

# **VIRTUE ETHICS AND THE INTERESTS OF OTHERS**

by

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## **STATEMENT BY AUTHOR**

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## **DEDICATION**

This dissertation is dedicated to my fellow graduate students in the Department of Philosophy, 1994-1999, without whom I would not have learned nearly as much, nor would have had anywhere near as much fun doing so.

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## ABSTRACT

In recent decades “virtue ethics” has become an accepted theoretical structure for thinking about normative ethical principles. However, few contemporary virtue ethicists endorse the commitments of the first virtue theorists — the ancient Greeks, who developed their virtue theories within a commitment to eudaimonism. Why? I believe the objections of modern theorists boil down to concerns that eudaimonist theories cannot properly account for two prominent moral requirements on our treatment of others.

First, we think that the interests and welfare of at least some others (e.g. family, friends, loved ones) ought to give us non-instrumental reason for acting — that is, reason independent of consideration of our own welfare. Second, we think others are entitled to what we might call respect, just in virtue of their being persons. Eudaimonist accounts (the objection runs) either cannot account for these intuitions at all, or they give the wrong sort of account.

My dissertation assesses the resources of eudaimonism to meet these lines of criticism. Chapter 2, 3, and 4 survey the views of Plato, Aristotle, and the Stoics, to discover insights that are important for a successful response. In Chapters 5 and 6, I offer my own account, based on what I call empathic identification. This is the habit or disposition of seeing things, in effect, through the eyes of others. Empathic identification is a process through which the interpersonal transmission of reasons for actions between persons becomes possible. I argue first that our interest in our own eudaimonia justifies us in identifying empathically with others as a general habit or disposition. Second, I argue that empathic identification explains our intuitions about the respect others are due. So empathic identification generates the right sort of explanation of our intuitions about the constraints others and their interests impose upon us after all, and renders eudaimonist virtue ethics a viable form of ethical theory.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

*“There’s no need to ask further, ‘What’s the point of wanting happiness?’ The answer you gave seems to be final.”*

— Plato, *Symposium* 205a

In the last half of this century moral theories known as *virtue ethics* have gained stature as alternatives to consequentialist and duty-based ethical theories. That stature has brought with it increased criticism of the viability of virtue theory, both in its modern incarnations and in the forms it took in the ancient views of Plato, Aristotle, and later Hellenistic philosophers. In this dissertation I assess one such line of criticism: the claim that virtue theory cannot properly account for the concern and respect which we ought to have for the interests of others.

This line of objection needs spelling out, and that is the project of this first chapter. Later chapters will consider the extent to which the ancient virtue accounts recognized it and tried to come to grips with it, after which I will offer my own response to it. But before we can make sense of the objection, we need to understand what it is an objection *to*. That is where we begin.

### *Eudaimonistic Virtue Ethics*

A number of recent views characterize themselves as virtue theories. I am interested in those of these views that may be called *eudaimonistic*, in that they accord a central theoretical place to the *eudaimonia* of the moral agent. ‘Eudaimonia’ is a notoriously difficult word to translate (it is often rendered ‘happiness,’ or ‘flourishing,’ but with problems in each case), so I will not attempt to do so. I take its meaning for the ancients who employed it to point (at a first approximation) to the well-lived life, and to the property(s) of human lives that induce us to regard them as happy and well-lived. Such lives involve a (subjective) sense of well-being, not merely occurrent or transitory, but as a stable attitude toward one’s life overall. Eudaimonistic virtue

accounts are those that claim that what we ought to do or be is determined by what will bring about our own eudaimonia.

I am not primarily interested in any *particular* eudaimonistic virtue account, although the way I defend eudaimonism ultimately draws a great deal on Aristotle's eudaimonistic virtue theory, and makes some distinctive claims about the connection between *empathy* and eudaimonia. But my primary interest is in a *type* of theory which can be (and has been) developed in a variety of ways. I have said that eudaimonistic virtue ethics accord a "central place" to the role of eudaimonia, and one way to characterize the type of theory I am interested in is to say in greater detail what that place must be. Theories of the type I am interested in share some core theses about eudaimonia. These are tenets which the primary ancient exemplars of virtue theory — the theories of Plato, Aristotle, and the Stoics<sup>1</sup> — all accepted. By understanding the claims such accounts make about the role of eudaimonia, we can get an idea of the sort of theory which is the focus of my discussion. So just what theses does the pertinent sort of virtue theory maintain about eudaimonia?

### *Theses about Eudaimonia*

(1) Eudaimonia is a property of complete human lives, and accordingly the first thesis eudaimonist accounts share is that the primary locus of moral assessment is not acts, but lives. Human lives, rather than particular human actions or even patterns of action, are the appropriate level for the most fundamental kind of moral evaluation.

Another way to put this thesis is to say that, in the first instance, moral theory is concerned with how to live, rather than what to do. Of course, this is an oversimplification, because *how we live* is comprised of *what we do* in living it. Still, the distinction has bite. Typical consequentialist and duty-based moral theories focus on the right-making features of particular, discrete acts and decisions to act. Kantian theory, for example, focuses moral assessment primarily on "maxims of action" — the

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<sup>1</sup>Although the view of Epicurus plausibly could be included in this roster, I omit it for a number of reasons, one of which is the unique substantive conception of the human good (viz. pleasure) it embraces.



decision principles we employ in acting.<sup>2</sup> Act-utilitarianism is (as the name implies) centrally concerned with which action, of a range of alternatives, will bring about the greatest good. Even rule-utilitarianism asks what rules of action will eventuate in acts that will bring about the greatest good. In each case, judgments as to what will make for the best (or right) kind of human life can be arrived at only by composition from the principles of action for particular, discrete cases.

By contrast, eudaimonist virtue theories turn things the other way around. They maintain that what is of the first importance is that we understand how our lives can be *eudaimon*: what the best kind of human life is — what it consists in, what form it takes. Judgments of how to act in particular circumstances must be arrived at by understanding the framework for eudaimon life within which individual actions occur.

(2) Eudaimonia is an *objective* criterion by which lives are judged. This is a tough pill for us moderns to swallow. More common is the notion that we (individually or perhaps as cultures) set our *own* standards for what counts as a good life — there is no fact of the matter beyond what *we* make of it, the expectations *we* establish for our lives.

This is not the view of the ancients, and it is not part of eudaimonism. On these views, while the desires and expectations we form about and for our lives are of great importance, they do not exhaust the standard for good lives.<sup>3</sup> There are also facts about us — about our *natures*, if you will — that impose demands on what counts as a good life.<sup>4</sup> Exactly what our natures are, and exactly what demands on lives follow from our natures, are vexed questions about which there can be (and is) substantial disagreement among eudaimonist accounts. But I take that all would agree, for

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<sup>2</sup>Here I differ with Robert Louden, who claims that Kant, too, takes “agents” — lives — to “come first” in ethics (Louden 1992, pp. 41, 44).

<sup>3</sup>It might be right that subjective satisfaction is a *necessary* condition for the objective standard in question. It is plausible to suppose that a life with which one is not satisfied (for whatever reason, including unrealistic expectations) cannot be the best kind of life to have.

<sup>4</sup>David Schmitz makes a similar point in his moral theory, which has eudaimonist elements. He says, “What we ought to value depends on what we can value and on what would be good for us, which in turn depends on what we are like” (Schmitz 1995, p. 27). “What we are like” is an objective fact about us, and introduces an inevitably objective element into what can count as our good.

example, that a life with a mental impairment which rendered practical rationality impossible would not count as a good human life, however satisfying it might be to its subject, and regardless of how well it measured up to his expectations for his life.<sup>5</sup>

Richard Kraut has marked this point with admirable clarity. He distinguishes our modern (subjective) conception of good lives from the ancient and objective one I am attributing to eudaimonism as follows:

Our view has a certain subjectivism. On it, a person is happy only if he meets the standards he imposes on his life....This contrasts with an objectivist view, on which people should not be considered happy unless they are coming close to living the best life they are capable of....The objectivist thinks that it is not up to you to determine where your happiness lies; it is fixed by your nature, and your job is to discover it. (Kraut 1979, pp. 180-1).

As Kraut observes, however, it is one thing to insist that there is an objective standard for eudaimonia, and another to explicate what that standard is. Part of the attraction of the modern and subjective conception is that it frees us from the enormously difficult task of setting out and defending a conception of the good human life.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup>My distinction between objective and subjective standards of well-being differs from some of the recent work on the subject. L.W. Sumner, for example, marks the distinction as revolving around the necessity of the subject's favorable attitude (Sumner 1995, p. 768): subjective theories accept, while objective theories reject, this requirement.

I do not find this the most interesting place to mark an exclusive and exhaustive distinction. As David Sobel remarks, it is hard to see how any theory could insist that "a person's attitudes are *never* relevant to ... her well-being" (Sobel 1997, p. 503). The more interesting question is whether her attitudes are *all there is* to her well-being. As case in point, Sumner locates Aristotle within the camp of objectivist theories, as I (using my distinction) do as well (Sumner, *op. cit.*, p. 782*f.*) But on his view this means that Aristotle leaves *no* room for individual desires, preferences, and so on to play a role in one's eudaimonia. I think this is an unduly restrictive and uncharitable understanding of Aristotle — ignoring, for example, the importance in his view of the *cultivation* of emotions, desires, and so on in accordance with virtue.

<sup>6</sup>And, moreover (as Kraut notes), from its implicit judgment about lives that fail to meet that standard for whatever reason, including genetic and other limitations which are out of human control.

On the other hand, consider John Robertson's observation based on the Platonic analogy between health and virtue:

It might, for all we once knew, have been the case that what constituted health varied from individual to individual, and that some men could not physically flourish except in conditions that were debilitating to others. But such medical relativism has never seemed plausible and is arguably metaphysically impossible. I can only think that the corresponding hypothesis about morality owes its popularity to a prior commitment to the superficiality of morality. (Robertson 1986, p. 133)

(3) Though the good (eudaimonia) is an objective standard for human lives, that good is *agent-relative* rather than *agent-neutral*. This distinction, owed to Derek Parfit (Parfit 1984 p. 27), is an important one for our purposes.<sup>7</sup> The point is that good human lives are, strictly speaking, good *for* those who live them, at least in the first instance. (Whether and how they can be good for others is a question we shall have to investigate.) The fact that the good of good lives is *for* the individuals that live them means that it is not something which can be aggregated or maximized across persons.

The contrast here is with agent-neutral virtue theories, such as the “perfectionism” of Thomas Hurka.<sup>8</sup> On Hurka’s view, all agents have equal reason to promote the perfection of any human life, whether that life is their own or not. That is why the value of perfected human life is agent-neutral.<sup>9</sup> Hurka claims that “Aristotelian perfectionism cannot capture (basic) convictions if it is fully agent-relative, but it can if it is agent-neutral” (Hurka 1993, p. 62). Thus, we “must distinguish sharply between questions about what makes a person’s own life best and questions about how she ought, all things considered, to act” (*ibid.*, p. 63).

Hurka’s reasons for rejecting agent-relativity for the good are too numerous to go into here, but one of them amounts to an objection that we shall consider at length.<sup>10</sup> He says:

A moralistic agent-relative perfectionism can forbid acts that diminish the perfection of others, but its ultimate reason for forbidding these acts is that they make the agent’s life worse. This is the wrong ultimate reason. (*ibid.*)

Since the explanation agent-relative accounts offer as to the wrongness of acts of (say) harming others is fatally flawed — they locate the wrongmaking feature of the act in

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<sup>7</sup>I discuss it at greater length in Chapter 3, where I defend an agent-relative interpretation of Aristotle as against agent-neutral interpretations of him, and in Chapter 6.

<sup>8</sup>Cf. Hurka 1993. Richard Kraut also offers an agent-neutral eudaimonist interpretation of Aristotle in Kraut 1989. I discuss Kraut’s interpretation and reasons for rejecting it in Chapter 3.

<sup>9</sup>Or, to put it another way, “My thinking about what is good is impersonal” (p. 63).

<sup>10</sup>Hurka also makes this objection in Hurka 1999, pp. 69f.

its effects on the *agent*, rather than in its effects on the *victim* — agent-relativity should be rejected. Since this objection will be considered at length, all that needs to be said here is that eudaimonist virtue theories are committed to just the view of the good which Hurka finds problematic (namely that it is agent-relative), and reject the aggregative conception Hurka favors.

(4) The way agents make their lives go well or ill is through the character traits and dispositions they adopt. Eudaimonism is a “virtue theory” because it identifies as *virtues* those traits of character or dispositions which lead to the best kind of life. Our interest in eudaimonia gives us reason to adopt these traits and dispositions, which is just to say that it gives us reason to be virtuous.

The kinds of traits and habits to which eudaimonism points are not limited to those typically thought of as “moral.” Eudaimonism can endorse as a virtue *any* facet of one’s physical, mental, emotional, or spiritual being which bears on making one’s life a good one.<sup>11</sup> Of course, *some* traits bear more crucially on eudaimonia than others. Practical wisdom is an obvious virtue, and I shall argue in Chapters 5 and 6 that a disposition to *identify empathically* with others is, in effect, another.

(5) The cardinal and distinctive claim of eudaimonism is that reasons for action are grounded *exclusively* in one’s interest in living and having a good life. Reasons for action take a number of forms, and serve a variety of purposes. The one of primary interest here is their *justificatory* role. We give reasons to *justify* what we do. And we can do this at a variety of levels. We can give what I will call a “proximate” justification for what we do pretty easily. My desire to break a window is a *proximate* justification for my throwing a rock at it. But of course you may well wonder why I wanted to break the window. To justify *that* I need to adduce a further reason, and you may ask again for a justification of *that* reason. But if our chains of reasons are not to be endless (or circular), at some point a *final*, or *ultimate*, justificatory reason must be

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<sup>11</sup>This is in contrast to even to the broad conception of the concerns of morality which Loudon urges upon us, because he insists that there remains a necessary and useful distinction between the moral and the non-moral (Louden 1992, p. 19). On my view, it is appropriate to distinguish between what is trivial and what is not among the aspects of one’s life and self, but this is not to carve out a domain of the non-moral.

given. Eudaimonist theories hold that the only fundamental reason that *can* be given —and thus the ultimate source of reasons for all that we do —is that what we do will contribute to our good or happy lives, to our eudaimonia.

This is the connection between eudaimonia and virtue — it explains why we should choose the dispositions and traits we ought. We can, to a great extent, choose our dispositions and traits. The virtue theorist holds that most people are somewhat *plastic* at this level — that they are capable of choosing for themselves what habits and traits of character to cultivate. Thus, we must think about reasons for choosing the habits and traits we wish to develop and cultivate (though such choices themselves are subject to the traits and habits we already have acquired — which is why good moral education features so prominently in most virtue accounts). Eudaimonist accounts hold that such reasons stem from the prospect of living a eudaimon life — it is the fact that some trait or habit contributes to living such a life that gives one reason to adopt it.

Some of the ancients held even stronger views about the connection between virtue and happiness. Socrates, for example, held that virtue was both necessary and *sufficient* for eudaimonia. However, eudaimonism as I shall consider it is not committed to this strong claim.<sup>12</sup> While it does not rule out this stronger conception, the type of view I am interested in maintains only that virtue is generally necessary for happiness.<sup>13</sup>

The conception of reasons for action just sketched yields a two-level, or indirect, structure of reasons. We have reasons to be a certain type of person (that is, virtuous), and being virtuous gives distinctive reasons for acting. This allows for a significant degree of slack between reasons for acting on particular occasions and the “final end”

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<sup>12</sup>The role of “conventional goods” in the good life was hotly disputed by the ancients. To what extent does, for example, health or wealth play in the good life, *beyond* its role in or contribution to virtue? Eudaimonistic virtue theory, as I shall assess it, will not take a position on this issue.

<sup>13</sup>The connection is a causal one and, like most causal connections, this one may be subject to exceptions and “*ceteris paribus*” clauses, stemming from the fact that, whatever generalizations we make about human beings, they are always *only* generalizations, rarely (if ever) universal claims. An example of an eudaimonist view with this sort of general (not universal) connection between virtue and happiness may be found in Hursthouse 1987, especially Ch. 6.

of eudaimonia. One may have reason for acting in particular cases in ways that seem not to contribute at all to living well, or in fact even to detract from a good life. That is as it should be, given that the primary level of assessment is whole lives rather than individual actions. This structure of reasons for action will contribute to the responses to the objections we shall be considering.<sup>14</sup> In turn, it also generates new objections, which I address in Chapter 5.

### *Why Eudaimonism?*

Now that eudaimonism's core commitments are in hand, I can explain my interest in *eudaimonist* versions of virtue theory. My interest is not commonplace among modern virtue theorists. The modern revival of virtue ethics has spawned a variety of virtue theories, and in general these modern theories are not eudaimonist. Probably the best-known modern theory is Alasdair MacIntyre's work *After Virtue* (1984), and eudaimonia plays only a small role in that account. The most worked-out of the modern views is Michael Slote's *From Morality to Virtue* (1992), and eudaimonia plays virtually *no* role in his theory. We have already seen that Hurka's virtue theory is not eudaimonist in the pertinent sense. So my interest in the eudaimonism of the ancient accounts is something of a throwback, and an explanation of it is in order.<sup>15</sup> I have two reasons for finding eudaimonism to be the most attractive form of virtue theory.

First, eudaimonism offers a comprehensive and unified theory, not merely of *morality* conceived of narrowly as the responsibilities and duties owed others, but of *practicality* — of the considerations that ought to determine how we live our lives. Ancient eudaimonism is a theory of practical *rationality*. It has at its core the claim

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<sup>14</sup>Nothing like much of what I claim here appears anywhere in the ancients. I know of nothing, for example, that even hints at an "indirect structure of reasons for action." My claim is that these theses provide an adequate (perhaps the best) way of understanding the thinking and explicit theses which *do* appear in the ancient accounts. At a minimum, I take it there is nothing in these commitments that Plato, Aristotle, or the Stoics would have rejected, and that they would accept them as capturing important aspects of the theories they developed.

<sup>15</sup>It is a minority view, but there *are* modern eudaimonist ethicists. Philippa Foot, Rosalind Hursthouse, and Neera Badhwar all are sympathetic to the eudaimonism of the ancients.

that all our reasons for action arise from our interest in eudaimonia. What we have reason to do (roughly) is what is most conducive to living such a life, and if something fails to contribute to living well, then we have no reason to do it. This is a simple but ambitious theory of practical reasons. It might turn out to be false, of course, but it holds out the prospect of a conception of human life and action that takes as its domain *all* of our concerns as human agents and purports to give direction on how we can fit these concerns into a single overarching structure of ends.<sup>16</sup>

The second reason emerges both in ancient theory and in modern descendants. Questions about what justification we have for what we do can be asked at a variety of levels. “Why did you throw the rock?” “I wanted to break the window.” “Why did you want to break the window?” “I wanted to ...” Any four-year-old can drive us nuts with progressively deeper questions about the reasons for doing what we do. But demands for reasons seem to stop when we say that we want to live a good and happy life. It’s not that no one can ask why we want to do *that* either. It’s just that it’s hard to know what could count as an answer to such a question. What can you offer as an explanation for wanting to live a good life? That desire is *basic* in a sense which makes further explanation impossible. A modern eudaimonist, Rosalind Hursthouse, puts the point this way:

...our question ‘How am I to live well?’ ... is a question that any one of us is bound to be interested in because we all want to flourish/be happy/successful; the very idea that someone interested in life should not want to ‘make a go of it’ in this way is deeply puzzling. (Hursthouse 1987, p. 225)

The passage which introduced this chapter illustrates Plato’s endorsement of this principle. The ancients seemed to take our interest in eudaimonia as being both a *descriptive* principle of psychology —a fact about how human beings normally work — and a *normative* practical principle about what we *ought* to seek. These two are not the same, of course, but the ancients seem either to have failed to notice this point or

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<sup>16</sup>Cf. Irwin: “The eudaimonistic outlook requires us to claim that all our reasonable concerns can be harmonized and made into a coherent set of values, and if we can show that a course of action promotes our happiness we must be able to show that it fits into this relatively harmonious and coherent set of values” (Irwin 1994, p. 165).

to treat it as of no interest.<sup>17</sup> Whether and how the descriptive and normative elements of eudaimonism come together is an interesting question to be sure, but it is one I will not take up here.<sup>18</sup> The form of virtue theory I will explore is one which takes our interest in eudaimonia to be *normatively basic*: it is the ultimate source of all our reasons for action.

But some modern critics find just this feature of the ancient accounts (and their modern descendants) to be a fatal drawback. They have felt that the eudaimonist account of our reasons for acting leaves unexplained some strong intuitions we have about the treatment we owe other people, and the way the interests of others can and should figure into our practical deliberations. Having laid out what eudaimonism amounts to, I now want to turn to the objections which have been raised to it, and which it will be my project to answer.

### *Problems with Eudaimonism*

The idea that reasons for action can arise only from one's interest in eudaimonia seems out of kilter with some very basic common-sense intuitions about our reasons for action. If my daughter needs something, the fact that she does so seems to give me a reason for acting to provide it without any justificatory detour through my interest in living a good life. The fact that she is in need gives me a reason to act, period. Or again: the fact that the houses in my neighborhood are constructed with (highly flammable) shake roofs gives me a reason not to set off bottle-rockets, whatever the pleasure I would get from doing so. The fact that I would be exposing other people and their property to risk of great harm gives me a reason for acting (or abstaining from

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<sup>17</sup>Cf. Gregory Vlastos: in the Platonic corpus "desire for happiness is strictly self-referential: it is the agent's desire for his own happiness and that of no one else. This is so deep-seated an assumption that it is simply taken for granted: no argument is ever given for it" (Vlastos 1991, p. 203).

<sup>18</sup>Robertson refers to the *descriptive* thesis as "Platonic internalism" (Robertson 1986, pp. 128ff), motivated in part by Socrates' claim in *Euthydemus* that virtually everyone "wants to do well" (*Euthydemus* 278e). Perhaps the most famous descriptive account is Aristotle's opening argument in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, but of course Aristotle immediately presses this descriptive account into normative service. How one is to get from the descriptive notion to the normative one — that there can be no source of reasons other than this end — is a tough question, but one that not crucial for the present project.



action, in this case), and that's the end of it. Even some of my own interests seem to justify action without any further reference to my life going well as a whole — avoiding being bitten by a rattler, for example.<sup>19</sup> In all these instances, interjecting the idea that I want to live a good life into my reasoning seems gratuitous, at best, and noxious, at worst. It is troubling to think that the interests of other people cannot give us reasons for acting in and of themselves, without being mediated by their contribution to our own eudaimonia.

This common-sense line of thought underlies the objections to eudaimonism which I want to consider more closely. Some critics have rejected the ancient eudaimonist theories as “egoistic,” and cited thinking of just this sort as a reason for thinking they are objectionable. Now, it is not always clear just what “egoism” comes to in these objections, and why it is supposed to be a bad thing for a moral theory to be. In the end, the charge that eudaimonism is egoistic is not very useful as a way of formulating the lines of objection we want to assess.<sup>20</sup> What *is* useful is considering the reasoning behind the complaints that ancient eudaimonist theories are egoistic.

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<sup>19</sup>I owe this point, and the example, to David Schmitz.

<sup>20</sup>Some defenders of the ancient accounts believe that the ancient theories *are* “egoistic,” but not in any problematic sense. Bernard Williams distinguishes between “formal” and “substantive” egoism. “Formal” egoism is the position that the sources of reasons for a person to act in a certain way or be a certain kind of person must “appeal to that person in terms of something about himself, how and what he will be if he is a person with that sort of character” (Williams 1985, p. 32). “Substantive” egoism, on the other hand, involves a particular conception of the human good — on Williams’ view, desire-satisfaction or some similar subjective conception. Williams maintains that the ancient accounts are *formally* egoistic in maintaining that ethical theory can and should justify itself to agents in terms of who they are and what they will become in adhering to it, and in advocating that agents develop and cultivate dispositions on the basis of how those dispositions will contribute to their own well-being — but that they reject the sort of conception of the good involved in *substantive* egoism (Williams 1985, p. 50). Julia Annas agrees with Williams both that the ancient theories are egoistic in (only) the formal sense and that this is not objectionable:

Eudaimonist theories are formally self-centered, because they develop from the agent’s reasonings about her own life. But they need not be self-centered in content. Whether they are depends entirely on what the theory’s candidate is for the specific determinate content of the agent’s final end. (Annas 1992, p.35)

Since ancient theories employ conceptions of the good that are not “self-centered” — each gives the welfare of others a substantial place in their structure — they are only formally, and not substantively and objectionably, egoistic.

*Why Ancient Accounts are thought to be Egoistic*

A.C. Ewing complains of Plato and Aristotle that they “base morality on the conception that it is to our own true good to act rightly;” this, he says, amounts to a species of egoism, albeit one that is “higher” than merely hedonistic egoism (Ewing 1965, p. 31). The ancients effectively accept the egoistic assumption that

ultimately we cannot be under an obligation to pursue anything but our own greatest happiness and that our duties towards others are to be commended solely as efficient, though indirect, means of attaining this happiness. (Ewing 1965, p. 21-2)

Ewing’s worry appears to be that in these theories acting for the good of others is valued only as an *instrumental* means of bringing about one’s own greatest happiness. Advocating such merely instrumental regard for others is a serious failure in a moral theory. Ewing rightly insists that

We ought not to treat either other people as a mere means to our own happiness or ourselves as a mere means to the happiness of others...the interests of others should be treated on just the same level as one’s own... (Ewing 1965, p.35)

This points us to one of the major lines of worry about eudaimonism we shall consider. Because in eudaimonism the ultimate end of action is the agent’s own good (the objection runs), the interest an agent takes in the welfare of another can at best be *instrumental* to that end. In contrast, other sorts of ethical theory allow or require us to take some sort of non-instrumental interest in the welfare of others, and insofar as they do, they offer a conception of the ethical life that is more in keeping with the way we intuitively suppose we ought to be related to others and their interests. But eudaimonism — constrained as it is to find reasons for action solely in the good life of the agent — can see the interests of others as nothing but means for the realization of the agent’s good.

There is a second aspect to Ewing’s objection to the egoism of the ancient eudaimonist theories. He rejects hedonistic egoism, in part because it proposes that

the reason a wrongful act (e.g. hurting another) is wrong is that it is not conducive to the agent's greatest pleasure. And this is a skewed picture of the wrong-making properties of wrong actions. As Ewing puts it, "Even if in fact it is the case that it is never conducive to my own greatest pleasure to hurt others, it should be plain that this is not the main reason why it is wrong" (Ewing 1965, p. 28). The hedonistic egoist, in other words, is looking in the wrong place to find what is wrong with hurting another person. The wrong is not in any feature or property or state of the *agent* at all. Ewing does not say explicitly what *is* the main reason hurting others is wrong, because he takes it as obvious that what is wrong with such actions is their effects on their *victims*.

Ewing's worry makes sense. Even if it is the case that it is never conducive to the best kind of life to hurt others, this just cannot be the main reason why it is wrong to do so. We need to look to the effects *on the victims* of wrongful acts to see what is wrong with them, but eudaimonistic accounts appear to look in exactly the wrong place to see what is wrong with certain kinds of wrong actions, such as those that harm others.<sup>21</sup> To do an adequate job of accounting for what is wrong in wrong actions of this sort, we must (somehow) find reasons for action (or for refraining from action) in the effects of the those actions on others. But eudaimonism seems to have ruled out this possibility by insisting that reasons for action must be grounded in the *agent's* good life.

G.C. Field makes essentially this point in objecting to Aristotle. An important feature of morality which Aristotle just misses (Field says) is that morality "involves a reference to others beside ourselves" (Field 1966, p. 109). As Field reads him, Aristotle holds that what each one of us desires is a particular *internal state* — some "condition

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<sup>21</sup>Annas formulates this line of objection this way:

...the good of others should matter to the agent just because it is the good of others, not because it is viewed as part of the agent's own overall good. Eudaimonist theories locate the good of others in the wrong place — as something which contributes to my own final good. (Annas 1992, p. 137)

of ourselves.”<sup>22</sup> As Field sees it, this “final object of desire” (as Aristotle refers to it) thus is “ultimately selfish.” Of course, he allows, Aristotle recognizes unselfish action as an important part of the good life. But ultimately Aristotle’s rationale for a man’s unselfish action is that

he really wants to do good to others because in doing this he exercises his own nature, and it is this aspect of it that makes it an object of desire to him. So that however much for the good of others the actual results of his action might be, he does them primarily because he is thinking of and aiming at a condition of himself. (Field 1966, p. 110)

Field’s complaint is that the good which ancient eudaimonism recognizes is made out to be just a state of the agent, with no obvious reference to external considerations which might be of moral significance.<sup>23</sup>

### *Modern Objections to Eudaimonism*

These complaints against ancient eudaimonism have modern counterparts. For example, William Wilcox has given voice to the worry that having a fundamental commitment to one’s own good will obstruct the kind of commitment to another which

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<sup>22</sup>Field can also be understood as offering a criticism akin to what I made out as Ewing’s first objection, as arguing that the eudaimonist is incapable of valuing the right sorts of things, or of valuing them in the right way. On his view eudaimonism is preoccupied with states of the agent, preventing agents from aspiring to have the appropriate sorts of relations with other people. Such relations are not in the last analysis *merely* states of oneself, of course, so if internal states are eudaimonism’s sole or primary concern, then it prevents agents from involving themselves in the best or most complete ways with the lives of others. Now, nothing about eudaimonism entails the strong view that reasons for action arise *only* from internal states of the agent, so I will have little to say by way of response to this objection.

<sup>23</sup>A somewhat different objection to Aristotle’s “egoism” comes from W.F.R. Hardie. His worry arises from the value Aristotle accords to living a *complete life*. Hardie agrees with Field that this makes Aristotle’s view of the good for man “ultimately selfish,” since on it no sacrifice of one’s life for morally worthy objectives can be countenanced (Hardie 1965, p. 293). The idea is that Aristotle’s interest in complete lives seems to mandate preserving one’s life under circumstances in which self-sacrifice for the sake of others appears to be appropriate, good, or morally required. Aristotle’s eudaimonism is thus objectionable because it insists on a complete life as part of the human good — moreover a part of that good which may not or must not be traded off for other parts of the good. Ewing objects to egoism on the same grounds: “A weak point in the egoist’s case shows itself when he is asked whether it can ever be a man’s duty to sacrifice his life for another” (Ewing 1965, p. 31). Mark Carl Overvold accepts the somewhat less ambitious point that an attractive virtuous life is not compatible with the prospect of immediate self-sacrifice: “If a prudentially-motivated person finds himself in a situation where choosing the moral life will force him to sacrifice his life the next day, I doubt that it would be rational for him to make such a choice” (Overvold 1984, p. 503). I take this line of objection to be a variant of the general objection that certain intuitively-valuable forms of *commitment* are ruled out by eudaimonism. Aristotle’s response to this general objection is discussed in Chapter 3 and I supplement that response in Chapter 5. A reply to this specific variant is in Appendix B.

Still a further form of accusation that Aristotle is unacceptably “egoistic” comes from Nicholas White. I discuss White’s argument in detail and reply in Appendix A.

is required for friendship. He argues that someone with such a commitment (an “egoist”) must be prepared to sacrifice a friend’s interests on any occasion in which those interests conflict with his own *to any degree* (Wilcox 1987, p. 76).<sup>24</sup> It does not help to think of this fundamental commitment as a “counterfactual commitment” which is “held in reserve” as “overriding,” while *subjectively* (and consciously and deliberately) one acts on the dispositions which one deems *objectively* to serve one’s norms most successfully.<sup>25</sup> Wilcox’ claim is that if such counterfactual conditions have any force at all, they will prevent just the sorts of sacrifices for friends that friendship requires. The problem, in short, is that

the practical effects of the egoist’s particular commitment are so pervasive that little room is left for a concern for another’s well-being to have much practical effect. Too often there is a choice to be made that pits the welfare of a friend against one’s own pleasure. (Wilcox 1987, p. 79)

Wilcox’ point here is not explicitly the objection that only instrumental interest in the welfare of others is possible given a fundamental commitment to one’s own good, but his argument is clearly sympathetic to it. If a commitment to the good of another person — a friend — has reason-giving force only so long as one’s own interests are not sacrificed, then it is hard to see what real force it can have *except* through its contribution to one’s own welfare. The “egoist’s” fundamental commitment simply leaves too “little room” for the good of others to have non-instrumental practical reason-giving force for him.

Thomas Nagel turns this objection the other way around: the egoist is, he says, afflicted with

an inability to regard one’s own concerns as being of interest to anyone else, except instrumentally or contingently upon the operation of some sentiment. ...The pain which gives him a reason to remove his gouty toes from

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<sup>24</sup>Cf. also Laurence Thomas, who claims, “The egoist must be prepared to exploit or to take advantage of others if he runs only a small risk of adversely affecting his long-range interests,” (Thomas 1980, p. 73).

<sup>25</sup>This is Railton’s strategy for defending consequentialism in Railton 1988, and it is Railton’s defense that is the target of Wilcox’ argument.

under another person's heel does not in itself give the other person any reason to remove the heel, since it is not his pain. (Nagel 1970, p. 85).

The force of Nagel's point is not just that egoists can't have the right kind of concern for others; it is that the egoist's fundamental commitment prevents him from expecting the right kind of concern for himself from others. He can neither *be* nor *have* a genuine friend. The egoist is doubly deprived, that is, of the kind of intimate, caring, and loving relationships which surely must be part of the lives we should aspire to lead.

Numerous modern critics have pressed the other line of objection to eudaimonist virtue theories, and with greater focus and force than did Ewing and Field. We have already seen Thomas Hurka's version of this complaint. Samuel Scheffler has expressed it perhaps as well as any. In his discussion of "agent-centred restrictions" as they might appear in a virtue-based theory, Scheffler argues (in essence) that virtue theory faces a dilemma: either it must recognize a "moral point of view" which opens the door to maximizing theories such as consequentialism, or it must adopt an extreme view of the locus of moral rightness and wrongness as located entirely within the welfare of the agent — in effect bowing to Field's charge that all the eudaimonist can seek is states of himself. Scheffler claims that eudaimonism

gives the wrong explanation of other-regarding norms. It appears to say that what is wrong with killing an innocent person, for example, is that such behavior, or the disposition to engage in such behavior, does not contribute to the well-being of the agent. Even if we agree that a disposition of this kind does not in fact enhance the agent's well-being, however, that hardly seems like a full explanation of what is wrong with [say] killing the innocent. Surely any adequate explanation must make reference to the effects of such behavior on its victims. (Scheffler 1992, pp. 116-7)<sup>26</sup>

The right sort of explanation needs to make the effects of (for example) acts of harm on the *victim* the centerpiece in their explanation of what is wrong with such acts. In

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<sup>26</sup>Scheffler makes essentially the same point in Scheffler 1988, p. 55.

Frances Kamm's terminology, an adequate theory needs to have a *victim-focus* (Kamm 1989, 1992).

Christine Korsgaard criticizes agent-relative theories of "deontological reasons" (duties not to harm, and the like) generally on this score. She claims that agent-relative accounts (such as eudaimonism) cannot explain the victim's "right to complain" about harmful treatment. On such accounts, she says, the reason *not* to engage in such treatment of another person belongs to the *agent*, not to the victim, so that if the agent fails to act on that reason, the victim has no more basis for complaint than if the agent fails to act on any other reason she might have:

I have no reason to do anything about your [agent-] relative reasons, even to think about them, although I may happen to. I certainly don't have any reason to complain of your conduct when you don't act on them, and if I do, you may justifiably tell me that it is none of my business. If deontological reasons were *agent-relative*, the same thing would hold of victims. My victim could entertain the thought that I have a reason not to treat him this way, but that thought would give him no grounds for complaint. Astonishingly enough, it turns out to be none of his business. (Korsgaard 1993, p. 48)

In addition to Scheffler, Kamm, and Korsgaard, there is a veritable chorus of modern voices pressing this point.<sup>27</sup> It is just implausible to think that the wrong in (say) acts of harm does not lie in the harm done to the victim; recognizing that fact requires

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<sup>27</sup>In addition to the sources cited, others include Korsgaard 1996 (p. 134), Thomas Nagel (Nagel 1986, p. 197), David Schmidtz (Schmidtz 1995, p. 193 and 1997, p. 116), and Ronald Milo, who says,

What's wrong about raping or torturing someone is not that in doing so one manifests traits of character (vices) that are incompatible with one's flourishing. It is rather that in so acting one is treating someone else in a certain way. For example, (one is) harming them – i.e., doing something to them that interferes with or undermines their flourishing, or treating them as a means merely. I am especially concerned to question the connection between the moral wrongness of other-regarding behavior and how this bears on the agent's own well-being or flourishing or happiness. The wrongness does not seem to me to depend on this....(Eudaimonist virtue theory) does seem to want to ground (ultimately) the wrongness of certain ways of treating others on how the character traits manifested by such behavior affect the happiness or flourishing of the agent. Cruelty towards others does of course manifest a morally bad character trait. But what makes this character trait morally bad is not that an agent who possesses it cannot flourish or be happy. It seems rather to have to do with how having such a character trait disposes one to treat others – in ways that affect their happiness or flourishing. (Milo, personal communication)

finding reasons for action in effects on victims, rather than in the well-being of the agent. A moral theory that is driven by the value of the good life to the person living it, as eudaimonism is, seemingly cannot accommodate the constraints against doing harm and other forms of injustice.<sup>28</sup>

### *The Two Main Objections*

The objections we have surveyed sort into two broad families of worry about eudaimonism. The difference between them is captured nicely by a distinction David Schmitz has drawn between what he refers to as *concern* and *respect* for others. Schmitz distinguishes these as follows:

First, we might care about other people, which is to say their welfare enters the picture through our preference functions.... Second, the welfare of others can enter the picture in the form of self-imposed constraints we acknowledge when pursuing our goals.... Insofar as one's other-regard takes the form of caring about other people's welfare, one exhibits *concern*. Insofar as it takes the form of adherence to constraints on what one may do to others, one exhibits *respect*. ... We manifest concern for people when we care about how life is treating them (so to speak), whereas we respect other people when we care about how we are treating them and constrain ourselves accordingly. (Schmitz 1995, p. 99)

I shall adopt Schmitz' terminology in referring to the charges that eudaimonist virtue theories cannot properly account for either (i) the *concern* or (ii) the *respect* which we (intuitively, at least) think we ought to have for others. But these objections can benefit from a bit more focus.

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<sup>28</sup>A related objection comes from Robert Louden. His worry is that the *agent-centeredness* of virtue ethics prevents it from being able to say the right sorts of things about what he calls "intolerable acts." Louden observes that certain sorts of acts are morally proscribed for reasons that have nothing to do with the agent doing them, but everything to do with the harm they inflict on their victims. "Such actions," he says, "are to be regarded not merely as bad but as intolerable" (Louden 1984, p. 30-1). Virtue theories cannot account for this fact, he says, because

We cannot articulate this sense of absolute prohibition by referring merely to characteristic patterns of behavior.... When we ask why there is a law against e.g. rape or murder, the proper answer is that it is morally intolerable. (*ibid.*)

Louden's target is virtue theory's attention to *dispositions* or *character traits* that lead to the best kind of life. Since virtue accounts evaluates acts only secondarily — as the effects of the dispositions and traits that are the primary focus of moral assessment — they simply cannot provide the right sort of moral constraint against intolerable action. This is another way of saying that they cannot help but give the wrong kind of explanation of what is wrong with "intolerable acts."



The first charge asserts that eudaimonism cannot properly account for the *non-derivative* and *non-instrumental* nature of the interest, concern, or regard for others which we intuitively accept as both right and good. It is animated by the belief that we ought to have a non-derivative concern for the welfare or interests of at least some others — that is, a concern that is not derived from and does not reduce to some aspect of the agent's interest in his own eudaimonia; otherwise (the thought seems to be) our interest in others necessarily becomes instrumental and self-regarding in an objectionable way. I cannot be a genuine friend, for example, if I see friendship solely as a means of making my own life better, and thus have one eye out for my own interests all the time.

We need not believe that we should have this sort of concern for *all* others to believe that it is appropriate in at least *some* relationships — in love, friendship, and familial relationships, for example. That is how I shall construe this objection — as a claim that eudaimonism *excludes* the possibility of non-instrumental concern for other persons. Thus, the first task for eudaimonism is to show that it is *compatible* with such concern for at least some others. A stronger defense would show that eudaimonism *endorses* or *recommends* some such relationships as part of the best kind of life. In Chapter 3 I will argue that Aristotle offers this stronger sort of defense, and that his defense is successful, at least in general outline. In Chapters 5 and 6 I will expand on his reply, but in a spirit of emendation rather than repair to the basic account he offers.

The second charge is that eudaimonism cannot properly account for *constraints* of *respect* that are imposed by the interests of others on our actions in pursuit of our own welfare. Some care is required to formulate this objection usefully, because it is in the neighborhood of a great deal of controversy in ethical theory, in two ways, both of which I wish to side-step.

The intuitive idea (which is simple enough) is that there are things we ought not do to (affect) others in advancing our own interests. There are constraints on our (permissible) actions irrespective of what our own interests are, and of whether or not

we take an interest in those whom the constraints protect. Sometimes these constraints are called *deontic constraints*. One area of danger is that this terminology is sometimes used to refer to “agent-centered constraints” — constraints that may not be violated even if by doing so more violations of the same kind may be averted. *This* conception of constraints has been the focus of recent consequentialist criticism,<sup>29</sup> and this is a controversy I do not wish to enter here. The objection to eudaimonism draws on strong and basic intuitions, and I will use the notion of ‘deontic constraints’ to refer to the limits we intuitively accept, and sidestep the question when, if ever, these limits are defeasible, and why.

A second danger arises with the use of the term *respect*. Often respect for others is taken to require a certain *attitude* towards others. For example, the Kantian conception of *respect* for persons requires seeing them not as mere means, but always as ends-in-themselves. Different moral theories will require different attitudes towards others, however, and I wish to sidestep any particular commitments of this sort in formulating the objection eudaimonism must meet. Thus, I will conceive of constraints of respect (deontic constraints —I will use these terms interchangeably) as *behavioral* constraints; for example, constraints against harming others.<sup>30</sup>

The second task for eudaimonism, then, is twofold. First, it must provide a theoretical basis for the constraints of respect we think agents owe to others and their interests. Second, it must do so in a way which explains the victim-focused nature of our intuitions. The challenge here is not, as in the case of concern, merely to show compatibility between eudaimonism and this way of treating others, because it is not enough to show merely that eudaimonism does not *conflict* with respect. Constraints of respect are binding in a way that the value of non-instrumental concern for others is not. The latter is (to a degree anyway) *optional*, while deontic constraints are not.

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<sup>29</sup>Cf. Cummiskey 1990, Kagan 1989, Scheffler 1982.

<sup>30</sup>In addition to doing no harm, some have thought deontic constraints proscribe breaking faith (deceit or false promising), failing to rescue others in dire danger, and interfering with the freedom of others. The extent of deontic constraints is as much in dispute as their nature and grounding, so I will focus on the central issue of constraints against harming others.

Thus, to succeed in meeting this charge, eudaimonistic virtue theory must show that respect for others is a *necessary* element of the best kind of life —that it is not a matter of choice for us in the way that, say, having close friendships is a matter of choice.

The project of this dissertation is to show how eudaimonist virtue theory can make an adequate theoretical place for others, their welfare, and their interests, so as to meet these two lines of objection. The first step is to examine the ancient eudaimonist accounts to see whether and to what extent they are vulnerable to these objections, recognize them, and attempt to meet them. The next chapter looks at Platonic moral theory. Chapter 3 considers Aristotle's attempts to explain the place of others' interests in his theory, and Chapter 4 assesses Stoic responses to the same questions. In each case we want to see not merely whether they do in fact adequately meet these lines of objection, but what insights they might offer to us in formulating a version of eudaimonist virtue theory more capable of replying to the charges.

In Chapters 5 and 6 I develop a conception of *empathic identification* which, I claim, is needed for an adequate solution to the problem of respect. I argue that the best kind of life requires us to identify empathically with others, and that if we do so, we will have reason to treat others in accord with constraints of respect, and that our reason will be properly victim-focused in a way that explains our intuitions. But the need for this account will not be apparent until after we have considered the ancient eudaimonist accounts, so that is where we begin.

## 2. PLATO

*Give an answer yourself, and tell us what you say the just is. And don't tell me that it's the right, the beneficial, the profitable, the gainful, or the advantageous, but tell me clearly and exactly what you mean, for I won't accept such nonsense from you.*

— Thrasymachus, *Republic* 336c

Not everyone thinks Plato succeeds in the task he sets himself in *Republic*.<sup>31</sup> Some doubt that his aim is to supply anything like our modern conception of justice. Others doubt that Plato attempts to offer anything like moral theory in the first place. There is enough merit to these worries to make it difficult to extract from Plato's dialogues a clear line of response to either of the objections we are concerned with. That does not make the task unworthy of the attempt, however. Even if ultimately we do not get satisfactory answers to the objections by doing so, we can still learn from Plato.

To do so, however, we have to begin by discharging the most radical of these doubts. *Can we rightly see Plato as a source of moral theory?* If so, can that theory be rightly understood as *eudaimonist*? If the answer to either of these is *no*, then it's hard to see how thinking about Plato can contribute to our investigation.

