on the term “nature”*. These last two commitments, and especially (8.b)*, are highly specific to my particular position in reformed naturalism, and cannot be separated from this particular project of CE in which I have been implicated. Moreover, if they are somewhat underspecified and abstract at the moment, they will become clearer in the process of this chapter. So, without further ado, here is my position, in the by now familiar table format. (See top of the following page) More commitments could be added to the above table, but for the moment being these are the ones essential to conveying my position in short. For instance, one might well ask where self-knowledge is to be found in this table. To this I respond that self-knowledge is intended to arise as an overall sum of activities, in which philosophy will do its task well if it keeps to the above commitments, as well as to the preferred meaning of “nature” that I propose. (I will defend this claim in the concluding section of this chapter.) Thus, I turn to discussing the commitments of liberal naturalism, in anticipation of contrasting my position, against other alternatives to classical naturalism.

⁹⁵ See especially strategies iii. and vi. in the Sequence.

Component	Commitment(s) to
Ontological naturalism	(1) anti-supernaturalism (2)* physicalism (within its bounds)
Methodological naturalism	(3)* a drive for intellectual economy (5) conducting empirical research
Epistemological naturalism	(4)* the scientific spirit (as an adherence to epistemic norms of rationality) (6) a disavowal of a prior philosophy
Metasemantics	(7)* externalism (8.a)* critically discovering and respecting folk content (8.b)* a focus on the term “nature”

[Figure 5. The specific reformed naturalist position adopted]

A.ii. What is liberal naturalism?

Two of the most prominent defenders and popularizers of liberal naturalism define it as:

“a philosophical outlook lying between scientific naturalism and supernaturalism. It is naturalistic in avoiding commitment to anything supernatural; but, unlike many versions of philosophical naturalism, it allows for the existence of non-scientific entities or powers of mind – where these are either not objects of scientific study or not fully explicable in causal-explanatory terms.” (De Caro and Macarthur 2015, n.p.)

A sketch of liberal naturalism, drawn by Macarthur, can further supplement this basic definition:

We can capture the insights and avoid the oversights of scientific naturalism if we endorse a *liberal naturalism*, which refuses to identify nature with the scientific image of the world, no matter how broadly interpreted [...] The key contrast for this new vision of naturalism is not the non-scientific but, rather, the *supernatural* which we can think of as commitments to entities (e.g. spiritual agencies) or forms of understanding that are neither part of the manifest or the scientific image of the world. Liberal naturalism opposes supernatural entities (e.g. transcendent gods,

immaterial souls and demonic spirits) and supernatural methods of acquiring truth and understanding (e.g. mystical visions, crystal balls and soothsayers).

Liberal naturalism thus equates nature with the manifest image or, better, with the *critical* manifest image that is the result of subjecting the manifest image to critical scrutiny, which includes how well it hangs together with the scientific image of the world. Consequently, liberal naturalism is a form of naturalism that positions itself to acknowledge the possibility of non-scientific entities or phenomena and non-scientific forms of knowledge and understanding – categories that the scientific naturalist prejudicially and dogmatically regards as supernatural.

(2019, p. 573-574) [emphases in the original]

Now, the reason that I provide these lengthy quotations from De Caro and Macarthur is that liberal naturalism is a rather loose and recent set of positions within “naturalism”. The earliest mention of it can be found in passing in the work of P.F. Strawson (1985, e.g. p. 1), though the most famous representative among contemporary canonical philosophers is undoubtedly John McDowell, whom De Caro and Macarthur and others often invoke for inspiration – and even for rather dubious-sounding claims to authority – and to whom they have attributed a “naturalism of second nature” (e.g. 2004b, 2015). Thus, according to De Caro and Macarthur, liberal naturalism still occupies a “contested territory” between supernaturalism and what they call *scientific naturalism* – the latter of which is identifiable within the family of positions I have called *classical naturalism* (2010b, p. 16).

