



Darwinian Natural Right: The Biological Ethics of Human Nature (Sunny Series, Philosophy & Biology)

By Larry Arnhart

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Shows how Darwinian biology supports an Aristotelian view of ethics as rooted in human nature.

This book shows how Darwinian biology supports an Aristotelian view of ethics as rooted in human nature. Defending a conception of "Darwinian natural right" based on the claim that the good is the desirable, the author argues that there are at least twenty natural desires that are universal to all human societies because they are based in human biology. The satisfaction of these natural desires constitutes a universal standard for judging social practice as either fulfilling or frustrating human nature, although prudence is required in judging what is best for particular circumstances.

The author studies the familial bonding of parents and children and the conjugal bonding of men and women as illustrating social behavior that conforms to Darwinian natural right. He also studies slavery and psychopathy as illustrating social behavior that contradicts Darwinian natural right. He argues as well that the natural moral sense does not require religious belief, although such belief can sometimes reinforce the dictates of nature.

"This is one of the best works of its kind that I have read in many years. It is extremely well-written and reads beautifully. Arnhart argues for a Darwinian perspective on morality and human nature generally, combined with an Aristotelian perspective. His argument will be extremely controversial." -- Michael Ruse, Editor, *Philosophy and Biology*

"This work is an astounding accomplishment. No one else could have done it. The range and depth of the understanding of Aristotle and Darwin are unusual; the capacity to link them to a thorough and accurate treatment of contemporary biology is even more so. And on other thinkers or historical issues, the erudition and clarity are equally precise and illuminating. For decades, we have been told that political philosophy in general and ancients like Aristotle in particular have been rendered obsolete by contemporary science. Social scientists and humanists in general--and political theorists more specifically--will simply have to reconsider their assumptions in the light of this work." -- Roger Masters, Dartmouth College

"This is a very intelligent discussion of matters that in the past have invited ideologues as participants and critics. My sense is that this is a book a publisher should be happy to have on its list." -- Timothy Goldsmith, Yale University

"Larry Arnhart is at the cutting edge of the frontiers of political philosophy today. His book on Aristotle and Darwin crowns more than a decade of research on the biological foundations of human nature. He has shown that it is no longer possible to assume that our biological nature is unrelated to our moral nature. He has therefore gone a long way to restoring the credibility of 'the laws of nature and of nature's God,' and of the political science upon which this nature was founded." -- Harry V. Jaffa, Claremont McKenna College and Claremont Graduate School

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Editorial Review

Review

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About the Author

Larry Arnhart is Professor of Political Science at Northern Illinois University. He is the author of *Aristotle on Political Reasoning: A Commentary on the "Rhetoric"* and *Political Questions: Political Philosophy from Plato to Rawls*.

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