### *Plato and Eudaimonism*

Taking the latter question first: since Plato does not speak in his own voice, it is difficult to find many theses that he affirms consistently and unequivocally throughout his work. However, a commitment to eudaimonism is one of the exceptions. Present from the earliest dialogues through the latest is the theme that each person finds (and should find) his or her own eudaimonia to be reason-giving. It is explicit in a number of dialogues, such as *Republic* (352d) and *Symposium* (cf. 205a, quoted at the beginning of Chapter 1), *Euthydemus* (278eff and 282a), *Crito* (48b), *Timaeus* (90c),

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<sup>31</sup> Those writers who think he succeeds don't agree on how he should be understood as succeeding.

and *Laws* (829a).<sup>32</sup> There are also numerous dialogues (such as *Apology*, *Gorgias*, *Meno*, *Philebus*, *Protagoras*) in which eudaimonism is necessary as a presupposition for the dialectic of the dialogue.

Plato seems to take for granted three things: (i) that each person's true interest is having a life that goes well (*eudaimonia*, *eu prattein*, *eu zen*, and *agathos bios* are interchangeable in referring to this kind of life and interest), (ii) that this interest provides genuine reasons for action, and (iii) that each person is motivated to bring about such a life if they can determine how to do so. At the very least Plato accepts these theses as widely shared among his audience (as common-sense beliefs, or *endoxa*) and believes they are appropriate foundations for ethical reflection. He seems to regard eudaimonism as both normatively and descriptively true of us as human agents. It is quite difficult even to make sense of much of Plato's discourse on practical philosophy outside of the context of a eudaimonist theory of reasons.

It is another thing to say that Plato really *has* or *offers* a moral theory. Whether Plato offers us a theory is the subject of a long-running, complex, and difficult debate. But, like countless others who read his work, I find it natural to see him at work in exploring, developing, revising, rethinking, reworking, not a mere mish-mash of philosophical tenets but a relatively coherent conception of what the world is like and of what it is good for human beings to do and be, individually and in their political and social organizations.

I thus think it makes sense to do what I do here, to see him as concerned with themes that reappear in various dialogues and at various stages of his thought. I am

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<sup>32</sup>Richard Kraut (1973a) argues that in *Republic* Plato develops and defends a conception of self-interest incompatible with eudaimonism — one which includes the welfare of others as *part* of one's "extended" self-interest. He contrasts this conception of self-interest with "proper" self-interest, and gives as an example of it a father's interest in his child: "His feeling for it may be such that he regards it as an extension of himself, so that anything that benefits the child ipso facto benefits him...the child's profiting is his profiting" (p. 333). He believes this account of extended self-interest explains why unjust treatment of others is excluded by Socratic justice (the "psychic harmony" of Book IV). I think this kind of motivational structure is important, and indeed will draw on it in my own account of concern, but I don't find it in *Republic*. Moreover, even if we did it would provide at best a very lame answer to the problem of injustice. Why not act unjustly toward those for whom we do not have this concern? Kraut's answer: "Evidently, he sees that certain ways of treating others are inappropriate even when we have no fellow-feeling for them, and since such behavior is not motivated by love of others, he reasons that it must be based on self-love" (p. 343). This approach is defective from the start, as we shall see in greater detail in looking at Aristotle.

committed only to the view that Plato has positive views which emerge through his dialogues, not to the stronger position that he has a monolithic and unwavering moral theory of which these views are parts. Some of these views are, nevertheless, fairly consistent throughout his work: his commitment to eudaimonism is one. Others include his commitment to virtue as necessary for eudaimonia and his metaphysical distinction between the worlds of “being” and “becoming.” Others doctrines receive differing treatment in different dialogues: his views on *eros* (love) and *philia* (friendship) took on different (and perhaps more determinate) forms as he pondered them, as did *dikaiosune* (justice) and *sophrosune* (self-knowledge, self-control). So while it requires care to extract from Plato’s writings the raw materials for responses to the objections from concern and respect, it is not obvious that the project is doomed from the start. The best way to decide whether Plato can help us is to go ahead and consider what he says.

### *Concern*

Plato does not directly address the question about the non-instrumental value of attachments to particular other people — whether or not the value of such attachments is found solely in their contribution to our own good life. The closest he comes is his discussions of friendship (*philia*) and love (*eros*). But a significant complication in thinking about these discussions is that our worries about valuing others in a merely instrumental way gets tangled with the question of what role individual others — as *particular* individuals — play in his views, especially as objects of *eros*. A considerable amount of critical literature addresses this second issue, and it is one that vexes not only Plato scholarship but also modern conceptions of attachment and love.<sup>33</sup> This entanglement directly affects Plato’s helpfulness in understanding non-instrumental concern within a eudaimonist framework.

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<sup>33</sup>See, for example, Ronald de Sousa’s handling of the problem in de Sousa 1987.

Some critics have run the two problems together. Gregory Vlastos — hardly unsympathetic to Plato overall — indicts Plato for a general blindness to the nature of the concern for others which we find important: “Plato is scarcely aware of kindness, tenderness, compassion, concern for the freedom, respect for the integrity of the beloved, as essential ingredients of the highest type of interpersonal love” (Vlastos 1981, p. 30). What support is there for Vlastos’ indictment?

One source of support is a striking form of instrumentalism about the value of persons that emerges in *Republic*. There, Socrates broaches the idea that in the ideal *polis* what citizens deserve is wholly tied to how capably they perform their jobs. He cites approvingly Asclepius’ judgment that “He didn’t think that he should treat someone [as a physician] who couldn’t live a normal life, since such a person would be of no profit either to himself or to the city” (407d-e). The idea seems to be that once you cease to be of service, you cease to be of value — a rather alarmingly instrumental conception of the value of citizens in the ideal *polis*.<sup>34</sup>

*Lysis* seems explicitly to endorse instrumentalism about friendship (*philia*). Running through the dialogue is the assumption that friends must be *useful* to each other, that this is the *basis* for friendship. Socrates asks, “are we going to be anyone’s friend, or is anyone going to love us as a friend in those areas in which we are good for nothing?” (210c). He argues that the man who is to be a friend is so “for the sake of something and on account of something” (218d). To end a regress in the ends for which one is a friend, Socrates claims that there must be a terminus (the *proton philon*) for the sake of which all other “so-called friendships” exist (220ab). Since our ordinary

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<sup>34</sup>An astonishing confusion on Socrates’ part about the difference between valuing something instrumentally and valuing it for its own sake is revealed in Book I of *Republic*. Socrates counters Thrasymachus’ claim that rulers rule for their own advantage, not for the advantage of their subjects (340c-41a), with the argument that “no kind of knowledge seeks or orders what is advantageous to itself ... but to what is advantageous to the weaker, which is subject to it” (342d). Thrasymachus points out that this commits Socrates to the claim that shepherds seek what is advantageous to their sheep, rather than to themselves. Indeed, Socrates does claim that the “true shepherd” is concerned “only to provide what is best” for the sheep, and in doing so he repudiates the idea that this is merely instrumental concern, that it is “not looking to what is best for the sheep” (345c). Here Thrasymachus is obviously right and Socrates obviously wrong (cf. Reeve 1988, p. 280 n. 15). A good shepherd of course does take an interest in his sheep, and may even come to care for them in a way (as for example we do with domestic pets), but if he lets such concern for his sheep get in the way of the ultimate ends of his shepherding, he won’t be much of a shepherd after all. Why Plato has Socrates maintaining otherwise here is not clear.

(so-called) friendships are merely ways of loving the *proton philon*, ordinary friendship is merely instrumental.

However, this dialogue really cannot be cited as an expression of Plato's views on friendship. It ends in indecision (*aporia*): the dialogue concludes with Socrates' admission that "what a friend is we have not yet been able to find out" (223). Although Plato's objectives in aporetic dialogues are not always clear, it seems that he is more interested in exploring commonly-held views on various topics than he is in arguing for a view of his own. *Lysis* — like other dialogues (e.g. *Euthyphro*) — does more to challenge the views of those who claim to have a firm grip on friendship (or piety) than to defend Plato's own ideas.<sup>35</sup>

The root of Vlastos' complaint is the worry that Plato seems to treat persons as in important senses *fungible* — that one is as good as another, and they can be swapped out when the ends they serve are better served by doing so. The *Republic* case reveals how the worry about instrumentality and the worry about fungibility can converge. One's value stems from what one can contribute to the flourishing of the polis. When one can contribute little or nothing, one ceases to be of value, and the polis is better off by swapping out the non-contributory citizen for one in whom the polis's limited resources will be better invested. So fungibility seems to be a consequence of merely instrumental value, and perhaps Vlastos' indictment can be understood as a complaint about an underlying instrumental conception of value in Plato's views on *philia*.

The issue of fungibility is even more of a problem for Plato's conception of love (*eros*). As objects of love, *individuals* do not appear in a favorable light. Vlastos believes that the particularity of the persons who are objects of our love, friendship,

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<sup>35</sup>A non-aporetic dialogue with a suggestion of merely instrumental concern for a friend is *Alcibiades*. Here, Socrates argues for the value of *sophrosune* — self-knowledge — for eudaimonia (134a). But in a move that foreshadows Aristotle's well-known conception of a friend as "another self" (*NE IX:1166a31*), Socrates claims that knowledge of one's own soul is possible only through knowing the soul of another: "if the soul, Alcibiades, is to know itself, it must look at a soul, and especially at that region in which what makes a soul good, wisdom, occurs..." (133b). It's not clear that in this story there is any value to a friend beyond their value in helping one become virtuous. On the other hand, there is nothing that *excludes* non-instrumental value in the *Alcibiades* story either, so it too is inconclusive.



and concern is somehow lost in the ideals (especially beauty) they represent and instantiate:

[T]o think of love for them as love for objectifications of excellence is to fail to make the thought of them as subjects central to what is felt for them in love....[Plato] has evidently failed to see that what love for our fellows requires of us is, above all, imaginative sympathy and concern for what they themselves think, feel, and want. (*ibid.*, p. 32)

Part of the source of Vlastos' concern here is Plato's metaphysics. The middle books of *Republic* distinguish between "knowledge" and "opinion," and between "philosophers" and "lovers of sights and sounds," on the basis of what each take to be real (475ff). "[P]hilosophic natures," Plato says, "always love the sort of learning that makes clear to them some feature of the being that always is and does not wander around between coming to be and decaying" (485a). The object of attention for such people is what is *real*: the world of Forms, not the world we live in. Such thinkers will not consider human life to be important (486a; cp. *Phaedo* 65dff). This makes it difficult to recognize the flesh-and-blood others who are the objects of our love and friendship as the appropriate sorts of things in which to invest our attention and energy, given that their reality is dubious at best. One consequence appears to be that, as Shirley Robin Letwin puts it, "To the degree that Plato's lovers fasten on any particular person, they are pursuing an illusion" (Letwin 1977, p. 134).

The problem is at its apex in the accounts of *eros* in *Phaedrus* and (especially) *Symposium*.<sup>36</sup> *Symposium* begins, inauspiciously, with an obviously instrumental

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<sup>36</sup>In Socrates' second speech in *Phaedrus*, he recounts a myth of a "procession" in heaven, led by Zeus (246eff). Souls that make themselves most like god fly high enough to catch sight of what is real and true, of "what really is what it is" (247e, 248a-c). This includes the vision of true Beauty, "the best and noblest of all the forms that possession by god can take for anyone who has it or is connected to it" (249e). The memory of this Beauty produces a kind of "madness" in its mortal beholder (*ibid.*, 251d), which is relieved only by his vision of a beautiful boy (251c). This vision temporarily stops the "pain and the goading" (251e); this relief the soul of the lover "is not at all willing to give up, and no one is more important to it than the beautiful boy" (252a). Plato describes what happens in the lover as being "moved abruptly from here to a vision of Beauty itself when he sees what we call beauty here" (250e). The "driving need" the lover has is to "gaze at the god" (253a). It is hard to see how the beloved can be accorded any distinctive or individual value in this process. In this sense the beloved is fungible, and the love of the lover for the beloved appears instrumental: the sight of the beloved "scratches an itch" that the sight of Beauty has planted in the soul.

depiction of love: the entire occasion of the dialogue (at least the speechmaking) is conceived of as praise for Eros (177c-d), but the model of propitiation the speeches employ is instrumental: they honor the gods *because* the gods give gifts (195a). Eventually, this mutually instrumental conception of love as a “fair exchange” is endorsed as the model of relation lovers engage in generally (218e). But the deeper worries come from the view of love Socrates attributes to Diotima. She describes the “ascent” that the wise lover makes in pursuit of his love. It begins with loving some one particular body, but that is followed by the realization that

the beauty of one body is brother to the beauty of any other and that if he is to pursue beauty of form he'd be very foolish not to think that the beauty of all bodies is one and the same. (210b)

The ascent continues, from the beauty of bodies to the beauty of souls, then to the beauty of “activities and laws” (210c), finally to the beauty of knowledge and ideas and theories in the “great sea of beauty” (210d). The ultimate goal of love, Diotima says, is ideal Beauty: “one goes always upwards *for the sake of* this Beauty, starting out from beautiful things and *using them* like rising stairs...” (211c, emphasis added). Not only is the human beloved loved only because he reflects the Form of Beauty, rather than anything particular to *him*, but it is explicit that his lover’s interest in him is instrumental on just those grounds: his love of the beloved is *for the sake of* ideal Beauty.<sup>37</sup>

The ideal Beauty has, and the mortal beloved has not, got the properties of immutability and eternity that, for Plato, mark what is real and what is really of value. As in *Republic* and *Phaedrus*, what is really the object of desire and knowledge is not the transient beauty in the mortal beloved, but “the Beautiful itself, absolute, pure, unmixed, not polluted by human flesh or colors or any other great nonsense of mortality” (*Symposium* 211e). The object of perfected *eros* is

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<sup>37</sup>Compare Nygren: “It is not beautiful things as such that are the object of love and desire. It is only because of the memory they awaken of the higher world that they have any place in the scheme of Eros.... Plato’s interest in them attaches, not to their singularity and individuality, but to their being ‘paradigms’, particular instances, which ‘participate in’ the universal beauty. They exist for him only as stepping-stones to this universal.” (Nygren 1982, p. 179 ).

not anywhere in another thing, as in an animal, or in earth, or in heaven, or in anything else, but itself by itself with itself, it is always one in form; and all the other beautiful things share in that, in such a way that when those others come to be or pass away, this does not become the least bit smaller or greater nor suffer any change. (211b)

There does seem to be a problem of fungibility here for Plato: the ontological reality of the human beloved is ephemeral, and thus it cannot satisfy *eros*. As Socrates argues in *Republic*, the “nature of the real lover of learning” struggles

toward what is, not to remain with any of the many things that are believed to be, that, as he moves on, he neither loses nor lessens his erotic love until he grasps the being of each nature itself with the part of his soul that is fitted to grasp it, because of its kinship with it, and that, once getting near what really is and having intercourse with it and having begotten understanding and truth, he knows, truly lives, is nourished, and – at that point, but not before – is relieved from the pains of giving birth.”  
(490a-b)<sup>38</sup>

This is surely worrisome for an apologist for Plato’s conception of love, but ought it to worry us? It’s true that there seems to be an inescapable degree of fungibility to human objects of erotic love, but it’s less clear that their value is only instrumental as a consequence. It might be a function of the human condition that we cannot help but learn to love Beauty (say) by beginning to love imperfectly and transitorily beautiful people; and it might further be true that, in terms of conducing to the goal of loving Beauty itself, one person (as love object) is as good as another — they are in this sense fungible. But these facts together don’t entail that the love we develop for these

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<sup>38</sup>de Sousa is critical of the import of Plato’s metaphysics for love just in virtue of the fact that they disregards the radical this-worldliness of our emotions (including love; de Sousa 1987, especially Ch. 5). In his discussion of Plato’s treatment of the appropriate object of love (see his discussion of “Plato’s Love Triangle,” pp. 112, 130f), he argues that our attachments to others are the product (in part) of our emotional constitutions, and our emotions are responses to things in our world, not the world of Forms. This is why Plato can’t get it right as to how we ought to love individual other persons:

we are so wired as to require attachments in the course of our causal interaction with such individuals as are posited in our metaphysics. The fabric of our social and emotional life depends on our ability to transcend the original fungibility of all reactivity and transform it into nonfungible emotions. (de Sousa 1987, p. 134).

individuals is only for their instrumental properties; it might be that, once having fallen in love with a person, they acquire non-instrumental value for us and cease to be fungible. I don't mean to argue for these points here; that is a project in itself. The point is that for all we've seen, such a non-instrumental conception of (eventual) concern is not inconsistent with what Plato has said. More detail is needed to see whether, and to what degree, our concern for our loved ones might transcend their purely instrumental value as an entry-point to love of Beauty.

At this point we are at a fair distance from the objection we need to deal with. Originally, the worry was that in virtue of endorsing a eudaimonist theory of reasons, a eudaimonist virtue theory (such as Plato's) would entail regarding others merely instrumentally, as means to one's own eudaimonia. Now there *are* passages where such instrumentalism seems to be suggested (*Republic* 407, *Symposium* 177, and *Phaedrus*, especially), but these simply are not adequate to support a solid claim that Plato's view of concern is only instrumental. In general, Plato's characterizations of love and friendship, both explicit and in his dramatic renderings of relationships throughout the dialogues, do not reflect anything like this objectionable sort of merely instrumental value. And it is not easy to see how we can get more support for such a claim through fungibility. The right thing to do here, I believe, is to mark the fact that there are some difficult questions to be wrestled with here, largely in consequence of Plato's metaphysics, and carry on to see what else in his work might shed light on the objection we want to meet.

### *The Philosopher-King's Concern*

A persistent problem for Plato interpreters has been what to say about the reasons the philosopher-king has to stoop to governance of the ideal polis, as Socrates argues he must in *Republic* Book VI and VII. Rulership is not something that will attract true philosophers — “real lovers of learning” — because its occupation with

matters of the “world of becoming” are a distraction from the “world of being.”<sup>39</sup>

Ideally, says Socrates, when such men have matured to the point that they can really benefit from philosophy, “they should graze freely in the pastures of philosophy and do nothing else” (498b). Of course, if they are free to do so, that will leave the polis bereft of the only people capable of really wisely ruling it. The only hope for the perfection of the polis and its citizens is if “some chance event compels those few philosophers who aren’t vicious ... to take charge of a city, whether they want to or not...” (499b).

Socrates elaborates on this idea in Book VII, using the allegory of the cave. Those that have escaped the cave into the sunlight will be reluctant to go back. “It isn’t surprising,” Socrates says, “that the ones who get to this point are unwilling to occupy themselves with human affairs and that their souls are always pressing upwards, eager to spend their time above” (517c). Natural though that desire may be, it isn’t one that can be indulged. The founders of the ideal polis, having compelled those with the “best natures” to “make the ascent and see the good,” cannot allow them to “stay there and refuse to go down again to the prisoners in the cave and share their labors and honors” (519d). Therefore, those who have become philosophers must be compelled to “share the labors of the city, each in turn, while living the greater part of their time with one another in the pure realm” (520d).<sup>40</sup>

Glaucon raises the natural question at this point: “are we to do them an injustice by making them live a worse life when they could live a better one?” (519e). Socrates says no, that in fact “we’ll be giving just orders to just people” (520e). But the reason *why* this demand is just is important. There are several possible explanations,

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<sup>39</sup>Annas observes, “the insight into virtue which the philosophers get from studying and assimilating themselves to the order and structure of the intelligible world makes it clear that they are to escape from the task of concerning themselves with others” (Annas 1998a, ch. 3).

<sup>40</sup>We might think we should go light on the idea of “compulsion” here, since, if Socrates is right that it is “just orders to just people,” presumably they will *willingly* comply. Yet Plato speaks of having to *compel* the philosophers numerous times in both Books VI and VII. The suggestion that the philosophers will be recalcitrant is hard to ignore. Perhaps this bit of justice is just a bit harder to swallow than most other demands of justice. As Irwin suggests, for a consistent eudaimonist account what Plato really needs to show is that “the philosophers choose to rule because they regard it as just and they regard the just action as part of their happiness, so that they recognize no conflict between duty and interest” (Irwin 1995, p. 301).

one of which might be that there is a sort of concern for those left behind that the philosopher comes to have, in virtue of having seen and grasped the Form of the Good. There might, in other words, be something like a theory about non-instrumental concern for others in the offing here.<sup>41</sup>

Here's how such a rationale might go. Suppose that each of the citizens of the polis was valuable in such a way that the Good consisted (in part) of advancing their interests through the wise rulership of the philosopher. This is something that ordinary would-be rulers (say, sophists) might not grasp. It might be only on seeing and grasping the Form of the Good that one could appreciate the value each citizen has, and come to see their welfare as reason-giving in the way it becomes for the philosopher. What justifies the philosopher-king's return to rule, then, is just his concern for his fellow citizens. There is nothing instrumental about that concern, so if this is the story Plato is giving us we might have a case of purely non-instrumental concern within the context of an overall eudaimonistic theory.

It's doubtful that this is actually the rationale Plato has in mind, however. He seems to offer two other lines of argument for "compelling" the philosophers to return, and neither has any clear connection with non-instrumental concern.

The first is that it is the objective of the laws to "spread happiness throughout the city by bringing the citizens into harmony with each other through persuasion or compulsion and by making them share with each other the benefits that each class can confer on the community" (519e). Now, it is possible to construe this in a way congruent with the non-instrumental concern rationale as suggested above, but I do not believe that is what Plato has in mind. The non-instrumental concern rationale would have the philosopher valuing the properly-ordered polis in virtue of the happiness it creates for each of its citizens — something like a utilitarian understanding of why the properly-ordered polis is good. It is good just because it makes good more lives for more people, each of whom is valuable. We might think of

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<sup>41</sup>I owe this suggestion to Tom Christiano.

this as a “bottom-up” conception of the value of the well-governed polis, since it is built up in virtue of the value of the enhanced lives of the people who live in it.

But I believe Plato has a “top-down” conception of the value of the ideal polis. That is, its value lies precisely in the fact that it is well-ordered. The ideal polis is an image of the “truth about fine, just, and good things” (520c), that is, of the Forms of the Fine, the Just, and the Good. The philosopher “studies things that are organized and always the same, being all in a rational order,” and then “imitates them and tries to become as like them as he can” (500c). His love for these Forms manifests itself in the activity of ordering what lies within his power to order —first himself, then the polis, where through his rule he puts “what he sees there into people’s characters” (500d).<sup>42</sup> In governing he is a “craftsman of moderation, justice, and the whole of popular virtue” (*ibid.*).

The philosopher-king is thus certainly *benefitting* the citizens of the polis through his rule. The question is whether what accounts for his doing so is his concern for the citizens or his love of the Forms. Put this way, the latter, rather than the former, appears to be doing both the justificatory and the motivational work. The value he places on likeness to the good seems to be what drives him to govern, rather than a concern with his fellow-citizens in virtue of some non-instrumental value he comes to recognize or ascribe to them. It is, so to speak, *The Good* rather than *their* good that he intends to realize (though of course the latter is a proper part of the

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<sup>42</sup>The idea of the *activity* of loving here connects with the sexual metaphors of *Symposium*, where Plato says that only by “getting near” and “having intercourse with” and “having begotten understanding and truth” with “what is” is the philosopher “relieved from the pains of giving birth” (490b).

former).<sup>43</sup> Non-instrumental concern thus does not appear to be an essential part of this rationale.

Socrates offers a second rationale for the return of the philosophers, and it doesn't seem to be any more connected with non-instrumental concern than is the first rationale. This seems to be something like a principle of reciprocity (or perhaps gratitude). In an echo of the argument from *Crito*, Socrates says the philosophers would be justified in refusing to return to cities other than the ideal polis — those in which their development as philosophers has been “spontaneous,” i.e. not in consequence of the design of the city and the reciprocity among its various classes (520b). By implication, the philosophers in the ideal polis owe a debt to their fellow-citizens for the very upbringing which is responsible for their escape from the cave into the sunlight, and that debt is to be repaid by wise governance. But, like the account that focuses on the order the philosopher comes to love, it is difficult to see any part of this story modelling anything like the sort of non-instrumental concern for others which we'd like to vindicate as part of an adequate ethical theory. On the whole Plato's view of the return of the philosophers to the cave is not of much use in advancing our project.

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<sup>43</sup>Versions of this rationale are offered in Cooper 1977a, Annas 1981, Kraut 1992, and Irwin 1995, with varying takes on its implications for eudaimonism. Annas and (especially) Cooper both believe that, upon coming to know the Form of the Good, the philosopher-kings acquire a new reason for action, and whatever commitment they had to their own eudaimonia is transcended. Cooper puts it this way: “The just man recognizes a single criterion of choice: What, given the circumstances, will be most likely to maximize the total amount of rational order in the world as a whole? ... Not only does he not do everything he does out of concern for his own good, he never does anything for this reason. His reason for acting is that good-itself demands it. That his good demands it is strictly irrelevant” (p. 156-7). Annas accepts roughly this picture of the motivation of the philosopher-king, but claims that it is in deep tension with the balance of Plato's moral theory (cf. p. 333ff). White makes something of the same point (“a rule ... is someone who not only has a firm grasp of the notion of the Good, but who is also moved to pursue it and the exemplification of it in the world” — White 1979, p. 195), but believes this involves *sacrifice* on the part of the philosopher.

I do not believe that is the right way to understand the choice that confronts the philosopher: the conflict with the requirements of justice makes *failing* to rule not a real option for the philosopher, and not good for him, so it is no sacrifice to forego it. Reeve puts the point succinctly: “a life of pure philosophy is not reliably available outside of paradise” (Reeve 1988, p. 203). While I accept the idea that there are difficulties in understanding how we are to understand the philosopher-kings to be motivated, I see no reason to accept anything as strong as what Cooper advocates. As Annas notes, it is in tension with the balance of *Republic* itself. Moreover, if Plato really *was* departing from eudaimonism at this point, it is the *only* point in a large corpus of work of which most endorses eudaimonism more or less explicitly. This is insufficient evidence here, I think, to believe that Plato actually departed from it. We shall encounter something like this view of reasons for action — and its relation to eudaimonism as a theory of reasons for action — again when we look at the Stoics.



## *What We Can Use*

In fact there is nowhere in Plato the sort of explicit account of non-instrumental concern for others which Aristotle undertakes (as we shall see in Chapter 3). It simply does not appear to have been a problem for him, and we have already seen that his preoccupation with metaphysical issues led him to views of what we seek as our good that provide an awkward framework in which to try to deal with the objection from concern. However, it is worth observing that some of the really interesting moves in Aristotle's account of non-instrumental concern for others are foreshadowed in Plato.

Among the provocative accounts of love (*eros*) in *Symposium* are the quite different stories of Aristophanes and Diotima which nevertheless have a common theme. Both suppose that our conceptions of ourselves are in fact rather elastic: on both accounts *eros* reveals to us that we can be ourselves in very different ways than what we might uncritically suppose. Aristophanes tells us of lovers who find this in a form of reunion into a unified whole (191d); the end-point of erotic love is that "one person emerge[s] from two" (192e). Diotima informs us that "giving birth in beauty" is what we humans can have in lieu of immortality (206bff). Somehow, the suggestion is, we can come to recognize the propagation of virtue in others as in some important sense an extended form of ourselves.

It's hard to know what philosophical theses Plato thought we should take away from these passages. What is striking about them, however, is that in them Plato invites us to reconsider the nature of the boundaries we place on what we identify (and identify with) as our own. Through *eros*, he says, those boundaries can change. We can come to see others' interests as our own.

This idea is, I shall argue, an important feature of Aristotle's argument for the compatibility of non-instrumental concern for others with eudaimonism about reasons for action. And here it is, broached in Plato. Potentially, at least, this insight can help us with the various forms of non-instrumental concern that we find important. There is "mundane" *philia* or friendship, of the sort that can't reasonably be thought to

derive from *eros* or beauty, and which any plausible account of the good human life must (we think) accommodate. There is the love of parent for child, and child for parents. There is the love of siblings and other familial relations. For each of these, we need an account of how it can and should occur without being merely instrumental, and nothing in Plato comes close to explaining how such relationships, and the reason-giving force they involve, can be justified on eudaimonistic grounds.<sup>44</sup> But the potential reach of the idea that the extent of the interests with which we identify ourselves is malleable includes all these relationships. If Plato has given us nothing else of use in responding to the objection from concern, he has given us at least this foundation for such a response.

### *Respect*

Though Plato seems clearly to assume that virtue —hence eudaimonia — requires respect for others, it is not so clear *why* he thinks this is so, or that he believes an account is due of why this is so. The closest he comes is the argument for justice (*dikaiosune* — sometimes translated more generally as ‘morality’) in *Republic*. But this is a notoriously problematic argument. Many have thought it fails to explain why interpersonal justice is required for the best kind of life — or perhaps (a bit more charitably) that it attempts to answer some question *other* than why we should respect others in our dealings with them.

The problem is usually located in the *kind* of answer Plato has Socrates give to the challenges of Thrasymachus, Glaucon, and Adeimantus. Cephalus actually introduces something like our intuitions about constraints of respect in Book I, when he says that wealth provides security against the need to wrong others — by cheating, lying, or not paying debts (as well as miscellaneous impieties) — which might be

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<sup>44</sup>Diotima points us to the desire for immortality not just in humans, but in all animals, as an explanation for the fact that parents will die for their young (*Symposium* 207b-e). It’s surely right that what we have in common with other animals goes some way towards explaining this feature of the love of parents for their children. But it would be a mistake to think that this exhausts it, and that what in us is different from other animals does not contribute to, inform, and shape our love for our children. And of course Diotima’s hypothesis does nothing to explain the love of children for their parents, or what I have called “mundane” friendship.

unsettling to the conscience of someone facing the near-term prospect of Hades (330d-331b). Cephalus' commonsense view seems to be that wronging others in these ways is *bad*, and that this sort of wrongdoing is liable to be punished in the afterlife, so one is best off with a record free of such wrongdoing. This is a very understandable *prudential* explanation for observing moral constraints on how we treat others. But it fails to explain *why* these constraints are what they are, and it is open to the critic to insist (with good reason) that Cephalus has missed the *moral point* of the obligations he has named; that in fact *his* just conduct does not reflect *morality* at all, but merely enlightened self-interest.

This is the point of Socrates' probing of Cephalus' uncritical conception of morality and justice, and in response Thrasymachus is provoked to claim that justice is a mere artifact of convention, by which the weak have a rationalization for capitulation to and exploitation by the strong: justice *just is* the advantage of the stronger (338c). This means that it is actually better to be unjust (hence strong) and reap the benefits of exploitation than to be just (hence weak) and be exploited for the advantage of one's masters (343d).

Of course, Socrates disagrees, and the dispute which shapes *Republic* is on. Notice, however, that what has begun it is a view about the nature and requirements of justice very much in accord with our interest in respect for others. Thrasymachus argues, in effect, that the interests of others provide no reason for action or restraint; in fact, he says, the way to the best kind of life lies in being prepared to take advantage of just those situations in which one can improve one's own prospects at the expense of another's. To the extent that Plato refutes this view, he may help us understand respect in the context of a eudaimonist virtue theory.

Glaucon and Adeimantus too are worried about respect. What the Ring of Gyges would provide is freedom from the constraints that social sanctions of various forms impose on exploiting others. With the ring one could (it seems) advance with impunity one's own interests at the expense of others (359dff). Gyges gets wealth, sex, and power by wronging others, and his victims are powerless to stop him. Given that

impunity, the worry is, what reason does Gyges have *not* to harm others in just the way he wants to? A response to *this* challenge would go right to the point of the objection to a eudaimonist account of respect.

Famously, however, this does not appear to be the question that Socrates answers. What we get is an explanation and vindication of the claim that one has reason to have a *just soul*. Socrates lays out a conception of justice which focuses on a way the soul can be ordered within itself. His notion of justice as realized in souls is developed through an analogy to the just *polis*, and cashed out as a condition in which each part of the soul — its reasoning, spirited, and appetitive elements — is “doing its own” (441e). That *this* conception of justice is very different than the one we began with — one centrally concerned with one’s relation to others — is something Socrates acknowledges explicitly:

And in truth justice....isn't concerned with someone's doing his own externally, but with what is inside him, with what is truly himself and his own. One who is just....regulates well what is really his own and rules himself. He puts himself in order, is his own friend, and harmonizes the three parts of himself ...[and] he becomes entirely one, moderate and harmonious....he believes that the action is just and fine that preserves this inner harmony and helps achieve it, and calls it so, and regards as wisdom the knowledge that oversees such actions. And he believes that the action that destroys this harmony is unjust, and calls it so...(443c-3)

This is, in one way, a compelling account of a very desirable and admirable inner state. It may not even be off the mark for us to think of it as a kind of justice, as a kind of “rightness” about one’s internal constitution.<sup>45</sup> But, at least as it stands, it tells us nothing about how or why we ought to respect others. It’s not obvious how other

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<sup>45</sup>Compare *Laws* IX:862b, where the Athenian decrees that “The description ‘just’ is applicable only to the benefit conferred or injury inflicted by someone with a just character or outlook.” This represents a further way in which justice as a property of the *treatment* of others (as opposed to the motivation for it) seems to have been revised away.

persons or their interests enter in to it at all. In *this* sense it is unhelpful as an account of *respect*, worthwhile though it may be in other ways.<sup>46</sup>

David Sachs has argued that the problem here turns on a distinction between “vulgar justice” (what Thrasymachus, Glaucon, and Adeimantus and presumably those who raise the objection from respect are worried about) and “Platonic justice” (what Socrates’ account fleshes out). Sachs accuses Plato of assuming fallaciously that being Platonically just will entail being vulgarly just and vice versa (Sachs 1971, p. 47.) If that assumption were valid, then Plato would have succeeded in showing that one’s interest in living the best kind of life gives one reason to be just in the vulgar sense — that is, to act under the sorts of constraints that are conventionally regarded as just (and which are close to our notions of respect). But, Sachs says, Plato gives no argument for either component of the crucial assumption, and both of the requisite entailments are implausible.

In one sense Sachs’ complaint is not squarely on target. Plato is not beholden to defend exactly the notion of justice that Thrasymachus, Glaucon, or Adeimantus holds. What *does* need defense, as modern critics of eudaimonism point out, is the claim that living the best kind of life necessarily involves or requires seeing others and their interests as imposing constraints on what one can do, on *respecting* them in something like the way we have characterized. This is the deep part of the challenge that Socrates’ interlocutors pose, and it does not seem that Socrates’ account is really responsive to it.<sup>47</sup>

What’s needed, of course, is a theoretical bridge between the account of justice he *does* defend, and the kind of respect that we want to see vindicated. In other words,

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<sup>46</sup>Cf. Annas: “There is a genuine problem, why justice should, so conceived, make me respect the rights of others. Why should the best realization of my nature be constrained by the needs and interests of other people also trying to realize their own individual projects as best they can?” (Annas 1981, p. 331). But Schmitz sees the glass as half-full rather than half-empty, observing that “even if Plato failed to connect rationality to justice, he did in the course of the argument connect rationality to integrity” (Schmitz 1995, p. 110).

<sup>47</sup>Cf. Schmitz: “Glaucon did not ask whether the individual needs to give each part of himself its due. He did not ask whether society needs to give each part of itself its due. What he asked was whether the individual needs to give each part of society its due. If Thrasymachus neglects to give other people their due, must he at the same time be neglecting to give a part of himself its due?” (Schmitz 1996, p. 119).

what we need to see, given the argument of *Republic*, is that respecting others and their interests is necessary for the well-ordered soul.<sup>48</sup> Possibly Plato intended his analogy between the soul and the city to provide this bridge, but if so it does not succeed. Just as we want to know what implications for a well-ordered soul there are as to relations with others, we would need to see what implications there are for a well-governed polis on other cities. He does give us a bit of this (more on this below), and what we get is suggestive, but hardly adequate for a complete account of respect. The connection is one Plato does not clearly make.

Even if he made it, he would still face the second part of the objection from respect. Suppose Plato could show that our interest in having the best kind of life gives us a reason to be just in the sense of respecting others and their interests. Is this the *right* kind of explanation for why we should be just? It appears to make the reason we ought not to be unjust — the reason we ought not, say, to harm others — that by doing so we would deprive ourselves of the best kind of life. This rationale lacks victim-focus, and does not seem to be at all the right kind of reason not to harm others.

So there appears to be a significant theoretical shortfall in accounting for respect for others on the kind of eudaimonist foundation Plato employs.<sup>49</sup> In the end, I think Plato does believe he has solved the problem, but his solution is unlikely to satisfy skeptics about his metaphysical commitments, which probably includes most of us. Even so, we can learn from his account. But the way we can best do so, I believe, requires us to shift a bit our understanding of the question Plato is trying to answer.

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<sup>48</sup>Here I agree with a number of critics of Sachs, that all Plato needs to defend is this necessity claim, not the further claim that external justice is *sufficient* for the well-ordered soul.

<sup>49</sup>One might think this is an unfair charge to make against Plato's account. One might construe Thrasymachus, Glaucon, and Adeimantus not as asking what reason there is to be just, but as seeking a demonstration that being just is not against their best interests. (This seems especially true of the latter two.) (Schmidtz invites us to understand the "why be moral" question in just this way — Schmidtz 1995, ch. 5.)

But this won't do the job for our purposes. If Plato is committed to eudaimonism, then ultimately *all* reasons for action can be traced to our interest in living the best kind of life. So if we have a reason for respecting others, it must come from that interest. That reopens Plato's account to this charge.

## Dikaiosune and Sophrosune

At the very point in his argument where Plato presents his “internalized” conception of justice of the soul, he goes on to draw some very interesting conclusions from that conception. If we have any doubts, he says, that justice “in us” is as Socrates describes, we can “dispel them altogether” by considering “ordinary cases” of justice (442d). He then cites some commonplace examples of interpersonal injustice: embezzlement, robbery, theft, betrayal of friends, untrustworthiness, adultery, disrespect. Plato claims that the kind of justice he has described — the patently *internal* state of the just person — is the *cause* of the incompatibility of *these* sorts of injustice with the justice of the soul.

Why does he think this? He gives us no ostensible reason to think that there is any impossibility in the idea of the well-ordered soul committing injustice against another person. Is Plato just too dense to see that he has committed a blatant non-sequitur? Less tendentiously, is this either an oversight which is a consequence of his infatuation with the internalized conception of justice he is developing, or a deliberate fallacy to mask a weakness in argument? Vlastos thought that there *is* a problem with Plato’s argument on just this point, but maintained against Sachs that the error is “neither inexplicable nor irreparable” (Vlastos 1981, p. 131). My view, on the other hand, is that there is no error here at all (or at least not the one Sachs and Vlastos suppose there is). Plato has an argument which needs ferreting out.

To see it, consider first Plato’s treatment of the virtue of *sophrosune* — the cardinal virtue that is often translated as “self-control” or “temperance” or “moderation.” In *Republic*, it is presented as a kind of agreement between the better and worse parts of the soul or the city as to which should rule (432a). In particular, in the soul it is described as “the mastery of certain kinds of pleasures and desires” (430e).

But *this* conception of *sophrosune* is relatively novel: in Plato’s earlier dialogues and to the Greeks generally it referred to something like *decorum* or proper comportment with respect to others and society, and involved a distinctively social sort

of *self-knowledge*.<sup>50</sup> Having *sophrosune* required that we not suppose ourselves to be isolated individuals, but to see ourselves as embedded in particular natural and social conditions, so that it involves the self-knowledge required to see what sorts of relations we stand in with various aspects of our situation, in particular how we stand with others.<sup>51</sup>

In other words, *sophrosune* is a virtue of recognizing and understanding the nature of the relationships between people and the way they appropriate parts of their common world. It requires a self-knowledge which crucially entails a grasp of how we fit into our world.<sup>52</sup> *Sophrosune* has a crucial *social* aspect that is, at the same time, connected with knowledge of one's self.<sup>53</sup> So while *sophrosune* refers to the state of a self or soul, part of its meaning picks out a distinctively outward-looking grasp of what is appropriate between oneself and others.<sup>54</sup> In *Alcibiades* Socrates concludes that without *sophrosune*, we not only don't know ourselves, but we don't know what belongs to us, or the properties of what belongs to us, nor anything about what belongs to others (133d-e), with the suggestion that in consequence we can't possibly *act* properly. If it is not quite identical with *dikaiosune*, *sophrosune* is at least in the ballpark of the conception of *respect* for others with which we are concerned.

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<sup>50</sup>For this reason, and because it is so very hard not to interpret *sophrosune* as "moderation" of some form, I will use the term untranslated, to draw attention to the pertinent aspects of its complex nature. I rely heavily here on North 1966 and Annas 1985.

<sup>51</sup>In *Charmides* the suggestion (taken over in *Republic* for *dikaiosune*) is floated that *sophrosune* is "doing one's own" (161b). In *Rival Lovers*, *sophrosune* is linked to the knowledge of good and bad in oneself, as a necessary condition of the knowledge of good and bad in humans generally (138a).

<sup>52</sup>In *Protagoras* Socrates says that the "art of measurement" (*metretike techne*) will "save" us, at least from mistakes in our evaluations of how things appear to us. This suggests too that there is value in accurate vision of oneself as related properly to the world and the conditions in which one acts. Cf. *Protagoras* 332a: Socrates and Protagoras agree that when people act correctly and beneficially, they are acting *sophronos*. Those who do not act correctly act foolishly, and those who act in this way are not *sophron*.

<sup>53</sup>This function of *sophrosune* also figures in an early passage in *Meno*. Here Socrates secures agreement from Meno that it is not possible "to manage a city well, or a household, or anything else, while not managing it *sophronos* and justly" (73a).

<sup>54</sup>A similar thought may be attributed to the Athenian in *Laws* IV, where he argues that justice and *sophrosune* go hand in hand (cf. *Laws* 716).



This makes Plato's argument for *sophrosune* in *Gorgias* quite striking. Socrates links *dikaiosune* and *sophrosune* as the "states of organization and order of the soul" which lead people to become "law-abiding and orderly" (504d). Just as in *Republic*, Plato here gives us both an "inward turn" of the previously "outward-looking" virtue and a link between internal states and external consequences. But, again just as in *Republic*, Plato does not explain or argue for that linkage: he merely postulates it.<sup>55</sup>

Socrates argues from the premises (i) that the excellence (*arete*) of a thing comes to be present in it through its organization (506d) and (ii) that the organization and order of the soul is *sophrosune*, to the conclusion that the *sophron* soul is the good one. At this point Plato makes the same sort of crucial and mystifying move he makes in *Republic*. Here's what he says:

And surely a *sophron* person would do what's appropriate with respect to both gods and human beings. For if he does what's inappropriate, he wouldn't be *sophronon*....And of course if he did what's appropriate with respect to human beings, he would be doing what's just...(507a-b)<sup>56</sup>

Plato is doing with *sophrosune* here *exactly* what he does with *dikaiosune* in *Republic* (at 441d-e). There, he supposes that the sort of order of the soul which he characterizes as justice goes hand in hand with "having and doing one's own" in the city. In *Gorgias*, order of the soul is characterized as *sophrosune* and from it, Plato thinks, comes appropriate action with respect to gods and men. And there is no more argument in *Gorgias* as to how this connection is to be understood than there is in *Republic*.

Now, it is one thing to suppose that doing this once is the result of an oversight, or an error in argument, or some other form of mistake on Plato's part. But supposing that he makes *the same mistake*, in two different dialogues, with two different virtues,

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<sup>55</sup>Callicles "assents" to the proposition that these states have this effect with his non-committal "Let it be so" (*ibid.*). The argument Socrates has offered for it is by analogy to the state of the body — health — that results from organization and order, but of course such an argument is only as strong as the analogy, and while Callicles has accepted it to begin with (504b), he might have decided that his reasons for rejecting Socrates' conclusion give him reason (in retrospect) to have resisted the analogy when it was offered.

<sup>56</sup>He then goes on to draw the requisite eudaimonist conclusion: that "the *sophron* man, because he's just and brave and pious ... is a completely good man, that the good man does well and admirably whatever he does, and that the man who does well is blessed and happy..." (507c).

is a very different thing. It is much more reasonable to suspect that there is an underlying thought which (Plato supposes, at least) makes *both* moves plausible.

### *Passions, Appetites, and the Soul*

The key, I believe, is found in the moral psychology that is under development in *Gorgias* and which is made explicit in *Republic*. In *Republic* we get a conception of the tripartite soul that is different from anything found elsewhere in Plato.<sup>57</sup> The analogy between the city and the soul rests on the idea that both have three parts: a reasoning part (*logistikon*), spirited part (*thumos*), and appetitive part (*epithumia*). What is important for our purposes is that in these dialogues the “spirit” and appetites are thought to be *parts of the soul*, instead of intransigent elements of the body with which the soul is saddled.<sup>58</sup>

This is significant because the appetites and passions *essentially* relate us to the external world.<sup>59</sup> They connect us with the various objects of desire with which external justice is concerned. Spirit (passion) is oriented to our relations with other persons: desires for “control, victory, and high repute” (581a). Appetites are oriented to satisfaction of bodily needs (food, drink, sex, wealth).<sup>60</sup> This conception of the soul gives Plato what he needs to make an intelligible connection between the soul that is *dikaios* (and *sophron*) and the notions of external justice with which he (and we) began. The ways one acts in relation to external goods (hence external justice) are, via

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<sup>57</sup> Though it bears similarities to the tripartite conception of soul in *Phaedrus* and *Timaeus*.