Unfortunately, the above characterizations of liberal naturalism are not entirely suited to my purposes as they stand; what we have so far is only a minimal naturalism, with some minor naysaying to classical naturalism. So I will seek to supplement these accounts further and modify them so as to fit the overview of “naturalism” that I have been advocating. That is, as I have pointed out earlier, a spatial metaphor does not do justice to the ontology of our philosophical views; we do not *get* from one philosophical position to another – we simply change our minds about which commitments to hold on to. So, liberal naturalism does not exist between “naturalism” and supernaturalism, strictly speaking. This remark is not meant as a substantial criticism of liberal naturalism, but rather as an indication of how we *should* describe liberal naturalism in way that does justice to its commitments. Namely, liberal naturalism is composed of a set of family resemblance traits, cashed out as commitments, some of which tie it to conventional “naturalism”, and others which differentiate it from it. In this spirit, I would like to suggest that, in fact, liberal naturalism could be described partly by appealing to the set of traits that I earlier proposed for reformed naturalism in general. (See Figure 4. p. 67) In addition to the texts cited above (i.e. De Caro and Macarthur 2010b, 2015; Macarthur 2019), I urge us to also reconsider the proposals mentioned in the previous chapter (De Caro and Voltolini 2010; Macarthur 2010).

In the context of liberal naturalism, the only trait out of the ones listed above (in Figure 4.), is (1), *anti-supernaturalism*. However, that by itself does not seem to be the decisive point of difference that De Caro and Macarthur make it out to be, between liberal naturalism and classical naturalism, as the latter also holds this commitment, almost essentially, as we have seen (e.g. Stroud 1996; Papineau 2020).⁹⁶ Thus, the contrast drawn in the excerpt from Macarthur (op cit, p. 69-70) does not really seem to do the heavy lifting that he wants it to do in differentiating liberal naturalism from classical naturalism; the non-scientific is not necessarily the same as the supernatural for non-liberal naturalists – that only really holds for the most extreme classical naturalists, who would be unwilling to accommodate any non-scientific, folk understanding. For instance, as we saw earlier, Ross, Ladyman and Spurrett (2007) are happy to acknowledge the existence of metaphors as non-supernatural ways of knowing the world, but because such metaphors “domesticate” the ontological claims of science, they seek to excise their non-scientific legacy in metaphysics. What is more, this purported contrast is even more mystifying given Macarthur’s own account of *liberalizing* “naturalism”, which I presented in the last subsection of the previous chapter. That is, given that Macarthur himself seems to acknowledge that there are various shades of “naturalism”, which though not liberal naturalist in his sense, can extend to the social sciences, far from the physicalist, scientistic stereotype of classical naturalism.

On the other hand, Macarthur’s appeal to *the critical manifest image* does qualify as a commitment that differentiates liberal from classical naturalism. Though I cannot explain these Sellarsian terms in detail here, I take it that classical naturalism is committed to the *scientific image* of the world, whereas liberal naturalism seeks to liberalize this by drawing on the contents of the non-scientific, manifest image of the world, as provide e.g. by the humanities and some social sciences, and perhaps even by folk ways of knowing. Call this commitment (3)**. This trait can be seen as related to (8.a)*, from Figure 5. – I will say more on this soon. Moreover, following De Caro and Voltolini, we can attribute two more commitments to liberal naturalism. The first is a non-naturalist ontological one, (2)**, to *the existence of non-causal entities*. These are, I take it, mostly mental constructs or entities, e.g. numbers, epistemic norms etc.; De Caro and Voltolini offer the example of modal properties, i.e. the qualities related to necessity, possibility, and essence, attributed to the world through our predicative statements about it (2010, p. 79). The second commitment that we can draw from De Caro and Voltolini, is a reaffirmation of (4)*, the scientific spirit (as an adherence to epistemic norms of rationality), given that liberal naturalism is characteristically rational, as opposed to the irrationality of supernaturalism (p. 74-75). De Caro and Voltolini also provide us with a helpful slogan that encapsulates the spirit of liberal naturalism:

⁹⁶ In Stroud’s account it is one of the two essentially controversial traits of conventional “naturalism”, while for Papineau it is one of the undeniable, albeit somewhat trivial, traits that one can attribute to any form of “naturalism”. Lest I be accused of inconsistency, remember also that anti-supernaturalism has figured as the first and only consistent trait in all of the tables that I have so far presented.