<sup>58</sup> Contrast *Phaedo* 82e. This is an oversimplification, of course. The spirited and appetitive parts of the soul are not immortal (611c), so there is still an important qualitative difference between them and the reasoning part. But far from mitigating the significance of their being included in the soul, this fact about them brings out the importance of the fact that they are not simply consigned to the body. One reason Plato might have had for making this somewhat contorted move, I think, is just to facilitate the connection between internal and external justice I sketch.

<sup>59</sup> This, at least, is their function. It is certainly possible to have appetites and passions stimulated through misperceptions, memory, or other internal processes so that on some occasions they are not hooked up directly with the external world. But I take these episodes to be parasitic on their general task of connecting us with our environment. I thank David Schmitz for raising this point.

<sup>60</sup> This distinction between passions and appetites is similar to Cooper’s, in which passions are distinguished by an essential “self-referential” aspect that appetites are not (Cooper 1984, pp. 14-6). I take that “self-reference” to be an aspect of one’s conception of oneself as a social creature.

their desiderative bases in appetite and passion, controlled and ordered by the reasoning part of the soul.

This interpretation requires that our concerns about external justice be seen as about something other than merely who has (gets) what. Just action with respect to others needs to be seen *as* action *by* agents on whom the external goods exert an attractive force. On the view of Thrasymachus, this force is thought to be good (or at least nothing to be limited or constrained), and the “natural” order is one in which, while each person does what he or she can to get the goods which exert this attractive force on them, the stronger will have a natural advantage when conflicts (inevitably) arise; so to them go the lion’s share of such goods.

Plato’s view is different. The attractive force of these goods acts on the spirited and appetitive parts of the soul — that is where the motivation to seek and acquire these goods comes from. But in the just soul — which is also *sophron*, in that the appetitive and spirited parts agree to be ruled by reason — the reasoning part imposes order and limit on those attractive forces, and on the parts of the soul in which they are felt. As Helen North puts it, in *this* conception of the soul, *sophrosune* regulates and orders the appetites and passions, rather than *suppressing* them (North 1966, p. 169). The good of the soul lies in the order that the reasoning part imposes on the attraction of and response to the goods of the other parts.<sup>61</sup>

In *Philebus* Plato takes this notion farther. Here he attributes desire *entirely* to the soul on the basis of a conceptual argument about the kind of thing desire must be (35c). Even more interesting, he seems to hold that one’s identity — the *self* one is enjoined to know by the Delphic oracle — includes not merely one’s soul, but one’s bodily goods, and even one’s external goods (48d-e).<sup>62</sup> So the move to incorporate the

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<sup>61</sup>In this respect Rosalind Hursthouse goes too far when she claims that “Plato seems to think that ideally the appetites, or the desire for bodily pleasures, would be eliminated entirely” (Hursthouse 1984, p. 90). This, at least, is not the case for the embodied soul at issue in *Republic* (cf. Irwin 1995, p. 218). Much more plausible is her suggestion that “reason provides *rational objects* for the passions....A passion that in other animals is essentially connected to physical self-preservation can be transformed in us into a passion connected with the preservation of what is best in us” (*ibid.* pp. 88-9, emphasis added).

<sup>62</sup>Delphic self-knowledge and recognition of one’s property are also linked at *Laws* XI: 923a.

relations with things in the world which are the subject of external justice, *into* the domain of internal justice as developed in the moral psychology of *Republic*, is one of considerable consequence for Plato.<sup>63</sup>

In *Laws*, Plato puts these ideas about the ways we can adjust our “object-relations” to work in a very interesting way. The Athenian identifies as “the highest kind of wisdom” achieving an “accord” between pleasure and pain and one’s rational judgment (689d).<sup>64</sup> He reveals what he means by this kind of “accord” in Books I through III, where he develops the idea that we can *modify* our pleasures and pains — we can change the way that we respond to stimuli from the world that impinges upon us. This means that the ways in which we value or assess (and thus respond to) various parts of the world we encounter are subject to reflective or rational appraisal. He thus provides us with a sophisticated, reflexive conception of a mental state which is both choosing what to find good in the world it encounters, and is responding in appropriate ways to the feedback it gets from acting upon it.

This, then, is the connection Plato is thinking of between internal and external justice. A soul in which the appetites and passions have been justly ordered is one which will eventuate in temperate and externally just action, because the order of the internal states determines the relations the agent will have with external goods. The untrammelled desire or greed (*pleonexia*) which is the source of external injustice has no motivational foothold in the just soul. Simply put, the internally just person has no *reason* to be externally unjust.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>63</sup>Jonathan Lear pays especially useful attention to this aspect of Plato’s “object-relations theory” (Lear 1992 and 1993). I differ from Lear’s insightful analysis of the argument of *Republic* primarily in wanting to emphasize not the order imposed on the polis, but instead on the order imposed on the object relations of the appetite and passions. I think this helps relieve the pressure Lear’s account generates to “reify” the political theory which is used to illuminate the moral theory in *Republic*.

<sup>64</sup>At 693c the connection between this wisdom and *sophrosune* is re-established when he virtually identifies the two.

<sup>65</sup>This conclusion is stronger than the one Annas draws. It is more than that desire, having been channelled into the goods of the reasoning part, is correspondingly weaker for the goods of the spirited and appetitive parts (Annas 1981, p. 155; cf. *Republic* 485d-e). It’s not merely that their motivational force has been undercut, as it were, but that that force has been exactly and appropriately fitted to their objects by the reasoning part of the soul.

Plato throughout his work seems to conceive of virtue as a kind of *skill* or craft (*techne*), in embodying a kind of knowledge. The craftsman has a sort of knowledge of his craft and the materials of it that enables him to see just what is to be done.<sup>66</sup> The virtue, or skill, of the just person consists in having just this sort of grasp of the “materials” of human life. She sees just which parts of it are to be ordered in just what way. This explains why Plato thinks that the just person will *respect* others and what belongs to them.<sup>67</sup>

Something like this kind of comprehensive grasp of how things are to fit together — to be ordered — is widely recognized as part of Aristotle’s virtue theory (as we shall see in Chapter 3), and will play an important role in the conception of practical wisdom I draw upon in my argument for eudaimonistic respect in Chapters 5 and 6. However, Plato is not often recognized as having such a conception as part of his moral view, and I think it is significant to see that it is, in fact, a component of his account of justice and morality in *Republic* and *Gorgias*, among other dialogues.

### *Remaining Problems*

Neither we nor Plato are out of the woods yet. Two significant difficulties remain. First, even if what we have so far is right, it still fails to capture the victim-focused aspect of our intuitions about respect. Plato has framed the problem with injustice as an issue of its effects on the *agent*, rather than on its victims. Surely what is *wrong* with the actions that Gyges undertakes with his ring is not simply that they are bad for *him* (though Plato may be right that they *are* bad for him). The reason it is wrong for Gyges to murder the king is because by murdering the king Gyges is inflicting a harm on his *victim* (i.e. the king). It is plausible to suppose that that will in

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<sup>66</sup>In *Gorgias* Socrates contrasts a “craft” with a “knack” on the grounds that the former, but not the latter, has “account” (*logos*) of what it is about. A craft, by contrast, “has no account of the nature of whatever things it applies by which it applies them, so that it’s unable to state the cause of each thing. And I refuse to call anything that lacks such an account a craft” (465a).

<sup>67</sup>Schmidtz finds a similar connection between respect and integrity: “integrity involves not only honestly presenting ourselves to the world but also *integrating* ourselves into the world, achieving a certain fit” (Schmidtz 1995, p. 112). Plato’s view of psychic harmony seems to involve a comparable fit.

turn have repercussions in Gyges' soul, but to get things the right way around we have to start with the harm to the victim, as critics of eudaimonism urge. But it is not obvious how the story we have can do this. This isn't to say there can be no such story — it's just that such an account is needed and we don't presently have one.<sup>68</sup>

Second, the specter of Thrasymachus' conception of justice has not actually been banished. The argument so far establishes that the passions and appetites must be brought under the control of reason, and ordered and controlled by it, for *sophrosune*, justice, and (consequently) psychic harmony and happiness. But what, exactly, is the nature of the order that reason is to impose? What pattern or constraints ought it to impose on the passions and appetites?<sup>69</sup>

For all we have said so far, it is open to Thrasymachus to argue, for example, that the just and orderly soul manifests itself in greed and tyranny. He advocates a sophistic picture of the natural order in which external goods are distributed according to the power and strength of those who aspire to have them. (That's why the *lion's share* goes to the lion, not the squirrel.) If he is right that this conception is a (or the) natural order, then it is open to him to argue that it is the order which reason ought to impose on the passions and appetites: in effect, that the *sophron* and just soul is one in which the passions and appetites are “controlled” into going for all and only what the natural resources of the agent (physical attributes, mental abilities, and so on) are capable of acquiring safely. And if that's right, then we are back where we began with Sachs' fallacy: why are the inner goods Plato has argued for *incompatible* with the acquisition of external, conventional goods in ways that manifest no respect for others?

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<sup>68</sup>Compare Irwin, who distinguishes common justice (c-justice) from Plato's account of psychic harmony (p-justice), then observes: “If a c-just person must avoid c-unjust actions out of a specific motive — say, out of concern or respect for the interests of others — then Plato has not shown that the p-just person is c-just simply by showing that she lacks any motive for c-unjust actions” (Irwin 1995, p. 261).

<sup>69</sup>Adkins complains that “From Plato's argument, the instructions which the intellect should give to the appetites cannot be determined” (Adkins 1960, p. 289).

We need a story that excludes Thrasymachus' conception of order from an acceptable notion of justice of the soul.<sup>70</sup>

Jonathan Lear suggests that the order arises from the structure of the just polis itself: that just those appetites, for example, will be cultivated (and, presumably, in just the quantities) which can be satisfied within the well-ordered polis (Lear 1992, p. 200). But this suggestion is too narrow to be of general use: it requires an appeal to a well-ordered polis which, Plato agrees, may never be realized and which, moreover, is otiose from the standpoint of moral theory (*Republic* 592b).

We might try appealing to the health of the body and soul, as an integrated unit, as a criterion for order. Plato suggests something like this as a criterion for "necessary" desires at *Republic* 558-9. But if this is not in fact blatantly circular as a solution to our problem, it is so close to being so that it will be of little help. What we are after is a conception of order that will *make our souls healthy* (to borrow the analogy developed in *Gorgias*: cf. 464b). It hardly helps to say that any acceptable account of order will be one that eventuates in our health. Worse, sometimes justice can be *lethal* for the combination of body and soul. Socrates' taking of the hemlock in the name of justice only served to hasten his death.

Plato in fact has a much more powerful response, which is suggested by the theme of virtue as a kind of knowledge, and is the explicit topic of *Republic* books V through VII.<sup>71</sup> There we find the description of the philosopher-king, who has progressed through an arduous process of training and education which culminates in knowledge of the Form of the Good (517b). Though Socrates is notably chary of describing what this knowledge amounts to, his emphasis on education in mathematics (525b), astronomy (530b), and "harmonics" (531b) suggests that what is

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<sup>70</sup>Irwin raises essentially this same concern about Plato's argument through Book IV (Irwin 1995, pp. 282-3).

<sup>71</sup>Here in large part I follow Kraut (1973b, 1992).

significant about this Form is that it is itself a kind of order in the highest degree.<sup>72</sup> Perhaps, then, (as suggested earlier) the reasoning part of the just soul imposes on the passions and appetites an analog (of some sort) of the order it discovers among the Forms in coming to know the Form of the Good. This is the knowledge that the “craft” of virtue consists in. Certainly Plato believes that the soul’s knowledge of the Good competes with the strong attractive force of the goods to which our passions and appetites respond, the “bonds of kinship with becoming, which have been fastened to it by feasting, greed, and other such pleasures and which, like leaden weights, pull its vision downwards” (519a).

Socrates comes close to saying, in so many words, that the Form of the Good is the final theoretical link between psychic and external justice:

No one whose thoughts are truly directed towards the things that are has the leisure to look down at human affairs or to be filled with envy and hatred by competing with people. Instead, as he looks at and studies things that are organized and always the same, that neither do injustice to one another nor suffer it, being all in a rational order, he imitates them and tries to become as like them as he can. (500b-c)

What should we think of this argument? We have not grasped the Form of the Good, so we don’t, after all, have just the sort of insight Plato suggests is necessary to see how psychic and external justice connect. Suppose, however, that for purposes of argument we accept that insight into the Form of the Good reveals the connection between a just soul and respect for others. In that event, Plato has shown that if one’s soul *does* know and is ordered (somehow) by the Form of the Good, this order will ensure external justice.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>72</sup>Cf. Cooper 1977, p. 155. See also *Timaeus* 90d for a similar claim as to the ultimate object of our understanding.

<sup>73</sup>Of course, as Annas observes, external justice so conceived does not rule out *manipulating* others for good ends, since this is just what the Guardians are to do with so-called “noble lies” (Annas 1981, p. 161; cf. *Republic* 459c). This is one way that the external justice which results from psychic harmony may approximate to, but not be extensionally equivalent to, the commonsense conception of justice which launches *Republic*, and (perhaps) our modern intuitions about respect.



Still, however, if we doubt that there is any ideal of Goodness of which we can have the sort of knowledge Plato supposes, he won't have solved *our* problem: we still lack a specification of the order that our souls are to have.<sup>74</sup> And of course we still need an account of how it is that it is the harm to *others* that underwrites our intuitions about injustice, rather than disruption to the agent's psychic harmony.

Does this mean Plato's theory is *defective*? We will consider this question again in Chapter 4. But whether it is defective as a theory or not, in any case it does not supply us with answers to the questions we are asking. Nevertheless, Plato has drawn our attention to something important. The connection he has established between the way that we act on others and the internal psychological states that eventuate in those actions in virtue of their "object-relations" is an important one. Though it is not the full story, it is an important part of the full story, as we shall see in Chapters 5 and 6.

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<sup>74</sup>The problem isn't solved if we abstract away from the *Republic* to the general claim that virtue is a kind of knowledge, as Plato seems to believe very generally, because we still need an account of what that knowledge is *of*. Why, in particular, does Thrasymachus' sophist conception of natural order not count as the requisite kind of knowledge? Perhaps the true philosopher can see that it does not, but that's not of much help to *us*. We will encounter this dialectical situation again in considering the Stoics (Chapter 4), whose views are close to Plato's on this point.

### 3. ARISTOTLE

*the good man should have a standard both of disposition and of choice and avoidance with regard to excess or deficiency of wealth and good fortune, the standard being — as said above — as reason directs. ... But this, though true, is not illuminating. (Eudemian Ethics 1249a25)*

Aristotle is undoubtedly the best-known of eudaimonistic virtue theorists. Indeed, a substantial proportion of the criticisms leveled against eudaimonism are generalizations of objections to Aristotle's view. Aristotle notoriously holds that "it is for the sake of [our eudaimonia] that we all do everything else" (*NE* I.12: 1102a3). It is easy to see how this commitment could give rise to questions about the possibility of both non-instrumental concern for others and respect for others in his moral theory, and in this chapter I assess what Aristotle has to say about those questions.

Aristotle is deservedly known for his attention to the value of friends. In the first part of this chapter I explore how his views on friendship bear on the issue of concern. My view is that Aristotle has an account of the human good, and a conception of the best kind of friendship, that reveal how non-instrumental concern for at least some others is wholly compatible with eudaimonism.

He is less helpful on respect. The second part of this chapter considers three ways we might try to extract a eudaimonist account of respect from Aristotle's ethical and political work. I find that, as in Plato's case, Aristotle has useful contributions to make, but also like Plato, Aristotle's explicit account does not give us all the resources necessary to address the problem.

#### *Concern*

We have intuitions that an important form of concern for others is not merely valuing them as instrumental — to our own happiness or anything else — but valuing them for their own sake. That such-and-such is essential to my friend's welfare ought (we think) to provide me a reason for seeking it without any further consideration of my own happiness, and any account of our relations to others that can't recognize or accommodate that fact cannot be right.

In fact Aristotle shares this intuition. He thinks we not only *can* but *should* have such concern — concern for others “for their own sake” — for at least *some* others. Such concern is especially, if not uniquely, characteristic of “perfect” (or “character”) friendships,<sup>75</sup> and he distinguishes this kind of concern from merely instrumental forms:

those who love each other for their utility do not love each other for themselves but in virtue of some good which they get from each other. So too with those who love for the sake of pleasure; it is not for their character that men love ready-witted people, but because they find them pleasant. Therefore those who love for the sake of utility love for the sake of what is good for *themselves*, and those who love for the sake of pleasure do so for the sake of what is pleasant to *themselves*, and not in so far as the other is the person loved but in so far as he is useful or pleasant. And thus these friendships are incidental; for it is not as being the man he is that the loved person is loved, but as providing some good or pleasure. (*NE* VIII.3:1156a10-18, emphasis in the original)

How can loving others for *themselves* be reconciled with his commitment to *eudaimonia* as that for the sake of which we do all that we do? To understand his view, we need first to apprehend some distinctive aspects of its conception of the human good, and then see how his account of friendship puts that conception of the good to work in explaining concern for others for their own sake.

### *The Human Good*

Aristotle’s solution to the problem, to make a long story short, turns on the idea that the human good is such that we can *share* in each other’s good in important ways. Now, the idea that we can share in each other’s good may strike us as odd, so this feature of his view needs elaboration.

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<sup>75</sup>John Cooper argues that non-instrumental concern is the “core of Aristotle’s own analysis of *philia* (Cooper 1977b, p. 621). If this is right, then all three of the forms of friendship Aristotle distinguishes are non-instrumental. I shall not take up the question whether Cooper is right about that. Instead I will consider only “perfect” friendship, which is certainly intended to characterize non-instrumental concern; my references to “friendship” simpliciter intend that highest form of friendship.

We can begin with Aristotle's well-known stratagem for discovering what our good as humans is: we first identify our function (*ergon*) as humans, since the goodness of a thing is thought to "reside in" its function (*NE* 1.7: 1097b26f). Aristotle thinks we discover the good of an X by determining what is distinctive about X's function or operation. In the case of us *homo sapiens*, Aristotle argues that our distinctive function is rational activity, so the human good must be "the activity of soul in conformity with excellence," such excellence being accordance with a "rational principle" (1098a8, a16).

What does he mean by "excellent activity of soul"? Aristotle begins *NE* Book I with the idea that as agents we live our lives pursuing ends. Some ends we seek for the sake of other ends, some we seek just for themselves, so they fall into a sort of hierarchy. This means that a clear grasp of what is atop that hierarchy (that is, our ultimate end or *telos*) is of great importance to us in prioritizing what we seek and thus in living our lives.<sup>76</sup> Here the rationality that is our distinctive function comes into play: we can use our reason to *impose* order and structure on the ends we seek. This suggests that "excellent activity of the soul" is seeing one's life *as* a rationally-ordered structure of ends, and utilizing that insight as an organizing principle for one's life and activity.

This suggestion is borne out by Aristotle's discussions of practical wisdom (*phronesis*) and of the true lover of self. In his discussion of the intellectual virtues in Book VI, Aristotle gives us a nuanced picture of a practical wisdom which does not merely deliberate and choose between competing structures of ends and means, but which consists in a "capacity to act" with regard for the good (*NE* VI.5: 1140b20). The practically wise person's desires and emotions are in concord with the dictates of reason (VI.2: 1139a30), and he or she is guided by a particular sort of *perception* as to what is right and appropriate (VI.8: 1142a30). So practical wisdom amounts to

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<sup>76</sup>Aristotle is sometimes criticized for the way he formulates his argument to an "ultimate end," but for present purposes such criticisms are irrelevant. A similar discussion in *EE* makes it a *normative* demand that we have such a structure: "not to have one's life organized in view of some end is a mark of much folly" (*EE* I.2: 1214b10; cf. also II.10: 1226b29). This normative claim is adequate for purposes of the present argument.

organizing oneself — one’s aims, activities, perceptions, and emotions — around what is really good for oneself as a human being and as the particular human being one is; this is the good performance of our function as human beings, and is the source and content of a *eudaimon* life.

What is distinctive about Aristotle’s view here is that the virtuous person considers the sort of deliberative, reflective activity which practical wisdom requires of him to be his most *essential self*.<sup>77</sup> In NE IX.7, Aristotle says the source of the “love” we have for the results of our activity is “that we exist by virtue of activity (i.e. by living and acting), and that the handiwork *is* in a sense, the producer in activity; he loves his handiwork, therefore, because he loves existence” (NE IX.7: 1168a6f). This is quintessentially true of the activity of deliberation as to how to order one’s life “according to a rational principle,” with perception, desire and emotion in agreement. I see my life as most truly expressive of my essential self when my life is the exercise and effect of my own practical rationality, and when my reason, desires and emotion are congruent.<sup>78</sup>

[The good man’s] opinions are harmonious, and he desires the same things with all his soul; and therefore he wishes for himself what is good and what seems so, and does it (for it is characteristic of the good man to exert himself for the good), and does so for his own sake (for he does it for the sake of the intellectual element in him, which is thought to be the man himself); and he wishes himself to live and be preserved, and especially the element by virtue of which he thinks. (NE IX.4: 1166a12f; cf. also IX.8: 1168b36)

Aristotle goes so far as to say that this is the truest form of self-love: the true self-lover is he who “gratifies the most authoritative element in himself and in all things obeys

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<sup>77</sup>Marcia Homiak makes this point in Homiak 1981.

<sup>78</sup>This, of course, just is *virtue* as Aristotle conceives of it.

this. . . That this is the man himself, then, or is so more than anything else, is plain, and also that the good man loves most this part of him” (1168b30, 36).<sup>79</sup>

So Aristotle’s idea is that as humans our good lies in rational agency — in establishing a rationally-ordered system of ends and structuring our lives according to it. In such lives we find the expression of our “truest” selves, and in living them we come to identify with and love our intellectual capacities as actualized in our reflective practical rationality. So far so good. But how does this conception of the good help us understand how we can have concern for others for their own sake?

### *Friends and their Goods*

The crucial aspect of the conception of human good just sketched is that it makes intelligible a sense in which distinct individuals can *share the same good*. Insofar as our selves and our good are realized in rational deliberation, they are subject to being shared by others. That is, I can share in the very activity that constitutes my friend’s good — it can be an integral part of *my* life, and come partly to constitute *my* good. By choosing to love my friend, I make his good an end; and my deliberation about that end and its pursuit are part of the expression of my truest self and hence part of *my* good. His good becomes mine and (given Aristotle’s requirement of reciprocity for friendship — *NE* VIII.2, *EE* VII.2) mine his: “In loving their friend they love their own good, for the good man in becoming dear to another becomes that other’s good.”<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>79</sup>This conception of the “essential self” renders Aristotle’s view of the self ineluctably particular and embedded in the particular life history of which the virtuous agent is his or her own architect. In this it differs from the more abstract conceptions of self in e.g. Kant, as well as in Plato and the Stoics, in my view to Aristotle’s advantage.

<sup>80</sup>*NE* VIII.5: 1157b32, Loeb/Rackham translation. Kelly Rogers claims that in this Aristotle was trading on a common idea: “since Homer’s time, at least, one’s friends’ interests were considered literally part of one’s own” (Rogers 1996, p. 294.) Terence Irwin understands Aristotle to claim at *NE* I.7: 1097b8-11 that “the good for an individual includes the good for his family, friends, and fellow-citizens” (Irwin 1985, p. 118). I am not confident that this is the right way to understand the passage in question, but such an interpretation would be explained by the account of shared goods I am sketching here.

This explains, I believe, the significance of Aristotle's repeated and striking assertion that a friend is a *second self*.<sup>81</sup> His reiteration of this claim suggests that it plays an important role in his understanding of friendship, and a conception of the human good on which the essential selves and goods of distinct individuals can be shared helps to explain why. Aristotle has in mind a particular and intriguing way in which our "ego boundaries" — the intangible borders which delineate me and my good from you and your good — are transformed in friendship, and in which it no longer makes sense to think of our respective goods as being entirely distinct.<sup>82</sup>

What allows for this transformation is an activity of reflective thought which, on Aristotle's conception of what a *self* is, can be constitutive both of *my* self and of my *friend's* self. This activity, Aristotle tells us, is one which is best shared with a friend, so "The man who is to be happy will ... need virtuous friends" (*NE* IX.9: 1170b18). Friends need to "live together," to share a common life (cf. *NE* VIII.5: 1157b19, *EE* VII.7: 1241a16), because — unlike cattle, who merely feed together — friends "share in discussion and thought" (*NE* IX.9: 1170b12; cf. also *EE* VII.12:1245a10f).<sup>83</sup>

But of course sharing in discussion and thought is possible without friendship: philosophers can do this with other philosophers (and do it constructively), even with people they detest. Aristotle thinks that shared deliberation can, in the context of the best kind of friendship, be characterized by a knowledge of each other, intimacy, and trust, which allow for a deeper and more distinctive form of shared activity. It is also

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<sup>81</sup>Cf. *NE* IX: 1166a31, 1170b6, 1171b32; *EE* VI.12: 1245a29; *Magna Moralia* 1213a12.

<sup>82</sup>Cf. Nancy Sherman, who says Aristotle's conception of friendship involves "mutual engagement ... a relaxing of one's own sense of boundaries and control... a sense of union or merger with another" (Sherman 1997, p. 198).

The interpretation I advance here is in stark contrast with that of Richard Kraut, on which "a boundary of sorts separates the happiness of each individual from that of every other" (Kraut 1989, p. 148). Kraut's view entails that the common goods of friends must be understood solely in causal terms (p. 149); the idea that the good of another can partly constitute one's own good is ruled right out (p. 151). In particular, the idea that my friend is a second self is to be understood through my shaping of his character over the course of our association (*ibid.*, p. 143). I find this implausibly weak as an understanding of Aristotle's "second self" claims.

<sup>83</sup>As Sherman emphasizes, this should not be thought of as purely cognitive or without affect: friends "share an emotional life together," having "a common core of well-cultivated emotions" (Sherman 1997, p. 205). Cf. *EE* VII.6: 1240a37-40. As individuals are embodied wholes of reason, affect, and desire, so are the selves that engage in deliberation in the context of friendship.

(as the shared activity of philosophers need not be) set in a context of mutual well-wishing (*eunoia* — *NE* VIII.2:1156a3).

Deliberation as an activity shared between friends thus differs both from discussion and thought among strangers and from deliberation as conducted individually and privately. It is something more and other than the individual activities of its participants, just as the playing of a duet is more and other than the individual activities of its participants. As a shared activity it makes a distinctive contribution to the lives and goods of those who participate in it. Of course, I cannot deliberate or act *for* my friend, nor he for me. Still, we can share the primary constituents of our respective goods — the activity of our souls in conformance with excellence. I can, through friendship, come to identify with the rational agency which constitutes his good, so that it becomes a constituent part of my good. My friend's practical rationality makes him the person he is, and I come to consider him a "second self" through my involvement in his exercise of that practical rationality.

The crucial part of Aristotle's story is that we identify ourselves with our "reasoning parts" — with the practical faculties by which we order our lives and which are expressed in our practical agency — and that our good lies in the exercise of those faculties. It is because this part of my friend is "most essentially" him, and the part of himself he loves the best, that I can come to regard what is essentially him as "partially me," making it possible for me to come to see him as a "second myself," and vice versa. Since on Aristotle's view my own good and the good of my friend lie in the expression of our rational natures, his good can become a constituent of mine in a way that it could not with another conception of the good.

### *The Possibility of Non-instrumental Concern*

Aristotle's idea that friends are "second selves" in this way thus models one important way in which non-instrumental and immediate concern for others is possible even while reasons for action trace to one's own eudaimonia. Since the welfare of friends (partly) constitutes one's own good, one has reasons for action in the good of



those friends *for their sake*, without appeal to one's own good conceived of as an end distinct from the good of the friend, and to which the friend's good is instrumental. It is possible for me to do something *both* for my friend's sake — because the fact that it is part of his good directly and immediately motivates me and explains why I do it — *and* entirely consistently with Aristotle's eudaimonism about reasons for action. It constitutes part of my good, because it is embedded in the structure of ends that is the expression of my practical rationality, and which constitutes my *eudaimonia*.<sup>84</sup>

This view does not conflate or break down the distinction between these persons as individuals. Aristophanes' myth in *Symposium* depicts a notion of a union between friends which abolishes this distinction, and it is easy enough to recognize the danger of ceasing to recognize the friend *as* a distinct self, and begin to conflate the notions of self and friend.<sup>85</sup> But Aristotle says nothing to controvert our sense that, as Lawrence Blum observes, genuine giving in friendship

takes place within a relationship in which one genuinely understands and knows the other person, and understands one's separateness from him....it retains a clear sense of the other's otherness and of one's own separateness and integrity as a person. (Blum 1980, p. 70)

It is also important to distinguish the dynamics of this sort of identification with the loved one from those of sympathy or benevolence. In cases of the latter, there is motivation to seek the good of another without the kind of incorporation into one's own good that characterizes one's concern for "a second self." Of course I may come to see the good of the person who is the object of my sympathy or benevolence as part of my own good on a transient basis; this is just to allow for the possibility of such sympathy or benevolence for his or her own sake. But in the case of *philia* there is, as Aristotle observes, both an *enduring* aspect to the identification with the friend (*NE* VIII.4:

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<sup>84</sup>This understanding of Aristotle's "second self" claims thus contrasts with that of Dennis McKerlie, who sees it as representing Aristotle's belief that "friendship is *as fundamental* as self-concern because it rests on the same basis as my self-concern" (McKerlie 1991, p. 97). On my reading, seeing a friend as a second self is (*pace* McKerlie) compatible with "giving people the single *fundamental* goal of making their own lives as good as they can be" (*ibid.*, emphasis added).

<sup>85</sup>Montaigne seems tempted towards this extreme in his essay on friendship.

1156b33, IX.1: 1164a13), and reciprocity in the way each partner to the friendship regards the other (*NE* VIII.2: 1155b33f, *Rhet.* II.4: 1381a1).

The idea that the good of others can come to constitute part of our own good in this way does not seem implausible. For example, my daughter's good is part of my good in this way. What benefits her — especially by contributing to her development as a practically rational being of the sort Aristotle has characterized — benefits me, and does so *constitutively* rather than (or at least in addition to) *causally*. That is to say, the right account of how her good affects me is not that (for example) her accomplishing something important for her is good for her, and my seeing her benefit in this way is good for me (though that may be true too); it is that I count her doing well in this way as part of my own good in a non-derivative way. Conversely, if she is harmed it is not merely that I become distressed at seeing her distress, but that the harm to her harms me as well, because of the way I identify with her and the part her good plays in constituting my good, through my love for her.<sup>86</sup>

I take Aristotle to suppose that the welfare of another can have an immediate influence on our desires and motives in virtue of coming to constitute part of how we understand and experience our own good. That is, it's not the case either that I seek my daughter's good because of its effects on me (an instrumental idea), nor that I set aside my own good in promoting her welfare (a self-disregarding idea), but that I seek it in just the way I seek other aspects of my good, because it just is part of my good.<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>86</sup>Though this is primarily true of other *persons*, it may also extend to other animate beings, albeit in an attenuated way. I might come to love my dog in such a way that his welfare partially constitutes my good, for example, although in virtue of the fact that we do not share a system of ends, as in the case of my (human) friend, it does so in a much more limited way. It is essential, however, that the other be the sort of thing which can *have* a good (viz. be animate). This is the point that Aristotle is bringing out at *NE* VIII.2: 1155b28. The case is different with my daughter. It is important here that I see her and love her as a *self* in the sense Aristotle draws our attention to. Her development as the particular rational and virtuous person she can be constitutes her good and partly constitutes mine, and setbacks to that development constitute harms for her and *ipso facto* harms for me. It is this account of her self and her good that makes the *sharing* of our goods possible. I thank Tom Christiano for bringing this implication to my attention.

<sup>87</sup>However, at the same time there may be a *distinct* way in which her good contributes to my good causally, hence which I seek on instrumental grounds. I may value her success both for her sake, and as part of my good, and also because her success (I imagine) makes me look good as a father. There is nothing about these two attitudes that renders them incompatible, and I suppose such admixtures are more common than not.

At the same time, I need not seek it *as* a part of my good, any more than I need to seek any of my other ends *as* a part of my good. Perhaps the most difficult part of grasping the idea I am attributing to Aristotle is resisting the notion that concern for the other's good ultimately *does* represent a mediated or instrumental form of concern — that *because* I take it to be part of my good I can not rightly be said to seek my daughter's good *for her sake*. I must, after all (the objection runs), be motivated by the thought of my own good in seeking her welfare. But this is a mistake. What motivates and explains my seeking this good is simply that it is good for her.

This is a claim about both my motivation *and* my justification for seeking my daughter's good. There may be many explanations for my being motivated to seek my daughter's good, but on Aristotle's view at least one of them will be that in virtue of my love for her I will see that I *do* have reason to seek her good, and as I become virtuous I will acquire desires to do what I have reason to do (*EE* VII.2: 1237a2). And that it is her good is, genuinely, my justification for acting to seek it.

Some might doubt that this is *really* my justification, because it is not the *ultimate* justification for doing what I ought to do — viz. that it will contribute to my eudaimonia. But the fact that something is not my ultimate justification does not mean that it is not really my justification. As noted in Chapter 1, what counts as a justification depends in large part on the context in which justificatory issues are raised.<sup>88</sup> Depending on the need for justification, different features of what I do may be salient. And given my love for and commitment to my daughter, what will be salient for me in acting is that what I do will promote her good. That is what motivates me to

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<sup>88</sup>Cf. Chapter 1, p. 18.

act, what justifies me in acting, and what explains why I act. At the proximate level of justification, my concern for my daughter is wholly non-instrumental.<sup>89</sup>

It is because I have come to identify myself with my daughter in crucial ways that I come to take what is good for her, for her sake, as good for me. Aristotle's view captures the important point that her good and mine cannot be completely prized apart — they are interdependent and partly constitutive of each other.<sup>90</sup> As Anthony Price argues

parts of lives can be shared: one and the same act may count as contributing, as a constituent and not a cause, to the eudaimonia of two persons. It is this possibility that grounds Aristotle's ideal of friendship. ...[and which] dissolves the obstinate dichotomy between egoism and altruism (Price 1989, p. 106).<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>89</sup>It might be helpful to think of this point in terms of *de re* vs. *de dicto* ways for me to conceive of what I am doing. *De dicto* it is my daughter's good that motivates me, though *de re* it is part of my good, and in reflecting on what I ought to do or in justifying what I do, I have recourse to this feature of my action as a fundamental reason for it. But it is the *de dicto* role that my daughter's good is playing in my practical deliberations that motivates and explains what I do, and which will be the primary justification I offer for acting as I do on her behalf.

This is tantamount to the view Julia Annas takes in attributing to Aristotle a distinction between what *motivates* and what *justifies* the virtuous agent in acting virtuously or loving a friend (Annas 1988, pp. 11f — to which discussion I am greatly indebted). A similar point about the way virtuous motives are represented to the person who has them is made by N.J.H. Dent (Dent 1984, p. 177).

White is critical of this strategy (White 1995, p. 275, n. 32): he finds no reason to attribute it to Aristotle. I do not see that Aristotle's distinction between ends we seek purely for their own sake ends we desire for the sake of something else (*NE* I.2) is not amenable to interpretation along Annas' lines, but in any event I think something like the *de dicto/de re* distinction I suggest here is necessary to make any sense at all out of Aristotle's thought there. Cf. Appendix A.

<sup>90</sup>However, at the same time there may be a *distinct* way in which her good contributes to my good causally, hence which I seek on instrumental grounds. I may value her success both for her sake, and as part of my good, and also because her success (I imagine) makes me look good as a father. There is nothing about these two attitudes that renders them incompatible, and I suppose such admixtures are more common than not.

<sup>91</sup>This conception of overlapping goods underwrites Aristotle's reference to the "marks of friendship" (*NE* IX.4). Aristotle says we think a friend is one who (i) wishes and does what is good for the sake of his friend, (ii) wishes his friend to exist and live, for his sake, (iii) one lives with and (iv) has the same tastes as another, and (v) grieves and rejoices with his friend (1166a3-8).

The view sketched here explains why and how one seeks a friend's good for his or her own sake.<sup>92</sup> On Aristotle's view, the goods of our friends as "second selves" figure constitutively into our conceptions of our own goods, and we thus naturally wish them good things as we wish them for ourselves. Further, the point that friendship involves a "shared emotional life" makes especially clear the basis for grieving and rejoicing with a friend. But this interpretation also gives special point to Aristotle's idea that friends wish to "live together" (share a common life): this is because their lives — the structure of ends and activities which constitute the lives of each — overlap or coincide to a significant degree.

So Aristotle's account of friendship provides a model for how non-instrumental concern for others is *possible* within a view which limits the source of reasons for action to one's own eudaimonia. In Chapter 1 I claimed that, strictly speaking, this is all that is necessary to meet the objection from concern, since the typical expressions of the objection allege that non-instrumental concern is *incompatible* with eudaimonism. However, a stronger response is possible. Aristotle in fact argues that the sort of non-instrumental concern which is characteristic of *philia* is not merely *compatible* with the best kind of human life, but an essential element of it. It is worth touching briefly on what he says by way of this stronger reply to the objection.

### *The Value of Concern*

If we think the importance of friendship ought to be recognized in the best kind of human life, we'd like an explanation from Aristotle as to why friendship is not only

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<sup>92</sup>One might object to this view that it doesn't ascribe enough reason-giving force to the interests of one's friend when they are in tension or competition with one's own interests. Nicholas White presses this objection against "inclusivist" forms of eudaimonism such as the interpretation of Aristotle offered here (White 1994, 1995). In Appendix A I treat White's objection at length, but I can summarize my response by observing that if the goods of our friends and ourselves are sometimes in conflict, this would not be surprising, inasmuch as elements of what are naturally thought of as our own (proper) good are often in conflict as well. That we have to make hard choices among available competing goods is not in itself a problem. There *might* be a problem if Aristotle were to insist that such conflicts should be settled in favor of one's proper self, instead of one's friend, but Aristotle does not say this. He does discuss what Kraut refers to as "moral competition" in *NE* IX.9, but even here he does not suggest such conflicts should be settled by appeal to what in the end is self, versus other.

possible but necessary for such a life.<sup>93</sup> Note that this is not a question about the *nature* of our concern — whether it is merely instrumental or not —but as to why such concern must be part of the best kind of human life. The right kind of answer is one that will show that having such concern for another person contributes to eudaimonia, but that does not make such concern merely instrumental. It is to give what I have called an *ultimate* justification for making and having commitments to others, and as I have argued the existence of such a reason for such commitment does not reduce it to merely instrumental concern.

Our question here is one which, fortunately, Aristotle takes up explicitly. For on its face, the idea that friendship is part of the human good is in conflict with what we might call the *autonomy* of the human good: the idea that our good must lie within our own powers to realize.

if the good life consists in what is due to fortune or nature, it would be something that many cannot hope for, since its acquisition is not in their power, nor attainable by their care or activity; but if it depends on the individual and his personal acts being of a certain character, then the supreme good would be ... more general because more would be able to possess it... (*EE* I.3: 1215a12-17)<sup>94</sup>

Aristotle's argument for the value of friendship comes as a response to a problem that friendship poses, given this condition on the human good:

It is said that those who are blessed and self-sufficient have no need of friends; for they have the things that are good, and therefore being self-sufficient they need nothing further while a friend, being another self, furnishes what a man cannot provide by his own effort; whence the saying 'when fortune is kind, what need of friends?' But it seems strange, when one assigns all good things to the happy man, not to

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<sup>93</sup>Cf. Cooper: "To show that the active expression of love is necessary in any satisfactory human life requires further argument establishing the fundamental importance of *this* intrinsically good activity vis-a-vis others with which it might compete for a place in a person's life" (Cooper 1977c, pp. 312-3).

<sup>94</sup>The *Nicomachean Ethics* makes the same point: "the good we divine to be something of one's own and not easily taken from one" (I.5: 1095b25).

assign friends, who are thought the greatest of external goods. (*NE* IX.9:1169b4-10)<sup>95</sup>

This way of posing the problem affords Aristotle a natural answer: if one is self-sufficient, one *has* friends, simply because friendship is something that the good life cannot be without.<sup>96</sup> To put it the other way around (and more usefully for our question), a life which lacks friends is not the best kind of life. Aristotle gives a number of reasons for thinking this.

First, he says, the good person needs friends to do well by (IX.9: 1169b13). Second, man is by nature social and it is in our nature to live with others (IX.9:1169b18, cf. *Pol.* I.2:1253a3). Third, with others we can be more continuously active (IX.9:1170a5). Fourth, a virtuous friend is needed as an opportunity for perception and reflection on oneself and on one's good and pleasant life (1170a13-b13, *EE* VII.12: 1244b20-1245a36). Finally, not completely distinct from the fourth idea, is the inherent good of shared activity *as* shared activity (IX.12: 1172a1-15, *EE* VII.12:1245b2-10).<sup>97</sup> Some of Aristotle's arguments on these points are simply tortuous, and I will not rehearse them. But the last three points, I believe, fit together into a recognizable general idea about our need for friends, and it is this idea that is worth considering.

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<sup>95</sup>Cf. *EE* VII.12: "For one might doubt whether, if a man be in all respects independent (*autarkes*), he will have a friend, if one seeks a friend from want and the good man is perfectly independent. If the possessor of excellence is happy, why should he need a friend?" (1244b2-3). (*Autarkes* is translated here as "independence," rather than "self-sufficiency," as in the *NE* passage cited in the text.)

As a condition on our final end, what I am calling the autonomy condition seems to be subsumed by Aristotle into "self-sufficiency" (*autarkes*), and has further bearing on self-sufficiency as a formal condition on our final end. However, autonomy would seem to be a sufficient but not necessary condition for self-sufficiency (construed as that which is lacking in nothing). If the good is wholly within our power, then having it would ensure that there was nothing further that could add to it, while the converse does not appear to hold. The good could be something to which nothing could added, without being wholly within our power (unless the thought is that such good *could* be improved upon by having it lie wholly within our power, in which case the autonomy condition would appear to be more basic than the self-sufficiency condition). I do not believe Aristotle has these conditions (nor the relation between them) adequately sorted out, but I will not belabor the point here.

<sup>96</sup>Hence, it is clear that for Aristotle virtue (excellence) cannot be sufficient for happiness, since friendship as a relation is not a moral or intellectual excellence, though being the kind of person a friend is may be one. This, I take it, is Aristotle's point in saying of friendship that it "is an excellence or implies excellence" (*NE* VIII.1:1155a4).

<sup>97</sup>*Magna Moralia* adds a further distinct argument: that loving another is itself a good, and indeed a better good than being loved (*MM* II.11:1210b5-7).

The general idea is that we are by nature creatures who do better in the company of our kind than by ourselves, and as a general claim this seems hard to dispute. The fourth and fifth points add a focus on distinctive aspects of what is possible in a social life (under certain conditions) but not a solitary life. These are the opportunity for activities which are good for us to engage in but which are possible *only* as shared activities, and the possibility of an activity (reflective development of self-knowledge) which, while perhaps barely possible in isolation, is better-performed through the sort of “mirror” the best kind of friendship affords.

Aristotle is not as clear as he might be as to why greater self-knowledge is possible through friendship, but his basic idea is intuitive enough. Our own natures can be somewhat revealed to us by the friends we choose; our friends can offer us perspective on our selves, our natures, and our actions, that we cannot achieve in isolation; through our intimate knowledge of our friends, we can arrive at insights about our shared human natures that enlighten us about ourselves; and so on. Friends also offer us an important line of resistance to self-deception. In *Magna Moralia* it is observed that “if a human being surveys himself, we censure him as stupid” (II.15: 1213a5). This is because we know we are blind to our own deficiencies:

we are not able to see what we are from ourselves (and that we cannot do so is plain from the way in which we blame others without being aware that we do the same things ourselves; and this is the effect of favour or passion, and there are many of us who are blinded by these things so that we judge not aright). (1213a5–20)<sup>98</sup>

Here I believe Aristotle to be right in the main, and I cannot improve on Cooper’s argument to this effect (which draws heavily on the *Magna Moralia* passage). He points out that in particular on Aristotle’s account of the human good — one which

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<sup>98</sup>Cf. *Pol.* III.9: “most people are bad judges in their own case” (1280a16).



turns on the excellence of one's intellectual and moral capacities —reflective self-knowledge is essential (Cooper 1977c, p. 297).<sup>99</sup>

In short, on Aristotle's view the intimacy and distinctive activities that are possible (at least in their highest forms) only through committed relationships are essential to the excellent performance of our human functions, and thus are necessary for the best kind of life. So the kind of relationship in which non-instrumental concern for another is possible is also one which we have reason — based on our goal of eudaimonia — to seek.

I will return to this line of thought in Chapter 5 and offer some further reasons for seeing non-instrumental concern as an essential element of the best kind of life, but before moving on to discuss Aristotle on respect, it is worth summarizing what he has given us so far. He has not only explained how non-instrumental concern is *compatible* with eudaimonism, but he has given us some plausible and intriguing explanations for our intuitions that such concern is essential to a good human life. In broad outline, I believe, Aristotle has met the objection as to non-instrumental concern.

### *Respect*

Does Aristotle have anything comparably useful to say about the ways we are or should be limited in our actions in virtue of their effects on others, irrespective of considerations of our interests? How can he consistently claim *both* that our eudaimonia is that for the sake of which we do all that we do, *and* that other persons and their interests are reason-giving for us in their own right? Recall that the challenge is not merely to show that we ought not (say) to harm others, but that the *reason* we ought not to do so is properly victim-focused.

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<sup>99</sup>Cooper also emphasizes the significance and value of shared activities: "Shared activities are especially valuable for any human being since they, more than purely private activities, enable one to be continuously and happily engaged in things" (Cooper 1977c, p. 308). This aspect of Aristotle's view of the human good is also brought out by Roberts (Roberts 1989) and Sherman (Sherman 1997).

There are three lines of thought in Aristotle that might meet this challenge — a roughly Kantian understanding of his view of reason (*nous*), his views on justice (*dikaiosune*), and his view of the noble or fine (*kalon*). I will consider these in turn.

### A Kantian Understanding of *Nous*

Our discussion of Aristotle’s account of friendship, and in particular the role played in it by the conception of ourselves as “most essentially” our thinking element, suggests a way of thinking about the reason-giving force of others which might vindicate respect for others. The strategy is roughly Kantian in structure, as I shall explain.

Recall that in his discussion of friendship in *NE* Aristotle focuses on our *nous* — our “most authoritative element” — as that with which we are “most properly identified” (IX.8:1168b32). We see both ourselves and others, he believes, in the first instance as loci of practical rationality, as beings with the capacity to make choices, develop plans, and pursue ends. If we are good this is the part of ourselves which we love most of all (IX.8:1169a2). Might we then argue that our appreciation for our own practical rationality can and should be extended to others, in a way which gives us reason to respect them?<sup>100</sup>

Consider, as a model for this argument, Kant’s famous argument for the Categorical Imperative in its Formula of Humanity. In the second section of the *Foundations*, Kant argues that rational beings such as ourselves must necessarily think of our own rationality as an “end in itself.” But further, he says,

every other rational being thinks of his existence by means of the same rational ground which holds also for myself; thus it is at the same time an objective principle from which, as

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<sup>100</sup>Charles Kahn claims that the *nous* in distinct individuals is one and the same thing. This is the way he explicates Aristotle’s view of friends as second selves: we have a common relationship to this “impersonal or superpersonal principle of reason” (Kahn 1981, pp. 35, 38). I don’t see anything in Aristotle that forces this extreme claim, nor is it necessary for the kind of argument I consider in the text.

a supreme practical ground, it must be possible to derive all laws of the will.<sup>101</sup>

His idea seems to be that when we consider our own rational wills, we discover them to be valuable in a way which imposes constraints on the ways we exercise them. Then we recognize that other persons, in virtue of *their* rationality, are also loci of precisely the same sort of value, and in virtue of that value, we are constrained with respect to our treatment of them in just the way that we are constrained with respect to our treatment of our own rationality. These constraints give rise to (or perhaps just amount to) the kinds of constraints which respect for others requires. The force of Kant's argument is that in seeing others as rational in the way we ourselves are, we perceive the value of their rationality and acquire reason to respect them, in a way that is not a function of any instrumental value they may bear for our interests or eudaimonia.<sup>102</sup>

Has Aristotle the materials for a comparable argument, based on our identification with and love for our *nous* as “most essentially” ourselves? Here's how such an argument might run along Kantian lines: we recognize the value to ourselves of our “thinking element” — indeed we find it constitutive of ourselves in a way that determines our good. So this capacity (and its actualization) is a source of value to us. Then we see that others have the same sort of capacity. In friends, indeed, (if my earlier reading of Aristotle is right) we value this feature of them so greatly that its realization and promotion becomes part of our own good. But even in the case of those for whom we do not develop this kind of concern, we nevertheless can accord them sufficient value to be objects of respect in the way we seek to vindicate. The fact that they have the kind of nature that is valuable in this way grounds their reason-giving force for us in the way that respect requires.

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<sup>101</sup>Beck trans. p. 47; Academie p. 429.

<sup>102</sup>This construal of Kant's argument follows Korsgaard 1986b and 1996a. The Kantian notion of respect it tries to justify involves *more* than the merely behavioral manifestation of respect that is at issue here, as noted in Chapter 1. But it plausibly *entails* those behavioral constraints, so is at least *sufficient* as a basis for (behavioral) respect, even if it is not necessary for it.

Attractive as this strategy might be, we can't make a Kantian out of Aristotle.<sup>103</sup> Aristotle is prevented from making the kind of argument Kant does in virtue of the formal properties of his conception of *value*. In particular, in Aristotle's view value is *agent-relative*, while the Kantian argument rehearsed above sees value (at least the value of rationality) as *agent-neutral*. It is this contrast between their respective views that allows Kant, but not Aristotle, to make the kind of argument for respect sketched above.<sup>104</sup>

The idea that value is agent-relative means that the reason-giving force of something valuable is relative to or indexed to some particular agent or agents, in virtue of some particular relationship they stand in with respect to the thing of value. The contrast is with something being generally reason-giving for moral or rational agents per se, in that particular relationships between agents and the thing of value do not contribute to the value it has.

This distinction is sometimes marked by replacing references to an unqualified property *good*, with the qualified property *good for*. Aristotle makes this point explicit

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<sup>103</sup>This is not to deny that there are deep similarities between the views, as Korsgaard (cf. Korsgaard 1996b) and others have argued. On the other hand, it is stretching things a bit to say, as Korsgaard does, that there is a "deep similarity in their general conception of what ethics is all about" (Korsgaard 1996b, p. 227).

<sup>104</sup>Does Kant consistently subscribe to an agent-neutral view of value? This is a difficult question to answer, and I can't settle it here. The point is that the argument Kant makes in explaining the Formula of Humanity works only if the rationality ("humanity") of others has agent-neutral value. The rationality in a human being is of value to any and all human beings, regardless of whether it is *their* rationality or not — that is why its value is agent-neutral. If the value of rationality were agent-relative, then that value would obtain in virtue of some special relationship an agent stands in relative to some particular instantiation of rationality (probably his own, just because it is *his* own). But that is precisely the move that Kant's conception of the Categorical Imperative is intended to head off. The rational acceptability of my maxim from the standpoint of all other agents binds me *just because* there is nothing special or reason-giving about *my* rational agency as opposed to theirs. So the value — the reason-giving force — of rationality must be agent-neutral for this argument to go through. This is consistent with Kant's opening words in the *Foundations*, where he rejects the idea that "uninterrupted prosperity" in the absence of a "pure and good will" could "give pleasure to a rational impartial observer" (9/393). He goes on to say that under the worst of conditions the good will would nevertheless "sparkle like a jewel in its own right, as something that had its full worth in itself" (10/394). This perspective — the agent-neutral one of the rational impartial observer — is never clearly abandoned.

It is more plausible to think that Kant acknowledges agent-relativity for at least some *conditional* values (viz. the value of anything other than a *good will*), and the *obligations* we get from the Categorical Imperative (e.g. the duty to perfect ourselves) seem agent-relative. However, Kant is not concerned with this distinction and he does not make his position on it obvious. What I take to be clear is (1) that he needs "humanity" to be of agent-neutral value for his argument to go through at p. 429; and (2) that *Aristotle* does not endorse an agent-neutral conception of the value of practical rationality (*nous*), without which his version of the argument cannot succeed. I thank Tom Christiano and David Schmidt for raising this issue.

in *De Anima*, where he argues that the difference between the true/false distinction and the good/bad distinction is that the former is “absolute” while the latter is “relative to someone” (III.7: 431b10-3). Ascriptions of “good” must be qualified by the subject (the “someone”) *for whom* it is good.<sup>105</sup>

Now, Aristotle’s account of value is an agent-relative one because *for each person* the ultimate source of reasons is his or her own eudaimonia. That is the upshot of Aristotle’s eudaimonism. You and I each have a different ultimate source of final reasons:<sup>106</sup> mine is my interest in having a good life, yours is your interest in having a good life. Your eudaimonia is not (at least in the first instance) reason-giving for me as it is for you, nor is mine reason-giving for you as it is for me. The value each of our good lives has is *relative* to the agent whose good life it is. This is what is at the core of the agent-relativity of eudaimonism.

In contrast, in *agent-neutral* conceptions, value is, in principle, equally reason-giving for all moral or rational agents.<sup>107</sup> Some have thought that the value Aristotle accords to eudaimonia is agent-neutral in this way. Richard Kraut, for example, rejects the view that Aristotle accords only agent-relative value to

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<sup>105</sup>It might be argued that Aristotle employs a clearly agent-neutral conception of the good when he speaks of the way “the nature of the universe contains the good or the highest good” (*Metaphysics* XII.10: 1075a12). But, as Stephen Menn argues, *this* sense of ‘good’ is *pros hen* predication — a sense which is predicable of nothing else, including the good achievable by humans and in human life. Aristotle is quite explicit in *Eudemian Ethics* I.8 that good has multiple senses (1217b24), that the sort of “good in things unchanging” has no bearing on practical matters (1218b5), and that “the object aimed at is best, and the cause of all that comes under it, and first of all goods. This then would be the good *per se*, the end of all human action” (1218b9-11). For purposes of ethics, and practical philosophy generally, the good is the human good, and it is that, I am arguing, that must be understood in agent-relative terms.

<sup>106</sup>By “final” reason, I mean it in the sense in which Aristotle uses it (*NE* I.7): that for the sake of which something is done is in that respect “final” (*teleion*). Cf. Richardson 1992.

<sup>107</sup>I say “in principle” because one might hold, for example, that one cannot have a reason to do something that one cannot do. In that event, something might be reason-giving for one agent, but not another, due to different limitations on what each could do. For example, if you can save someone’s life by giving them medical treatment, you would have reason to do so while I would not, because I don’t have that capability. One might therefore say that the health of the patient, as a goal or value, is reason-giving for you but not for me. My qualification is intended to abstract away from differences of that sort, such that the health of the patient would be thought to be a source of reasons for both of us, insofar as it is something we can advance or promote (including abstaining from impeding or detracting from it).

eudaimonia.<sup>108</sup> I quote him on this point at length, because his argument shows how important this issue is for grappling with Aristotle's views on concern and respect (though Kraut addresses only the issue of friendship here):

when we look carefully, what we find [Aristotle] saying is this: happiness [eudaimonia] is the ultimate end for the sake of which one should always act. That is quite different from the claim that *one's own* happiness is the ultimate end of one's actions. Aristotle's idea ... is that whether we act for our own sake, or for the sake of others, or both, happiness (our own or another's) is the good we are ultimately trying to attain. He never says, in Book I, that one's ultimate end should simply be one's own happiness, and that the happiness of others should be promoted only as a means to one's own. Such an instrumental attitude towards others would of course conflict with his idea that in the best relationships we seek the good of others for their sake. Aristotle's conception of friendship makes it clear that the happiness of certain others should, by itself, provide us with a reason for action. And so we should not read Book I in a way that conflicts with this. In saying that our ultimate end is and should be happiness, Aristotle must be taken to mean that ultimately we are and should be aiming at *someone's* happiness, whether our own or another's. (Kraut 1989, p. 145)

Kraut's argument is that if eudaimonia has only agent-relative value, that *entails* that the good of one's friends can be only instrumentally valuable; since Aristotle clearly rejects the consequent, we must take him to think that the value of eudaimonia is not agent-relative, but agent-neutral: my having a good life has the same reason-giving force for you as it does for me, and vice versa.<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>108</sup>We have already encountered Thomas Hurka's agent-neutral account of the value of human perfection (in Chapter 1). Hurka shares with Kraut an agent-neutral interpretation of Aristotle. He argues that, though Aristotle's "perfectionist value" is not wholly agent-neutral because it disregards those outside the polis, it nevertheless is "not just agent-relative" because of the value it places on the ends of the state (Hurka 1993, pp. 66, 197). However, Hurka does not show that the value of the polis cannot be understood in agent-relative terms, and in fact I believe that is the most natural way to understand it, though there is not space to argue for the point here.

<sup>109</sup>In a similar vein, McKerlie says that Aristotle is clearer that eudaimonia is our ultimate goal than he is whose eudaimonia we should aim at. He rejects the view that "Aristotle gives to each agent the single fundamental goal of making his or her own life realize *eudaimonia*," in favor of the claim that "we should also have as a fundamental aim that at least some other people realize *eudaimonia*" (McKerlie 1991, p. 85). (Note that this is not Kraut's conclusion: McKerlie accepts that it is special relationships with others which give their eudaimonia reason-giving force for us (cf. p. 99), as Kraut apparently does not.) McKerlie's argument is based largely on Aristotle's view of friendship in *NE IX*, which, if my discussion of those views is correct, is congruent with wholly agent-relative value in eudaimonia.

Two reasons justify rejection of Kraut's claim that Aristotle understands the value of eudaimonia as agent-neutral. First, we have seen that Aristotle's account of friendship (properly understood) shows that non-instrumental concern for others is consistent with an agent-relative conception of the value of eudaimonia — with seeing one's own life as the only ultimate source of reasons for action. If my account of Aristotle's view of friendship is correct, then the relationship of implication which sustains Kraut's argument is broken, and there is no reason to reject the agent-relativity of the value of eudaimonia.

But, second, Kraut also says that there is no reason from the textual evidence, at least in *NE* 1, to conclude that Aristotle has an agent-relative conception of the value of eudaimonia. On the contrary, I think the evidence is overwhelming throughout his ethical and political works that Aristotle, like Plato and Socrates before him, takes eudaimonia to be of agent-relative value. I take the agent-relative value of eudaimonia to undergird the structure of reasons found in Aristotle's ethical and political works so completely that it is a strain to read him otherwise. This is precisely why Aristotle is generally read as endorsing the agent-relative value of eudaimonia.<sup>110</sup>

But of course Kraut has a competing comprehensive interpretation of Aristotle, and on *this* interpretation it is no strain to read him as an agent-neutralist. I think the best reason to reject Kraut's reading is that we can attribute the crucial premises of an argument for the agent-relative value of eudaimonia to Aristotle. Though he never makes either the premises or the argument explicit (perhaps because this question was not a live issue for him), it is plausible to understand him as endorsing these premises and hence the conclusion that follows from them. Here is how the argument runs:

(1) *If the value of something is asymmetrical between agents, its value is agent-relative.* This is just what it means for value to be agent-relative.

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<sup>110</sup>Cf. Ackrill 1980, p. 21, Annas 1992, Cooper 1986, pp. 123-5, Hardie 1965 and 1968, Irwin 1988, pp. 366-7, and Ross 1924, p. 230 (cited in Kraut 1989, p. 145n).

(2) *There is an asymmetry between the relationships agents stand in to the lives of themselves and with the lives of others.* This asymmetry has two aspects. First, there is the purely subjective and experiential point that *my* life is the only life *I* will experience. I will undergo its pleasures and pains, successes and failures, in a direct way, unlike the pleasures and pains, successes and failures, of any other life.<sup>111</sup>

But second, on Aristotle's view, there is a metaphysical point that the life I lead *constitutes* me — identifies and makes me up — in a way unlike any other life. We (human agents) are beings of a certain kind — essentially rational creatures for whom our theoretical and practical cognitive capacities and activities constitute the kind of thing we are. As we saw earlier, Aristotle thinks that it is not merely the case that carrying off these activities well makes us good specimens of our kind. Instead, in our (special) case, the activity of our “intellectual part” goes to constitute the particular, individual creatures we are. It is what makes us, us. The point of all this is that *both* our identities *and* our good lie *essentially* in our rational activity.<sup>112</sup> In this respect too we stand in a different relation with our own life than we do with the life of anyone else.

(3) *The value of eudaimonia (a good life) depends on the relationship one stands in to the life which is good.* In other words, the value to you of eudaimonia — understood as a source of reasons for action — depends on whether the life in question is your own.

Partly, this is a claim about *value* which follows from the metaphysical identity claims in premise (2). In part, this also reflects Aristotle's insistence (*NE* I.8) that what is good is the first-person experience of *living* of the eudaimon life, rather than the

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<sup>111</sup>I take this to be connected with Aristotle's conviction that our final good must be something within our power: “the good we divine to be something of one's own and not easily taken from one” (*NE* I.5:1095b25; cf. *EE* I.5:1215a15f, quoted p. 15 above). His idea is that the final end — the source of our reasons for action — for each of us must somehow be thought to be up to each of us individually.

<sup>112</sup>Aristotle makes this claim in many ways and in many places; cf. *NE* IX.7: “we exist by virtue of activity (i.e. by living and acting), and that the handiwork *is* in a sense, the producer in activity” (1168a6-8). Cf. also *EE* VII.8: 1241a39, *Pol.* VII.3:1325a32 for a sampling of the ways he employs this idea.



third-person observation that *such a life is lived*.<sup>113</sup> But it is also, I take it, a motivational point.<sup>114</sup> Aristotle supposes (*NE* I.2) that it makes a great deal of difference to us to grasp that for the sake of which we do what we do. Because *my* life will be not merely affected by but *constituted* by the choices I make and the kind of person I become (and because that is the only life the experience of which will be *mine*), I am motivated in the case of *my* life as I am for no other life to make it a good one (to be eudaimon).

(4) *Therefore, agents stand in an asymmetrical relationship with the value of the eudaimonia of themselves and others.* It follows from (2) and (3) that my life is of value to me in a way no one else's is. Conversely, my life is valuable to me in a way it is to no one else. It constitutes me and determines my eudaimonia, hence gives me reason for action, in a way no other life does.

(5) *Therefore, the value of eudaimonia is agent-relative.* This follows from (1) and (4). Moreover, since on Aristotle's view eudaimonia is the only ultimate source of final reasons, the value of all other human goods — in particular the value of rationality in ourselves and others — must be agent-relative too.

Although the crucial premises (2) and (3) are controversial ones, and merit far more defense given modern concerns about agent-relativity, they nevertheless reflect commonsense intuitions about reasons and value which Aristotle does not call into question. In light of his acceptance of his acceptance of these premises, it is (*contra* Kraut and Hurka) right to ascribe to Aristotle the belief that human goods are agent-relative rather than agent-neutral.<sup>115</sup>

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<sup>113</sup>Thus Ackrill: eudaimonia is “doing well, not the result of doing well; a life, not the reward of life” (Ackrill 1980, p. 24).

<sup>114</sup>As noted in Chapter 1, the ancients (Aristotle included) do not clearly distinguish between this motivational point as a descriptive claim and the normative claim that we thus have *reasons* to act in line with *this* sort of motivational fact. Whether they are justified in the inference from the first to the second is an extremely interesting question which would take us far beyond this project.

<sup>115</sup>If I am right in my reading of Aristotle, he shares an intuition that guides some modern conceptions of well-being. The idea is that whatever role well-being is to play in moral theory, an adequate account of the value of well-being must have it that that value is *for* the person whose well-being it is; as L.W. Sumner puts it, “the prudential value of my life is its value *for me*” (Sumner 1996, p.37). Though he does not use this terminology, the thought is clearly that the value of well-being must be agent-relative.

This, then, is the point that renders the Kantian strategy unavailable to Aristotle. On Kant's account, the value of the good will and rational nature is agent-neutral. Kant does not make this point in these terms, but it is the agent-neutrality of this value which generates the argument for the Formula of Humanity. Kant moves from the fact that each agent values his own rational nature as an end in itself to the claim that regarding the rational nature of every agent as an end in itself is an "objective principle" which is categorically imperative for the human will (47/429). It is hard to see what could justify this move except the idea that the value accorded to rational nature in each of its instantiations is agent-neutral: it is equally a source of reasons for us whether the will in question is ours or not. This move will fail if the value in each case is thought to be agent-relative: no inference of the kind Kant needs here is available to support such an argument, because there is nothing about the fact that one agent A values some item X that entails that another agent must do likewise. Since this is the situation that confronts Aristotle's view of the value of the rational natures of human beings, the Kantian strategy is not available to him. The failure of this strategy does not by itself mean that Aristotle cannot account for our intuitions about respect for others, of course. It means merely that if we are going to find a grounding for those intuitions in Aristotle's ethical theory, we must look elsewhere.

### *Justice in Aristotle*

Aristotle has an account of justice in both his moral and political works, and initially it appears to respond to our concerns much more than, say, Plato's account in *Republic*. In his central discussion of the virtue of justice, in *NE* V, Aristotle tells us that "justice alone, of all the excellences, is thought to be another's good, because it is related to others; for it does what is advantageous to another, either a rule or a partner" (1130a3f).

This promises help with our investigation, because it sounds as though Aristotle might be responding to the same sorts of intuitions about respect for others we are.

The promising start turns out, however, to be merely a “general” account of justice. Aristotle moves right away (1130a16) to a concern with “particular” justice, which is defined as that in virtue of which one makes just distributions (1134a1). In the end, as I shall argue, this discussion fails to give us the rationale we seek.

For his account to succeed, it would need to solve two problems simultaneously. First, it must give an account of our intuitions about respect for persons, and in particular of our intuitions that *all* persons are deserving of this respect. Second, it needs to explain how respect is consistent with eudaimonism: it needs to show how such respect is consistent with seeking one’s own eudaimonia as the exclusive source of final reasons for action.

Aristotle’s view, it turns out, can meet one of these challenges, but not both. The view of particular justice he actually develops is plagued with a deep parochialism or non-universalism. The constraints of respect it identifies are imposed by conditions which only contingently attach to other persons, and consequently fail to attach to *all* other persons. Thus, to the extent we believe that respect is due others universally — that is, to all persons independent of any contingent facts about them — we will fail to find an adequate grounding of this intuition in Aristotle.<sup>116</sup> The problem is evident in his claim that “justice exists only between men whose mutual relations are governed by law” (*NE* V.6: 1134a29). The respect in which Aristotle believes others impose constraints on us is in the first instance a function of our political, legal, and contractual relationships, rather than anything applying to persons generally.

The trouble begins with his supposition that particular justice is chiefly concerned with distributive and rectificatory issues. Now this needn’t be an insuperable obstacle: our idea that the constraints of respect apply universally might be construed distributively — as one in which persons are owed the sort of treatment that respect

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<sup>116</sup>As Miller 1995 shows, Alasdair MacIntyre’s sweeping claim that the ancients had *no* expression correctly translated by our expression ‘a right’ is false. However, MacIntyre is explicitly concerned with “rights which are alleged to belong to human beings as such...supposed to attach equally to all individuals, whatever their sex, race, religion, talents or deserts” (MacIntyre 1984, pp. 68-9), and, as my discussion will reveal, he is certainly right that Aristotle’s view of justice does not sustain such a conception of rights. Perhaps we should say that Aristotle had a *concept* of rights, but that it is not like the *conceptions* which have come to dominate liberal thought, and for which we seek justification.

picks out in virtue of some property which all persons should be thought of as sharing in equally (the capacity to govern oneself by reason, perhaps). This way of thinking of respect as a matter for distributive justice might be fruitful (if not clearly motivated), but Aristotle does not take this approach.

Instead, his tack is to characterize distributive justice as a matter of seeing persons as *deserving* in certain ways. He says that “all men agree that what is just in distribution must be according to *merit* in some sense,” while they nevertheless disagree over what merit consists in (*NE* V.3: 1131a24, emphasis added). Distributive justice is thus a “species of the proportionate” (1131a29). Insofar as we are distributively just we apportion according to merit; depending on the case, what is to count as merit may vary.<sup>117</sup> For example, in distributing the benefits of economic cooperation, Aristotle says that

it would not be just that he who paid one mina should have the same share of a hundred minae, whether of the principal or of the profits, as he who paid the remaining ninety-nine. (*Pol* III.9:1280a29; cf. also *EE* VII.10:1242b12f)

Aristotle’s views about political authority are a special case of this view of desert. Aristotle believes that in constitutional government citizens should take turns ruling and being ruled, on the grounds that they are about equally suited to the tasks of political rule (*Pol.* I.12: 1259b4, III.12: 1283a9, III.16: 1287a13, VI.2: 1317b1, VII.14: 1332b25). Political authority is something which is to be *deserved*, and the basis upon which it is deserved is “political excellence” (III.12: 1282b16, III.9). Now Aristotle’s view on political excellence differs in two ways from Plato’s. First, “political excellence” is roughly equally distributed among the citizenry; there’s no “expert” such as is found in *Republic* or *Statesman* (II.2: 1261a38-b3, VII.14: 1332b25). Second, the aggregated wisdom of the citizenry does not compound the defects in individuals’ grasp of what is to be done, but offsets or overcomes it (III.11: 1281a43). So equal share of rule by equals is both just and efficient as a form of constitution.

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<sup>117</sup>As Bernard Williams observes, this entails that for Aristotle the notion of a fair distribution is prior to that of a fair or just person (Williams 1981, p. 90).

We might be tempted to think that Aristotle's views that citizens are equally entitled to rule suggests that there is something about them that deserves *respect* of the form we are interested in. But there are two problems with this inference. First, what is doing the work here is a desert-basis which, while perhaps roughly distributed among *citizens*, is explicitly *not* equally distributed among *all* persons, at least on Aristotle's view. Some persons — women, natural slaves, and barbarians — are naturally suited only to be ruled, not to rule (I.5: 1254a34). Others might not be *naturally* excluded, but are rendered unfit by the lives of labor they must lead in order for the polis to prosper (III.5: 1278a20). Into this category fall “mechanics and laborers” — those who provide the “necessary services” within the polis. Their kind of life, Aristotle says, is inimical to the leisure which is “necessary both for the development of excellence and the performance of political duties” (*Pol.* VII.9: 1329a1). Of course, we might think that Aristotle is simply making an *empirical* mistake here, which, if corrected, would show that *all* persons are equally capable of political excellence. I will return to this point below.

Even if we think this, however, there is a further problem. All Aristotle's view here establishes is a desert-basis for ruling and being ruled, not for forms of individual treatment. It is not clear how the kind of entitlement which is at work in formal political equality could carry over to informal relationships between individuals. The merit-basis for the proportional distribution of political authority is excellence of character (*Pol.* III.9: 1281a3-6), and our intuitions about respect do not hold respect to be due in virtue of virtue (so to speak).<sup>118</sup> This is a theory about political obligation, and the claims (some) citizens have on their state, rather than a theory about what individuals, qua individuals, have reason to do, and it is not based on any general account of persons which generates reasons for us to be constrained by them and their interests.

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<sup>118</sup>A danger of vacuous circularity exists here. If, as he says, justice is “not part of excellence but excellence entire” (*NE* V.1:1130a9), then just distribution will turn out to be distribution according to excellence, which is justice, viz. a disposition to distribute according to dispositions to distribute according to dispositions.... I don't say Aristotle is stuck with this vacuity, and neither do I wish to belabor it, only to mark that there is a danger of it.

Charles Young suggests a way around this problem. What we need to do, he says, is understand the attitude toward one's fellow-citizens that Aristotle's conception of political justice requires. Political justice, says Aristotle, is

found among men who share their life with a view to self-sufficiency, men who are free and either proportionately or arithmetically equal...(*NE* V.6:1134a26f)

Young's proposal is that there is an attitude toward others described here which arguably could be extended to fill out the demands of what we are referring to as respect. The point of Aristotle's view of political justice is that each of us is to see and govern ourselves as one among "free and equal members of a political community" (Young 1988, p. 245). If the virtue of justice is to see ourselves in this way, and regard others around us correspondingly, then we will act and choose justly, as

one who will distribute either between himself and another or between two others not so as to give more of what is desirable to himself and less to his neighbor (and conversely with what is harmful), but so as to give what is equal in accordance with proportion; and similarly in distributing between two other persons. (*NE* V.5: 1134a2f)

Arguably, adopting this perspective would result in general respect for the welfare and interests of others: if we are just we will refrain from those sorts of actions that are unjust and in violation of the constraints of respect.

However, this doesn't completely solve the problem with Aristotle's account. First, notice that Young has us driven by a conception of ourselves — and of the others falling under relations of justice with ourselves — as partners who are "sharing a life with a view to self-sufficiency." This implies that constraints of justice rest purely on the necessity of community for the good life, which has untoward consequences. If justice arises out of these civic or political associations for the sake of utility, we end up with a notion of respect which is contingent on those associations. In particular, it is not clear how such respect would include in its embrace those who are not capable of contributing to a shared life of self-sufficiency. We may be unsure what exactly are our obligations to those who cannot contribute to cooperative productive endeavors, but

the notion that they have no claim to respect as persons is quite foreign to our intuitions here. It is not clear that this kind of contractarian thought is what Young has in mind, but he does not present a clear alternative to it either. I will return to this point below.

Second, Young's proposal does not establish a connection between respect and eudaimonia. Even if it yielded an account of respect with the proper scope, we would lack an understanding of how to reconcile the reason-giving force of claims of respect with the idea that our eudaimonia is that for the sake of which we do all that we do. What reason do we have to take up the point of view of political justice generally? Why should we defer to others when we are in conditions of scarcity? If we understand the source of all reasons to be our own eudaimonia, then we need to see how our eudaimonia gives us reasons to adopt the attitude Young is describing. The objection here is not that no such account can be given; it's that such an account is just what we *need*, and the view Young ascribes to Aristotle makes no attempt to provide it. So Young's strategy actually fails on two counts.

A more promising strategy is to try to repair Aristotle's conception of justice with respect to what he thinks *disqualifies* persons from claims to self-governance and political participation. Notoriously, he bars women and "natural slaves" from such claims on the basis of their alleged inferior rational capacities.<sup>119</sup> Aristotle believes in the subordination of the "irrational" parts of a person to the "rational" parts (cf. *Pol.* I.5: 1254a34f), and women and slaves are excluded from citizenship on the grounds that they are by nature incapable of the proper degree of this subordination.<sup>120</sup> Aristotle appears to believe that the basis of *legal* rights is the capacity for this sort of rational self-governance, since it contributes to the end of the state (*Pol.* III.12: 1283a14) and is essential for "political excellence."

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<sup>119</sup> "The slave has no deliberative faculty at all; the woman has, but it is without authority..." (*Pol.* I.13: 1260a12).

<sup>120</sup>I ignore for the moment the complications introduced by resident aliens and other freemen who have the requisite natural capacity, but for other reasons (perhaps lack of education or development, or political expediency) are denied the rights of citizens.

That helps to explain Aristotle's insistence that justice is "between any man and any other who can share in a system of law or be a party to an agreement" (*NE* VIII.11: 1161b5). Perhaps he has in mind an idea recognizable from modern discussions of moral personality. Kant's moral theory, for example, draws heavily upon the "fact of reason": the idea that we experience ourselves as being capable of determining our wills based on reason rather than inclination (*CPR*, pp. 31, 48-9; cf. also *Foundations*, p. 65). Though Kant's conception of "inclination" does not line up tidily with Aristotle's notion of the "irrational" parts of the soul, the general idea that reason (under some conception) is to have authority over more recalcitrant aspects of our personality is readily recognizable as common to the two views.<sup>121</sup>

Maybe we can generate from this an argument for respect. If Aristotle's mistaken views about natural slaves and women are based on *empirical* errors about who possesses the features necessary for rights-claims, perhaps we can dispatch with the myopic limits he set on who is entitled to respect as a person. *As it turns out* everyone we would be inclined to recognize as a person — as someone who constrains us in the way respect denotes — satisfies the conditions which Aristotle erroneously believes are satisfied only by (some) upper-class Greek males. Perhaps in Aristotle's view of political rights we have what it takes to underwrite a kind of value for persons which demands respect, whether those persons are actually citizens of the same polis (and capable of mutual benefit via agreement) or not.

Aristotle's remarks in *Politics* VII.2 about constraints of justice which hold independent of political ties might encourage us in this interpretation. He maintains that conquest of other nations for the sake of "despotic" government is "irrational" (1324b23f); the only time conquest is justified, he says, is when "one party is, and the other is not, born to serve, in which case men have a right to command ... those who are intended to be subjects" (1324b36; cf. also *Pol.* I.7, I.8: 1356b21-25).<sup>122</sup> Similarly,

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<sup>121</sup>An even more recent example of this line of thought can be found in Judith Jarvis Thomson's argument that the Kantian notion of being subject to moral law is a necessary condition of having rights-claims against others (Thomson 1990, ch. 8).

<sup>122</sup>I thank Dan Russell for pointing out the implications of this passage.



he maintains that it is never right to hunt people for food or sacrifice (1324b40), apparently on the grounds that by nature we are not meant to be eaten (at least by other people) or sacrificed. The natural properties of natural slavery and natural mastery — as well as suitability for food or sacrifice — are reason-giving independent of political context, and if we chalk up Aristotle's misguided conclusions about natural slaves and women as an empirical mistake, maybe we have a basis for claims to justice outside the bounds of the polis.

These passages are tantalizing because they strongly suggest that Aristotle shares something like our intuitions that *all* persons are entitled to respect just in virtue of being persons. But Aristotle gives them no theoretical explication, and there is a problem with trying to integrate them into his comprehensive practical (moral and political) theory. Doing so expands the scope of Aristotle's conception of political justice at the cost of the connection between that conception and his eudaimonism. There is a reason why his conclusions about justice are parochial rather than universal, and the reason lies in his commitment to eudaimonism.

Aristotle clearly thinks there is something important about actual political ties in establishing justice. In both his ethical and his political works he claims that law is necessary for justice, and thus that justice is a function of relations between citizens (*NE* V.6: 1134a29, *Pol.* I.2: 1253a38). In *Eudemian Ethics* he argues that justice requires antecedent bonds of contract or commitment:

...generally all justice is in relation to a friend. For justice involves a number of individuals who are partners, and the friend is a partner either in family or in one's scheme of life. (*EE* VII.10:1242a19f)

This appears to be a repudiation of the idea that there is any general *capacity* to be bound by moral or rational constraints which gives rise to considerations of justice — indeed that there are any natural properties at all that are sufficient to give rise to claims of justice apart from political ties. Instead what seems to do the work is *de facto* considerations of *actual* commitment to others (in the family or the polis) which introduce constraints of justice.

Now, if we ask what in Aristotle's broader theory justifies ascribing such value to individuals *qua* rational, potential co-citizens or partners, it is hard to see that there is any answer other than the purely instrumental or contractarian one that we benefit by doing so. This line of thought can justify according such value only conditionally, that is, upon the actual possibility that the other person offers cooperative benefits. But one serious problem with contractarian theories is that they leave us considerably short of the universality of respect for others which intuitively we think we ought to have, so if this is Aristotle's view it will not be very helpful.<sup>123</sup>

However, it is not quite Aristotle's view. Fred Miller argues that the virtuous person comes to respect the rights of fellow-citizens because it is a necessary condition for a just constitution that citizens do so with each other, and living under a just constitution is a necessary condition for the best kind of life (Miller 1995, pp. 137-8). Still, this argument is not to be understood in purely contractarian terms: Aristotle rejects a purely contractarian view of the basis for political affiliation in claiming that the end of the state is not "mere life" but good life (*Pol.* III.9: 1280a29). The fact that for us as "political animals" good lives can only be found among communities of others affords the virtuous agent a reason both to choose political justice and not to defect from it even when he could do so, given Aristotle's conception of virtue and the place of virtue in the good life (cf. Miller 1995, p.131ff).<sup>124</sup> So the virtuous agent recognizes the aims and purposes of the state and the value of citizenship as necessary for a good human life.<sup>125</sup>

This line of argument is responsive to the need to give a eudaimonic justification for adhering to the constraints of respect, but it at best blunts, rather

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<sup>123</sup>Jean Hampton argues that "Hobbesian" contractarianism "gives us no reason to respect those with whom we have no need of cooperating, or those whom we are strong enough to dominate, such as old people, or the handicapped, or retarded children whom we do not want to rear, or people from other societies with whom we have no interest in trading. And I would argue that this shows that Hobbesian moral contractarianism fails in a very serious way to capture the nature of morality" (Hampton 1991, pp. 48-9; cf. also Hampton 1993 on Hobbesian contractarianism).

<sup>124</sup>This is, I think, the view which Young has in mind as well.

<sup>125</sup>As Miller puts it, "individuals require the structure of legal justice in order to realize their natural ends as excellent and reasonable beings" (Miller 1995, p. 135).

than eliminates, the force of the problem of the scope of Aristotelian justice. It offers no ready way to bring relations with *some* others under the umbrella of justice — those who are not part of one's own polis, hence do not share in one's political life and the constitutional basis for respect for fellow citizens, as well as those within the polis who do not or cannot contribute to the good life of the polis in the right way. As noted earlier, in Aristotle's view this includes not only natural slaves and women, but also "mechanics and laborers." So there are multiple groups of people which fail to fall under the conditions which, on Aristotle's view, entitle them to the full respect of others; this is short of the kind of universality we think attends to the constraints of respect.<sup>126</sup>

Moreover, it seems to be the wrong rationale even for those who *are* entitled to respect. For on this account it is in virtue of their membership in and contribution to the polis which is necessary for one's own good life that others are entitled to respect from us. That doesn't seem right as a basis for the bare sorts of constraints we feel obligated to as a matter of respect, as we have characterized it. I take our intuitions to be clear that whatever that basis is, it is not in virtue of properties (some) persons just happen to have, so there is no possibility of motivating and justifying them on the grounds Aristotle affords us.

Aristotle's conception of justice, while not wholly satisfactory, is nevertheless suggestive in an useful way. It fails to give us a rationale for respect for other persons — for *all* persons, irrespective of their actual or potential contribution to our political

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<sup>126</sup>Miller argues on the basis of the passages considered above that the capacity for "some limited forms of co-operation or community" provides the basis for constraints of justice outside the polis (Miller 1995, pp. 84-6). It is not clear how this should be thought to work. On the one hand, the most straightforward way to understand such an idea would be in terms of the instrumental disvalue of not cooperating with others with whom productive cooperation is possible. But that amounts to a sort of naked contractarian view of justice which Aristotle seems to eschew, and which is open to lethal criticism (see above). Another way to understand it, however, would be to understand Aristotle as pointing to a morally-significant form of *kinship* (*suggeneia*) with others (*EE* VII.10:1242a25). This might be construed as an anticipation of the Stoic doctrine of *oikeiosis*, which underwrites a related argument (cf. Chapter 4). Perhaps the idea is of a sort of "natural equality," which on Aristotle's view entitles others to "the same natural right and worth" (*Pol.* III.16: 1287a14). However, here it must be noted, first, that Aristotle does not say in just what respect persons as persons are naturally equal so as to ground the application of principles of justice in such cases (and in the *Politics* passage, he clearly supposes that not all persons *are* naturally equal), nor, second, how kinship and the constraints of justice that could be thought to come with it can be reason-giving in a way compatible with eudaimonism.

community — within a eudaimonist framework, because he fetters justice to political community in ways that are problematic both for the scope of respect and for its basis. However, he has pointed to our natures as essentially “political animals” as the place to look for a rationale for justice. We still need to know how such natures can give rise to universal respect for others, and how the reasons it gives us for respecting them can fit within a eudaimonist framework, but in my view it is an important start. More help is to be found in Aristotle’s conception of the *kalon* — the noble or fine.

### *The Kalon*

The doctrine of the *kalon* — roughly translated as the *fine* or the *noble* — is a distinctive feature of Aristotle’s moral theory. In pre-classical days, *kalon* was primarily associated with *beauty* as an aesthetic value, and there is something of an aesthetic element captured in translating it *fine*. Yet in Aristotle’s hands, it also denotes a clearly moral property, which is better captured with *noble*.<sup>127</sup> In short, as with much other Greek moral vocabulary, we don’t have a simple translation for it, and in light of the subtle use Aristotle makes of the *kalon*, it is perhaps just as well not to influence our understanding of it by gratuitously importing nuances or overtones by translating it, so I will merely transliterate the Greek term.

The doctrine of the *kalon* draws together and focuses Aristotle’s conception of virtue. The *kalon* is that for the sake of which, for example, the courageous person faces the things which are fearful (*NE* III.7:1115b13, III.8:1116b30, 1117a8); it is the “mark” at which the temperate person aims (III.11:1119b15); it is characteristic of liberality (IV.1: 1120a14) and magnificence (IV.2:1122b7); in fact in general “excellent actions are noble and done for the sake of the noble” (IV.1:1120a24, cf. also *EE* VIII.3:1248b35). So there is a deep connection between the *kalon* and virtue: it seems to be something like what the virtuous person seeks or aims at in acting virtuously.

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<sup>127</sup>Here, as in much of this section, I am greatly indebted to Rogers 1993.

Since it is that for the sake of which the virtuous person acts, it appears also to be *reason-giving* from the perspective of virtue.

Now, how can we make sense of this reason-giving force within Aristotle's overall eudaimonism? In his view of friendship he says that in complete friendships the friend loves his friend for his own sake, but that nevertheless this is compatible with finding the exclusive source of ultimate reasons in one's own eudaimonia. Is a similar reconciliation possible here?

A further question, more pressing than in the case of friendship, is this: even if choosing the *kalon* is strictly speaking compatible with eudaimonism, is there any reason it must be part of the best life? This matters because we think respect for others is not merely an option: we are constrained by others and their interests whether we choose to be or not. If Aristotle's doctrine of the *kalon* is to help us with our intuitions about respect, we thus need to know whether eudaimonia *requires* seeking the *kalon*, and if so, why?

These answers won't help, of course, unless we can make out a connection between Aristotle's doctrine of the *kalon* and our intuitions about respect. So let's begin by attempting to understand this connection.

### *Respect and the Kalon*

The simplest possible link between the *kalon* and respect would be that Aristotle was denoting with *kalon* what we denote by *respect*. Terence Irwin offers a view of the *kalon* which is not far off this view. Irwin finds evidence in the *Rhetoric* that what Aristotle intends the *kalon* to pick out are benefits to others (Irwin 1988b, p. 440; 1986, pp. 124-7). This allows us, Irwin says, to see in the *kalon* a "fairly recognizable concept of moral obligation" (1986, p. 130). Now, if this is not exactly our notion of respect for others, it is close. If Irwin is right, what Aristotle has in mind with his doctrine of the *kalon* is that the good of others has a reason-giving claim upon us, and that it is this feature of situations to which the virtuous agent, in acting for

the sake of the *kalon*, is responding. This is in the right ballpark for the sort of connection to respect we need.<sup>128</sup>

Unfortunately, this simple approach will not work. The first problem is that even if Aristotle *did* intend by *kalon* benefit to others, that may or may not reflect a fit with our interest in respect. For respect, as I have characterized it, is a matter of constraint, rather than promotion. The intuitions we are seeking to explain with an account of respect are, at least in the first instance, *limits* on what we may permissibly do to others in pursuit of our own interests. We might, of course, be morally required to benefit others or promote their welfare, but the intuitions we are intent on justifying for present purposes are those that say we can't *harm* them. Whether there is a sharp demarcation between "negative" duties not to harm and "positive" duties to benefit others is an issue in modern moral philosophy that distinguishes consequentialist from deontological or Kantian moral theories, and it is not clear how Irwin's reading of Aristotle lines would treat that distinction. But I will not press this point, both because the nature of the distinction itself is contentious, and because in any case what Aristotle has to say on the subject grossly underdetermines any conclusion we might try to draw about where he would come down on that distinction.

The real problem with Irwin's proposal is that he has not captured Aristotle's view. As Kelly Rogers observes, the basis for Irwin's view is the *Rhetoric*, and we have good reason to doubt that Aristotle is representing his own views in the passages crucial to Irwin's interpretation (Rogers 1993, p. 362ff). Rogers argues persuasively that the *kalon* is instead better understood from the ethical works as what is *fitting*

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<sup>128</sup>There is, however, a complicating nuance in Aristotle which Irwin is quick to point out: since the *kalon* is the object of reason (*EE* III.1:1229a3), and reason seeks the agent's own good (*NE* VI.5:1140a28), it would be a mistake to attribute to Aristotle the idea that the *kalon* requires self-sacrifice. Instead, what it picks out should be thought of as the *common good* (Irwin 1986, p. 132). Still, Irwin says, "the content of the moral virtues [and hence the *kalon*] is not determined by the agent's own good, and for this reason Aristotle is not an ethical egoist" (*ibid.*, p. 143).

However, he immediately adds that "the justification of the moral virtues ... does depend on appeal to the agent's own good." How this does not amount to at least "formal" egoism is not at all clear, in part because Irwin has not made sufficiently clear just what commitments he takes to be involved in "ethical egoism." This seems to me to be a muddle, but the immediate bearing of Aristotle's account of the *kalon* on the "egoism" of his overall view is not crucial in light of the other problems with Irwin's understanding of Aristotle's doctrine of the *kalon*, discussed in the text.

(*prepon*) and *praiseworthy* (*ibid.* pp. 356-60). So we cannot exploit the simple connection between the *kalon* and respect which Irwin proposes. We now face the problem of understanding the pertinent notion of “fittingness” and the basis for praiseworthiness; I will return to this point shortly.