“ontological tolerance plus methodological discontinuity” (p. 78)

Thus, in the table of traits below, characterizing liberal naturalism, methodological naturalism drops out altogether. And though somewhat redundant, I propose to group (2)** and (3)** – liberal naturalism’s more unconventional commitments – simply under the label ‘liberalizing traits’:

Component	Commitment(s) to
Ontological naturalism	(1) anti-supernaturalism
Liberalizing traits	(2)** the existence of non-causal entities (3)** the critical manifest image
Epistemological naturalism	(4)* the scientific spirit (as an adherence to epistemic norms of rationality)

[Figure 6. A list of components and commitments for liberal naturalism]

A.iii. Comparing reformed naturalism with other alternative views

As I said earlier, my position of reformed naturalism will avoid the excesses of both classical naturalism, and the deficiencies of liberal naturalism. In the previous chapter I have said what the excesses of classical naturalism are, and why we should avoid them. Now I will do the same for liberal naturalism; my view will be more akin to liberal naturalism, but it will differ from it because it seeks to avoid said excesses. Then, I will conclude this subsection by comparing my reformed naturalism to the alternative views that I presented in the concluding section of the previous chapter – Macarthur’s *liberalizing* scheme of naturalisms (2010) and Stanford’s *integrative naturalism*. It should be easy enough to compare reformed naturalism with liberal naturalism, since we have Figure 6. just above.

(1), anti-supernaturalism, is not a point of contention, though as we will see in discussing my preferred meaning of “nature” later, I strongly oppose the emphasis placed by De Caro and Macarthur and other liberal naturalists on this trait. What’s more, as I said a bit earlier, anti-supernaturalism might very well be a common point between classical naturalism and liberal naturalism – thus granting the latter at least some conventional naturalist credentials – but it is by no means the shibboleth dividing these two naturalisms that the above authors make it out to be. Simply put, classical naturalists do not only oppose anything unscientific – they *a fortiori* oppose anything supernatural too.

This leads us to commitment (2)**, the existence of non-causal entities. Let me clarify my position on this; I do not think that mental entities or non-scientific entities do not exist. Along with the classical naturalists, I believe that they do exist insofar as our really existing, physical brains constantly think of such mental and non-scientific

entities, and the very fact that we *can* think of them is what keeps these non-physical entities in existence.⁹⁷ Unlike the classical naturalists, however, I do not take the extra step to say that such mental entities can always be reduced to their physical causes. I think that such a reduction would be in many, if not most, cases pointless and useless, and I have tried to make this explicit by committing myself to (2)*, physicalism (within its bounds), and (8.a)*, critically discovering and respecting ‘folk’ content. This, once again is meant to make philosophy balance between the ontological explanations of science and the folk content of traditional culture.

Moving on to (3)**, a commitment to the critical manifest image, my gripe with this is that given what I have said in the previous paragraph, it is hard to see in what way the liberal naturalists’ image *would* be critical. My contention is that liberal naturalists simply discard too many of the relevant commitments for their position to be naturalistic in a relevant way, and they also do not say enough to justify their claim to a *critical* view of folk content. Certainly, if the position described by De Caro and Voltolini (2010) holds true – that is, anti-supernaturalism plus *adherence to epistemic norms of rationality*, i.e. (4)* – then, liberal naturalism certainly avoids the charge of being a form of supernaturalism.⁹⁸ Still, that would not quite qualify liberal naturalism as similar enough to classical naturalism either, in the sense that almost all of the *deflationary bite* – or drive for intellectual economy, (3)*, as I put it – of the latter would be absent in liberal naturalism.

We have seen from the very early stages of this thesis that the contestation involved in setting the bar for “naturalism” is what is at stake in the confrontation between classical naturalism and its opponents. I take the liberal naturalists at their word, that liberal naturalism is “a philosophical outlook lying between scientific naturalism and supernaturalism” (De Caro and Macarthur 2015), and so my claim is that liberal naturalism *is* indeed “naturalism”. “Naturalism”, as I see it is a host of different, but related families of views, each with its set of traits. Thus, liberal naturalism *is* “naturalist” in some sense, but, as I will argue, it is not so in a relevant enough sense.