Even if Irwin’s reading were accurate, interpreting *kalon* as he proposes would merely recapitulate, rather than solve, the problem we face in attempting to reconcile eudaimonism and respect. For we would still be confronted with the question of how we could have reason to benefit others — *all* others, independent of particular commitments of *philia* to them — when doing requires constraint on our pursuit of our own interests. That is the cardinal question at issue. For the moment, let us set aside worries about the connection between the *kalon* and respect and consider how it might be possible to choose the *kalon* both for its own sake *and* consistent with eudaimonism about reasons for action.

### The Kalon as a Source of Reasons

Irwin’s interpretation aside, we have the *kalon* as something like the object or “mark” of virtuous action, and since it is that for the sake of which the virtuous person acts virtuously, Aristotle clearly believes that there is something reason-giving about it. How are we to understand it to be reason-giving consistent with his agent-relative eudaimonism about reasons for action?

The first step is to understand how the *kalon* is represented in the thinking of the virtuous person. Bernard Williams argues that the *kalon* is the end or aim of virtuous action in only a *de re*, not a *de dicto*, sense (Williams 1995). That is, the aim of virtuous action is in fact *kalon*, though that need not be (and for the most part will not be) how the virtuous person represents it to himself.<sup>129</sup> Typically, what the agent sees in particular circumstances and finds reason-giving are *values* of various sorts, to be

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<sup>129</sup>Williams thinks this is not quite true of courageous and temperate actions (Williams 1995, p. 19; cf. Wiggins 1995 for similar doubts about courage), but I agree with Hursthouse that this idea extends even to these instances of virtue (Hursthouse 1995): the basis for action in such cases reveal what the virtuous person finds reason-giving, and this just is the *kalon* in a *de re* sense.

realized or preserved by action (or abstention). In this recognition of value, and acting to promote it, lies the *kalon* in virtuous action.<sup>130</sup> It is these values that the agent finds reason-giving, not (at least in the first instance) the fact that promoting them is *kalon*.

This allows us to explain the reason-giving force of the *kalon* in a way similar to the account of being able to love a friend for his own sake, consistent with holding one's own eudaimonia to be the sole source of reasons for action. As we saw in the case of acting for the sake of a friend, the agent is motivated by and has a proximate justification for what she does in terms of the good of her friend, while her ultimate justification for what she does is that it is a constituent part of her own good.

Now, exactly how the parallel story for the *kalon* is to work is not explained by Aristotle, but the essential idea must be that in seeking the *kalon*, the virtuous agent is seeking something which she (rightly) values as part of her own good. As Rogers observes, Aristotle “stresses that the noble is a ‘greater’, ‘more pleasant and more loveable’ good than the things which constitute our routine advantage” (Rogers 1996, p. 301). Part of becoming virtuous seems to be seeing that seeking and realizing that what is *kalon* is part of one's good,<sup>131</sup> and coming to love the *kalon* and be motivated by particular realizations of it because of this connection. Even this is perhaps not quite right, because what the virtuous agent values and responds to as reason-giving are particular features of situations which in fact (*de re*) share the property of being *kalon*. *De dicto* what the agent is motivated by is, for example, an occasion for generosity, while *de re* it is the *kalon* in that occasion which explains its value, and it is the fact that being the kind of person who responds in this way to occasions for generosity is the best kind of person to be, which ultimately justifies her in responding in this way.

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<sup>130</sup>Arthur Madigan says that “it is almost as though the *kalon* were a simple non-natural property, known by a kind of intuition” (Madigan 1991, p. 79). I think this is right, so long as we conceive of such properties as supervening on the kinds of value that are realized in particular — natural — conditions.

<sup>131</sup>As Rogers puts it: “The goods coalesce” (Rogers 1996, p. 301). Cf. *EE* VIII.3:1249a10, *MM* II.9.



Of course, we want an explanation just why such responses to the *kalon* are and must be a constituent part of one's good, and a vital feature of such an explanation will be a clearer conception of just what the *kalon* is. But the essential point in reconciling the reason-giving nature of the *kalon* with eudaimonia about reasons for action is that virtuous action is *motivated* in one way — by the values located in particular features of specific situations — while it is ultimately *justified* by its incorporation in the eudaimonia of the agent.

### The Necessity of Finding the Kalon *Reason-giving*

If this is right, the idea of seeking the *kalon* for its own sake is not *incompatible* with one's own eudaimonia as the exclusive source of reasons for action. But this is far from a full explanation of the role Aristotle thinks the *kalon* plays in the virtuous life (as well as lacking any clear connection with our notion of respect). Given its close connection with virtue, and the centrality of virtue in Aristotle's account of eudaimonia (*NE* I), Aristotle clearly believes that the best kind of life is not possible without responding to the *kalon* in the appropriate way. Why might this be?

A full answer here is difficult to give, in part because Aristotle is not explicit about it, and in part because drawing together a reply on his behalf involves much if not most of his ethical theory. But I think we can get the gist of it by attending to the property of the *kalon* that it is *fitting*.

What does the idea of *fitting* mean? What is supposed to be fitting, and to what is it fitted? I think the view Aristotle has in mind turns on his conception of human agents as beings of a certain kind — the kind which he brings out in *NE* I.7 in speaking of the function (*ergon*) we have. It is this function that characterizes what we are, and which fixes what is good for us and what excellence in human activity is. It is this function which gives determinate content to Aristotle's concept of the *mean*,<sup>132</sup> and it is to our nature so conceived that what is *kalon* is fitted.

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<sup>132</sup>Here I follow a view I take to be roughly shared by Rogers 1996 and Korsgaard 1986a.

When virtuous persons act virtuously, it is insofar as and because they see the action in question as being appropriate and suited as a response to human nature — in themselves and others —and consequently as valuable, and are motivated so to act thereby.<sup>133</sup> These are, indeed, two crucial aspects of virtue: first, that one perceive correctly the suitability of particular responses to our nature and our good, and second that one be motivated by that perception. To be so constituted is to be responsive to “right reason” (*orthos logos*) which, Aristotle tells us, is the standard for virtue (*NE* VI.1: 1138b23).<sup>134</sup>

This helps make it clear how being motivated to choose the *kalon* for its own sake is a necessary component of the best part of human life. Because the *kalon* is reflective of human nature and its distinctive excellence, to choose it *just is* to choose what is good for one as a human being.<sup>135</sup> This is why there is no conflict between choosing the *kalon* for its own sake and one’s own eudaimonia as the exclusive source of reasons for action — they converge in being determined by our nature.<sup>136</sup> Since our good lies in a particular form of rational agency (together with harmony between our rational, affective, and conative constitutions), typically the *kalon* will be what strengthens and reinforces that rational agency. The *kalon* is what makes us better as the kind of creature we are; this is where Aristotle’s eudaimonism and his perfectionism converge. Thus Korsgaard:

What the morally virtuous person finds pleasant, and so correctly judges to be good, is the kind of activity that keeps reason in control of the soul. What is morally good is what is good for the soul, and what is good for the soul is

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<sup>133</sup>Cf. Rogers: “The fully virtuous person transforms the ordinary objects of his pursuit into noble ends by pursuing them not independently of, but, rather, insofar as they are dictated by, the noble” (Rogers 1996, p. 299).

<sup>134</sup>Cf. Korsgaard 1986a, p. 271f.

<sup>135</sup>Cf. Rogers: “One simply cannot strive for noble ends without concomitantly striving to better one’s own condition. We may regard this as the corruption of morality; Aristotle regards it as its beauty” (1996, p. 302).

<sup>136</sup>Hence Madigan: “Whatever account of *kalon* one takes, the notion of *kalon* does not suppose, and if anything undermines, any clear line between the benefit of a given self or agent and the benefit of other selves or agents” (Madigan 1991, p. 85).

what realized its full potential — the potential for rational activity....[V]irtue, then, is the perfected state of the human soul. It is the state in which a human being can perceive correctly, and be motivated by, considerations of what is noble and good, and so can engage in rational activity. (Korsgaard 1986a, pp. 276–7).

So response to the noble — the *kalon* — is thus an essential part of the best kind of life, because it is an accurate response to human nature and its good.<sup>137</sup> Again it is important to emphasize that this is a *de re* description of the *kalon*: it characterizes how one is *justified* in seeking it. But part of Aristotle’s view is that in becoming virtuous one comes to seek what is *kalon* for its own sake. If I become virtuous I will learn, for example, to love learning: opportunities to learn will in their own right motivate me, and I may justify what I do in terms of the opportunity to learn, while it is at the same time true that I am ultimately justified in learning because in making me a better rational agent — a better creature of the kind I am — learning is conducive to my living the best kind of life I can.<sup>138</sup>

But now we are back to the problem we began with. It’s easy to see how appropriate response to *my own* human nature could be constitutive of my good; ignorance of the kind of creature I am will very likely lead to catastrophe, and amounts to simple imprudence. But why is it necessary for me to respond similarly to the nature of *other* humans — say, with acts of courage or generosity, or even *respect*? We have seen that the reason-giving force the eudaimonia of any given person has is relative to that person; how are we now supposed to understand that the human nature of others is something which should evoke from us “fitting” responses?<sup>139</sup>

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<sup>137</sup>John Cooper makes the same point for the role of *virtue* in Aristotle’s account: “On Aristotle’s theory of moral virtue, the virtues are essential properties of *humankind*: a person realizes more or less fully his human nature according as he possesses more or less fully those properties of character which count as moral excellences. And since individual persons are what they essentially are by being human beings, it can be said that a person (any person) realizes his own essential nature more fully the more completely and adequately he possesses the moral excellences” (Cooper 1977b, p. 635).

<sup>138</sup>It thus would not be a mistake to think of the *kalon* as a relatively “thin” concept: it gets its content from whatever is to be sought for its own sake, as a constituent part of the best kind of life. I thank Julia Annas for suggesting this way of thinking about what Aristotle intends here.

<sup>139</sup>A related question is how the *praiseworthy* aspect of the *kalon* can be thought to come into play.

Here, in my view, we run out of answers from Aristotle. I see only two hints as to what sort of response can be extracted from his account. The first is his idea that we are by nature “political animals,” (*NE* IX.9: 1169b18, *Pol.* I.2: 1253a3), and the second is his view as to the necessity of friendship. We have already seen, however, the limits of an appeal to our political nature as a basis for constraints for justice: they justify respect for others only conditionally and parochially, not universally. Likewise the reasons for friendship ground particular commitments of *philia*, not respect for persons generally and unconditionally. So neither of these lines of thought has the right scope for an adequate answer to our basic problem. If we are to have an account of *respect*, it cannot be through contingent bonds of commitment in either social/political or personal/friendship domains — it must be more general, and *not* conditional upon particular relations we may have with others.

### *Conclusion*

We are confronted, then, with the verdict that Aristotle has not provided a solution to the problem of reconciling respect for others with eudaimonism as a view about the ultimate reasons for action. The agent-relative nature of eudaimonism prevents him from employing a Kantian strategy of basing respect for others on their rationality; we cannot accept contingent and limiting conditions of political affiliation or friendship as a basis for respect; and his account of the *kalon* falls silent at just the crucial point of explaining how the interests of others become reason-giving within a eudaimonist framework.

So a further account will be required. However, Aristotle’s insights into our commitments to and relationships with others can help to ground such an account, because he has after all left us with some provocative suggestions. He has drawn our notice to the fact that we are by nature social and political beings who thrive in community, and this must surely be part of a eudaimonistic accounting for respect. Moreover, though it is left unexplicated at crucial points, the idea that respect for others might in an important way be understood as a sort of response which is *suited*

to its objects, viz. other persons *qua* persons, is one I will exploit. My argument will be that when we act out of respect for others — when we see them and their interests as reason-giving for us, irrespective of any particular interest we have taken in them — we treat them in a way which befits them, as beings who, like ourselves, have a full panoply of cognitive, affective, and conative capacities, and a conscious interior life which commands attention for its own sake. These are the building blocks of Aristotle's views of friendship and justice. But there is nothing with adequate scope or detail in his characterizations of these commitments, so developing such an account will be my job after considering what we can learn from the Stoics on these questions.

## 4. STOICS

*neither justice nor friendship can exist at all unless they are chosen for their own sakes.*  
(Cicero, *De Finibus* III.70)

A conspicuous feature of Stoic ethical thought was the rejection of the parochial nature of Aristotle's conception of justice. The Stoics were no happier than we are with the limits on respect for persons which his account imposes. The Stoics developed an account of impartial concern for others which included in its embrace all humanity, in this respect matching our own intuitions about the demand for respect for persons. This gives hope that Stoic ethical theory potentially could be of help in meeting the challenges to eudaimonism with which we are concerned.

The Stoics differ from Aristotle in paying comparatively little attention to *philia*—the form of commitment to others that emerges in relationships of friendships or love. However, this does not mean they have nothing to say about valuing others non-instrumentally. On the contrary, their conception of the eudaimon life involves a form of concern for others that is *both* universal in scope and non-instrumental in nature. Thus, the discussion of this chapter will consider Stoic theoretical resources for meeting worries about *both* concern and respect together. I shall conclude, however, that we cannot understand their account as succeeding in ways that advance our inquiry. It is not that they do not offer answers to our questions; rather, the suitability of their reply is limited for our purposes because their answers are embedded and justified in a systematic theory which few of us now accept. Nevertheless the Stoic view is worth considering both because they take more seriously than do the other eudaimonist theorists we have considered something like the problem of respect as we are concerned with it, and because the limits on the success of their reply will force us to consider what will count as a satisfactory response to the objections.

### *Methodology*

Understanding the arguments of the Stoics can be tricky. The Stoic system was holistic, unified, and deductively organized. Cicero's Stoic mouthpiece Cato says of the

system that, “if you alter a single letter, you shake the whole structure” (*De Finibus* III.74). Without a grasp of the complete system, therefore, we may miss the support components of it enjoy from other parts of the system. This raises difficulties for piecemeal assessment of Stoic ideas. Reasons of space preclude discussion here of important parts of the system, and thus it will always be open to the Stoic to plead in defense of the view that we have failed to consider some feature of it which addresses whatever difficulties we encounter. This is especially problematic for us since we will skirt the central and important matter of Stoic value theory. The distinctive hallmark of Stoic ethical theory, especially as against Aristotle, was that virtue is not only necessary but *sufficient* for happiness. The kinds of things Aristotle would count as “external goods” (e.g. health, happy marriage and children, etc.) are in the Stoic system literally of no value for happiness (they are “indifferents,” although the Stoics do allow that they have “selective value”). This doctrine is as important as it is complex and subtle, and an adequate exposition of it is simply beyond the scope of the present project.

But the Stoic view of what is required in our treatment of others is an implication of this value theory, and it raises a number of difficult questions about Stoic value theory. Many of the forms of attachment to particular other persons we normally think are good and appropriate fall into the category of “indifferents,” and as a result it is not clear what we have reason to do in our treatment of others. But we can get a grip on at least the outlines of the view by beginning with the Stoic account of the development of human nature, which turns on the distinctive Stoic doctrine of *oikeiosis*.

## Oikeiosis

*Oikeiosis* is another of those ancient Greek terms which is inevitably compromised in translation. Sometimes it is translated as “familiarization” or

“congeniality,” both of which have unhelpful connotations.<sup>140</sup> The basic idea is that it is a process by which we come to discover as our own — to *identify* with, in some sense — what we previously thought of as other.<sup>141</sup> This is very abstract; concrete examples of the two forms *oikeiosis* takes in Stoic theory may help make the idea clearer.

One form of *oikeiosis* is sometimes called *personal oikeiosis*, and Cicero provides a somewhat expansive account of it in *De Finibus*.<sup>142</sup> In humans, he says, as with all living creatures, the process of *oikeiosis* begins at birth: the infant “feels an attachment for itself, and an impulse to preserve itself and to feel affection for its own constitution and for those things which tend to preserve that constitution” (III.16). The form of self-preservation Cicero is thinking of here is a strong one: it requires one not merely to survive but, as Cicero puts it, to “preserve oneself in one’s natural constitution” (III.20).

As the child develops, its sense of self evolves. Children begin to take pleasure in their employment of reason (III.17), and part of this discovery is that they “naturally” are attracted to the truth and find “mental assent to what is false” to be “repugnant” (III.18). This is the first step in noticing that there is value for them in abiding by nature’s direction in exercising their rational capacities: “things in accordance with nature are ‘things to be taken’ for their own sake, and their opposites similarly ‘things to be rejected’” (III.20). This principle of choice becomes a habit, and finally develops into “choice fully rationalized and in harmony with nature” (III.20). At

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<sup>140</sup>Annas believes that “familiarization” is the best translation because it captures the connotations of *family* (1990, p. 94 n. 9). Long and Sedley translate *oikeiosis* as “appropriation” because they like the associations with property ownership (1987 (LS), p. 351). Perhaps the most intuitive access to *oikeiosis* is as an antonym to *allotriosis*, which *does* translate fairly readily, to “alienation” (Annas, *op. cit.*).

<sup>141</sup>Cf. Striker, who renders it “recognition and appreciation of something as belonging to one” (1996, p. 281).

<sup>142</sup>The language in what follows (as in much Stoic thought) is *descriptive*, but the ideas are *normative*. The Stoics describe what *should* occur unless things go wrong. They do, of course, recognize that things very often go wrong, but do not expend much effort in explaining *why* they go wrong, or the various sources of corruption of what they see as natural processes. As Gisela Striker observes, the “optimistic assumption” that *oikeiosis* is natural “makes it hard, if not impossible, for the Stoics to explain why most people in fact turn out to be bad rather than virtuous” (Striker 1996, p. 256), but I will leave this problem aside.



this point, an awakening occurs which signals a deep and abiding change in one's conception of oneself as a human being:

Man's first attraction is towards the things in accordance with nature; but as soon as he has understanding, or rather becomes capable of 'conception' ... and has discerned the order and so to speak the harmony that governs conduct, he thereupon esteems this harmony far more highly than all the things for which he originally felt an affection, and by exercise of intelligence and reason infers the conclusion that herein resides the Chief Good of man, the thing that is praiseworthy and desirable for its own sake... (III.21)

The process of personal *oikeiosis* results in a shift, that is, from an initial natural inclination to seek one's own self-preservation, to a conception of what is valuable as the exercise of one's rational capacities in a certain way, viz. in accordance with nature.<sup>143</sup> If things go right, at some point the transition from infancy to adulthood the child goes from choosing Twinkies over carrots, for example, to choosing carrots over Twinkies because carrots are good for her and Twinkies aren't, to recognizing that it is more important that she choose for *reasons* than that she get *either* the carrots *or* the Twinkies. Then she sees that her choice of carrots was for the best possible reason: it is what nature directs her to. She internalizes, as it were, the order and direction of nature, as a process of the development of her reasoning capacities. Seneca puts a somewhat different spin on the same point: "every animal first finds his own constitution congenial [to himself]; but a man's constitution is rational and so man finds not his animality but his rationality congenial [to himself]; for man is dear to himself in virtue of that part which makes him a man."<sup>144</sup> The point is that the instinctive drive for self-preservation which is common to all animals, takes the form in the maturing human child of an increased appreciation for and identification with her own rationality — with the exercise of her reason.

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<sup>143</sup>Michael Frede characterizes this as not a development but a radical *change* in the soul of the child (1986, pp. 108-9). This has implications for the appeal to personal *oikeiosis* as a foundation for the appeal to nature as a normative standard, which will be considered below.

<sup>144</sup>*Letters on Ethics* 121.14, in Inwood and Gerson 1997 (hereafter IG), passage II-107. What Inwood and Gerson are translating as 'congenial' here is the adjectival form of *oikeiosis*.

The other process of *oikeiosis* is *social oikeiosis*. In contrast to the personal variety, this process pertains to one's understanding of the various relationships one stands in with others. We begin by identifying closely with ourselves and our immediate family, seeing others as alien, but end up identifying closely with *all* other people in virtue of their membership in the "human race." Here too we come to internalize something we initially consider to be "other". Hierocles gives us a vivid description of the process of social *oikeiosis*:

In general each of us is as it were circumscribed by many circles, some smaller, others larger....The first and nearest circle is the one which a person has drawn around his own mind as around a centre; in this circle is included the body and things got for the body's sake. This circle is the smallest and all but touches its centre. Second, farther from the centre and enclosing the first one, is the one in which are placed parents, siblings, wife and children. Third is the one in which are uncles and aunts, grandfathers and grandmothers, siblings' children and also cousins. Next the circle including other relatives. And next the one including fellow-demesmen; then the one of fellow-tribesmen; then the one of fellow-citizens and then in the same way the circle of people from towns nearby and the circle of people of the same ethnic group. The furthest and largest, which includes all circles, is that of the whole human race.

When this has been considered, it is for the person striving for the proper use of each thing to draw the circles somehow toward the centre and to make efforts to move people from the including circles into the included ones. It is for someone with familial love to [treat] parents and siblings, [wife and children, like oneself; grandfathers, grandmothers, uncles and aunts like parents, siblings' children like one's own, cousins like siblings] and so by the same analogy treat older relatives, male and female, like grandfathers or uncles and aunts; those of one's own age like cousins, and the younger ones like cousins' children....there remains the point that we should treat people from the third circle similarly to those in the second, and our [further] relatives similarly to those from the third circle.... We would hit a reasonable

mark, if through our own initiative we reduce the distance of this relationship to each person.<sup>145</sup>

The metaphor is clear enough. We begin by seeing others at various distances from ourselves, presumably as thereby having weaker claims upon our energies and practical reasoning. Through the process of social *oikeiosis*, those distances are reduced, to the point where the “centre circle” includes all those of the “human race.” Accordingly the strength of the claims others have upon us gradually increases, to the point where we no longer distinguish the claims and interests of others from our own. This is not, as in the case of Aristotelian *philia*, a product of the *commitments* we make to others, but a recognition of a kind of natural bond we have with them.<sup>146</sup> As Cicero puts it, “The mere fact of their common humanity requires that one man should feel another man to be akin to him” (*De Finibus* III.63). This, clearly, is a robust sense of the community of humankind which corresponds to our own sense of the universal scope of respect for others. But precisely what does the recognition of this “kinship” entail? Whether the Stoics can defend their account of the outcome of the processes of *oikeiosis* is of little interest to us if we can’t connect that outcome with our interest in eudaimonic justifications of concern and respect. So I want now to suggest why the Stoics view that we should recognize our common membership in the human race as normatively significant responds to our questions about concern and respect.

### *The Normative Requirements of Oikeiosis*

The first of the important points in the Stoic view of human “kinship” is that non-instrumental concern is required, not merely for some others, but for *all* others. (How *much* concern—in particular whether varying *degrees* of concern can be warranted, is something we shall have to consider.) The second is that something like

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<sup>145</sup>Translation by Julia Annas in Annas 1993, p. 267. A similar account of concentric circles of varying “degrees of fellowship” appears in Cicero, *De Officiis* I.53-4, but without the notion that these circles should or do collapse.

<sup>146</sup>Annas emphasizes the aspect of commitment in *philia*, and observes that social *oikeiosis* obliterates the bounds that such commitments have (Annas 1992, pp. 140f). This is an important feature of Stoic thought and a large part of what clouds their view as to what treatment of others is actually required of us. I return to this point below.

the constraints involved in our modern conception of respect for persons pertain to our dealings with others. Together these suggest that what the Stoic theory requires of our treatment of others is “thick” enough to bear evaluation as a counterpart of, or proxy for, our intuitions about respect for persons.

On the first point, we can begin by observing that the model of social *oikeiosis* is parental love. Cicero attributes to the Stoics the view that “nature creates in parents an affection for their children; and parental affection is the source to which we trace the origin of the association of the human race in communities” (*De Finibus* III.62). As with other Stoic doctrines, the point here is a descriptive-cum-normative one: the Stoics would cite the concern parents have for their offspring in most species, and maintain that, in the normal case, human parents are no exception. Arguably it would be a stretch to suppose that in the first instance natural parental love should be regarded as merely instrumental, and the Stoics certainly thought of this love as a form of non-instrumental concern. Stobaeus records Arius Didymus as holding that children are loved for their own sake.<sup>147</sup> The doctrine of social *oikeiosis* is then supposed to explain how this “natural” concern gets extended: it is by seeing that what is valuable (on the Stoic view) in the ones we naturally love — their rationality — is common to all other humans. If this is right then Cicero’s observation supports the idea that our interest in others is not to be merely instrumental. But there is further evidence for this idea.

Cicero repudiates one merely instrumental explanation of the formation of human communities:

It is not true, as some claim, that men embarked upon communal life and fellowship in order to provide for life’s necessities just because we could not manage, without others, to provide ourselves with our natural requirements. (*De Officiis* I.158)

If it *were* true that we just need others for the benefits of cooperation, he says, then if we could sustain ourselves by our own efforts we would have no use for others.

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<sup>147</sup>Stobaeus II.120, 8-20 W., cited in Pembroke 1971, p. 124.

But that is not the case. Cicero claims that even if the necessities were provided by a “magic wand,” we would still “flee from loneliness,” seeking companionship (*ibid.*). Of course, this is not an argument against merely instrumental interest in others: seeking others merely to relieve loneliness is still a way of seeing others primarily or exclusively as instrumental.

The clearest passages in support of the notion that we are to have non-instrumental concern for others focus on the value of friends. Cicero is quite insistent that the instrumental view of friendship is rejected by the Stoics:

the school I am discussing emphatically rejects the view that we adopt or approve either justice or friendship for the sake of their utility....In fact the very existence of both justice and friendship will be impossible if they are not desired for their own sake. (*De Finibus* III.70)

Diogenes Laertius agrees that “one’s friend is worth choosing for his own sake” (VII.124, IG II-94).

These are straightforward repudiations of instrumentalism as regards our interests in our friends, but their implications are both helpful and troublesome.<sup>148</sup> It is helpful to think that social *oikeiosis* requires that we bring all humankind in (as it were) to the circle of concern we have for our friends. This yields a quite general account of non-instrumental concern for *all* others. But the view is troublesome, in that the demands of this process raise questions as to what, on the Stoic account, should be distinctive about commitments to particular others. In other words, this way of defending non-instrumental concern seems to come at the cost of an inability to recognize the distinctive claims that friendships and other particular relationships of *philia* carry with them. I will return to this point again; at present the point is to show that the Stoics do not believe our interest in others is filtered through consideration of how they may be useful to our lives or ends.

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<sup>148</sup>The troublesome implications I discuss are independent of other texts that seem to indicate equally clearly that the value of friends is *purely* instrumental! The Diogenes Laertius passage follows shortly after a claim that “a friend and the benefits derived from him are instrumental” (VII.96, IG II-94), and Stobaeus concurs (*Anthology* 5g, IG II-95). Glenn Lesses works out the tension in favor of non-instrumentalism (1993), but it is not crucial for present purposes exactly how their account of friendship is to be understood.

It is even more plausible to think that the Stoic view of our morally- and rationally-required relations with others roughly tracks our conception of the behavioral demands of respect for persons, and is possibly even more demanding than our modern notions. First and foremost, the Stoic abjures harming others. Diogenes Laertius says simply that the Stoics “harm neither others nor themselves” (VII.123, IG II-94). Cicero has clear Stoic inspiration when he writes that “a man who is obedient to nature cannot harm another man,” and that “we are certainly forbidden by the law of nature from acting violently against another person” (*De Officiis* III.25, 27).<sup>149</sup> The conception of *harm* at work here is not merely *bodily* harm, but also involves the deprivation of property. Cicero says that “for anyone to take from someone else for the sake of his own advantage is more contrary to nature than death or pain” (*ibid.*, II.24). Justice requires not merely that we not harm others but that one “treat common goods as common and private ones as one’s own” (*ibid.*, I.20). Virtue also requires just distributions (“assigning to each his own”) and faithfulness to agreements (*ibid.*, I.15).<sup>150</sup> And Stoic “impartial concern” (as I shall henceforth refer to it) is not limited to these negative responsibilities. Justice requires, says Cicero, that one serve the “common advantage” (*ibid.*, I.31). The very general demands on our treatment of all others on the Stoic view are thus quite substantial, and certainly incorporate our central intuitions about the requirements of respect.<sup>151</sup>

I have already alluded to the most significant aspect of Stoic impartial concern as an improvement on Aristotle: it fixes the problem of parochial *scope* of respect. On the Stoic account, social *oikeiosis* embraces all human beings within its reach, and this is what our intuitions tell us about the scope of respect for persons. Stoic impartial concern, like respect, extends to everyone in the human community, and is not based

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<sup>149</sup>Furthermore, we are obliged not merely not to harm others but to defend them from harm (*De Officiis* I.23).

<sup>150</sup>See also Stobaeus *Anthology* 2.5b1, 5b5 (I&G II-95) for the formulation of justice as *what is due*.

<sup>151</sup>Cf. Cooper: “We must understand developing rational agents as also seeing that they have reasons, given the benevolence of nature’s initial endowments, to care about other people as such and for their own sakes, to treat them fairly, and considerately, and humanely” (1996, p. 271).

upon or limited by contingent political associations or bounds of community.<sup>152</sup> As Annas puts it, on the Stoic account there is “no defensible stopping-place until we come to have concern for every human just as a human being” (Annas 1992, p. 140). Nor is it constrained by the *desert* of those with whom we are dealing. Justice, Cicero declares, “must be maintained even toward the lowliest” (*De Officiis* I.41); moreover, he says, “we must exercise a respectfulness towards men, both towards the best of them and also towards the rest” (*De Officiis* I.99). The impartial concern which, on the Stoic view, is the product of social *oikeiosis*, thus seems to have the right nature and scope for an account of respect for persons.

So far so good. It is a tenet of Stoic ethical theory that we ought to have and exercise a form of concern for all other people which answers well to our intuitions about both non-instrumental concern and respect for others. The next, and crucial, question is: how can this moral constraint be justified? In particular, how do the Stoics suppose it is compatible with eudaimonism as a theory of what we have reason to do?

### The Justification of Stoic Impartial Concern

We can begin by asking what sort of normative force underwrites social *oikeiosis*. The Hierocles passage begins by sounding like a description, but is clearly supposed to carry normative import.<sup>153</sup> What we need is a justification of the normative story, one which tells us not merely *that* we come to regard others as the account of social *oikeiosis* suggests (whether or not this account is descriptively plausible), but that we *ought* to do so—that we have *reason* to do so. What source can the reason-giving force of social *oikeiosis* have?

The story has to be that impartial concern connects is necessary somehow for eudaimonia. The Stoics are as committed to eudaimonia as the source of reasons for

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<sup>152</sup>Stoic theory is equally clear that *oikeiosis* does not extend beyond humanity, to animals. Cf. Cicero, *De Finibus* III.67.

<sup>153</sup>The comparable passage in Cicero is clearly descriptive: it purports to be a characterization of a “nature common to all animals” (*De Officiis* I.53-4).

action as are Plato and Aristotle.<sup>154</sup> So we need to determine just what that connection might be. How is impartial concern essential for eudaimonia?

One way to connect impartial concern and eudaimonia would be through the Stoic conception of *virtue*. Suppose we accept the claim (again, one the Stoics shared with Plato and Aristotle) that virtue is necessary for happiness. Now if we could show that virtue requires Stoic impartial concern, we would have the connection we need to make. But what conception of virtue can at once be thought necessary for eudaimonia *and* require Stoic impartial concern? How are we to flesh out such a conception of virtue?

The Stoics do so through the notion of *nature*. We have already seen how part of this story is supposed to go. Suppose that impartial concern is natural for us — that *not* to have such concern is in some way a violation of our nature. If “following nature” in this way is an essential element of virtue, and virtue is necessary for eudaimonia, then we have the requisite connection between impartial concern and eudaimonia. The Stoics in fact believe not just that following nature is essential for virtue, but that it is *identical with* virtue. Diogenes Laertius reports that the Stoics hold that “virtue is a disposition in agreement” with nature; and that it is “perfectly in accord with nature for a rational being, qua rational” (VII.89, 94). So nature requires that we have impartial concern, following nature is virtue, and virtue is necessary for eudaimonia. Ergo, impartial concern is necessary for eudaimonia.

Obviously this story doesn’t fly without more being said about “nature,” why it is a requirement of nature that we have impartial concern, and why “following nature” is virtue. So we need now to consider Stoic thoughts about nature.<sup>155</sup>

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<sup>154</sup>Cf. Stobaeus: the Stoics “say that being happy is the goal for the sake of which everything is done and that it is itself done for the sake of nothing else” (*Anthology* 2.6e, IG II-95).

<sup>155</sup>Troels Engberg-Pedersen argues for an alternative connection. On his view the descriptive account is inherently normative, because it is what a fully rational, right-reasoning human agent will do (1986). This approach merely relocates the problems we are grappling with without solving them. What it is about what the fully rational person sees that commands this response? The same issues I shall raise below arise in his account, albeit in somewhat different form.



## *Nature*

Nature plays several important roles in Stoic doctrine. It is, as I have suggested, the focus for the Stoic conception of eudaimonia. According to Cicero, the Stoics held that our final end is “to live in agreement and harmony with nature” (*De Finibus* III.26). More specifically, “the Chief Good consists in applying to the conduct of life a knowledge of the working of natural causes, choosing what is in accordance with nature and rejecting what is contrary to it” (*ibid.* III.31). Indeed, for the Stoics the expression ‘living according to nature’ is equivalent to the expression ‘living well,’ as well as to ‘virtue’ (Stobaeus 6e, IG II-95).

But there is an ambiguity in ‘nature’ as it features in the Stoic conception of our final end and in its other Stoic theoretical applications. One way to understand it is as *human nature* —the way we humans are as a species, in particular as *rational* animals. The other is as what may be referred to as *cosmic Nature* (following Long 1971, ‘Nature’ with a capital ‘N’). The roles played by these two forms of nature vary among Stoic accounts, and it is controversial among modern scholars whether, or to what extent, cosmic Nature must be invoked to defend Stoic ethical precepts.<sup>156</sup> But let us begin by considering just how far an argument for impartiality can go by considering only *human nature*.

The simplest construction of an argument for Stoic impartial concern from the Stoic conception of human nature may be something like this.<sup>157</sup> The upshot of the process of personal *oikeiosis* is that we come to identify ourselves with and value most our rationality. We see that the exercise of this rationality is our good as human beings, and the source of value for us. This recognition, however, is captured in the metaphor Hierocles gives us of the first stage of social *oikeiosis* — “the first and

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<sup>156</sup>Annas argues that early Stoics (Cleanthes excepted) generally did not make essential use of cosmic Nature for ethical theory, and that its role in later Stoic accounts marks a significant change in Stoic theory (Annas 1993, pp. 160ff), although this claim is somewhat moderated in Annas 1995b.

<sup>157</sup>Nothing like a version of this argument appears in the Stoic texts. The closest is Cicero’s argument that “the power of reason, unites one man to another” in *De Officiis* I.11-12. However, that argument is too weak to support *impartiality* as opposed, say, to a limited and partial altruism. So the argument presented here is all surmise and reconstruction. I thank Julia Annas for suggesting how it must go.

nearest circle is the one which a person has drawn around his own mind as around a centre...” We can redescribe the process of social *oikeiosis* from this perspective as one in which we come to recognize that this thing which is most truly valuable in ourselves is present in others as well.<sup>158</sup> In virtue of the rationality we can recognize in even the proverbial “furthest Mysian,” we come to affiliate or identify with others *as* bearers of rationality. Since this feature of ourselves is what we recognize as most distinctive and valuable, we recognize that the distinctions which obtain between individual people — even such commonsensically important features such as whether or not they are *family* or *friends* or *countrymen* — is overwhelmed by the magnitude and value of what we have in common with all other people in virtue of our rationality. The reasons we might offer for *partial* concern turn out not to be genuine reasons after all, and at that point we understand that partiality on *any* basis is simply arbitrary and unwarranted.<sup>159</sup> The only appropriate stopping-point for the kind of concern we begin by having only for ourselves is the whole human race.<sup>160</sup> As Annas puts it, “The fact that someone is a remote Mysian rather than my father, say, is not a rationally defensible difference from the moral point of view” (Annas 1992, p. 141). The fact that this man is my father is much less significant than the fact that he, like all other humans, is rational. But likewise the fact that the furthest Mysian is rational is more significant — significant *to me* as rational — than the fact that this man is my father. So there is no basis for partiality either to oneself or those who might fall, on Aristotle’s view, within the reach of commitments of *philia*. Impartial concern is due to *everyone*.

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<sup>158</sup>In terms we have used earlier, we ascribe *agent-neutral*, not *agent-relative*, value to rationality, whether it is in us or in others.

<sup>159</sup>Cf. Engberg-Pedersen: “Reason has not provided one with any more justification for acting on one’s own behalf than for acting on the behalf of any other individual” (1986, p. 175). Compare Annas: “Failure to be impartial is displayed just as much in favoring one’s spouse or friends as in favoring oneself” (Annas 1992, p. 145).

<sup>160</sup>Presumably, we stop there because animals do not have the requisite form of rationality and we don’t know of any other creatures that do. Rational aliens would, on the Stoic account, presumably be entitled to impartial concern.

The problem with this argument lies in what we are to make of the culmination of personal *oikeiosis*. Personal *oikeiosis* is a process by which a rational (human) creature progresses from a merely instinctual striving for what is needed to sustain it, to the employment of reason instrumentally to get what it needs, to the crucial step at which it recognizes that the reason it has been using has its own distinctive and superior value — a kind of value that is incommensurable with the value of the kinds of things it was using reason to get. There is an awakening to the distinctive value of reason that changes everything for the rational agent. In a famous passage, Cicero offers an analogy for this process:

as it often happens that a man who is introduced to another values this new friend more highly than he does the person who gave him the introduction, so in like manner it is by no means surprising that though we are first commended to wisdom by the primary natural instincts, afterwards wisdom itself becomes dearer to us than are the instincts from which we came to her. (*De Finibus* III.23)

How are we to understand what is grasped at the crucial point? Annas glosses the new insight as seeing that what matters is not getting or even seeking things per se but rather having and acting upon the right reasons for doing so: the upshot of the proper development of reason is seeing that “it is the reasons we act on that matter, not the consequences of acting on those reasons” (1993, p. 263).

This is plainly false as a bit of descriptive psychology or anthropology. At best it is true in only a limited set of cases. It is clear that most people do *not* come to regard themselves this way — to see as what is most crucial about them that they act upon the right sorts of reasons.<sup>161</sup> But the theory need not be construed as descriptive. As Annas observes, it is better understood as a *normative* account of how we *should* develop (1992, p. 43; 1993, p. 177).

But this generates a further problem. At the culmination of personal *oikeiosis*, we identify with our rationality, as the capacity to be moved by reasons. But what is to

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<sup>161</sup>Even if they do, they may, as Aristotle believed, ascribe only *agent-relative*, not agent-neutral, value to that feature of themselves.

count as a reason? We have, at this stage of the argument, a formal — rather than a substantive — account of ideal rationality. We see that we are (or are to be) creatures who act on reasons, but we do not yet know what counts as a reason for us.

The situation confronting the Stoic argument is parallel, in certain respects, to the problem Kant faces in the *Groundwork*, where he makes the conceptual move from a will which excludes as its principle of choice any “empirical inclination” and thus must be determined by the representation of law itself, to the Formula of Universal Law as a substantive representation of the requirements of duty (400ff). The Stoics need to connect the outcome of personal *oikeiosis* formally considered as a condition in which we recognize that the only thing of value is acting rationally, to a substantive conception of rationality in which the reason-giving force of human nature is recognized as supplying the content of the reasons which personal *oikeiosis* leads us to value.

No such connection is made in the extant Stoic texts. Further, there is a serious problem in attempting to make one by relying solely on a conception of human nature. For it is the nature of that nature (as it were) that we are trying to make out.<sup>162</sup> Suppose we grant that it is our nature (at least ideally) to act upon reasons, and that our eudaimonia lies in being reason-directed in this way. Now we ask what is reason-giving for us — that is, what reasons do we have to act upon? A dilemma confronts us.

One horn of the dilemma is to see our good as perfecting our human nature as it develops through personal *oikeiosis*. That is, we see our rational activity as the perfection of a process begun instinctively and non-reflectively in us (as in all animals) from gestation forward. The problem is that in fact these processes seem to highlight the partial attachments we form to other people. In particular, as the Stoics themselves emphasize, the bonds between parents and children are the paradigms of attachment to others, and that would suggest that the proper task of rationality is to

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<sup>162</sup>A point Annas recognizes: “For the ethical appeal to nature to have any real application... we need a theory of human nature that is less controversial than the practices and institutions in question” (1997, p. 189).

perfect the attachments of this sort that we have with family and other loved ones. This line of thought appears to lead to a rather Aristotelian account of *philia*, with its emphasis on relationships of commitment to particular others, rather than to Stoic impartiality. But it is supposed to substantiate the claim that partiality is unwarranted. Why should we be rationally required to transcend our natural inclinations to partiality, given that they are as developmentally and psychologically primary as they are—that they form as large a part as they do of nature’s plan for our early development?<sup>163</sup> This horn of the dilemma seems to be at a loss to resist an Aristotelian conclusion as to the culmination of personal *oikeiosis*.

The other horn of the dilemma is to focus on our rationality itself as the reason-giving feature that is common to human beings; on this tack this shared rationality is the all-important source of reasons for action. This preserves the defense of impartiality as against Aristotelian partiality, but at the risk of vacuous circularity. It is just the project of trying to understand what it *is* to be rational in the way humans should be that we are engaged in. This horn of the dilemma leads to the claim that what is important for us as rational beings is to act upon the recognition that it is important for us to act rationally, that is, as beings who recognize that it is important for us to act rationally. This is not very helpful as a substantive account of the reasons we will act upon as rational beings, as the culmination of personal *oikeiosis*. Since the substantive normative content of human nature is exhausted by our rational natures, we cannot flesh out what we, as rational beings, are to take as reasons without appealing to something beyond our human nature so conceived: either to a broader

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<sup>163</sup>Engberg-Pedersen makes the point this way:

The Stoics start developing their claim about the good from a consideration of what accords with a man’s nature and they maintain that viewpoint right through. But ‘natural’ goods [such as health, a good wife, intelligent and flourishing children, etc.] do accord with a man’s nature (and the Stoics admit that when they start their account of the good precisely from those goods), and these goods continue to be in accordance with a man’s nature no matter what more one will have to say later about man’s nature and things that accord with it. (1986, p. 145)

conception of our nature (e.g. as more than merely rational), which seems to invite Aristotelian lines of argument, or to some further source of content.<sup>164</sup>

One might think there is a third alternative here, one which appeals to the notion of *virtue* to give content to our reasons. Perhaps in becoming virtuous we come to grasp how we fit into our environment and what sort of interaction with it is natural, and the content of our reasons comes from this grasp.<sup>165</sup> Now the problem with this alternative is not so much that it must fail, but that if it succeeds it defers, rather than offers, an answer to the question we are asking. It says, in effect, that only from the perspective of virtue can we grasp the content of our reasons. Since we who are doing the inquiring are presumably not virtuous,<sup>166</sup> that means that we are not capable of grasping the answer. If that is right, then our inquiry will have dead-ended. But before we accept this pessimistic (for us) conclusion, we ought to see if there are other avenues for justifying Stoic impartial concern. If there are not, we shall have to consider what to make of a situation in which the Stoics claim to have answers to our questions, but that they are answers we can't see or understand.

Another possibility is to see our reason as responding to a cosmic or universal world of natural order. We get a substantive account of what we have reason to do,

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<sup>164</sup>Kant solves an analogous problem by claiming, famously, that the formal nature of our practical rationality *generates* the content of maxims of action through the Categorical Imperative. Of course, his view has long been criticized for being “empty formalism” on this score. But even if that is wrong, Kant can draw on the resources of his transcendental idealism and the idea that there is a noumenal self that gives shape to practical rationality. The Stoics — being materialists — do not have the same sort of resource to ground a substantive account of the content of reasons in the formal nature of our rationality.

<sup>165</sup>An alternative, and I believe less satisfactory, form of this alternative is this: we see our interests in e.g. health, food, and similar “indifferents” as reflecting their instrumental value in enabling us to be virtuous and consequently happy. This is not, I think a line the Stoics should take, for a number of reasons. One: the source of the value of such indifferents would be our eudaimonia, albeit only instrumentally and indirectly, and this the Stoics roundly reject. Two: such things can be used *either* for virtue or for vice, so their instrumentality is neutral between virtue and vice (this is Aristo’s point). Three: this move would seem to allow for a degree of commensurability between virtue and these indifferents which the Stoics reject. In this respect it is significant that the Stoics generally advert not to any instrumental value but instead to the “selective value” the preferred indifferents have in virtue of the fact that they are “according to nature” (cf. Diogenes Laertius VII.107, IG II-94). I thank Tom Christiano and Scott Labarge for discussion on this point.

<sup>166</sup>The Stoics are pretty clear that the virtuous are very few and far between. The demands of virtue are great, and “there is nothing in between virtue and vice” (D.L. VII.127), so most of us spend our lives in the latter category.

that is, by understanding how cosmic Nature intends things to go. This is the way many scholars have understood the Stoics as arguing,<sup>167</sup> so we should not give up before exploring it.

### *Cosmic Nature*

John Cooper argues that we *must* grasp the Stoic conception of cosmic Nature to get a complete grasp of the Stoic conception of the requirements of rationality and morality:

we need especially to ask how and why it should be thought 'natural' ... to adopt the very peculiar and certainly quite counterintuitive policy of regarding everything else besides fully rational and virtuous action as having no value except what I have called 'pursuit' or 'avoidance' value. I will argue that one cannot even begin to understand the reasons for this unless one takes into account, in conceiving the nature we are to live in agreement with, what Chrysippus says about the relation that holds between our natures as human beings and the single nature of the whole world. (Cooper 1996, p. 271)<sup>168</sup>

Cooper suggests that we should see human nature as a part of and in concord with universal or cosmic Nature — nature, that is, understood as everything we know. This connection emerges very clearly in Diogenes Laertius, who attributes to Chrysippus the view that this connection is essential:

Again, "to live according to nature" is equivalent to living according to the experience of events which occur by nature, as Chrysippus says....For our natures are parts of the nature of the universe. Therefore, the goal becomes "to live consistently with nature," i.e. according to one's own nature and that of the universe, doing nothing which is forbidden by the common law, which is right reason, penetrating all things, being the same as Zeus who is the leader of the administration of things. And this itself is the virtue of the happy man and a smooth flow of life, whenever all things are done according to the harmony of the daimon in each of us

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<sup>167</sup>Among modern scholars, Cooper, Engberg-Pedersen, Irwin, Long, and Striker all endorse variants on this way of understanding Stoic ethical argument.

<sup>168</sup>Cf. Long 1996 for a similarly strong way of understanding Stoic ethical theory.

with the will of the administrator of the universe.  
(VII.87-8, IG II-94)<sup>169</sup>

There are enough identity and equivalence claims here to fund a small deductive system, but we need to focus only on the notion that living according to nature is living according to the nature of the universe. This claim is interesting for the Stoics, because they held that the nature of the universe is *rational*:

in the final analysis the only thing which is perfect is that which is perfect in accordance with universal nature; and universal nature is rational. (Seneca, *Letters on Ethics* 124.14, IG II-110)

Zeus, the administrator of the universe, embodies cosmic Nature and imposes a rational design, a *telos*, on the universe in which we live and act. Moreover, this design is not only rational but *benevolent*. It seeks and promotes our good:

that which benefits in accordance with rational judgment is superior to that which does not benefit in this way; but nothing is superior to god; and benefiting in accordance with rational judgment is nothing but attending to man; therefore god cares for and attends to man. (Clement, *The teacher* 1.87.83.2, LS 60I)

If we grant both the rationality and the benevolence of the design of cosmic Nature, then, can we get an account of what we have reason to do as rational agents? The Stoics say that we should seek a “smooth flow of life in accordance with nature,”<sup>170</sup> but what does that tell us?

Maybe the nature of cosmic Nature (as it were) gives us a pointer as to what is pertinent about human nature in discovering reasons for action. Cosmic Nature is behind our human nature, and it is both rational and beneficent, and maybe that gives

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<sup>169</sup>He goes on to say: “By nature, in consistency with which we must live, Chrysippus understands both the common and, specifically, the human nature. Cleanthes includes not only the common nature, with which one must be consistent, and not the individual.” The explicit identification of “human nature” here appears to give credence to Annas’ position; however, the concern of this passage seems to be more whether our individual natures or our (shared) human natures are important, rather than whether it is human nature or cosmic Nature that matters. But the dispute between Annas and the more common view is hashed out extensively in Annas 1993 and 1995b, and Cooper 1995 and 1996; I have nothing to add to it, and it is not crucial for the questions I am asking here, so I will say no more about it.

<sup>170</sup>Cf. Cooper: “nature is a benevolent, *reasoning* agent ... Nature is something *to be* followed for that reason” (Cooper 1996, p. 272).



us reason to accord special value to the rationality that is part of our human nature. What is important —what we should act on —is the possibility of recognizing and subscribing to the cosmic order.

The idea would be, once again, that personal *oikeiosis* leads us to the point where we realize that the *only* thing that is really good for us is acting upon reasons. When we look at what reasons we really have, we recognize that ultimately it is the rational and benevolent plan of the cosmos that is the ultimate source of reasons, as Striker puts it that “the only thing that really deserves to be called good is the order and harmony of the universe” (1996, p. 268).<sup>171</sup> Stoic impartial concern for others might on this account be vindicated as part of this appreciation for cosmic Nature. We realize that we are part of its grand order, and likewise that our fellow human beings are too. Thus Cicero:

we derive from nature herself the impulse to love those to whom we have given birth. From this impulse is developed the sense of mutual attraction which unites human beings as such; this also is bestowed by nature. The mere fact of their common humanity requires that one man should feel another man to be akin to him....It follows that we are by nature fitted to form unions, societies, and states. (*De Finibus* III.63)

Cicero is not concerned here to fend off worries that Nature may have intended for us to have partial concern for others; his thought is clearly that it is part of the order of Nature that human beings develop a concern for other humans merely in virtue of their humanity. Cosmic Nature has no rational grounds for preferring one of us to another, or for partiality to one person’s projects or desires over another’s. Consequently, there are no rational grounds for *us* to prefer ourselves to others, or to accord special importance to our own projects or desires. When we find our place in the cosmic order, our recognition of that place undermines any partial preferences we

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<sup>171</sup>Cf. Long: “Nature stands to man as a moral law commanding him to live by rational principles, viz. those principles of thought and action which Nature, a perfect being, prescribes to itself and all rational beings (1971, p. 101).”

might have, and we are driven to an impartial recognition of the value of each other person as a rational part of the rational cosmic whole.<sup>172</sup>

Apparently the idea that cosmic Nature is rational must bear an enormous amount of weight. But even if we grant that Nature *is* rational, we need to understand what that comes to. In us, rationality consists in our capacity to act on reasons, though to understand what that comes to we also need to know what sorts of considerations *are* reasons for us. Don't we have the same problem recapitulated for cosmic Nature? How are we supposed to know what counts as a reason for Nature and what doesn't? And until we grasp that, how can we get the substantive practical conclusion the Stoics are arguing for here?<sup>173</sup>

There is a further source of worry here. Whether we focus on human nature or on cosmic Nature to get content for our reasons, the implication is that our partial concern for others must be superseded by impartial concern. The very nature of partial concern itself has also been transformed, because our understanding of the interests of ourselves and our loved ones must also be transformed. Only our virtue *really* matters; every other aspect of us — our health, our projects, even our continued existence — is of only “selective” value. It is something we should seek only insofar as it is in the order of cosmic Nature to tolerate or sustain; if Nature removes it, we have no cause for complaint, because we have sustained no loss. If we are rational, then, we will regard others in precisely this light. Here is how Cooper makes the point:

the Stoics want us to do more than accept [things such as the loss of one's child to a horrible death from cancer at age 15] as inevitable *losses*....We are to think of them as no losses at all; we are not just to accept but to welcome them, and welcome that not just, I take it, as what the universe needed, but as what we as part of that universe needed too. (1996, p. 274).

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<sup>172</sup>Cf. Cooper: this view of Nature supports “the famous Stoic insistence that we have duties of justice and humanity to all human beings merely as such: observation of nature gives us many bases, they think, for supposing that we were ‘made’ for that sort of thing” (Cooper 1996, p. 272).

<sup>173</sup>A related worry is Long's: “How is a man to know whether his reason meets [the condition of consistency with Nature]? As far as I can see, the Stoics gave no satisfactory answer to this question.” (Long 1971, p. 102).

Striker, too, is troubled by the Stoic account of the happy human life because it requires disturbing attitudes towards others and their welfare. “It is disconcerting,” she says, “to be told that the wise person will indeed love her friends, if they are virtuous — but not to the extent of being distressed if one of them dies, or longing for them when they are absent, or being pleased upon seeing them again” (*ibid.*, p. 275). Stoic doctrine, in short, “makes us indifferent to things we ought to appreciate” (p. 278).

Is this really an advance in the direction of a more substantive and acceptable conception of what we have reason to do? Our project is to explore whether an account that adopts eudaimonia as the exclusive source of reasons for action can accommodate certain intuitions about how others ought to be treated. These include the notion that at least some others (friends, family, loved ones) are entitled to be treated as though their welfare, interests, and projects are reason-giving for us independently of their contribution to our own welfare. Furthermore, we are obligated not to harm others, to keep our promises to them, and to render aid to them even if not doing so advances our own interests. But the Stoics have redefined what *is* the interests of these others in such a way that our original intuitions are to be jettisoned. I am not to desire my daughter’s health, for example, or believe that it matters (to me or to her), but instead to seek it only so long as the universe “needs it,” and if and when it goes, to reject the idea that anyone has suffered any loss at all.

The Stoic will reply that our intuitions here are defective, that they are based on a false notion of value which accords value to something other than virtue. In general, however, they characterize their view as consistent with our intuitions.<sup>174</sup> And we have already been warned that the structure of Stoic theory is holistic; maybe we should not be surprised that we are not persuaded by tearing at just a piece of it. Moreover, the Stoics have a natural explanation as to why we just aren’t getting it. We who are doing the doubting are not virtuous by Stoic standards. Our doubts about

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<sup>174</sup>This feature of Stoicism is emphasized by Annas (cf. 1992, pp. 163f). Plutarch attributes to Chrysippus the view that Stoic value theory is “most in harmony with life and connects best with the innate preconceptions” (*On Stoic Self-Contradictions* 1041e, LS 60B).

these matters are the effects of our benighted vicious condition, whereas with the wisdom of virtue the Stoic sage can see the answers to our questions. Why should the Stoics have to give answers that are persuasive to the ignorant?

Ought we to be satisfied with such a reply? I will conclude my assessment of the Stoics by taking up this question. Doing so forces us to confront the question what would count as a successful reply to the objections we are considering.

### *Conditions of Success*

We saw in Chapter 2 that the best account Plato can give of something like respect turns on knowing and having one's soul ordered by knowledge of the Good. Since we lack that knowledge, that limited the help he could provide for our enquiry. Now we find the Stoics making a similar claim, and with even more force. Because we are not virtuous, we do not understand the way that following Nature gives us reason to respect others, to be impartially concerned with *all* other humans merely *as* humans, as virtue requires us to do. Should we count these conditional replies — *if* we had the requisite insight or knowledge, *then* we could see how our worries are to be met — as adequate or satisfying? After all, it does seem unfair to ask for a reply to our questions and then insist that the terms in which Plato or the Stoics respond are out of bounds. This is just what Thrasymachus does to Socrates to begin *Republic*:

Give an answer yourself, and tell us what you say the just is. And don't tell me that it's the right, the beneficial, the profitable, the gainful, or the advantageous, but tell me clearly and exactly what you mean; for I won't accept such nonsense from you. (336cd)

It's hard not to feel the force of Socrates' complaint in response:

You knew very well that if you ask someone how much twelve is, and, as you ask, you warn him by saying, "Don't tell me, man, that twelve is twice six, or three times four, or six times two or four times three, for I won't accept such nonsense," then you'll see clearly, I think, that no one could answer a question framed like that.... am I not to give any of the answers you mention, not even if twelve happens to

be one of those things? I'm amazed. Do you want me to say something other than the truth? (337ab)

Is asking Plato to give us something beyond knowledge of the Good, or the Stoics to say more than that virtue yields an understanding of how Nature leads us to impartial concern, like asking for something other than the truth?

I don't believe it is. True, that we want more explanation does not demonstrate that the replies of Plato or the Stoics are incomplete, let alone incoherent or false. But they don't answer to our concerns. They don't tell us what we want to know; they tell us we're asking the wrong questions. Does that put us in the same straits as Thrasymachus? It does so only if we demand a response that addresses as narrow a range of interests as those he recognizes. The injustice of Thrasymachus' demands on Socrates stems, in large part, from the narrowness of the premises he will accept in support of a reply. But the range of premises we will accept are considerably broader than these, though we do exclude premises that will be plausible only to the Stoic sage or to someone with antecedent knowledge of the Good. We are more in the position of Glaucon and Adeimantus — of being willing to grant a wide range of premises about what people can have reason to do, and wanting to see that concern and respect are among these.<sup>175</sup>

From that perspective, we do not have to see the Stoics as wrong to see them as, in the end, unresponsive. Our project grants the validity of the objections from concern and respect (and of the intuitions behind them) to see if a eudaimonist account can meet them. Instead of answering the objections, the Stoics reject them as the product of a kind of confused thinking. This means that the Stoic variety of eudaimonism will not help us to do so, even if we chalk up the deep intuitive implausibility of parts of their theory to our not having grasped that theory in full. We need a different strategy to meet our worries about concern and respect. In chapters 5 and 6 I sketch just such a strategy.

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<sup>175</sup>David Schmitz makes precisely these points in his 1995 book (cf. pp. 118-9, 256-8), and I owe to him the analogy between our problematic and that of Glaucon and Adeimantus.

## 5. EMPATHIC IDENTIFICATION

*There is no general doctrine which is not capable of eating out our morality if unchecked by the deep-seated habit of direct fellow-feeling with individual fellow-men.*

— George Eliot, *Middlemarch*

Our review of ancient ethical theories has discovered that they fail to give completely satisfying accounts of how respect for others can be accounted for on eudaimonist grounds. Moreover, though Aristotle has given an account of how non-instrumental concern for others can be reconciled with eudaimonism, that account is hardly complete. In this chapter and the next I offer my own view of how a eudaimonist virtue ethics can explain these intuitively-important features of our relationships with others, by showing that they are essential components of the best kind of human life — the life that each of us has reason to seek.

My account turns on a feature of human moral psychology which I take to be of the first importance, which I will refer to as *empathic identification*. Empathy<sup>176</sup> is a significant element in other ethical theories: it is at work at various points in Aristotle, and it is prominent in the accounts of David Hume and Adam Smith.<sup>177</sup> The account I shall give differs from these in important ways, as I shall note in my discussion. The most important difference is an emphasis on the *normative* aspect of empathy. This is a concern which is absent from Hume's and Smith's descriptive and explanatory psychological projects. I will sketch my conception of empathic identification and explain how it functions as a medium for the interpersonal transmission of reasons for action. Then I will argue that we have reason, grounded in our own eudaimonia, to cultivate the capacity and disposition to identify empathically with others. Then, in Chapter 6, I will argue that our intuitions regarding respect for persons can be vindicated by my account, and that it can fill in some of the missing elements in Aristotle's account of non-instrumental concern.

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<sup>176</sup>I have in mind no sharp distinction between empathy and *sympathy*, but see note 35. There are numerous forms of empathy; here I will be interested only in the form which arises from "role-taking" or *simulation*, as I discuss below.

<sup>177</sup>As well as Arthur Schopenhauer and, in contemporary work, Martin Hoffman.

### *The Psychological Backdrop of Empathic Identification*

We human beings are reflective and imaginative creatures. By ‘reflective’ I mean that we have the capacity to think about and act in response to the world, to our thoughts about the world, and even to our thoughts about our thoughts. We can take our own mental states as objects of thought, and that is a distinctive feature of human cognition.

Not only can we take our thoughts as objects of thought, but we can think about and act upon representations of things that aren’t there. We can *imagine* things to be in a certain way that they aren’t, or imagine that we are in situations we aren’t, and we can set our practical reasoning capacities to work on these imagined inputs. This, too, is a feature of the way we think and function that distinguishes us from lower animals.

Together, these two properties of our mental equipment have important ramifications for how we negotiate our ways through the world, and even more striking ramifications for how we negotiate our ways with each other. They allow for and make important our capacity for *empathic identification* with other people. It is the way this capacity for empathic identification contributes to our good as humans, I will argue, that explains how concern and respect for others are essential components of a *eudaimon* life, and thus how a eudaimonistic virtue ethics can account for the intuitions we seek to explain.

#### Empathic Identification Defined

The “standpoint of empathic identification” is a way of thinking about situations or states of affairs as framed in a certain way, with certain features of a situation made salient by considering it as from a particular perspective — from the perspective of the person with whom we are identifying. We see things as they look from the other’s standpoint. Taking up the standpoint of empathic identification need not necessarily involve any conscious or deliberate decision to do so, although it may. For

the most part, I think that taking up this standpoint is natural and unremarkable: most people who function normally with others do it all the time, entirely unselfconsciously, just as they employ other techniques in the vast arsenal of human cognitive capacities entirely unselfconsciously.

On my view there are two aspects to taking up the standpoint of empathic identification. First, we imaginatively “project” ourselves into the condition or situation of another person —what I will refer to as *simulating* them.<sup>178</sup> By simulating we can “see” or experience the world as others do. We can make judgments informed by the situations of others by doing so, and we can experience affective responses to the conditions that others are in.<sup>179</sup> We can also gain insight into ourselves, our actions, plans, and situations, by *seeing ourselves* from the perspective from which they see us.<sup>180</sup> This is, I believe, an extremely important component of our capacity for social interaction.

But more is required for empathic identification as I employ the notion. It is not enough that we merely experience the world and ourselves (imaginatively) as others do. We also must do so in a way which opens us to discovering reasons for action from such perspectives, in a way that corresponds to the reasons of those with whom we are identifying. On my account, what allows for the “transmission” of reasons from one person to another in the requisite way is the emotional components of the respective experiences, and in particular the emotional responses generated through empathic

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<sup>178</sup>This is a significant departure from Hume, for whom sympathy is the result of an *inference* from the causes or effects of a passion of another to the nature of that passion. Cf. *Treatise* III.III.I, p. 576. My account here concurs with Smith, for whom what I am referring to as *simulation* plays an important role. Sympathy “arises from bringing your case home to myself, from putting myself in your situation, and thence conceiving what I should feel in the like circumstances” (Smith 1790/1976, p. 317). Like Hume and Smith, my primary interest is in the way we empathize with other *persons*, though I believe empathy with animals is also possible, and may shed light on how we ought to treat them.

<sup>179</sup>Cf. Ian Ravenscroft, who defines *empathy* as “the capacity to bring about in ourselves another’s affective states without actually placing ourselves in their situation” (Ravenscroft 1998).

<sup>180</sup>In *Middlemarch* Dorothea experiences this seeing of herself from the perspective of others (in this case that of her husband Casaubon) very graphically: “her conviction that he had been asking about the possible arrest of all his work, and that the answer must have wrung his heart, could not be long without rising beside the image of him, like a shadowy monitor looking at her anger with sad remonstrance” (ch. XLII). This passage and others from *Middlemarch* are insightfully discussed in Hampton 1997.



identification.<sup>181</sup> In other words, our empathic emotions, like our emotions generally, can be *reason-bearing*.<sup>182</sup> This idea requires some unpacking.

### *Emotions and Reasons*

A general account of how what we perceive and experience leads to reasons for action would be quite complex; what I offer here is merely a sketch of what I take such an account to be. Moreover, a cautionary comment is needed right up front: our everyday use of the notion of ‘reasons’ is ambiguous, and reflects somewhat conflicting attitudes about it. On the one hand, there is a sense of ‘reason’ in which it is a perfectly objective fact whether or not I have a reason to do something, and my thoughts or beliefs about the matter are of no relevance whatsoever. On this sense, I can be mistaken in believing I have a reason to do something. If I think a glass of gasoline is vodka, I may think I have a reason to drink it, but I will be mistaken. This is the sense in which the ancients thought of reasons, and it is one I think we sometimes employ still.

Sometimes, however, we take ‘reasons’ to be things we have merely by thinking we have them, so that our subjective states determine what reasons we have. In this sense, my belief that the liquid was vodka gives me a reason to drink it. In this sense I wasn’t mistaken about having a reason, though I was mistaken in the belief that gave rise to my reason. It seems right to cite a *reason* to explain my doing what I did (since what I did was perfectly rational and intelligible), rather than to cite a mistake, or to give the wordy explanation for my action that I thought I had a reason when in fact I did not.

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<sup>181</sup>Ravenscroft believes that it is possible to simulate others while taking “off-line” the processes which give rise to affective responses to the simulated mental states (Ravenscroft, *op. cit.*). I think in general it is not possible to separate the affective responses from simulations as he supposes: affective processing plays a crucial role in the *evaluative* component of thought, so non-affective simulation is likely to be severely constrained.

<sup>182</sup>I thank Chris Griffin for this locution. The reasons emotions bear are not merely *motives*, which are the focus of the Hume and Smith accounts. Motivation is only one aspect of reasons; sometimes we have no reason to do what we are motivated to do, or are not motivated to do what we have reason to do. I discuss these matters below.

I take it that this ambiguity in our employment of the notion of ‘reason’ tracks distinct roles that that notion plays in our discourse. Sometimes we use reasons to explain what people do, or to specify what motivated them to do what they did. In these cases the subjective sense seems appropriate. Other times, we are thinking of what *justifies* us in doing what we do, and in these cases the objective sense seems more appropriate. I do not think anything important hangs on usage, because I think anything that can be said using one sense can be said (perhaps more wordily) using the other.<sup>183</sup> But in general when I use the word ‘reason’ I shall mean it in the objective sense. Eudaimonism is a view about what reasons we in fact (objectively) have, not necessarily what reasons we take ourselves to have, and since what I am attempting to give is a eudaimonistic account, in the main the reasons that are at issue are reasons in the objective sense. But at times I will be discussing motives and explanations, and in these cases the subjective sense is more natural. I will, however, try to be clear about my departures from the objective sense of ‘reason.’

Let’s begin with a simple example (borrowed from Thomas Nagel, who in turn borrowed it from Hume) to illustrate how emotions bear reasons. If I have a gouty toe, and you inadvertently set the leg of your chair down on it, I will feel pain. That pain alerts me to a reason to act, specifically to get my toe out from under your chair. I do not of course *reason* from my pain to a decision to move my foot; the processes which connect my pain and what I do in such a case are considerably more compact than that. But that my pain bears a *reason* emerges in two ways. First, if you asked me to *explain* why I howled, jumped up, and thereby knocked you off your chair, I would do so by adverting to the sharp pain I was experiencing in my foot. That experience has *explanatory* power (I have identified what *motivated* me to act), and that, as observed above, is one characteristic of reasons: they explain why people do much of what they do. Second (though in this case perhaps not distinct from my explanation), I might *justify* what I did by reference to my experience of pain. My doing what I did is

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<sup>183</sup>For an argument that what I am calling the “subjective” sense of ‘reason’ is the primary one, see Schmidt, unpublished.

something which I endorse and which I expect you (once you are in possession of the facts) to endorse. My pain registers a kind of damage being done to my foot, and that damage justifies my jumping up and in the process knocking you off your seat. It would not, however, justify my going on a rampage, seizing a baseball bat and smashing everything in sight (though it might *explain* why I did so). The justificatory role of reasons is tied up with the rational endorsement of what we do, and on a eudaimonist account the basis for endorsement is a contribution to one's eudaimonia. On my account the pain is alerting me to a connection between what is happening about me and to me in ways that are pertinent to my welfare and to my eudaimonia. That is how I discover reasons through it, and through other affective states.

But *how* do emotion and other affective processes (pleasure and pain, perhaps some aspects of desire) contribute to our rational capacities to detect and evaluate reasons? A preliminary point regards the way I am conceiving of emotions and affective states or processes. Here I am not, in the first instance, referring to our *experiences* of emotion — of the phenomenal nature, for example, of being in pain, or being angry. Instead, I am referring to the neurophysiological and anatomic processes which underlie these experiences. They may result in quite salient phenomenology (your chair on my gouty toe is one of these), or they may not. The physiological processes which seem to underlie the phenomena are exceedingly complex and only dimly understood.<sup>184</sup> They appear to involve distinct parts of the brain (including the amygdala, the hypothalamus, and parts of the prefrontal cortex) as well as other bodily systems (the autonomic nervous system, the endocrine and various motor systems). But emotions thus understood need not be consciously experienced. The point is that whether we are conscious of them or not, these systems and their operations can be the physical bearers of what we, as rational creatures, understand as reasons.<sup>185</sup>

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<sup>184</sup>See Damasio 1994 for a good non-technical summary of the rough state of what we know about these processes.

<sup>185</sup>I shall not speculate on *how* reasons and their physical bases are connected. My project is ambitious enough as it is!

Now, the starting point for eudaimonism is that all reasons are grounded in our interest in eudaimonia, in having a good life. My basic claim, then, is that emotions are connected in a vital way with this interest. This connection takes two forms. One is a *constitutive* connection: an emotional life of a certain kind is a significant constituent of the best kind of life. But what is important here is an *epistemic* connection: our emotions *signal* where our interests lie, and how our circumstances and conditions bear on our welfare.

The epistemic role of emotions is one that has emerged from the recent (and burgeoning) empirical and philosophical research on the psychology and physiology of emotion. There is much dispute over details, but in general there is agreement that in some way emotions reflect *evaluations* of our conditions. At its simplest, the idea is that emotions carry aversive or attractive values which cue us and prepare us physically and cognitively for dealing with our environment in an effective way.<sup>186</sup>

Of course, this idea requires some defense in the context of a eudaimonist conception of reason and value, since simple survival is not the basis for reason or value as it might be for lower species with similar affective equipment. However, an important part of the story of eudaimonist virtue ethics is the idea seen first in Plato, then explicitly in Aristotle, that our emotions and desires can be shaped and trained so that the values they reflect conform to our rational judgment. The virtuous person's emotions have been trained so that their aversive and attractive cues track genuine value — what we have reason to seek as congruent with our eudaimonia. They can do so both at a very simple level (e.g. responses of pain to violations of our bodily health

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<sup>186</sup>The literature which supports this generalization is massive. An early and stark form of the view is sketched in Zajonc 1980. Jenifer Robinson discusses the startle reflex as a typical example of this role of emotion in Robinson 1990, and Antonio Damasio gives a thorough and detailed (though still very speculative) account in Damasio 1994.

Here, as in so many other cases, Aristotle was there first. He defines passions or emotions as feelings which are “attended by pain or pleasure” (*Rhet.* II.I, *NE* III.5); pleasure in turn registers the “unimpeded activity of our natural state” (*NE* VII.12, 13).

or integrity) and at much more complex levels (e.g. responses of anger to denigration by others).<sup>187</sup>

Here we can help ourselves to a distinctive aspect of Aristotle's thought — that affect and rationality are mutually reliant in a way that is best explained by the idea that our affective responses embody the values that we accord objects or states of affairs. The structure of that interrelationship has been cogently described by N.H.J. Dent (Dent 1984). Dent's idea is that we begin (developmentally, as well as theoretically) with a hodge-podge of desires (sense-desires and "passional" desires) which for eudaimonia require the imposition of the kind of principled structure that practical reason supplies. Virtue is, in part, the discipline of desires to agree with deliberative decision as to what is valuable.<sup>188</sup> The upshot of desire so trained is this:

by our practically rational judgment and determination we endeavor to give to our life that shape and direction we think it best it should possess, one which it would not, save by chance, assume if we simply acted as and when we were prompted to do by our aroused desires. However, ... the endeavor to give our lives this shape and direction is not an endeavor which proceeds entirely separately from, nor necessarily in opposition to, the purposes which engage us out of our sense- and passional desires. It is an endeavor which can be, in good part, carried through the motivation that such desires provide; they can come to embody and enact our deliberately adopted concerns precisely because we have so ordered them that they direct us to what is appropriate, in the appropriate way, with the appropriate degree of concern, and so on. (Dent 1984, p. 193)

It is important to note that Dent is describing a *virtuous* psychological state. Passional desires may not reliably point to one's good; it is precisely characteristic of vice that in it one's valuations (including those embedded in affective responses) are skewed so that they do *not* reflect one's genuine good. In the normal case emotion is an efficient

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<sup>187</sup>On this account both the identification and the recognition of value essentially involve both emotion and cognition. In particular, I mean to block *both* the Humean notion that reason cannot redirect and shape the values to which our emotions respond (cf. *Treatise* III.II.V), and the idea that value judgments are "cognitive" in any sense that is exclusive of any central role for affect. I think the right picture is that both aspects of ratiocinative activity are involved "all the way down."

<sup>188</sup>On Dent's account this is actually true only of passional desires. The story as to the relationship between sense-desires and practical rationality is more complex, but the details are not important here.

and highly reliable indicator of the values it has been trained to reflect, so without the right education and habituation, it will reliably reflect a mistaken structure of values.<sup>189</sup> That is why my claim is the qualified one that affect is *potentially* a reliable indicator to one's good, hence to reasons to act.

In the ideal case, anyway, emotion plays an important role in signaling to us how our real interests are affected by what is going on around us. Sometimes, what it signals may be available to conscious awareness, other times it may not. (Our capacity to "feel" what is right may very often outstrip our capacity to analyze explicitly what is right about it.) But once the emotions are trained to track one's real welfare (eudaimonia), emotional reactions are reliable signals of reasons to act, and we can be justified in acting on them. Emotion is an important indicator of what we have reason to do, and sometimes it is the only register of what there is reason to do available to our mechanisms of practical reasoning.

That, in outline, is the general story of emotions and reasons which underpins my account. In empathy further steps are involved. Our emotions bear reasons to act because they can be trained to be reliable trackers of our eudaimonia. But the emotions that arise through empathy are, as I shall explain, tracking the welfare of *others*. My view is that empathy, in particular the affective components or concomitants of empathy, serves as a medium for the transmission of reasons from one person to another. So an account is due for the idea that the affective components of empathic identification can afford us reasons to act in the same way that our "native" emotional responses do.

In empathic identification, what we do first is empathize: we simulate others by imaginatively projecting ourselves into their conditions. Some care is required in specifying in detail just how we do this, but I take the intuitive idea to be simple enough.<sup>190</sup> Roughly speaking, we use our imaginations to generate pretend "inputs"

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<sup>189</sup>An Aristotelian instance of the slogan, "Garbage in, garbage out."

<sup>190</sup>For a discussion of differences between ways of conceiving of the simulation process, see Gordon 1995b.

into our practical reasoning and related cognitive systems. But we don't act on the "outputs" of these systems as we normally would; instead we take the systems and their outputs "off-line" and read off of them states or outputs which we attribute to the person we are simulating.

What is important for my purposes is that imagined inputs generate affective responses just as perceptual or other veridical inputs do.<sup>191</sup> This means that when we empathize with another person, it is possible for us to feel much the same affective response to the situation that they do.<sup>192</sup> Given the reason-bearing nature of our emotions, then, it is possible for us to take from our empathic identification reasons for acting that are similar to those of the target of our empathy. In this way empathic identification is a medium for the transmission of reasons.

This, once again, is a greatly simplified account, and more is needed to flesh it out. A first point is that we must take the reason-giving force of others' experiences to *be* reason-giving in roughly the way they do. Thus, if I set the chair down on *your* sore foot, from my empathic identification with you in your pain, I discover a reason to go get some ice and a towel for your foot, in a way that is similar to *your* reason to seek ice and a towel for your foot. This qualification is to block a way of misunderstanding what empathic identification might allow. Suppose a person were "bent" so as to get sadistic pleasure from causing other people pain.<sup>193</sup> One might think, then, that it would be to the advantage of such a person to cultivate their capacities of empathic identification so as to get *really good* at determining just what will cause others the most pain, and thus generate for themselves the most pleasure. This, on my account, would not be empathic identification, but a perversion of it, because the normal

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<sup>191</sup>The literature here is scattered but ample. For an example, see Taylor and Schneider 1989.

<sup>192</sup>The same is also true of *fictional* characters. Good representational art (literature, film, perhaps other media) creates such characters in the *expectation* that we will empathize with them, and I take the value of such art in part to rest on that possibility. The nature and value of empathic engagement with fictional characters is, I think, a fascinating issue, but one I cannot take up in more detail here.

<sup>193</sup>Thinking about these sorts of pathologies as ways of being "bent" is due to C.S. Lewis.

reason-giving *valence* of the experiences of others would be inverted.<sup>194</sup> Here the notion of valence picks out, as it does in chemistry and psychology, both the polarity (the positivity or negativity) and the amplitude of a response to an experience. On my view, it is empathic identification with the reason-giving force of others' experiences *as they experience them* which is both a crucial component of the eudaimon life, and which explains concern and respect for others.

I have broached the notion of the valence of reasons here because it picks out what is pathological about the ersatz "reasons" the sadist gets from his victim's pain, but more needs to be said about the *form* or *nature* of genuine reasons as they are transmitted. Suppose that reasons are responses to *value*, and that, following Irving Singer, we can distinguish kinds of value.<sup>195</sup> One kind is what I shall refer to as *public* value. Things have value of this sort when they have properties that are very generally and publicly recognized as satisfying people's needs and desires. For example, a car has public value insofar as it is reliable, comfortable, fun to drive, and so on.<sup>196</sup> *Private* value, in contrast, is the value a thing can have insofar as it satisfies some particular individual's needs, desires, or motivations. My teddy bear had private value for me that greatly eclipsed its public value.

Both of these categories of value reflect the degree to which a thing answers to antecedent desires, needs, or motivations, but a third category of value is what Singer refers to as *bestowal* value. This is a value that does not exist prior to the act of bestowal. Singer maintains that this form of value is typical of value a lover ascribes

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<sup>194</sup>Max Scheler characterizes such cases as ones in which "vicariously visualized" feeling is present but participation in feeling is absent (Scheler 1954, p. 14). My point here is not a distinction among feelings or affects, as his is, but instead the *reasons* that arise in such pathological cases from the affective states involved.

<sup>195</sup>Singer 1984, ch. 1. He refers to these categories (respectively) as *objective appraisal* value, *individual appraisal* value, and *bestowal* value.

<sup>196</sup>Public value should not be mistaken for *agent-neutral* value. It is instead a generalized conception or summary of the individual agent-relative value which the thing in question has for lots of individuals. It is clear from Singer's account that this is the way he conceives of it. Speaking of the objective appraisal value of a house, Singer says that "it exists only insofar as there are people who want the house" (Singer 1984, p. 4). There is nothing about the house to command valuation by people whose needs and desires it would not meet.



to his beloved: the beloved comes to have a value for the lover which is not merely her public value nor her private value (for him) — it is a value she acquires for the beloved solely in virtue of his bestowal of it.<sup>197</sup>

Now, the nature of the reasons we get through empathic identification varies depending on the nature of the value to which the reasons of our target correspond. If our target has a reason in virtue of some public value, we will get a reason of the same type through seeing what he sees about that value. Suppose the target of my empathic identification has developed an appreciation for the ballet. One way for me to acquire a similar sort of appreciation is to try to see ballet as he sees it. If I succeed, I can recognize and respond to those features of the ballet which give it public value, and when I do, I will have just the same sort of reasons for e.g. seeking and promoting ballet that he does.

This is not the case with private value, and even less with bestowal value. In these cases the reasons we get through empathy are “filtered” through the relation of our target of empathic identification to what she values or has reason to seek, and it is that relation which we get reason to promote. If my friend loses glasses which she needs to read, then in empathizing with her I don’t get a reason to find her glasses so that *I* can read, as I would if it was a public value which was giving her reason to act. Instead, I get a reason from the private value of her glasses to her, and that is a reason to find the glasses so that *she* can read. If I set my chair down on Nagel’s gouty toe, it is the private value of the relief of Nagel’s pain (to Nagel) that gives Nagel reason to act, and which is transmitted to me through my empathy with him.<sup>198</sup> And the bestowal value my friend accords to his wife gives me reason to support his love for her, rather than to love her myself. So the nature of reason I get through empathy depends on the nature of the reasons which the person I am empathizing with has. In

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<sup>197</sup>The categories listed are not mutually exclusive. In particular, I take all bestowal value to be private value, but not vice versa. Some private value does not require bestowal.

<sup>198</sup>This is, of course, a different story than the one Nagel tells. I address this example at length — and my claim that only agent-relative, not agent-neutral, value is at stake in such cases — in Chapter 6.

any case, however, the valence of those reasons remains unchanged in genuine empathy.<sup>199</sup>

This raises a final but important point about the reasons that empathic identification gives rise to. It would be a mistake to think that they are transmitted to the empathizer without the need for, or unconditioned by, the effective use of the empathizer's own practical reasoning to determine what, all things considered, he or she ought to do. Even in empathy we need to use our own practical wisdom to distinguish genuine reasons from considerations that may be taken for reasons but in fact are not. For example, my friend might be so frustrated with his wife that he feels like walking out on their marriage. His experiences with her give rise to a belief that he has reason to do this, all things considered, and it may be important for me in empathizing with him that I enter into his perspective enough to appreciate what reason he believes he has from that perspective. But I need not take that to be reason for me to promote or endorse his leaving her, all things considered. One reason is that (unless he is virtuous) his emotions may not be tracking what he has genuine reason to do. Another is that, even if they are tracking genuine reasons for him, I may have other reasons which arise from my own observations of their relationship, and these may override the reasons I come to appreciate from his perspective. Though I do not dismiss the reasons my empathic identification with my friend gives me, what I have reason to do is not necessarily determined by them. The role of practical wisdom here is critical: while we have (as I shall argue) reason to empathize with others, we *never* have reason to lose touch with recognition of what is of genuine value, of what genuinely contributes to the best kind of life. All of our affective experience must be

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<sup>199</sup>In some cases it may be the *type* of affective experience that gives reasons, rather than the specific form of that experience takes. Consider the reason-giving force of the pain which results when a chair lands on gouty toes. Even people without gout can empathize with the great and sharp pain which would ensue, at least to a degree sufficient to give them appropriate reasons to act. (Notwithstanding the claim that some forms of pain — I am thinking specifically of the pain of childbirth — must be experienced to be understood. Even in those cases, however, the fact that it is great pain is sufficient to justify finding reason to relieve it through empathy.)

subordinate to and trained by this insight, and our empathic emotions are no exception.<sup>200</sup>

A further important aspect of practical reasoning in “governing” empathic identification is that it is how we as empathizers distinguish ourselves from those we empathize with. John Deigh distinguishes *empathy* from *emotional identification* on the grounds that the former, but not the latter, “entails imaginative participation in the other’s life without forgetting oneself” (Deigh 1995, p. 759). Similarly, Robert Gordon writes of the need to “contain” the “emotional contagion” we get from others:

The decision-making we perform in simulating another must itself be segregated from our own decision making; it must be decoupled from the mechanisms that ordinarily translate decision making and intention formation into action. Here, too, only a thin line will separate one’s own mental life from one’s representation of the mental life of another. (Gordon 1995a, p. 739)<sup>201</sup>

However *thin* this line may be, it is *bright*. Part of the virtue of practical wisdom involves not subordinating our own decision-making to that of others, as would be the case if we *automatically* took, via empathic identification, what another sees as sufficient reason to do, all things considered, to be sufficient reason to act upon

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<sup>200</sup>The role of practical wisdom explains how a couple of important objections can be blocked. First, it need not be thought that my failure to appreciate what seem to be reasons to my friend *as* reasons, indeed as decisive ones, marks a failure to empathize just in virtue of the fact that I thereby see things as in an important way different from my friend. The norms which govern empathic identification are finally determined by practical reason. (I thank Julia Annas for raising this point.) Moreover, this explains, at least in part, how and to what degree a virtuous person may empathize with less virtuous or even vicious persons, even get subjective reasons through their empathic identification with them, but not share in their targets’ practical conclusions. I think it is possible to empathize to some degree even with a monster like Hitler. I can empathize with lots of his experience insofar as he is (was) human: his desire for loyalty, his anxiety and fear of people whom he does not understand, and so on. However, his emotions did not at all track what he had reason to do, and what he took himself to have reason to do does not become a reason for me through empathy with him.

<sup>201</sup>Scheler distinguishes “fellow-feeling” from “identification” on precisely these grounds, and addresses a number of forms of identification as pathologies (Scheler 1954, pp. 23ff). In his terms it is fellow-feeling, not genuine identification, that my view embraces.

ourselves, all things considered.<sup>202</sup> On my account what is required by empathic identification is that the reasons others have become reasons for us, not that everything they *take* to be a reason become a reason for ourselves, and even if it does, not that it be decisive.

What I have offered so far is only a sketch of a perspective or outlook which on my view is to do substantial explanatory work. I have characterized empathic identification as a process in which we imagine ourselves to be in the place of another person. In doing so we experience an emotional response similar to those of the person with whom we are empathizing, and, if we are virtuous, our emotions give us reasons for action — in this case reasons that reflect the reasons of the target of our empathy. Much more explication is required to fully flesh out this sketch, and important questions about it must remain unexplored here. We need now to turn to the critical question as far as generating a eudaimonistic theory is concerned. What reason do we have to identify empathically with others, let alone to form a disposition to do so naturally and unconsciously? This question is crucial, because if I hope to vindicate a eudaimonist theory of reasons for action, I must show that empathic identification is at least congruent with the best human life. In the next section I argue that it not only is congruent with eudaimonia, but is an essential component of the best human life.

### *Empathic Identification as Necessary for Eudaimonia*

Why *ought* we to take up the standpoint of empathic identification? Eudaimonism is committed to the claim that whatever reasons for action we have come from our interest in good lives. Thus, if we are to have eudaimonic reason to take up the standpoint of empathic identification — let alone to cultivate the disposition to

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<sup>202</sup>Cases where one decides to accept the *authority* of another person might be considered exceptions to this general claim. I am not sure this is the right way to think about submission to authority, but it does not in any event undercut the point made for empathic identification. Nor does the point that “peer pressure” can at some times be enormous to go along with the plans or actions of others, and that we naturally find ourselves agreeing with others’ judgments under these circumstances. I take it that it is part of practical wisdom to be able to resist such pressure when that is the right thing to do, and to accede to it when *that* is the right thing to do (as when a bunch of us are deciding where we want to go out to eat). I thank David Schmidtz for raising this point.

do so as a regular and routine way of interacting with others — we must be able to make sense of the idea that it is conducive to, even necessary to, the best kind of life. I will argue that in fact that is so, because we all have eudaimonic reason to be *reflectively rational*, and empathic identification is an essential constituent of reflective rationality.

By ‘reflective rationality’ I do not intend to denote any complex psychological description of mental states or activities. First and foremost the idea refers to our capacity to take as objects of thought and evaluation our mental states themselves. We do this with *beliefs* when we consider what reasons we have for holding them. We aspire to shape the way we represent the world to ourselves by assessing what practices we have for forming beliefs generally, and what considerations should bear on the particular beliefs we hold.<sup>203</sup> We try to *rectify* our system of beliefs (first order and higher order beliefs included) so as to provide ourselves with the most accurate representation we can get of the environment in which we live and act.

We try to rectify our desires, too. Here the fit of mental state to world is not the same as in the case of belief, but at the very least we try to organize and shape our desires rather than to seek them willy-nilly. We prioritize and adjudicate among our desires, in part by ascribing relative importance to them. This requires a reflective standpoint — one which is distinct from a standpoint identified with any particular desire — in order to adjudicate between them. So here too rectification is important, and reflective rationality is the means by which we accomplish it.

Thus the conception of reflective rationality I have in mind is a fairly basic one. Moreover, the way in which I have set it out explains why it is natural to think that we have eudaimonic reason to be reflectively rational in this way, even if one does not accept the Aristotelian view that this sort of rationality is the dominant constituent of eudaimonia. Most of us (certainly most moral theorists) agree that a life that eschews

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<sup>203</sup>I mean to suggest neither that our epistemic practices are completely transparent to us nor that we have direct voluntary control over particular beliefs. But neither is it plausible to suppose that we have no power to improve our epistemic practices nor that by indirect methods we cannot subvert or support beliefs we already hold.

reflective rationality of this sort is unlikely to be a good life. That does not mean there are not skeptics about this claim, nor that there aren't large numbers of people who live their lives avoiding reflection to one degree or another. My account has the implication that people of the latter sort in so far forth live lives that are less worthwhile, less eudaimon, than they could be with the practice of reflection, and that seems plausible. About the skeptics, I will say little, except to observe that they pose a challenge for moral theory generally (indeed, perhaps *theory* generally) which it is beyond the scope of this project to try to meet. There is no shortage of bases for doubt about my account in particular, and I will confine myself to trying to alleviate those.

Suppose, then, that we agree that our reflective rationality, as I have characterized it, is something we have reason to perfect, as essential to the best kind of human life. If it is then essential to effective reflective rationality to enter into and have one's practical reason informed by the perspective of empathic identification, we will have eudaimonic reason to identify empathically with others. This is what I will try to show. There are three steps to my argument. First, I argue that we have eudaimonic reason to see ourselves as others see us —that we have reason to cultivate the habit and disposition of taking others' perspectives in assessing our attitudes and conduct. Second, I argue that a natural outgrowth of this first disposition — together with our imaginative capacities for counterfactual and hypothetical reasoning — is adopting the perspective of others more generally (that is, not merely confined to how *we* appear from that perspective), and that we have eudaimonic reason to promote this natural development.

These two steps show that generally adopting the perspective of others — by simulating them — is something we have eudaimonic reason to do, but this is short of a justification of empathic identification since it does not yet show how the *reasons* others should become reasons for us through this process. This reason-transmitting element is what distinguishes full-blown empathic identification from mere simulation. The third step, therefore, is an argument that we have eudaimonic reason

not merely to be able to see things as others see them, but to find others' reasons to be reasons of our own through seeing things so.