What I claim, is that my reformed naturalism, which in turn lies in between classical naturalism and liberal naturalism, is related enough to both, so that it retains both a more restrained form of the scientific edge of the former, *and* a more careful respect for folk content inherited by the latter. The former achievement, I cash out in terms of respecting that ontological claims are in the exclusive purview of science, so philosophy should follow suit, and not make *is* statements of its own. While, the latter achievement is that my naturalism reforms classical naturalism in the spirit of liberal naturalism, by admitting the relevance of non-scientific, even folk content, but does so while keeping a firm eye on the achievements of science and scientific philosophy.

⁹⁷ Here I am alluding to Andy Clark and David Chalmers’ extended mind theory (1998), with some material help we can extend our mental capacities beyond their normally limited scope. This is how the humungous amount of information and knowledge amassed by our cultures can remain in existence.

⁹⁸ That is, if supernaturalism is cashed out as the paired commitments to the existence of supernatural entities, and the irrational cognitive-epistemic means to know about such supernatural entities, as De Caro and Voltolini would have it.

Though I cannot defend this claim in depth and with examples here, I put forth the metaphorical content of “nature” itself, for which I have been arguing, as the flagship example of this effort.

Relating this back to Macarthur (2010), it might be apt to characterize reformed naturalism as a form of Broad Naturalism, in that it holds on to as broad as possible a view of what science is. Yet, at the same time, I think that it is a step too far to follow Macarthur to liberal naturalism. If we recall Macarthur’s text, he urges that even though Broad Naturalism is the preferable Scientific Naturalist (aka classical naturalist) view, it, supposedly, still fails to account for what makes rationality *normative* in naturalistic terms (p. 136). Hence, Macarthur argues, we should adopt liberal naturalism instead, because it accepts rationality on its own, non-natural terms. Moreover, Macarthur proposes that “naturalism” is a normative doctrine (ibid) – it is about how we *should* philosophize – and I have agreed and promoted this point from the beginning of this thesis.

There is something to Macarthur’s above point about rationality, if his allegations hold water, but unfortunately he does not say enough to make his claim convincing or to spell out why indeed classical naturalism fails in this way. Macarthur only cites Mark Colyvan’s “Naturalizing Normativity” (2009), and he unfortunately fails to provide any explanation of said paper at that. Let me make up for this lack, and see what there might be to Macarthur’s claim about rational normativity, and how this relates to reformed naturalism.⁹⁹

Colyvan’s paper lies in a tradition of “naturalist” attempts to face the problem of rationality’s circularity, that is, the problem we are faced with when attempting to justify and explain the norms of reasoning in non-normative terms. Davidson, for instance, sees no problem with rationality’s circularity, and claims this to be a *virtuous circle* (1995, p. 169). Others, such as David Lewis (1970), and F.P. Ramsey (1990), on the other hand, seek to explain rationality in non-normative terms, in what is famously known as the “Canberra Plan” (Colyvan, p. 308). Colyvan adopts the former approach, which has the interesting implication of *presupposing* a form of “naturalism” in order to justify and explain rational normativity. Here is what this kind of “naturalism” entails:

“[...] the scientific enterprise has a remarkably successful history, and naturalism is little more than a statement of our continued support for that enterprise. After all, rejecting naturalism amounts to claiming that sometimes we ought not accept our best scientific theories. Let’s get clear about what this amounts to in the current context. With Quine, I’m understanding science very broadly here, to include all theoretically and empirically well-supported areas of study (including philosophy). In short, our best scientific theories are simply our best theories. To reject naturalism is to deny that we ought to accept our best theory of some domain. But what are the other options? Accept the second-best theory? Accept no theory at all? Once put this way, naturalism, if not self evident, is at least a rather compelling

⁹⁹ Or normative rationality, I take it that these are interchangeable terms.

doctrine. It's not trivial though. It does rule against certain mystical and religious worldviews, for instance—at least when there are better (scientific) theories of the same phenomena.”

(Colyvan, p. 307)

Rationality in Colyvan's approach is what is needed for our best science to function; the rationality needed for our best theories to operate should be taken for granted. This is the Great Success of Science Argument all over again, leading us back towards a form of classical naturalism, albeit one lacking the sharp contours that I sought to define in Chapter 4. Colyvan goes on to admit that his approach only really works for systematic and formal theories of rationality, but it is unclear whether it would extend to less rigorous, folkier theories of rationality, that is, “commonsense judgements and informal logic” (p. 310).

Now, following what I have been saying so far, reformed naturalism should be able to take include both systematic-scientific rationality, as well as the latter, folkier kinds of rationality, but should do so in a critical spirit. Moreover, though these forms of rationality, qua mental entities, *are* just as much part of “nature” – in the scientific total sense of real existence – these forms of rational normativity should *appear* to us as non-natural, and essentially human. I will say more why this should be the case, and why it is an advantage of reformed naturalism to include this view; but before I do so, let us go back to the integrative naturalism proposed by Stanford (2016).

The problem we were examining so far is how reformed naturalism can incorporate the better features of both classical and liberal naturalism. It was MacArthur's claim that if classical naturalism – even including in his account Broad Naturalism – cannot properly account for rationality in naturalistic terms, then we should opt for liberal naturalism, which accepts rationality in non-scientific terms. Colyvan's theory, it turned out, *can* account for some forms of normative rationality but not other, folkier ones. Therefore, what my reformed naturalism ought to pull off is to show how *all* kinds of rational normativity are part of “nature”, in the scientific sense of real existence.

This is where Stanford's integrative naturalism, and in particular his version of *constructive interpretation* become relevant, when combined with the overall skeptical-critical task that I have proposed for philosophy in my spectrum of intellectual activities of self-knowledge. Making science “the best it can be” involves seeing it as part of the continuum that it forms with philosophy as a mediator, and literary, traditional or folk culture on the other end. The normative rationality (or rational normativity) required in this activity of knowing “nature” is what is needed not just for science to work, as Colyvan would have it, but rather what is needed for this entire continuous activity of self-knowledge to operate. Unfortunately, it still unclear what form of rationality would be relevant for a given kind of intellectual activity.

Thus, among its other tasks, it would be the task of philosophy to pass judgment as to which forms of rationality are relevant in a given domain of activities. I do not have the space to develop this particular part of my proposal much further here, but I can offer a couple of examples of what I mean. A typical complaint that arises about science is “Why is x scientific research relevant?” – (somewhat stereotypically) scientists are well

equipped to deal with rational tasks involving scientific theories, or technical matters pertaining to their research, however the above question seems to require a different kind of rationality than those. In this case it can be both the philosopher who poses the above challenge to the scientist, but also part of the philosopher's task to examine the above question this impartially, and then recommend what kinds of rationality are relevant to answer this challenge. A similar challenge, or question can be posed for traditional culture – take the one that we started with at the very outset of this thesis, “Why should we keep the word nature in language?”. Taking a cue from social science, we can liken such problems about rationality to “wicked problems” (Rittel and Webber 1973), in that they do not come with ready-made solutions as to what type of rationality applies, nor is there a foreseeable conclusion to such problems, *but* the philosophers are ultimately responsible for the kind of answer that they will give.¹⁰⁰

To close this section, where I have compared my position in reformed naturalism to other alternatives, let me repeat that my view is strongly naturalistic, yet seeks to do justice to the richness and relevance of folk and other non-scientific content as well, albeit without committing myself to scientifically implausible ontological statements. Understanding “nature” is key to this task for philosophy, and we will see why that is so, again, in the following section.