Two caveats are in order before setting out the argument. First, this is a *justificatory* story, not a developmental one. Developmentally, things are more complex.<sup>204</sup> Second, the account I am about to give is avowedly an *instrumental* one. It attempts to justify the development of a disposition for empathic identification in terms of the instrumental value of such a disposition for eudaimonia. That does not imply, however, that the reasons which arise from empathic identification are *themselves* instrumental — they may be, but they need not be. Once we have such a disposition, the fact that it is conducive to our eudaimonia to have it need not enter in at all to practical reasoning or acting on the basis of the reasons that arise through it, just as we saw, in Aristotle's conception of friendship, that the eudaimonic value of friendship need not feature in either the motivation or the proximate justification of what I do on my friend's behalf.<sup>205</sup>

*Step One.* The first step I take to be relatively simple and straightforward. Our nature as human beings requires social interaction — cooperation, mutual reliance, toleration — to survive, let alone to thrive. Obviously it's true that when we are children we are dependent on the goodwill of others to live into adulthood. But few of us can be (and fewer still are) self-reliant in any robust sense, even as adults. The advantages of cooperation, division of labor, etc., in the production of goods and services necessary for living — and living well — are obvious enough as to not need belaboring. But I take it as evident that we generally need others *psychologically* and *socially* as well. It is a general fact about us as human beings that we need the

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<sup>204</sup>However, babies exhibit at least the precursors to empathic responses (sympathetic crying) within a day or two of birth; and other “modes” of empathy — less complex cognitively than the simulation form I discuss here — are in place in early childhood. Cf. Hoffman 1984.

<sup>205</sup>As opposed to the justification “full-stop” of what I do. My view here parallels Schmitz' argument that what he calls “maieutic ends” — ends to adopt ends — can give rise to final ends as well as to instrumental and constitutive ends (Schmitz 1995, ch. 3). Though the terminology is different, I believe the structure of the views is the same.

company of other human beings. And if we are to have these needs met, we must be the sort of person others want to have around.

To some degree, we can organize and discipline our behavior and our attitudes towards others to serve this end entirely from within our own perspectives. We will learn pretty quickly, for example, that others will not take well to our lying to them or breaking promises to them, or harming them in various ways, and so on. But other social grievances are not so obvious, and are more difficult to correct. It is difficult to see, for example, how exactly to determine that it is the fact that we are *boring* that is driving away potential companions, if not through considering ourselves as others see us.

I mentioned earlier the idea that *rectification* of beliefs, desires, and other mental states is a project for reflective rationality. Our beliefs, for example, need to be rectified so that they accurately reflect the world we act in. That idea has an important application here. As members of social communities and relationships with others, we need to rectify our actions and attitudes in such a way that (at least some) others will want not merely to cooperate with us, but also will want to have the more intimate and personal relationships with us which make life worth living. My claim is that our resource best-suited to this aspect of rectification is our capacity to see others as they see us — to adopt their standpoint for evaluating the implications of the kinds of persons we are and the kinds of things we do.<sup>206</sup> So we have reason at least to simulate others to this degree.

*The second step.* If the foregoing is right, then given the obvious eudaimonic reason we have to succeed in being involved with others productively and socially, we have eudaimonic reason to cultivate the capacity, and engage regularly in the practice, of seeing ourselves as others see us. How does this extend to the more general practice of seeing *things generally* as others see them?

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<sup>206</sup>I emphatically do *not* mean to suggest that this resource is always adequate, or gets things right. I suppose that one place we are masters at self-deception is in matters of this sort. The point is that, however unreliable it may be, we have no better way of calibrating ourselves to the demands of basic social interaction.



An initial point might be that by simulating others more thoroughly, we can do a better job of making ourselves congenial to others. In other words, we can take the first step more effectively if we go beyond merely seeing ourselves through others' eyes to seeing others' conditions more generally. I think this is true as far as it goes, and that it goes some way towards explaining the eudaimonic reasons we have for cultivating this further capacity, but it is not the whole story.

Consider for a moment another important feature of our practical rationality. We are capable of assessing and deciding upon, not only things (situations, conditions) as they are given to us but also as we can *imagine* them. This capacity for imaginative generation of alternative combinations of conditions and circumstances is vitally important to us, because it allows us to engage in counterfactual, hypothetical, and conditional reasoning.<sup>207</sup> Such reasoning is valuable because it allows us to anticipate (with more or less success) the costs of various alternative courses of action *without* actually having those costs imposed upon us. It is thus a cheap way to learn.<sup>208</sup> Given the importance of the capacity imaginatively to model counterfactual circumstances and conditions, we have eudaimonic reason to develop and foster it.

Now I suggest that given this natural capacity and our reason for exercising it, and given the reason we have to learn to occupy others' perspectives so as to be able to see ourselves as others see us, a natural development is a more general capacity imaginatively to model other persons' conditions as they perceive them. We begin by wanting to see ourselves as others see us. At the same time we seek to enrich our imaginative repertoire — our capacity to exploit our imaginations of various situations and alternative courses of action within them, so as to improve our deliberative capacities. It would be odd, then, if we did not begin to consider others' circumstances — as represented to the agents in those circumstances, rather than to ourselves as

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<sup>207</sup>We might think of these as examples of simulating *ourselves* under other conditions.

<sup>208</sup>This argument plays an important role in Gregory Currie's assessments of the role of imagination in effective practical reasoning and in interpersonal interaction. Cf. Currie 1995, Currie and Ravenscroft unpublished.

mere observers or bystanders — as exercises in counterfactual practical reasoning.<sup>209</sup> In effect, then, our general capacity for and disposition to simulate others is a natural byproduct of two processes we have reason to perfect: seeing ourselves as others see us, and taking up imaginary entry-points and perspectives for practical reasoning. In addition to the fact that we have instrumental reason to simulate others generally (it simply makes us better companions), these considerations support the idea that we have eudaimonic reason to simulate others quite generally — to see not merely ourselves, but situations and circumstances, as others see them.

*The Third Step.* As indicated above, however, this is not yet a justification for empathic identification, because we might be able to see things as others see them while having very different reactions than they do to what is seen from that perspective. Bill Clinton no doubt could simulate Bob Dole's outlook on the importance of winning the 1996 presidential election. However, the reasons this outlook gave Bob Dole to try to win the election would not emerge for Bill Clinton, however thoroughly he simulated Dole's state of mind. He might be moved in various ways by Dole's disappointment, but one thing that would not come of that would be any sort of decisive reason for Bill Clinton to seek Dole's election.

While it is not a requirement of empathic identification that decisive reasons for acting emerge from taking the perspective of others, on at least some occasions they might. One problem for my account is that it seems that we could very generally adopt the perspective of others — come to see things as they see them — without finding that perception of things moving or reason-giving at all in the way that the subjects of our simulations do. For empathic identification to play the role required of it in my theory, it has to be something which generates at least some sort of reason in us corresponding to the reasons others have in virtue of their conditions. Simulation alone (as described thus far) does not obviously provide such reasons.

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<sup>209</sup>In fact, I think that we do begin to consider others' conditions this way so naturally that it is reflected in some of the most common idioms of everyday language: "If I were you I'd...", and the like.

The missing link is afforded, as suggested earlier, by the affective responses to simulation which make sympathetic reasons (reasons that arise for one person *because* they arise for another) possible.<sup>210</sup> While I do not suggest these affective concomitants of simulation are inevitable, I think they *are* natural — they occur for most of us when we simulate others, unless we cultivate the habit of suppressing them. My claims, then, are that the affective concomitants of simulation are capable of bearing reasons in sympathy with the reasons of others, and that we have eudaimonic reason *not* to suppress or habituate ourselves out of such affective responses to our simulation of others.

The basis for the first of these claims is the psychological fact that imagined (or simulated) episodes of cognition have affective consequences, roughly in correspondence to the affective consequences that would result from episodes of cognition resulting from veridical events. If you vividly imagine yourself walking down a dark alley (late at night, in an area known for violent crime), and further that you suddenly become aware of footsteps behind you, matching yours step for step, but steadily closing the distance between you, while when you look behind you you can catch at most the movement of shadow while the steps cease — pretty soon you will begin to experience some of the affective concomitants of the perception that these things are occurring. Your heart rate will increase, and your body will begin to prepare for fight or flight, in much the way that it would if you were perceiving rather than imagining these data. The same is true of the states we arrive at through simulating others. We can get angry at slights to those we identify with, grieve at losses to those

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<sup>210</sup>The relationship between *sympathy* and *empathy* is not a tidy one. I have chosen to employ the notion of *empathy* in my central conception because it reflects imaginative identification with a very broad range of mental states and emotions, rather than being limited to states of pleasure and pain, as *sympathy* often is. Here I introduce the notion of a *sympathetic reason* to draw attention to the connection or affinity between states that a change in one effects a change in the other. Nothing important hangs on the terminology.

we identify with, cringe at the pain of those we identify with.<sup>211</sup> Simulation engages the affective responses that normally attend our perception and cognition.

This need not necessarily occur, of course. We can to some degree learn to suppress or react perversely to the affective states that arise naturally through simulation. We have reason not to do this (or to the degree we do it already, to try to reverse the process), as I shall argue below. But our nature is such as to make us emotionally resonant with those whose mental states we simulate.

We have seen that in the normal case our affective states give us reasons to act (at least if they have been trained in virtue). Our emotions are (potentially) reliable indicators as to where our good lies. Given the reason-bearing force of our affective states, and the fact that these states are generated through the process of seeing things as others see them, it should be apparent how we can acquire reasons to act that shadow those of the persons we simulate. Our empathetic emotional responses can bear reasons just as our emotional responses to our own experiences do, with one significant exception. I have suggested that our emotions play a natural epistemic role with respect to our own welfare, and that given the connection between our welfare (as part of our eudaimonia) and our practical reasons, our emotions thus bear reasons for us. But the natural link between our emotions and our welfare is missing in the case of our empathic identification. Here, at least in the first instance, they are yielding signals about *other* people's welfare, rather than our own. So an additional step is required for our empathic emotions to be genuinely reason-bearing. In this case, we must *ascribe* or *bestow* the requisite value, or reason-giving force, to the good of those with whom we are empathizing, at least to the degree necessary to have our empathic emotions be reason-bearing. That we have reason to ascribe or bestow this sort of value on the good of at least some others I shall argue shortly. My point at present is that when reasons are transmitted between persons in this fashion, simulation becomes full-blown empathic identification. It is a way we can share in each other's

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<sup>211</sup>Cf. Hampton: Eliot "impresses upon us how much emotional impact is involved in fathoming, and taking seriously, other people as they are, with their distinctive views and experiences of the world" (Hampton 1997, p. 41).

reasons in addition to a more deliberative and “purely cognitive” process of adopting each others’ ends.

It is through the reason-giving force of our affective states, then, and the “communicability” of affective states through simulation, that the reason-giving nature of full empathic identification is possible. There is an important role for the rational endorsement of the deliverances of emotion in both cases. It is evident that reason has this role in the case of discovering reasons in our emotional responses to our actual situations. Our emotions will reveal reasons only if they have been trained to track genuine value — what is genuinely conducive to our eudaimonia. That our emotions have this relation with our good is both necessary and sufficient for us to endorse the deliverances of emotion as reason-bearing.

The role of reason in the evaluation and endorsement of the reason-giving force of our empathic emotions is even larger. In the end, it is responsible for placing the reasons that arise from empathizing with others into context — evaluating them in the light of the nature and conditions of the other, for example, and of our relationship to the other. But it has a prior role as well, because insofar as we shape our affective responses through our reflective endorsement of them, it is in virtue of this educative function of reason that the affective components of our empathic responses have the reason-bearing force that they do.

But why should we endorse the reasons we get through empathic identification? Need we really accept the deliverances of our empathic emotional responses as reason-giving? Why ought we not suppress the process through which the interests and concerns of others give us reasons to act, when they may well conflict with the reasons which might arise from our own proper interests?

The answer is that the complex of cognition and affect is integrated in our embodied brains in such a way that we can not “turn off” our natural affective responses to simulated perceptions and representations without also suppressing our affective responses to our imagination and cognition more generally. We are not built so as to be able to “compartmentalize” our emotional responses to imagined and

veridical conditions, even less to compartmentalize our responses to imagined situations that are “ours” and those of others that we enter into empathically.<sup>212</sup> Doing so distorts the basic system of cognition and emotion which constitutes our capacity for practical reasoning.<sup>213</sup> If we value that capacity for itself, that will provide sufficient reason not to distort it in this way. But even if we do not, the instrumental value of our capacity for practical reasoning for the pursuit and achievement of any other ends we may have surely provides such reason. The vicious person, like the virtuous person, has “head and heart” in agreement: judgment and emotion, affect and cognition are united in their direction for action. But in the vicious person violence has been done to native capacities for practical reasoning, and this is something we have reason to avoid.<sup>214</sup>

Is this an adequate justification for the claim that we ought not alter our reason in this way? This question is similar to the ones raised in Chapter 4, about the justificatory adequacy of Platonic and Stoic accounts of our reasons for respect. It may be helpful here to ask, following Gregory Kavka (Kavka 1984), to whom the justification is due. The reasons given above will not be sufficient to persuade the thoroughly vicious person or the wanton (Thrasymachus or Callicles), and it is easy to see why it will not. The vicious person’s reason and judgment have been shaped so as to conform to his desires (cf. Dent 1984, Korsgaard 1986). He has, in effect, rejected the rule of reason in his action and his life, making of it instead a servant of his passions. It should not be surprising, then, that he will not be moved by reasons to be otherwise. Such appeals amount to making a case for revolution to a despot. On the

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<sup>212</sup>These claims should be distinguished from the ideas that we can train ourselves *not* to use our imaginations or *not* to empathize, which it is certainly possible for us to do. The present point is that, if we do these things, we can’t then simply disconnect the emotional consequences of those activities.

<sup>213</sup>As would attempts to conceal from ourselves the plights of others when recognizing them would be costly. This would amount to an emotional form of self-deception, in which one part of our mind acts not only to obstruct recognition of reasons for action, but also to obscure the fact that it is doing so. (Cf. Talbott 1997 for a description of self-deception along these lines.) Such self-deception dis-integrates our rational and affective capacities and is thus something we have reason to avoid engaging in.

<sup>214</sup>Dent argues that the vicious person has in effect limited his own freedom by shaping his reason in the way necessary for vice, as opposed to incontinence (Dent 1984, p. 210ff).

other hand, those who are not in the grip of this sort of hegemony of desire are in position to accept and be moved by reasons such as these, and it is these to whom the arguments above are directed. The success of this rationale, then, will be at least partly contingent on the nature of the person who assesses it. But *this* degree of contingency has both a long history and modern defenders, and the desire for a more categorical argument may not be a helpful one.<sup>215</sup>

On my view there are, in effect, at least two levels of motivating and justifying reasons to act. At the foundation level, we have reason to seek the best kind of human life. This is always a justifying reason, and to a great extent it can (though it need not always) motivate us. It justifies us in becoming a person of a certain sort: the sort of person who is disposed to identify empathically with others and discover higher-level reasons for action which are in sympathy with the higher-level reasons those others have themselves, through the affective components of the process of empathizing. The reasons which arise from this process are not directly connected with the eudaimonia of the empathizing agent, as are the reasons which arise from their affective responses to their own conditions and circumstances. Instead, they have the reason-giving force they do because the virtuous agent endorses them *as* reason-giving; this is something which he or she has eudaimonic reason to do. Given this endorsement, the virtuous agent becomes the sort of person who is motivated by the conditions of others, and who can justify her responses to those conditions by citing the conditions themselves as reason-giving. They are, in fact, reason-giving for the virtuous person, just because the virtuous person has chosen to see them so.

To summarize the argument I have sketched, then, reflective rationality is an essential component of the best kind of human life, and empathic identification with

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<sup>215</sup>Recall Aristotle's caution early in the *Nicomachean Ethics* that his lectures can help only someone who has been "brought up in good habits. For the facts are the starting-point, and if they are sufficiently plain to him, he will not need reasons as well" (I.4: 1095b5). For a modern argument to this effect, see Schmidtz, who argues that "Some people in some situations have no compelling reasons to be moral. It is conventional to think of a successful answer to the 'why be moral' question as one that convinces or ought to convince literally everyone to be moral. This convention is a mistake, because there are real reasons to be moral, and the real reasons are not reasons for everyone. To look for universal reasons is to look for something other than the real reasons" (Schmidtz 1995, p. 258). I deal with worries about the scope of the vindication of reasons for respect again in Chapter 6.

others is an essential component of reflective rationality at its best. Thus, we have eudaimonic reason not merely to practice empathic identification, but to cultivate it as a disposition and as a natural aspect of our practical reasoning. I will conclude this chapter with a response to one worry about the psychological picture I have sketched.

### *Integrated Selves and Levels of Reasons*

Some ethical theories end up with a “dualism” of sources of reasons, though this is surely not a desirable outcome. Sidgwick’s account is notoriously of this form, and in contemporary work Thomas Nagel’s theory in *View from Nowhere* has this problem. I will argue in Chapter 6 that Nagel’s problem can be avoided by recognizing that agent-relative reasons —recognizable entirely within a subjective perspective —are capable of accounting for the intuitive phenomena which drive Nagel to posit an “objective” point of view. However, one might worry that my view is subject to its own duality problems.

There are two forms of such worries, and both stem from the fact that I have distinguished different “levels” of reasons which figure in justifications of different sorts. *Ultimate* justificatory questions are, within eudaimonism, always answered by appeal to eudaimonia, but I have claimed that *proximate* justifications can be and are given in terms of reasons based on the interests and conditions of others. One worry, then, is that reasons at these distinct levels might conflict in a way which destroys the integrity of the view as an account of practical reason.

Recall William Wilcox’ objection to Railton’s “two-level” version of consequentialism, one which was designed precisely to reconcile consequentialist commitments to maximize utility with the sorts of commitments that are endemic to friendship.<sup>216</sup> Railton suggests that one’s commitment to utility maximization — the “counterfactual condition” which makes one’s outlook count as consequentialist — functions as a check on the kind of commitment to others and their welfare which

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<sup>216</sup>Chapter 1, pp. 29f.



friendship requires. Wilcox pointed out in reply that the psychological force of Railton's counterfactual condition is that one intends to do things in specific circumstances (i.e. to act on utilitarian grounds), and these intentions, according to Wilcox, "are too pervasive to leave room for the commitment to particular persons necessary for friendship" (Wilcox 1987, p. 79). To put the objection in somewhat different terms, what one has reason to do as a consequentialist, and what one has reason to do as a friend, are sometimes (often?) incompatible, so if the reasons given by one's consequentialist commitment are to be accorded this counterfactual authority, there will simply be no practical room left for the reasons of friendship. The content of commitments to consequentialism and to friendship are in fundamental conflict, and a single agent cannot simultaneously hold both, without a dis-integration of his practical faculties.<sup>217</sup>

I am uncertain whether this objection to consequentialism is sound.<sup>218</sup> What is important is to see that in any event no comparable objection can be leveled against my account. On it our commitment is to become a certain kind of person, to adopt certain dispositions and ends, in virtue of the fact that doing so is living the best kind of life a human being can live. But this commitment does not function as a check — a "counterfactual condition" — on the responses to reasons that we acquire in virtue of our attachments formed in friendship or love. Those attachments include their own constraints — self-abdication and self-denigration are no part of genuine friendship — but our commitment to our own *eudaimonia* does not impose on the mandates of friendship in the way Wilcox is worried about. In fact, a *eudaimon* human life just is

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<sup>217</sup>This, too, is an old insight. Cf. James 1:8: "... a doubleminded man [is] unstable in all his ways." I thank Rhonda Smith for drawing my attention to this passage.

<sup>218</sup>In part this is due to my uncertainty as to how Railton believes the consequentialist ought to respond to it. Wilcox supposes that maintaining one's commitment to consequentialism in the form of this "counterfactual condition" is necessary to remain a consequentialist, and I think given this requirement, his objection is sound. But it's not clear that only such a commitment could count as genuine consequentialism. Suppose I believe that only a full-hearted commitment to friendship, with all the commitments it requires, will truly maximize utility. Then as a committed consequentialist I ought to forget about acting on the principle, "maximize utility," and just try to be a good friend. Railton at points seems to suggest this approach, similar in form to the "esoteric" form of consequentialism Sidgwick advocates, but as Wilcox points out (p. 81) it is not clear any longer what job Railton's "counterfactual condition" is supposed to be doing. But my present objective is not, of course, to assess the viability of various consequentialist strategies.

one in which one's relationships with others are characterized by the kind of unstinting commitment Wilcox values.

But a second form of worry waits in the wings. Even if we don't have a lethal conflict between the kinds of considerations this account recognizes as reasons, still it may be psychologically unattractive. In particular, it may posit an undesirable sort of motivation for many acts of e.g. friendship or love, or require a sort of *compartmentalization* of our practical reason in order to avoid the "wrong" sorts of reasons creeping into our deliberations.<sup>219</sup> When we act for the sake of a friend or loved one, presumably the thought that *being* a friend serves the end of our own eudaimonia is "one thought too many," and ought not to be part of our deliberations. But how and why should such reasoning be excluded? Don't we have to "segregate" our thoughts at the different levels in some way, to avoid this sort of motivational contamination?

This was a problem for some ancient eudaimonist accounts, and Julia Annas has argued it is too serious to be ignored:

On a two-level view, normal human moral activity depends on the agent's having two kinds of thought, but always keeping them carefully compartmentalized in his mind....It is clear that without special effort the two kinds of thought are bound to come into collision on occasion. But if they are kept apart deliberately, this would seem to be itself the result of a metadeliberation about the agent's priorities; but if this involves a concern to avoid conflict, it seems that the metadeliberation must itself have considered together the very two kinds of thought that it is concerned to keep apart; it segregates them because it already knows that they are going to conflict....It needs to distinguish levels of the self. (Annas 1993, p. 241)<sup>220</sup>

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<sup>219</sup>Hurka presses this objection in Hurka 1999, p. 67.

<sup>220</sup>Annas makes this point in her discussion of Epicurean eudaimonism, which has a very different conception of the good than does the form of eudaimonism I am concerned with, and which in consequence advances a very different form of moral psychology. The sort of response I give in the text is simply not available to the Epicurean, but further discussion of the comparative liabilities of Epicurean eudaimonism is beyond the scope of the present project.

The form of eudaimonism I am sketching not only does not require such compartmentalization, it actively resists it to the extent it is possible to do so. Reflective rationality is, as I have described, an essential part of the human good, and of the eudaimon life. But reflection does not require compartmentalization. It requires taking as objects of assessment and judgment the thoughts, attitudes, desires, and feelings that occur more or less spontaneously in response to one's environment. Practical wisdom requires developing habits of thought and action which *integrate* these components of the "inner life" into a congruent whole; the guiding aim of living one's life in such a reflective fashion ought never to be far out of mind. This is just to say that even in our unreflective moments we want to live and act in such a way as to earn our own endorsement and approval, rather than shame and guilt, and I have argued that cultivating a disposition for empathic identification merits this kind of reflective endorsement.

A helpful model for the way this can work is developed (surprisingly enough) within Barbara Herman's Kantian account. She has to confront an analogous objection to the role of the motive of *duty*. Critics of Kantian morality have argued that concern with duty can itself be "one thought too many" in responding to the needs of others, and Herman argues that this need not be so (Herman 1993, chapters 1 and 2). The role of this basic principle, she argues, is actually conducive to personal integrity rather than compartmentalization:

...insofar as in acting from emotions as motives the agent is able to respond 'directly' to the other, the regulative presence of the motive of duty cannot alter the direction of response....There is reason to encourage the complementary influence of emotions even when the motive of duty is sufficient to bring about the required action. An agent whose emotions cooperate with the motive of duty has a desirable kind of internal unity....(p. 32)<sup>221</sup>

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<sup>221</sup>Herman's interpretation takes on eudaimonist overtones when she says that the "kind of place that Kantian morality is supposed to have" is as "a project whose point is to shape and limit other projects so that they are compatible with an ideal sense of how a person ought to live" (Herman 1993, p. 40).

The role of emotion is even more central in the roughly Aristotelian conception of eudaimonism I am defending, and Herman's point applies with even greater force to the justificatory role of concern for one's own eudaimonia. The desire to have a good life does not, under normal circumstances, motivate me to perform any specific action. What I normally *do*, practically speaking, is act on my nexus of higher-level desires, interests, plans, and responses to those around me. Practical wisdom requires that I shape these higher-level motives in a way that is guided by my eudaimonia, but far from needing to keep these thoughts apart, eudaimonism requires that they be as transparent to each other, as amenable to interlevel reflection and judgment, as possible. The conception of the good at work in this view recognizes that, while we are reflectively rational animals, we are other kinds of animals too: we have a wide variety of needs and interests that are not satisfied by the activity of reflective rationality. So it can be and often is good for us to act in nonreflective ways. Some ways of acting nonreflectively are ones that we can recognize and endorse reflectively, while others are not, and ideally the structure of reasons upon which we act is one that is open to our inspection and evaluation at *any* degree of reflectiveness. We can distinguish multiple "levels" of reasons, but in practice those levels are integrated by and in a single agent seeking a unified eudaimon life.

This helps to explain why Wilcox's objection is not a problem. The very content of the best kind of life — of eudaimonia — includes explicit commitment to friends of the sort we (along with Railton and Wilcox) want to recognize and endorse. This means that the fundamental justificatory role eudaimonia plays in an agent's structure of reasons can be fully transparent to her even when her commitment to a friend incurs costs, in that she loses things she would otherwise like to have. She does not have to keep her commitment to her own eudaimonia opaque in order to act in full heart on her commitment to her friend, because that commitment is a part of her eudaimonia. She may have to give up something she would otherwise have liked to have, but there is nothing novel or especially intractable about having to make those sorts of choices. On *any* plausible account, agents have to choose between goods all the time. This kind

of choice is merely one among others in which the practical wisdom of the virtuous agent must come into play. Thus, concern for others within the eudaimonist framework is not only possible, but it is possible within an integrated, harmonized conception of one's own practical agency and commitments.

## Summary

In this chapter I have laid the groundwork for an argument that eudaimonism is not only compatible with but champions non-instrumental concern for others, and requires respect for others as our intuitions demand. I have claimed that empathic identification with others is something which comes at least to some degree naturally to us, and moreover argued that it is something we have reason to cultivate as a disposition. If my argument is successful, I have established a connection between empathic identification and eudaimonia, as a concept which mediates the linkage between eudaimonia and respect and concern for others. But the connections between empathic identification and respect and concern themselves still need to be established. Those connections are the subject of Chapter 6.

## 6. EMPATHIC IDENTIFICATION, RESPECT, AND CONCERN

... *my life is not more beneficial to me than to be so disposed in spirit that I would not do violence to anyone for my own advantage.*

— Cicero, *De Officiis* III.29

It is time for a summing-up. In the previous chapter I set out a conception of empathic identification and argued that our interest in living the best kind of human life gives us reason to cultivate a disposition to identify empathically with others. The next step is to argue that eudaimonism can accommodate our intuitions that non-instrumental concern for other persons is worthwhile, and that we are under constraints of respect in our treatment of others. John Cottingham has defended a “minimal definition of morality” which tells us to “help your friends, and do not harm your neighbors, [and] ‘neighbor’ here can be construed as globally as you like” (Cottingham 1983, p. 98). In this chapter I will maintain that a person with a disposition to empathic concern will have reason to treat others in ways very like those Cottingham proposes. Before defending that claim, however, I want to situate my proposal relative to the ancient views we have considered.

The greatest virtue of the Stoic account — its reach to all humanity, irrespective of contingent ties of commitment via community or family — is preserved in my account. As Cottingham suggests, one ought not to harm others, and for this proscription “the furthest Mysian” matters as much as my fellow-citizen or next-door neighbor. But the Stoics achieve this reach only by recourse to a justificatory argument that rejects our intuitions as to the legitimacy of a stronger, *partial* concern for my fellowcitizen or next-door neighbor (or father, or daughter). In general, I believe, what is necessary is an account on which *both* universal respect for others and special (partial) concern for *some* few others is endorsed, and in the Stoic story the force of these two moral principles tends to be conflated. My account avoids this mistake.

I take Aristotle to have demonstrated the possibility of non-instrumental concern within a eudaimonist framework. Here I will try to build on his account of *philia*, showing that empathic identification is congruent with and indeed helps to fill

out his account of how such concern possible. On the other hand, as just noted, my account of respect offers a principled basis for treating all human beings justly in virtue of their humanity, and thus avoids the parochialism that impugns Aristotle's account.

I have ascribed to Plato the original insight that our emotions — including, especially, our experiences of pleasure and pain — are largely plastic and moldable in light of practical wisdom. This is, of course, a thread that was picked up and developed by Aristotle, but it is an important component of my view about how our emotions — including our empathetic emotions — can come to bear reasons. In this respect my view can rightly be seen as a development of Plato's original insight.

It can in another respect as well. Recall that in Chapter 2 I argued that Plato had largely demonstrated that we have eudaimonic reason to seek what we might call "psychic justice," but that he fell short of supplying a satisfying connection between psychic justice and the behavioral constraints of respect. My account offers the missing connection. Something like psychic justice (viz. virtue, construed as practical wisdom and emotion in harmony) connects with the patterns of action required by respect for others through features of our psychological nature as human beings. Structurally, then, my account resembles Plato's, though its claims about human nature draw more upon Aristotle.

A full account of the kind of life and action engendered by empathic identification is, of course, beyond the means of a single chapter to provide. However, I will begin with a brief account of the contribution of empathic identification to the kind of non-instrumental concern for others broached by Aristotle. I will then sketch how empathic identification sustains respect for others. I conclude the chapter and the dissertation by rebutting two major objections to the project of extracting an account of respect from eudaimonist theory.

### *Empathic Identification and Concern*

We have seen that Aristotle offers an account of friendship (*philia*) which suggests how a eudaimonist virtue account can make sense of non-instrumental, non-derivative concern for others. Thus I take it that part of the philosophical task chartered in Chapter 1 of defusing this objection to eudaimonism has been accomplished. Here I will supplement Aristotle's account with insights which come from recognizing the significance of empathic identification, and elaborate on the way the resulting view meets the objection from concern as it was formulated in Chapter 1. I do not, of course, suppose or suggest that Aristotle was thinking of empathic identification when he developed his account. I offer the following as a theoretical extension of Aristotle's view, not as part of but instead as congruent with the conception of non-instrumental concern he defends as part of his moral theory.

### *How Empathic Identification Enriches Friendship*

Let's begin by recapitulating what we learned from Aristotle. The problem of non-instrumental concern for others is met by understanding that we may come to care for others immediately —non-derivatively, non-instrumentally —as part of our own good. A significant feature of Aristotle's account is the claim that the boundaries of what counts as our good are elastic, and can come to encompass elements of the good of (some) others.<sup>222</sup> What he tells us is that there is a way in which friends can become "second selves" through the kind of intimate discourse, shared deliberation and activity that comprise friendships of the best sort. When this occurs, the good of the friend is sought immediately, directly, and noninstrumentally, rather than as a means to one's own eudaimonia. The fact that *having* such relationships is a necessary part of the best kind of life is a reason — indeed is the fundamental reason — for having such relationships, but once one is in such a relationship it is the way that the

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<sup>222</sup>Aristotle is quite clear that the *number* of others with whom we can stand in this sort of relation is very limited: "great friendship too can only be felt towards a few people" (*NE IX.10: 1171a13*). That might be a problem if we were justifying *respect* for others, since we think respect is due *all* others irrespective of the particulars of our relationships to them. But it is not a problem for concern. What matters is that it is possible, within a eudaimon life, to have relationships with others that have this non-instrumental nature. The objection itself endorses the kind of partiality which follows from Aristotle's view.



friend's good partially constitutes one's own that provides both a motive and a justification for seeking it.<sup>223</sup>

Empathic identification and the elements which comprise it fill out this story in at least three ways. First, the affective component of friendship is a valuable and finally (that is, non-instrumentally) desirable element of our friendships. We want friends and loved ones whose concern and appreciation for us is not merely cognitive but also emotional. We want their full engagement with us; cold and standoffish friends are not those we most cherish. But emotional engagement is a cardinal element of empathic identification. Since empathic identification requires and involves affective involvement with the target of empathy, it is one way in which such affective involvement with a friend comes into play. It is, of course, only *one* way; there are lots of other ways of being emotionally involved with others. The point here is just that empathic identification is one of these ways.

Second, the *simulative* aspect of empathic identification plays an important epistemic role. I do not claim (and do not think it is defensible to claim) that the *only* way we can come to interpret others —to ascribe beliefs, desires, intentions, and other mental states to others — is to simulate them, but neither is simulation dispensable. It is an important way for us to come to understand the contents of another person's mind.<sup>224</sup> Thus, to the extent that intimate and committed relationships of friendship or love are extended and enriched by fuller understanding of the thoughts of the friend, the simulative aspect of empathic identification can make an important contribution to the best kind of friendship.

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<sup>223</sup>In this sense the end of developing and having such friendships might be what David Schmitz refers to as a *maieutic end*: the end of acquiring a further end of a certain kind (Schmitz 1995, pp. 60ff). Schmitz observes (rightly, in my view) both that having a reason to adopt a final (as opposed to an instrumental) end does not undercut its finality —that is, it does not reduce it to instrumentality — and that the acquisition of final ends (including, we might suppose, the non-derivative value we come to accord to the good of a friend) need not be conscious or deliberate (p. 77).

<sup>224</sup>In "Simulation, Theory, and Emotion" I argue that simulation may be especially important in situations characterized by *novelty*, *urgency*, and *significance*, in which application of a "theory of mind" may have drawbacks.

Finally, I believe that empathic identification should be seen as a significant contributor to the process of shared deliberation which, for Aristotle, is characteristic of the best kind of friendship. Recall first that empathic identification is of eudaimonic value just because it is an exercise of our practical faculties which develops and perfects them. Empathic identification involves coming to recognize and acknowledge reasons of various sorts through the cognitive and affective processes involved in seeing things as through the eyes of another. It amounts to acquiring reasons for acting through a process of simulation, allowing empathic identification with another to transmit reasons from the target of identification to the empathizer.

But *shared* deliberation can benefit from improved practical reasoning as much as individual deliberation can. Shared deliberation is enhanced in two ways by the practice of empathic identification between friends. First, insofar as each cultivates the general disposition of empathic identification and becomes practically wiser by doing so, each “brings to the party” of shared deliberation greater practical wisdom. But second, and more direct, the process of empathic identification is one in which the empathizer comes to a sympathetic appreciation of the considerations and reasons which obtain for the target of identification, without losing the perspective of her *own* judgment and practical faculties. This means she is able to bring to sharpen her friend’s thoughts and plans through a critical perspective which is the more effective both because of the context of commitment and trust in which it is exercised, and because of the greater intimate knowledge of the target’s thinking through the bonds of friendship. King Solomon anticipated Aristotle when he wrote, “As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another” (Proverbs 27:17); it is just this kind of sharpening which empathic identification between friends makes possible.

I believe empathic identification can be seen as largely responsible for the benefits of shared deliberation which Aristotle describes. Through it, friends can come not only to critically engage the practical faculties of each other, but also to be moved to adopt ends and attitudes and to see reasons which are shared with the friend.

Empathic concern thus can play a vital explanatory role in a view of friendship which is wholly compatible with eudaimonism.

One of the two objections to eudaimonism which are the focus of this dissertation — the objection from concern — has now been addressed. It remains to be shown how respect for persons can be vindicated by empathic identification. To that I now turn, and to do so I draw on two unlikely sources — John Stuart Mill and Arthur Schopenhauer.

### *Mill, Schopenhauer, and Feelings of Justice*

In Chapter V of *Utilitarianism* Mill sets out to reconcile to his account of utilitarianism the intuitions or “feelings” we have that certain wrongs — “injustices” — can be distinguished from wrongdoing generally. The distinction, he argues, lies in the fact that in cases of injustice the wrong harms some definite individual (or individuals), and the recognition of such a wrong is accompanied by a desire to punish the wrongdoer (Mill 1861/1979, p. 50).

What is of interest here is not the general account Mill gives of justice, but his explanation of *why* injustices (or rights violations, which on his view amount to the same thing) excite the kind of passionate moral objection that they do. On Mill’s view, what accounts for this is the conjunction of two “natural” and “instinctual” sentiments: “the impulse of self-defense and the feeling of sympathy” (p. 50). Obligations of justice, he tells us, are concerned with a kind of interest which is “extraordinarily important and impressive”: our need for *security*, “to everyone’s feelings the most vital of all interests” (p. 53). Mill says,

no human being can possibly do without [security]; on it we depend for all our immunity from evil and for the whole value of all and every good, beyond the passing moment, since nothing but the gratification of the instant could be of any worth to us if we could be deprived of everything the next instant by whoever was momentarily stronger than ourselves. (*ibid.*)

What Mill appears to have in mind here is that without security, no other good can really *be* a good for us, because its capacity to benefit us in anything beyond the immediate present is up for grabs. Now virtue theorists will take exception to the claim that the good of *virtue* is up for grabs in this way, but Mill's point is nevertheless plain enough. For our lives as embodied rational agents to be bearers of value for us — for them to be able to possess the kind of continuity and structure that makes them capable of being *good* human lives — we must have at least some degree of security in them.<sup>225</sup> And our interest in and passion for *justice* arise from this very foundational value of security.

Now, Mill may be thinking of *justice* as referring to a narrower set of issues than we are likely to apply it to. He is clearly preoccupied with overt sorts of *harms*, and we may be inclined to think the notion of justice applies to far more than cases of harm. The important point, however, is that justice as he uses the idea roughly tracks *respect* for others as we are concerned with it. Justice so understood underwrites the bare possibility of our existence as social creatures:

Justice is a name for certain classes of moral rules which concern the essentials of human well-being more nearly, and are therefore of more absolute obligation, than any other rules for the guidance of life....The moral rules which forbid mankind to hurt one another ...are more vital to human well-being than any other maxims....they are the main element in determining the whole of the social feelings of mankind. ...Thus the moralities which protect every individual from being harmed by others, either directly or by being hindered in his freedom of pursuing his own good,<sup>226</sup> are at once those which he himself has most at heart and those which he has the strongest interest in publishing and enforcing by word and deed. It is by a person's observance of these that his fitness to exist as one of the fellowship of human beings is tested and decided... (p. 58)

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<sup>225</sup>This point is made negatively, of course, by Hobbes.

<sup>226</sup>Note that Mill extends his basic account beyond acts of direct harm to include acts of confinement here, and in a similar way could be extended to include, say, the imposition of *slavery*. In all these cases what is at issue is a radical compromise of a person's agency via the forceful physical intervention of others. It may be difficult to work out a precise account of when such interventions might be appropriate and when not, but there is little doubt that Mill is right that such interventions stand in need of justification, and that they do so for just the sorts of reasons he indicates.

Now in Mill's utilitarian account, the interest each of us has in his own security is generalized through "sympathy" to the apprehension of "a community of interest between himself and the human society of which he forms a part" (p. 50). Since my account is not utilitarian, I do not wish to argue for the same sort of extension of interest Mill does. Still, his conception is suggestive of the contours of empathic identification.

Mill's account of the almost visceral reactions we can have to injustices of at least some sorts is psychologically plausible. Acts of injustice, as instances of the kind of act to which we most violently object, engage the antipathy of the virtuous person not only when they are directed at himself, but also (through empathic identification) when they are directed at others, even — especially — when the agent of the prospective injustice is himself.

The basic idea here is that in the virtuous agent who has ingrained empathic identification as a disposition, the effects of harm (or prospective harm) to another are alive to him in a way similar to the way the thought of prospective harm to himself is alive to him. Due to the basic and vivid nature of responses to these thoughts, the force of reaction to prospective harms is great. In one's own case, of course, the thought or image of prospective harm is quite motivating and, it is plausible to think, in general reason-giving. If I see your chair about to come down on my gouty toe I both am motivated to move my foot and have genuine reason to do so. Through empathic identification, however, something like that same force and vitality of the motivation and justification for getting my foot out of the way applies when I see it is *your* foot in the way, in virtue of my identification with you. This is true whether I see someone else inadvertently about to set their chair down on your gouty toe, or whether a course of action to advance my own interest I am considering requires that I set my own chair down on your toe, deliberately. The latter, of course, would normally be a case of injustice in a way that the former would not. The point is that the reasons you have to avoid the harms which would constitute my unjust treatment of you are, if I am empathic, reasons for me too — they are reasons for me not to engage in injustice.

This is precisely Schopenhauer's suggestion as to the motivating force of empathy (or, in his account, "compassion"):

the first ... effect of compassion is that it opposes and impedes those sufferings which I intend to cause to others by my inherent antimoral forces. It calls out to me 'Stop!'; it stands before the other man like a bulwark, protecting him from the injury that my egoism or malice would otherwise urge me to do. (Schopenhauer 1841/1965, p. 149)

Schopenhauer, indeed, believed (as I do) that the power of empathy to block unjust action extended not merely to bodily injury of the obvious kind but also to further interests that motivate us and which comprise the rough borders of our intuitions about respect:

I shall just as little seize another man's property as I shall his person; I shall cause him just as little mental suffering as bodily; I shall, therefore, refrain not only from every physical injury, but also from the infliction of mental suffering through mortification, alarm, annoyance, or slander....The maxim, [injure no one] arises in noble dispositions...from the knowledge, gained once for all, of the suffering which every unjust action necessarily brings to others and which is intensified by the feeling of enduring wrong....Rational reflection raises noble dispositions to the firm resolution, grasped once for all, of respecting the rights of everyone, of never allowing themselves to encroach on them, of keeping themselves free from the self-reproach of being the cause of another's suffering. (*ibid.*, p. 150)

However, there are two features of Schopenhauer's account which do not carry through to my own. First, he thought that human nature was intractably wicked and unjust, or more precisely that one element of it was, so that absent the restraining effect of empathy we would always be acting only out of "egoism and malice." Thus, his view is one of competing forces or vectors in human nature which, under the best conditions, would settle in favor of empathy.

This is not part of the role I wish to suggest for empathy. The picture I propose is a roughly Aristotelian one in which empathy is habituated and becomes a disposition in the sense that natural inclinations are *trained* to seek virtuous action. Thus, in the virtuous agent the kind of internal tension or strife Schopenhauer

suggests is not a factor. As Aristotle argues, such tension is a sign of continence, not of virtue, and is not part of the best kind of human life. In the best kind of life, empathic identification becomes “second nature” and it is not in competition with malicious motives.

A second point is that on Schopenhauer’s view it is the cognitive recognition of *principles* (viz. of justice) which in the general case impede unjust action. We learn from experiences of empathic revulsion to unjust acts that we don’t like doing them, and we formulate practical principles which capture that recognition. It is these principles which (typically) determine our conduct:

Without *principles* firmly held, we should inevitably be at the mercy of antimoral tendencies when, through external impressions, these tendencies were stirred to emotions.... *Self-control* is the steadfast adherence to and observance of principles, in spite of the motives that act against them. ...compassion operates in the individual actions of the just man only indirectly, by means of principles, and not so much *actu* as *potentia*. (*ibid.*, p. 150-1)

While it is certainly true on my account that the virtuous agent is capable of representing the principles upon which she acts as action-guides of this form, I think Schopenhauer’s picture is misleading in two respects. One, it suggests a deliberative model of just action that is, for the most part, not necessary when a possible course of action is manifestly unjust. Two, it suggests that unjust courses of action suggest themselves to the virtuous agent as viable possibilities. This is the wrong way to understand the effect of ingrained empathic identification, and the cultivation of wisdom and virtue generally. The absence of conflict in the virtuous person goes so deep as to transform the way she *sees* the contexts in which she acts. This transformation is deep enough and complete enough (in the virtuous hence eudaimon agent) that courses of action which are unjust in the way Schopenhauer describes do not appear to her as possibilities at all, just as possible courses of action which involve doing harm to ourselves do not, in the normal case, crop up in our practical deliberations. The effect of empathic identification with others is to shape the way we

understand the contexts in which we act as ones in which harm to others rules out alternatives *ab initio*. They are, so to speak, never in play at all.<sup>227</sup>

Philip Mercer argues that attempts to account for reasons to be just by according a “conative” quality to sympathy (or empathy) as my account does cannot succeed by themselves (Mercer 1972, p. 84). First, though such a move lends reason-giving force to the interests of others — it shows us that others count — it does not show for *how much* they count. Second, as he observes, “conative sympathy is ... likely to be conditioned by such contingent circumstances as time, place, mood, interest, and so on...” (*ibid.*). Thus, he concludes, conative sympathy is “in need of qualification by reason” (*ibid.*)

With this suggestion I wholeheartedly agree. The reason-giving force of any affective process is conditional on the validation or endorsement of rational reflection, and an essential part of the cultivation of the right sort of affective responses (empathic and otherwise) consists in selecting and reinforcing those responses which accurately track value and reasons for action — in ourselves and others.<sup>228</sup> Empathy is no more an autonomous source of reasons than is any other affective response. What reasons we have arise from the ways we must live in order to have good lives. What empathy allows is the *transmission* of such reasons from one person to another — but it never gives reasons independently of what is genuinely of value in the lives of the empathizer or the person being identified with. Empathy is the affective bridge between persons that allows the genuine reasons of one person to become the genuine

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<sup>227</sup>Does this mean the empathic person cannot or should not identify with a vicious or evil person? In some ways yes, in some ways no. The virtuous (empathic) person may be able to see, from the vicious person’s perspective, something of why she does what she does. A virtuous person may be able to recognize as an intelligible motivation, for example, a (vicious) overriding desire for material gain, even while seeing it in its proper perspective as not a genuine reason. The virtuous person clearly does *not* share in the overall hierarchy or structure of reasons in which the vicious person finds such considerations as *decisive*. Empathy can modify or temper the sharp divergence between the incorrect perception of values and reasons the vicious person has and the genuine reasons that are the objects and products of practical wisdom, but it does not do away with the virtuous person’s recognition that the vicious person is simply *wrong* about what reasons he or she has.