B. A defense of reformed naturalism: nature and self-knowledge

From the beginning of this thesis, I have been urging that “naturalism” can be partly understood as a normative doctrine as to how we ought to philosophize, or what philosophy should be. We may identify this component of “naturalism” with methodological naturalism. However, and in order to put forth a coherent *and* systematic proposal, in reformed naturalism I have not confined myself to one component of “naturalism”, but have instead provided a non-local, rather ambitious set of commitments covering *all* components of “naturalism”, as well as some metasemantic characteristics particular to the project of revising “nature”. Moreover, in light of the normative-programmatic character of methodological naturalism, I have suggested a revision of philosophy itself, and I have hinted at a larger intellectual scheme or spectrum of intellectual activities of self-knowledge in which this revised philosophy should be part of. These latter suggestions are indeed the most ambitious part of my proposal, and I cannot flesh them out here, nor defend them properly. I have merely hinted at what might be appropriate for philosophy, *if* my proposal for reformed naturalism were to be accepted, and I have done so in order to make my proposal systematic and coherent as part of the bigger picture of our overall intellectual activities as human beings. If “naturalism” is partly a normative doctrine about what philosophy should be, then it is not out of place in reforming “naturalism” to at least have some notion as to what philosophy *could be*.

Of course, the weight of my proposal in this thesis falls on the substantive elements of my proposal; that is, reformed naturalism, and the elements relating to the terminological revision of “nature”, a metaphorically driven understanding of the

¹⁰⁰ Starting with the optimistic assumption that scientists or other involved parties will listen to the philosophers' proposal.

meanings of “nature” through the Mapping Sequence, and the proposed meaning of “nature” in reformed naturalism, *chaotic nature* ruled by *necessity*, opposed to *freedom and normativity*. The problem of “nature” in language was after all what prompted my investigation and overall proposal. That said, in what follows, let me attempt one last defense of the particular commitments of reformed naturalism, by relating such commitments to the revision of “nature”, and where necessary hinting at the overall activity of self-knowledge

Looking back at the specific commitments that I proposed for reformed naturalism (Figure 5. p. 70), we first have the ontological component, which reaffirms the authority of science *within its own domain and boundaries*. (1), anti-supernaturalism, is the most basic commitment for a view to be respectful of science at all, and hence qualify as naturalist in a minimal way. Countenancing the existence of supernatural entities, which unlike other non-natural entities require irrational or mystical powers in order to be known, flies in the face of rationality, as understood both in science, and philosophy, in the conventional, academic sense. (2)*, physicalism (within its bounds), is what really qualifies reformed naturalism as strongly naturalistic, and differentiates it from liberal naturalism. We can of course countenance the existence of many non-physical, non-scientific and even folk entities, along with their related rational ways of knowing about them – but this does not change anything in the fundamental ontology of the world, as dictated by our best science. Following Ney (2008, 2018), I take it that the world *is* – at the fundamental level – what physics tells us it is; crucially, though, we should distinguish between such explanatory-ontological statements, which are in the purview of science, from normative and descriptive statements that lie outside, which are not.

Moving on to the methodological component, (3)*, a drive for intellectual economy, is meant to account for the skeptical-critical task of philosophy. Both scientific and traditional cultural terms, theories and ways of knowing are good on the face of it, but philosophy’s task is to also play the Intellectual Police – to paraphrase Stanford’s “Epistemic Police”. Yet, philosophy should do so in moderation, and with a constructive, not purely negative role in mind. Following Stanford (2016), intellectual economy should be brought into line with an adapted version of Dworkin’s principle of creative interpretation, and thus such *economy* should be understood in a more expansive, liberal way, making (*self-*) *knowledge* “the best it can be”. (5), conducting empirical research, I merely see as an acknowledgement of the needs of such an expansive enterprise for philosophy. Once again, this comes with a qualification that such empirical research ought to be conducted when relevant – what is more, not all thinkers are necessarily suited to the lab, or to fieldwork, and so acknowledging the place of the old trusty armchair in this scheme of things is only an affirmation of an optimal division of labor.

This brings us to the epistemic component of reformed naturalism. (4)*, the scientific spirit (as an adherence to epistemic norms of rationality), has already been discussed at length in the previous section, but I should stress again that rationality comes in many forms, and acknowledging this variety *is* in itself part of the scientific

spirit, understood as intellectual rigor, open-mindedness and other such beneficial epistemic traits. This what I take many detractors of classical naturalism, such as liberal naturalists, have tried to stress, and I try to balance this expansiveness with the aforementioned firm ontological-scientific commitments.¹⁰¹ As for (6), a disavowal of a prior philosophy, I am afraid that this point can take us very far afield; that is, if we are to analyze what a priori knowledge involved in such philosophy ought to, or does entail. So, in the interest of brevity and conciseness, let me say that I mean (6) in a rather common sense, or basic way; in other words, I take it that human beings, no matter how intellectually inclined, are not brains in a vat, or beings hooked up to simulation-machines, as in the Matrix movies, and so there is *de facto* no non-empirically informed philosophy. Of course, this is not exactly what philosophers have argued over at length when discussing the prospect of a prior philosophy, or a priori knowledge, but for the sake of simplicity and conciliation I put forth this rather trivial reading of (6).

To conclude, let us turn to the metasemantic component of reformed naturalism, and make a brief, but much needed return to discussing the term “nature”. (7)*, externalism as I remarked already in Chapter 2, following Strawson (1985), is a metasemantic commitment palatable to “naturalism”, and this can be traced back to the behaviorist underpinnings of Quine’s theory of meaning.¹⁰² Externalism is also part and parcel of Cappelen’s Austerity Framework, which I adopted, presented and defended at length in the same chapter. (8.a)*, critically discovering and respecting folk content, is both part of the expansive approach to naturalistic knowledge that I have been urging so far, but also a prerequisite for my Mapping Sequence for “nature” to go through, given that the strategies in that sequence are not scientific, but instead draw on largely folk content in order to supplement and structure our understanding of the central pretheoretical term “nature”. Finally, turning to (8.b)*, a focus on the term “nature”, one ought to remember that “naturalism” itself can be interpreted as amounting to repeated appeal to the question “What is nature?” – one’s answer to this question is the shibboleth for whether one is “naturalist” or not (Stroud 1996; De Caro and Voltolini 2010). Thus, a focus on the term “nature” is not *prima facie* controversial for any kind of “naturalism”; *but*, as I have argued so far, the typical mistake of the classical naturalist is to assume that only the scientific-ontological meaning of “nature” is relevant in posing the above open question.

As I have tried to show, given that we *are* still largely dependent on our natural language and its inherited, metaphorically rich meanings of “nature” – at least in philosophy and literary culture – we had better have a more critical-reflective view this term. And that is so, because given (7)*, externalism, our language is beyond our control, as has been repeatedly shown. Science can achieve its task of ontological explanation by relying on a single, pre-theoretical meaning of *nature as the really existing world*, but this is insufficient and inappropriate for the purposes of philosophy. Not to be overly reliant on the intellectual scheme or spectrum of self-knowing activities, which I have

¹⁰¹ This kind of expansiveness, I take it, was the point of *liberalizing* in Macarthur 2010. I also draw on the more positive remarks about classical naturalism and its motivations, discussed in Clark 2016.

¹⁰² See Verhaegh 2019 on Quine’s behaviorism.

only sketched out; my overall claim about “nature” has been that it is a central term in all three groups of activities of self-knowledge (science, philosophy, and traditional-literary culture).¹⁰³ In its critical-skeptical task of expansive self-knowledge, philosophy as dictated by reformed naturalism has to countenance not only science’s meaning of “nature”, but also humanity’s phenomenological experience of the world. In particular, philosophy is different from science and literary culture, because it has to deal with the normative upshot of its skeptical questions. In particular, with respect to “nature” in “naturalism”, incorporating the phenomenological-literary content of our non-scientific knowledge of of humanity and the world means critically accomodating our finite freedom to act and think. As such the “nature” suited to philosophy should be one that, for all we know, *appears* to be chaotic and ruled by necessity, unlike the law-bound “nature” of science, and different to our own limited and norm-following thinking and acting selves.

¹⁰³ Remember that I adapt and change these from their original context in Snow (1959) ,and Sorell (1991).

6. Epilogue: Towards a clearer view of “nature”

I began this thesis by motivating the problem of “nature” in “naturalism” by touching upon some much greater issues, which I have only dealt with superficially. To bring the problem of “nature” in language down to a more manageable size, I decided to investigate how we could revise the term “nature” in order to reform “naturalism”, that is, so as to rid “naturalism” of its scientific tendencies, while keeping its respect for science and other associated advantages. Reciprocally, this was meant to help tackle the problem of “nature” in language, by providing a better philosophical doctrine on the basis of which to pursue this greater problem of “nature”. This was my main question, or problem, in this thesis.

My proposal for dealing with the main problem is composed of four elements:

- (1) The *Austerity Framework* for conceptual engineering, as proposed by Cappelen (FL)
- (2) A unified theory of metaphor supporting *The Mapping Sequence of Strategies* for the term “nature”
- (3) A preferred meaning for “nature” in reformed naturalism: *chaotic nature as necessity*
- (4) *Reformed naturalism* itself, cashed out as a set of philosophical commitments

The chapters preceding this one – excluding the prologue – have all been concerned with arguing for these four elements, which when put together are meant to provide a sound proposal for how a reformed naturalism can be reciprocally aided by a re-examined meaning of “nature”, and supported by an externalist metasemantic framework, so as to critically explore the metaphoric content of our language, starting with “nature”. In this way, I have made a very small step in showing in practice how a philosophy guided by reformed naturalism can promote an ongoing *activity of self-knowledge* (Edmundts 2017). That is, an activity whereby philosophy – perhaps overly broadly understood¹⁰⁴ – mediates between the ontological-explanatory activities of science, and more phenomenological activities of literary culture, by playing the skeptic to both, and suggesting *normative* answers to its questions, providing boundaries for our *freedom* to think and act *in* “nature” (in the scientific sense), while we purposefully envision that we are doing so *outside* “nature”.¹⁰⁵

Still, what I have just said somewhat inflates my perceived achievement, and I would like to make clear that I am aware that much of the above is wishful thinking. If my thesis makes a real contribution, it is primarily to be found in my treatment of the above four elements. I think that with regard to (1), I have shown that the Austerity Framework, though somewhat restrictive, provides a feasible and realistic guide for

¹⁰⁴ I say this because the task that I have outlined for philosophy does not coincide with the responsibilities of actual academic philosophy – if such exist.

¹⁰⁵ Earlier in my text I referred to McDowell’s notion of *second nature* to refer to this latter activity, and though I disagree on many things with McDowell, I still think that it might be apt to think of this part of my proposal in this way, if one prefers McDowell’s notion.

terminological revision, though it can still be further refined for simplicity and ease of application, and this could be done by rephrasing its components, from negative restrictions into positive exhortations or suggestions. Concerning (3) and (4), though I am confident enough in my proposal that naturalism can be reformed and employed as a beneficial philosophical doctrine, I also appreciate that –isms and doctrines in general can be unhelpful for actually practicing philosophy, instead of merely writing about it. “Naturalism” in general is best treated with caution, if at all, lest we fall into the trap of overgeneralizing the success of science into other unrelated intellectual activities (Horwich 2014). Then, attempting to fix a preferred meaning of “nature” to accompany such a doctrine is a fortiori doomed, never mind the inscrutable and uncontrollable meaning change that Cappelen warns us about.

As a result, it turns out that the most successful part of my proposal is (2), because it allows us to critically examine our usages of the term “nature”, both in an academic, as well as an everyday context. This is in keeping Cappelen’s idea of CE, whereby actual meaning change is next to impossible, and requires changing the real world. Consequently, applying the Mapping Sequence, cumbersome though it might seem, is an effective enough – if rather simple – example of the activity of self-knowledge and terminological revision at a small scale. What is more, the Mapping Sequence is a good example of philosophizing independently of science, however modest.

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“Natuur is voor tevredenen of legen
En dan: wat is natuur nog in dit land?
Een stukje bos, ter grootte van en krant,
Een heuvel met wat villaatjes ertegen.

[...]

Alles is veel voor wie niet veel verwacht.
Het leven houdt zijn wonderen verborgen
Tot het ze, opeens, toont in hun hoge staat.

[...]”

– J. C. Bloem, “De Dapperstraat” (1968)