<sup>228</sup>I mean that response-types, rather than response-tokens, need rational endorsement. On particular occasions virtuous persons need not stop to reflect on what they are feeling. As indicated, they have already trained their emotions to be responsive to reasons, hence to earn rational endorsement.



reasons of another. The point here is that the picture of the virtuous agent I wish to draw is one in which, as in the accounts of Aristotle and Dent, reason and empathic emotion are coordinated and integrated, rather than independent and in conflict.

The central significance of the governing role of practical wisdom can be brought out even further by considering a possible objection to the *scope* of respect for others which empathic identification can justify. Why can't my empathy, and thus my respect, be limited to those that are *like me* in some crucial way? It is a deep aspect of human nature to divide up humanity into *us* and *them*, and accord differential treatment to *them*. If my social and security needs can be met by identifying myself as, say, an Aryan Nazi, and rejecting Jews as creatures somehow not deserving of respect in virtue of their subhuman nature, why reason do I have to do otherwise?

The answer lies in the sort of self-conception that is entailed by such an attitude. Our natural psychological mechanisms do not differentiate between other people in this way; we have to *learn* to do so. And for this learning to stick, it has to be supported by (at least putative) *reasons*. For me to constrain my empathic identification, and thus my reasons for respect, in this way I must conceive of myself in the first instance *as* an Aryan Nazi, and hold the difference between me and the Jew in this respect to be a reason not to respect him. Thus, the way I conceive of myself is inextricably linked to the way I conceive of others, and the way I value myself affects the way I find others valuable (or not).

Christine Korsgaard refers to such self-conceptions as “practical identities.” She argues that contingent and limited practical identities such as Aryanism cannot stand as *fundamental* upon reflective scrutiny (Korsgaard 1996, pp. 120ff). On her view, if we pause to reflect how we have *reasons* from such identities we will see that, at bottom, we are the sorts of creatures to whom reasons matter. In other words, the process of reflection on *why* questions — why we have reasons to do anything at all — will lead us finally to seeing that the reasons we have come from the fact that we are reason-seeking creatures.<sup>229</sup> Thus, she says, I must recognize my *humanity* —

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<sup>229</sup>That is the “source of normativity.”

understood as my nature as “a reflective animal who needs reasons to act and to live” (*ibid.*, p. 121) — as my fundamental and governing practical identity. To be reflectively rational, we can’t in the end conceive of ourselves in any way more limited or exclusive than as this sort of reason-driven creature. And *this* self-conception recognizes no distinction between Aryan and Jew.

I think Korsgaard is largely right, but that her argument fits more naturally in a eudaimonist virtue theory than in the Kantian context in which she locates it. Her argument is congruent with Aristotle’s view —explored in Chapter 3 — that the virtuous man acts “for the sake of the intellectual element in him, which is thought to be the man himself; and he wishes himself to live and be preserved, and especially the element by virtue of which he thinks” (*NE IX.4: 1166a13*). Practical wisdom, and thus eudaimonia, require a proper conception of what is most essentially myself. For the best kind of life — one which will withstand reflective scrutiny — I must understand my humanity (as Korsgaard and Aristotle conceive of it) as what is most centrally of value to me. But if I do this the distinction I try to maintain between my Aryan self and the Jew disappears.<sup>230</sup> Our shared rational nature — our “humanity” — makes him a legitimate subject of my empathic identification. I cannot reject his humanity as an irrelevant feature about him without distorting the value I accord my own humanity. This doesn’t mean people don’t live with such distorted self-conceptions, of course —clearly many people do. The point is that there is a significant cost of doing so, in terms of the possibility of the best kind of life. The demands of practical wisdom, and the recognition of value such wisdom entails, require that my respect not be limited to some arbitrary subset of humanity.

### *The Objection from Respect*

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<sup>230</sup>Except in the presence of false beliefs about the humanity of another. I doubt that such false beliefs can survive without a significant degree of self-deception and cognitive distortion, and we have good reason not to engage in either of these. But if they *do* survive in a particular case, then I believe the *moral* objection against such an attitude is weakened. Such a person is in need of instruction, not of sanction.

Brief though it is this sketch puts us in position to see why both aspects of the objection to eudaimonism on the basis of respect are invalid. The objection is that eudaimonism is hard-pressed to account for the reasons we have to respect others, and if it can be thought to do so at all, the account it must offer is basically wrong-headed, as stemming from the effects of wrongful actions on the *agent* rather than on the *victim*. The story I have told of empathic identification is clearly an account (or at least *claims* to be an account) of how respect for others is justified within a eudaimonist virtue theory, so if it is successful the first aspect of the objection is rebutted. But what is important to notice is that if it is successful it also squarely defuses the second part of the objection.

For the virtuous person who identifies empathically with others and takes from that identification reasons not to harm or injure them, or otherwise treat them unjustly, it is *precisely* the effects of their prospective course of action on others that motivate them not to act unjustly and provide reason not to do so. This seems to be just what our common-sense intuitions recommend to us as the way the interests and welfare of others should affect our practical deliberations. Intuitively, an adequate account of respect must be *victim-focused*, and the account offered here has that focus.

We have distinguished between the *ultimate justification* for our actions and dispositions and the *proximate justification* and motivation for acting in particular cases. The objection to eudaimonism on the basis of respect supposes that our interest in eudaimonia, as the source of all our reasons for action, must come into play both in *justifying* particular actions and in *motivating* us to do them. This, as should be plain by now, is not right. Our interest in eudaimonia gives us reason to be (or become) people of a certain sort, with particular deeply-ingrained traits and dispositions. In virtue of the dispositions the virtuous person forms, she comes to *find* reasons in places and things she otherwise would not. In the case of potential acts of injustice, she finds immediate or proximate reason not to act unjustly, and is motivated not to do so, precisely in virtue of the effects her unjust action would have on her victim. And it is these proximate justifications and motivations, I suggest, which are the objects of

our common-sense intuitions. Thus, a eudaimonist virtue theory can account for our common-sense intuitions about the victim-focus of respect for others, and can do so in just the right way.

The sketch I have provided obviously needs further explication before its adequacy can be assessed. Even in its present state, however, there are natural worries about what I have suggested. An important one concerns the claim that the degree of empathic identification needed to secure the eudaimonic benefits mentioned in the last chapter is sufficient to meet the requirements of respect. But I defer dealing with this and other important questions in favor of coming to grips with a broader and deeper objection to the entire method of trying to account for respect as I do here. It amounts to an argument that, even given its victim-focus, in virtue of its *agent-relative* account of reasons for action, the kind of reasons for respect eudaimonism gives are wrong in another way.

### Empathic Identification and Agent-Neutral Reasons

One important source of doubts about the account just sketched is that it makes all reasons for treating others as we should *agent-relative*. Some have felt that no theory which endorses only agent-relative reasons for action can adequately account for the normative requirements on our relationships with others.<sup>231</sup> Here I want to show that by attending to empathic identification those doubts can be alleviated, and that the intuitions which seem to mandate agent-neutral reasons as a supplement to or replacement for agent-relative reasons, can be accounted for by empathic identification within an entirely agent-relative account.

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<sup>231</sup>Korsgaard argues that theories that “deontological reasons” are agent-relative cannot accommodate our intuitions about victims’ right to complain about violations (Korsgaard 1993, p. 47). Nagel took this line as a consistent theme in his 1970, 1986, and 1991. Schmitz might be construed as maintaining something similar, when for example he claims that “Morality is more than one thing” (Schmitz 1995, p. 188). On Schmitz’ view, it is necessary to supplement a roughly “Aristotelian theory of virtue” — one which, I might point out, retains its eudaimonistic flavor — with a “Humean theory of justice” (*ibid.*, p. 212, n. 20). This suggests that Schmitz believes that a theory of the Aristotelian stripe cannot do it all. In this section I try to show why I believe this is an unduly pessimistic stance.

My view of the function of empathic identification draws on a conception of reasons as being exclusively agent-relative. Agent-relativity is a consequence of eudaimonism about reasons generally — the idea that reasons come from the value to each agent of his or her own eudaimonia, of living and having a good life.<sup>232</sup> Eudaimonist reasons are paradigmatically agent-relative. Moreover, eudaimonism appears to exclude the possibility of *agent-neutral* reasons. This of course does not mean it excludes reasons for me to seek or promote things of value outside my own life. Instead, the point is that all reasons arise in relationship to the eudaimonia of particular agents, and agents have reasons because of those particular relationships. States of affairs or other things of value give agent-neutral reasons for action if the reasons they give are reasons for persons or agents quite generally — irrespective of any particular relationship in which agents stand to what is of value. This is clearest in the case of utilitarianism, which is paradigmatically agent-neutral. On it all of us have reason — equal reason — to maximize happiness, or pleasure, or however utility is to be understood. There is nothing special about *me* which gives me reason to maximize utility; what particular agent I am makes no difference as to my reason for doing so. But it is the cardinal claim of eudaimonism that my eudaimonia is reason-giving to me just because it is *I* who can be eudaimon, it is *my* life which can go well.<sup>233</sup>

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<sup>232</sup>In what follows I take for granted that reasons and values are complementary —in particular that we have reasons only in virtue of some value or other. Though this thesis is not universally accepted, I think it is true, and that it is implicitly accepted by the classical eudaimonists, as well as by a broad range of other moral theorists (cf. Korsgaard 1993 and 1996), and I will not defend it here.

<sup>233</sup>This does not mean that I cannot have agent-relative reason to value or promote things to which I stand in no special relationship. For example, I can have agent-relative reason to promote world peace, which presumably is something of value almost universally. The point is that *my* reason for promoting world peace comes through its connection with my eudaimonia. It is certainly possible that that connection could be missing, in which case I would have no reason to seek or promote it —so it is a contingent matter of fact (about me) that I have that reason. But that cannot be the case if world peace has *agent-neutral* value. If that is the value it has, then there is nothing contingent about the reason I have to seek it. That value gives me reason irrespective of anything peculiar to me or my situation.

Note that the facts about me that give me reason to seek world peace (or not) are not (necessarily) facts about what I believe or desire. They are objective facts about my eudaimonia and what is conducive to it. Though the view is thus *relative* in certain respects, it is not *subjective* in the way that many forms of e.g. “cultural relativism” are. This point is made capably by Mack in Mack 1989.

Now, it is possible to have an agent-neutral conception of the value of eudaimonia.<sup>234</sup> On such a view, the value of the eudaimonia of any particular agent (say, Amy) is equally reason-giving to *all* agents, not just Amy, just as on utilitarianism the end of maximizing utility is equally reason-giving to all agents, not just Amy. The interest Amy naturally has in living a good life gives her reason to do things that are instrumental to or constitutive of such a life, but on an agent-neutral account others have equal reason to try to bring about such a good life for Amy. This is because the reason-giving force of things like good lives, just like the reason-giving force of maximal utility in utilitarianism, is the same regardless of the relation one stands in to them: whether a good life is yours or not, you have reason to promote it or bring it about, just as everyone else does. Of course, others cannot act in just the ways Amy can to try to bring about such a life, but whatever courses of action *are* available to them to promote her eudaimonia, they have reason to adopt. Moreover, Amy's eudaimonia is just as reason-giving for them as their own. Ben has as much reason to seek Amy's eudaimonia as he has his own eudaimonia, though of course what he can do toward the realization of a good life for Amy will be very different than what he can do for his own.

This is not, however, the conception of the reason-giving force I wish to defend for eudaimonia. On my view, the eudaimonia of a particular person gives distinctive reason-giving force to the agent whose life it is. As I have indicated in previous chapters, I believe that this is also the proper conception of the reason-giving force of eudaimonia to ascribe to Plato, Aristotle, and the Stoics, and in my discussion of Aristotle I have given reasons for resisting the agent-neutral interpretation of his view in particular. However, the agent-relative conception apparently leaves some strong intuitions unaccounted for, and it is these intuitions, I believe, which motivate those who advocate agent-neutral conceptions of reasons.

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<sup>234</sup>Kraut 1989 and Hurka 1993 employ agent-neutral conceptions of the value of eudaimonia.

The intuitions are something like this: we think some things are important or valuable, not just valuable-to-me or valuable-to-you or valuable-to-Amy, but valuable *period*. Some things don't just give me reasons or you reasons or Amy reasons, but give *anybody* (or *everybody*) reasons. The alleviation of pain is often thought to typify the sort of thing that has this property. If Amy is in pain, then of course Amy has reason to stop it or alleviate it, but beyond that *I* have reason to stop it and so do you, insofar as we can do so. So does anybody in position to do so, regardless of who they are, what they believe, or whether or not they care about Amy one way or another. The fact that the pain is *Amy's* makes no difference as to *who* has reason to stop it: *everybody* does.

Thomas Nagel maintains that this is a potent argument that at least some things have agent-neutral (or, in his terminology, *objective* or *impersonal*) reason-giving force. Pain is an example of something that isn't merely bad *for* someone, but bad *period* — its reason-giving force is agent-neutral. The problem with thinking that pain gives a merely agent-relative reason for acting, Nagel maintains, is that such a reason could accompany an "impersonal indifference" to pain, in oneself or in others:

If we assign impersonal value to pleasure and pain, then each person can think about his own suffering not just that he has reason to want it gone, but that it's bad and should be gotten rid of. If on the other hand we limit ourselves to relative reasons, he will have to say that though he has a reason to want an analgesic, there is no reason for him to have one, or for anyone else who happens to be around to give him one. (Nagel 1986, p. 160)

Ascribing the reason-giving force of pain to only the agent who is experiencing it forces a sort of *dissociated* attitude toward one's own pain: one wants it stopped, but must at the same time acknowledge that others have no reason to stop it. Ascribing agent-neutral value to pain, on the other hand, captures the force of the intuition that *anyone's* pain gives *everyone* a reason to try to stop it. Anyone who is in pain thinks that others *do* have a reason to try to stop it, and that shows that we take the

reason-giving force of pain to be agent-neutral and not merely agent-relative.<sup>235</sup> While pain is probably not the *only* example of something which intuitively might be thought to have agent-neutral reason-giving force, it is hard to imagine a more convincing exemplar. I will therefore focus my defense of the exclusivity of agent-relative reasons on the case of pain, and suppose that a comparable reply is available *mutatis mutandis* to other alleged sources of agent-neutral reasons.

My claim is that our intuitions about the reason-giving force of pain can be just as well or better accommodated by seeing pain as having agent-relative value as opposed to agent-neutral value. In effect, I want to claim that we can explain our intuitions about the reason-giving force of pain better through the perspective of empathic identification than through Nagel's objective standpoint. An account of the reason-giving force of pain in purely agent-relative terms is less mysterious than Nagel's "objective" or "impersonal" standpoint, and it avoids the problematic conflict and collision with the "subjective" perspective which Nagel himself recognizes as a troublesome feature of the objective standpoint. I will return to this point below.

Begin by considering two problems with Nagel's view. First, if we try to consider why some person's being in pain should matter from a truly and purely objective standpoint (that is, not a subjective standpoint masquerading as an objective one), it's hard to see why pain should be reason-giving at all. It can be, as Nagel points out, a perfectly objective fact (that is, a fact that holds independently of whether it is recognized or believed by anybody) that some subject feels itself or experiences itself as being in pain — that's not in doubt. What is in doubt is why from a completely objective standpoint (that is, a standpoint that is different from that of any *subjective* entity) this should be reason-giving. If we can make sense of a "perspective" or outlook that is completely severed from any vestige of subjectivity — and hence from any

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<sup>235</sup>Setting aside cases of *deserved* pain, as for example in punishment. I thank Steve Scalet for this point.

Is there any third alternative here? I don't believe Nagel believes there is. The reasons pain gives are reasons for rational agents, period, so the only escape from their force is through irrationality. That there are better ways to understand the reason-giving force of pain than this is what I want to show. I thank David Schmidtz for pressing this point.



experience of what pain is like — why would we think pain would be recognized as reason-giving from such a perspective?<sup>236</sup> How are we to make a transition from the recognition that subjects take pain to be reason-giving to the acknowledgement that pain actually, objectively, *does* give reasons?

Nagel recognizes something of the force of this worry. He admits:

It may be that from a standpoint sufficiently external to that of ordinary human life, not only chicken salad and salami but much of what is important to human beings — their hopes, projects, ambitions, and very survival — cannot be seen positively to matter. (*ibid.* p. 131)

But his discussion blurs the force of this problem, because his thought-experiment purports to achieve objectivity without doing so. It asks *us* — persons who are occupants of subjective perspectives in which pain is eminently reason-giving — to suppose that we are occupying an “objective” standpoint when we abstract from the thought that the person suffering the pain in question is ourselves. But this gets us only to a more reflective subjective standpoint, not to an objective one.

The problem is not in the objectivity of the fact that pain is felt, but in the conception of a standpoint which is objective in a sense which is contrasted with *subjectivity*, as in being vulnerable to the experience of pain. The difference — and the point — is that we *are* subjects who can recognize the reason-giving force of pain in others *because* we recognize it in ourselves. It is just *because* we consider Nagel’s thought-experiment *as* subjects who can experience and have experienced pain, that we appreciate the reason-giving force pain has. Nagel tacitly admits this point: “When the objective self contemplates pain, it has to do so through the perspective of the sufferer, and the sufferer’s reaction is very clear” (Nagel 1986, p. 161). This is not a merely epistemic point for the objective perspective; it is not merely that this is how in such a perspective facts that pain is being felt come to be known. It is a fact about what such facts can *mean*, how experiences of pain can be *reason-giving*. The only way pain provides reasons at all is because it provides reasons for *subjects*. Nagel both

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<sup>236</sup>Mack objects in a somewhat similar way to Nagel’s argument in Mack 1993, p. 218.

overestimates the virtues of “objectivity” and, concomitantly, underestimates the power of subjectivity to explain the thought-experiment, and consequently the resources of agent-relative reasons to account for our intuitions about reasons under such conditions.

The second problem with Nagel’s case is that the consequences of ascribing only agent-relative value to pain are not what he thinks, either in the case of one’s own pain or in the case of the pain of others. In the case of others’ pain, because we can be and are naturally moved by the pain of others, the fact that they are in pain is or can become (through empathic identification) a reason for us to stop it — an agent-relative reason. This is an important effect of empathic identification, and it is one we have reason (as I have argued) to cultivate. Someone who can remain unmoved by the pain of others is *defective* in a significant way, and it is a kind of defect which is normally not found in people simply because it tends to render them unfit for society. Moreover, as I argued in the previous chapter, it renders them less able to advance their *own* well-being in virtue of the discord it requires between their affective responses and their judgments. As Plato said of unjust persons, they are essentially out of harmony, in conflict with themselves, and such is a state we have reason to avoid out of concern for our own eudaimonia (*Republic* 445b).

We are moved by the pain of others because we can and do occupy the standpoint of empathic identification. Because *we ourselves* experience pain and feel the reason-giving force that being in pain has, we can be moved by the pain of others and take their pain to be reason-giving for us. Nagel purports not to see how such an account can work:

Suppose I have been rescued from a fire and find myself in a hospital burn ward. I want something for the pain, and so does the person in the next bed. He professes to hope we both will be given morphine, but I fail to understand this. I understand why he has reason to want morphine for himself but what reason does he have to want *me* to get some? Does my groaning bother him? (Nagel 1986, p. 160)

Yet if we are not moral and social monsters, we will naturally have this response, and of course it is just that intuition to which Nagel's argument appeals.<sup>237</sup>

Moreover, it is because we expect just this sort of response from others that we are not susceptible to the kind of "dissociation" Nagel thinks is inevitable if we ascribe to pain only agent-relative force. Agent-relative reasons need not be *exclusive* reasons. They can be shared: they can be taken up by others without compromising their agent-relative nature, and that is what occurs when we contemplate a person in pain, whether it is ourselves considered as one person among others, or anyone else.<sup>238</sup> For us to feel the reason-giving force of pain, it is essential that we *not* cease to be subjects who can and do feel pain, and experience it as reason-giving. Far from mandating an objective standpoint, the reason-giving nature of pain requires that we remain subjects, and from within that perspective the reason-giving force of others' pain is readily explained.<sup>239</sup>

If this argument is successful, it shows that our thoughts about the reason-giving force of pain are actually better explained by thinking of that force as agent-relative than as agent-neutral. But then we have a further puzzle: if my account is right, why have Nagel and others thought it so *obvious* that the reason-giving force

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<sup>237</sup>Mack, replying to this example, says that "it may be that my groaning bothers him because my being in pain, in a way that is vivid and present to him, bothers him. Because I am near to him and he is a person of normal sympathies, his sympathy extends to me. So he has a reason to want it to stop — a reason that does not extend to the suffering of those whom, perhaps simply because of their distance from him, his sympathies do not embrace" (Mack 1993, p. 219).

<sup>238</sup>I believe the point could be further extended to our response to animals, and in fact is the right way to think about the moral requirements on our treatment of animals, but I will not take up that point here.

<sup>239</sup>It is true that the *scope* of this reason-giving force is narrower than on Nagel's view. On Nagel's agent-neutral view, pain gives reasons to all agents equally, regardless of how they are situated relative to the person that is in pain. On my view, reasons are given only to those who empathically identify with the sufferer, and our empathy generally is limited to those with whom we are in contact in some way — those whose plights become vivid to us through our imagination. I do not see that this is a problem, however. The view certainly accounts for the reasons people have to relieve the pain of those they can most directly affect. And nothing about the limits on reasons to *relieve* pain undercuts the general points, made above, about reasons not to *inflict* pain. We have reason not to inflict pain *irrespective* of the victim and our relationship to him or her (except in special cases such as punishment), through the mechanisms suggested by Mill and described earlier. In any event, it is also true that, as Korsgaard argues, inflicting pain or harm establishes a personal *relationship* between agent and victim (Korsgaard 1993, p. 48), and that reasons of respect "supervene" on these relationships. Though she does not say how this happens, on my view it happens because when such relationships are established empathy becomes both possible and natural.

of pain cannot be merely agent-relative, and must be agent-neutral? An *error theory* of some sort is required here.

My error theory is this. Empathic identification occurs in various degrees, and varies among persons. Nevertheless, as I have argued there is a threshold of amenability to empathic identification which it is not possible to fail to meet without suffering significant social consequences. If one is insufficiently adept at seeing things as others see them and finding reasons for action in such perspectives, one will naturally be excluded from participation in relationships with others that are important (i.e. cooperative endeavors) or desirable (e.g. companionship, friendship), or both. These costs are sufficiently high that there is ample purely instrumental reason to cultivate one's capacity for and disposition to empathic identification at least to the minimal degree represented by this "threshold." And part of this threshold is having the sort of response to the pain of others that we think is normal: we naturally find pain reason-giving. This is just to say, then, that the susceptibility to the reason-giving force of the pain of others which Nagel accounts for by recourse to "objective" or "impartial" (agent-neutral) reasons is in fact explained by the virtually universal disposition to find the pain of others reason-giving, while that reason-giving force is in fact entirely agent-relative. In the first instance it is relative to the subject experiencing the pain, but others can and do find their own agent-relative reasons to stop or alleviate others' pain through empathic identification. It is part of my view, then, that empathic identification at least at this (minimal) level is virtually universal and unconscious, and I think there is ample empirical evidence to bear this out.<sup>240</sup> It

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<sup>240</sup>As Robert Gordon says, "We do this sort of thing so routinely that we are not aware of doing it — and we fail to appreciate the sophistication of the maneuver we are engaging in" (Gordon 1995a, p. 731).

is because they are all around us that we think that the agent-relative reasons we are responding to are agent-neutral.<sup>241</sup>

I mentioned earlier that Nagel, by his own account, is left with a conception of selfhood and practical agency that is saddled with a deep schizophrenia.<sup>242</sup> *View from Nowhere* is dedicated to the task of considering the effects of aspiration to an ever more “external” and “objective” point of view, and it confronts inevitable tensions which arise from the fact that our *subjective* points of view are parts of what the objective perspective must accept as genuine and real parts of what there is. In ethics, this leads to a discord between “agent-neutral” reasons and “impersonal values” — such as, for example, that pain ought to be alleviated irrespective of the subject who is feeling it — and “agent-relative” or personal reasons and values (Nagel 1986, p.165ff). Nagel’s pessimistic conclusion is that “the human duality of perspectives is too deep for us reasonably to hope to overcome it” (p. 185). He is left with a Sidgwickian acknowledgement that a dualism of practical reason is inevitable (pp. 194ff).

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<sup>241</sup>On the other hand, this very universality may give rise to an attempt to salvage a notion of agent-neutral reasons. What if by “agent-neutral reasons” we mean simply those reasons that people in fact (virtually) universally share? In other words, what about the claim that my account of the agent-relative reason-giving force of e.g. pain amounts to a tacit expansion of agent-relativity in effect to agent-neutrality?

Now, if the claim were put this way I would respond that, if anything, agent-neutrality is being *contracted* to a form of agent-relativity, because such a conception of agent-neutrality is reducible without remainder to agent-relativity. And if that is the case, I think a more perspicuous explanation and understanding of the nature of reasons, and identification of what reasons we have, is to be had through considering the reasons individual agents have, than by adverting to such a conception of agent-neutrality. Nagel’s account, for example, utterly obscures the reasons people have to relieve the pain of others.

But I think in fact that agent-neutrality should *not* be thought of as amenable to this sort of reductive analysis. The point of agent-neutral reasons is that there are sources of reasons outside of any feature of the *particular* properties, qualities, or values of agents. This, of course, is just what eudaimonism denies. In identifying the source of all reasons for action in the eudaimonia of each agent, it affirms only agent-relative reasons; if the argument I have given is a good one, agent-relative reasons are all we need.

<sup>242</sup>It is not clear that Nagel is still committed to this view. Nagel 1994 and 1995 argue for a view that is somewhat different than his earlier defenses of deontic constraints.

A significant benefit of the account I have given is that no such dualism is necessary.<sup>243</sup> Empathic identification roots the explanation for the reasons we have for respect in the same soil which supports all our other reasons. Eudaimonism is a unified practical theory, and apart from the specific problems with Nagel's impartialist, "objective," account, that is a significant reason to prefer it.

But there is a further source of worry, I believe, about offering an agent-relative account for our intuitions about the constraints of respect. The worry, roughly, is that as soon as we abandon the claim that the "scope" of agents for whom the reasons are reasons is universal, in virtue of their agent-neutrality, we may find that not all agents have agent-relative reasons for respect. Some people may "fall through the cracks" and thus have no reasons for respecting others, whereas our intuitions suggest that the constraints of respect apply without exception to human agents. I consider this worry next.

### *The Scope of Empathic Reasons*

If reasons for acting morally toward others (in particular for constraining our treatment of them in the ways we think intuitively appropriate) are only agent-relative, then there is a possibility (at least a conceptual possibility, perhaps a practical possibility) that there might be persons who escape their reach. There might be persons, that is, for whom it is not true that they have eudaimonistic reason to respect others. The reasons for becoming (or remaining) empathically identified with others in the requisite way somehow break down.

One attraction of appealing to agent-neutral reasons to ground respect for others is that, since such reasons are not contingent on any particular features of the

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<sup>243</sup>There are skeptics about the claim that virtue theories, even eudaimonist ones, can plausibly maintain that virtues (or the values which we have reason to seek and promote) do not conflict. Such skepticism may give rise to the suspicion that the unity I claim for eudaimonism is chimerical. While I cannot address this worry in depth here, the idea is that things that are of value have value *only* insofar as they can fit into a unified eudaimon life. Any good life will have to leave undone things which *could* have contributed to that good life had they been done —there are just too many things that are good for human beings to do. This does not, however, lead to *conflict* among a plurality of values, and thus does not generate the kind of deep tension which appears in Nagel's and Sidgwick's accounts. I take it that an account that gives us a single, unified aim for practical reason —albeit one that is difficult to work out in detail — is one we would like to have.

agents who have them, no pathologies can disqualify moral agents from having reasons to respect others. We can think even of psychopaths, as bent as we can imagine —Adolf Hitler, Robert Alton Harris<sup>244</sup>, whomever —and say of them, no matter what, that they have reason to respect others, if we accept an agent-neutral basis for such reasons. Nothing about their pathology delivers them from the scope of the force of agent-neutral reasons, even though these reasons have absolutely no grip on their practical rationality (that's just what makes them psychopathic).

On the other hand, if reasons to respect others are agent-relative, as grounded in agents' interests in having a good life, then it may not be true that psychopaths have reason to respect others. It may not hold that empathic identification — and thus respect for others — will in fact conduce to what minimal chances they have of a good life. In that case we should have to say that they have no reason to respect others. This seems undesirable as an implication of a moral theory.

The intuitive problem here is that we want to say that what the psychopath does (in, say, harming others) is *wrong*, and it is not clear how we can say so on my view. When we say of such an act that it is *wrong* we are saying three things. First, we are saying that its effects are *bad*. Now, on my agent-relative view, this has to be an elliptical way of saying that its effects are *bad for* those who suffer from the act, directly or indirectly. However, I have argued above that this should not be seen as a problem, and in any case this is not the crux of the problem.

The real problem is that, in labeling an act *wrong*, we are saying that the agent who did it had reason not to do it — *conclusive* reason not to do it — but did it anyway. Furthermore, in consequence of this feature of a wrongful action, the agent who has committed such an action may *deserve* sanctions (punishment) of some sort or other. But on my view it need not be true that a psychopath had a reason not to commit the wrongful act, and hence it may also be true that he does not deserve sanctions. That sits poorly with our intuitions about the actions of psychopaths.

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<sup>244</sup>For a gripping discussion of the horrible (in every sense) life of Robert Alton Harris, multiple homicide, see Watson 1993, pp. 131ff.

Now we need not go so far as to say that the psychopath is acting *rationally* in victimizing others. That would indeed be a bitter pill to swallow, but on my account it need not be swallowed. It is the fact that the psychopath is in some sense *beyond* the grip of rationality or reasons that leaves him with no reason to respect others, and whatever the right account or explanation of what he does at that point, it will not merit being regarded as *rational*.

Still, there is an intuitive problem here. My response to that problem turns on the fact that psychopaths are *incapable* of perceiving and acting on what they have genuine reason to do. In psychopaths the full practical reasoning capacities that normal people have are crippled, and what is left is perhaps some effective instrumental reasoning abilities driven by ends that are bad both for the psychopaths and for those unfortunate enough to cross their paths. These people are *degenerate cases* of human beings, not persons with the kinds of practical reasoning capacities that our moral terms apply to and to which our moral intuitions respond. I think the right thing to say here is that our moral intuitions are less than fully reliable in these cases, and that there is good reason for this lack of reliability.

Psychopaths fool us. They appear to us to be like other human beings, but they are not. They lack the effective capacity to be moved by the plight of others, and the effects on others of their actions have no reason-giving force for them beyond their instrumental connection with the ends of the psychopaths themselves. In this respect they are *brutes* — they are no longer guided or moved by reason. If we are attacked by a grizzly bear, we yell in fear and pain, but we don't expect the bear to be *moved* by our distress — to empathize with our distress and find in it reasons to cease attacking us. It is the same with the psychopath, but his human form deludes us into believing that he is guided by or responsive to reason, when he is not. Our inclination to label his act as *wrong* — think that he has *reason* to do otherwise — is an illusion. It is a natural mistake, but a mistake nonetheless. It makes no difference whether we think there is an agent-neutral reason “out there” that the psychopath is ignoring, or whether we think his nature has been sufficiently bent that it no longer makes sense to appeal to



reasons to try to stop him. All that is left in dealing with the psychopath are causal implements — goads and rewards to control him into letting others be.

The same point explains our intuitions that victims are entitled to *complain* or *object* to their treatment at the hands of the psychopath.<sup>245</sup> As Nagel observes, if we are in pain we simply suppose that others have reason to stop it (Nagel 1986, p. 159). Our thinking about the reasons others have to stop our pain is unconditional — it is not dependent on what others have reason to do in virtue of their dispositions to empathy. If we are being assaulted by a psychopath, we think our distress just *is* a reason why the psychopath ought to stop. Our thinking about what the psychopath has reason to do does not include a step of assessment whether, on the basis of his psychological constitution, the psychopath really *does* have reason to heed our demands that he stop. We believe he *does* have reason to do so, whether he heeds it or not.

But it is significant that in fact we run into very few psychopaths in the course of our lives. It is a fact about the people among whom we live and act that they *are* reflectively rational and they *do* empathically identify with others, and we can and do in the normal case rely on their having these dispositions. Expecting that others will find reason to stop our pain or alleviate our distress is something that is deeply ingrained in us, and it is natural for us to regard others as moveable by our own reasons in this way.

There are of course also more marginal cases — persons who, while not psychopathic, who through “hardness of heart” are nevertheless incapable of perceiving their reasons to identify empathically with others, and hence incapable of acting on the reasons empathic identification yields. We still want to ascribe *wrongness* to their acts of harm others, but they too seem to lack any reason to act otherwise.

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<sup>245</sup>Korsgaard also takes entitlement to objection as a major consideration *against* agent-relative accounts of the reasons underlying deontic constraints (Korsgaard 1993, pp. 47ff).

But insofar as it is at all possible for persons to be ruled by reason — to make their lives into expressions of their practical, reflective rationality — the eudaimonist theory of the good entails that they have overwhelming reason to do so, and hence to cultivate empathic identification. There is a bright line theoretically between those who are *incapable* of living their lives in this way, and those for whom it remains possible, however difficult it is to do so. In the latter case the centrality of reflective rationality to *whatever* else can be good for a human life ensures that such persons have as much reason as anyone to respect others.<sup>246</sup>

But those who are beyond the reach of full practical reason are in the same boat as the psychopath in this respect. They differ from the psychopath in that the ends their instrumental reason seeks are not overtly incompatible with the interests of others as the psychopath's are. But they have crossed an important line so far as our moral intuitions go. This line is something like the one between having free will and being causally determined, and I do not pretend to have a general account of that line. But the point here is that we can and do generally treat people as though they are *not* merely the pawns of deterministic forces, but instead are amenable to reason. We treat people, that is, as though they can respond to reasons, including reasons about what it is good for them to do. Our intuitions are less reliable when it comes to human beings who lack this capacity, whether they are fully psychopathic or merely creatures who can no longer deliberate about and be moved by their own good.

All of this has important ramifications for our *treatment* of these people. Of course, whether or not the psychopath (or the merely hard of heart) has reason to respect others, when he fails to do so we are justified in *defending* ourselves and others against him. But on my view we may have lost the capacity to punish the psychopath (or even the hard of heart) as a matter of *desert*. I do not see this as a problem, however. By hypothesis such people are beyond the reach of the pertinent kinds of reasons, and it is thus appropriate that we treat them as cases of behavioral

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<sup>246</sup>This is a way of claiming, as Aristotle did, that while virtue does not *exhaust* the human good, it is necessary for it, and that it plays a crucial role in allowing other aspects of the good — so-called external and bodily goods — to contribute to the human good.

management. To the extent their instrumental reasoning capacities are intact, the threat of punishment is an appropriate way to condition their pursuit of their own ends (“behave or your ends will be defeated by imprisonment”). To the extent they are not, then they *are* brutes in human form, and treatment as such is appropriate for them, even though the concept of *desert* may have ceased to apply to them as rational animals.

In short, though admittedly the thought that psychopaths have no reason to respect others strikes us as odd, there is no real adverse upshot to it. We naturally think that they do, but that is because we are used to thinking that people are amenable to reasons, and in particular reasons that arise from the conditions of other persons. Psychopaths defy that expectation, so we should not be surprised that our intuitions on their account are not highly reliable.

This completes my sketch of how empathic identification harmonizes our intuitions about the respect we owe other persons with eudaimonism, and thus rebuts the objection to eudaimonist virtue theories that they cannot adequately account for the constraints we feel are imposed on our actions by others and their interests.

### *Conclusion*

I have argued that two sources of objection to eudaimonism on the basis of intuitive constraints on our treatment of others should be rejected. The first, the claim that eudaimonist virtue ethics cannot endorse non-instrumental concern for others, I regard as effectively rebutted by Aristotle. I have elaborated a bit on the nature of the psychology of the virtuous agent who has such concern, and claimed that that psychological structure also reveals how a virtuous agent can reasonably be sufficiently committed to others. In this respect there is nothing objectionably self-serving about the nature or degree of involvement with others which eudaimonism recommends.

To meet worries about respect for others, I have had to go beyond the positive arguments of the ancients and draw on an account of empathic identification to

explain why agents who seek their own eudaimonia will also treat others as respect requires, and will do so for reasons that we intuitively find acceptable, even appealing.

There is much more to be said to make this line of response out as a viable and compelling conception of the basis upon which we owe respect to others, but I hope to have offered enough here by way of description and defense to make plausible the idea that, far from being incapable of answering to our intuitions about respect, eudaimonist virtue ethics is congruent with and a theoretical basis for an understanding of how we can, do, and should regard others.

## APPENDIX A: INCLUSIVISM AND MORAL COMPETITION

Nicholas White criticizes accounts of the human good such as the one I offered in Chapter 3 on Aristotle (White 1994, 1995). He refers to the strategy employed there as “inclusivism,” and argues that inclusivist interpretations of Aristotle allocate a morally insufficient role to others’ interests. Here I try to address White’s objections.

White’s complaint begins with the fact that a conception of eudaimonia which is broad enough to include both what would normally be thought of as the agent’s own good and the good of a friend is bound to have internal conflicts among its constituents.<sup>247</sup> Now, according to White, Aristotle fully acknowledges that the goods of selves and others can conflict in ways which are not subject to harmonization (White 1995, p. 265).<sup>248</sup> This means that there is no “guarantee” that any particular good will be pursued to any particular degree (White 1994, p. 66; 1995, p. 268). There is, and can be, apparently, no minimum threshold for the realization of any given component of the good, including the good of a friend (White 1994, p. 68). So differing parts of our good inevitably give rise to what is in essence a zero-sum game for scarce goods: either the agent can get them, or the friend can get them, but not both. Something has to give, and nothing in inclusivist eudaimonism (IE) assures that self-satisfaction will not always win out.

White sees this scenario played out in Aristotle’s discussion of conflicts over scarce “noble” goods in *NE* IX.8. These are cases in which (in White’s terms) “competition arises over nobility” (White 1995, p. 272). When they occur, he says,

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<sup>247</sup>White 1994, p. 65; 1995, p. 268. Actually, White argues that there can be conflicts among the constituents of the agent’s proper good, *a fortiori* between his proper good and the good of the friend. This is particularly true of the allocation of time and energy.

<sup>248</sup>The extreme of this sort of problem is thought to be evident in Aristotle’s recognition in *NE* Book X that lives of contemplation (*theoria*) and to virtue (*ethike arete*) are mutually incompatible, and mutually exclusive.

The aim of being maximally altruistic conflicts with the aim of maximizing one's own well-being. One must choose the one or the other. (White 1995, p. 273).<sup>249</sup>

Crucially, White claims that we can only understand Aristotle's account of self-love in such contexts if we see it as accepting conflict and advocating a substantively egoistic resolution to it (White 1995, p. 274). So on his view IE views of friendship fail in the end to escape an objectionable form of egoism.

Further, White offers specific arguments against the notion of overlapping or common goods I have attributed to Aristotle in understanding his claims about friends as second selves as a way of escaping this objectionably egoistic conclusion. The first argument is negative: White criticizes what he refers to as "Mill's idea" that "the desire for a given part of happiness for its own sake is not to be distinguished from the desire for happiness itself" (White 1995, p. 277). The second is positive: he offers his own non-inclusivist recommendation as to how to understand Aristotle's claims that friends' good and virtuous action can be valued for themselves in light of his insistence that happiness is the end of all we do. I will address his critical first argument after assessing his alternative.

On White's view Aristotle should be understood as advancing a sort of *joint* notion of the desire for or pursuit of goods: "something can be desired or aimed at both for its own sake and for something else, in the sense of being aimed at partly for the sake of each" (White 1995, p. 278). The idea here is one of *overdetermination*: a good is desired on two independent grounds, either of which is sufficient to motivate or justify seeking it on its own. On this interpretation there would be nothing about the (counterfactual) failure of one of the grounds to hold to preclude seeking the good on

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<sup>249</sup>Strictly speaking, these cases are not zero-sum games: White says they assume the form of a Prisoner's Dilemma if each insists on getting the greatest good (White 1995, p. 273).

the other grounds alone.<sup>250</sup> White attributes this view to Aristotle on the basis of claims in *NE* I to the effect that “intelligence, sight, and certain pleasure and honors” are goods in themselves, even if we also pursue them for the sake of something else (1096b18-9), and that, though we chose for the sake of happiness “honor, pleasure, reason, and every excellence” we nevertheless choose them for themselves, “for if nothing resulted from them we should still choose each of them” (1097b1-5).

But overdetermination has a serious problem as a way of understanding Aristotle’s thoughts here (and in his similar discussion of the way that we seek a friend’s good). It runs squarely into one of Aristotle’s formal requirements on eudaimonia. The requirement in question is that the best life be one which cannot be made better by the addition of any other good. At some times this requirement is expressed under the rubric of “completeness” (*teleios*),<sup>251</sup> at others as “self-sufficiency” (*autarkes*),<sup>252</sup> but in any case the point is that the eudaimon life cannot be improved by adding to it anything outside it.

Here’s the problem. Suppose that White is right that virtuous action and friends’ goods are choiceworthy both for their own sake and for the sake of our happiness, with either of these considerations being sufficiently reason-giving to justify and motivate that pursuit in the absence of the other. This is just to say that these goods have reason-giving force for us, independently of their contribution to our

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<sup>250</sup>An alternative would a *combination* idea: neither ground for seeking the good is sufficient to be effective in its own right, but in combination, the two grounds are motivationally sufficient. An example: If I am making spaghetti sauce and see that I am out of fresh Italian parsley, that may give rise to a weak desire to go to the store for some, instead of making do with some dried substitute. Likewise, if I see that I am out of tomato sauce, I get a similar weak desire, so as to avoid using some combination of tomato paste and tomato juice. Either of these desires, by itself, won’t get me to the store. But if I see I am out of both, the combined force of the two weak desires becomes effective, and off I go. This model is one White does not consider (perhaps because on it eudaimonia would appear to fail Aristotle’s stipulation that these goods are choiceworthy on their own —see text), and I will not take up its implications for his argument.

<sup>251</sup>Aristotle says that the first of the three ways in which we call something “complete” is when “they lack nothing in respect of goodness and cannot be excelled and no part proper to them can be found outside” (*Meta.* V.16: 1021b33; cf. also V.26: 1023b26).

<sup>252</sup>At *NE* 1.7: 1097b15-20 Aristotle defines the “self-sufficient” as “that which when isolated makes life desirable and lacking in nothing,” and on that basis then says that eudaimonia cannot be “counted as one good thing among others — if it were so counted it would clearly be made more desirable by the addition of even the least of goods.”

eudaimonia. Then over and above our eudaimonia, these would be good to have or bring about. A eudaimon life which failed to include these goods would straightforwardly be lacking — in particular it would be lacking in the value represented by these goods apart from their contribution to eudaimonia.

But this is an incoherent conception of eudaimonia. Aristotle's formal requirement that it be incapable of improvement by addition means that there cannot be reason-giving force to these goods apart from their contribution to eudaimonia. White supposes that "it is wrong to picture Aristotle as thinking that one's own happiness is the sole basis of ethical and altruistic considerations" (White 1995, p. 279), but Aristotle's insistence on the completeness and self-sufficiency of eudaimonia requires that we picture him in just this way. Nothing outside of or apart from one's eudaimonia can be a source of reasons for action; if there were, eudaimonia would not be self-sufficient — a life with eudaimonia and these extraneous goods would be both more complete and more self-sufficient than the eudaimon life alone. The fact that such goods might *also* be sought for the sake of eudaimonia is wholly irrelevant. Either they have reason-giving force independent of their contribution to eudaimonia or they do not, and Aristotle clearly comes down on the side that they do not.

This leaves us a puzzle, of course: we need to explain *how* they can be pursued for their own sake, while nevertheless acquiring all their reason-giving force from their contribution to eudaimonia, but that is just what my common-goods account, in contrast to that of White, provides. So let us consider what might be said on its behalf in reply to White's worries about Mill's idea.<sup>253</sup>

Of these there are two. First, White thinks there is an important distinction between desiring some "part of happiness" for itself and *as* a part of happiness (White 1995, p. 277). This is borne out, he maintains, by the fact that distinct parts of happiness can conflict; however, he does not say exactly how these two thoughts are

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<sup>253</sup>I am not keen on assimilating the view I have put forward to Mill's, for a number of reasons, only one of which is the confusion within Mill's hedonistic conception of happiness. More to the point, thinking of the matter as one of "parts of happiness" seems to me to be unhelpful. Perhaps this is the source of the obscurity White finds in it. Still, the similarities are such as to make examination of White's objections fruitful.



connected. I will return to this point in a moment. Second, there is (he says) no reason to believe that Mill's idea occurred to Aristotle, particularly given its incongruity with Aristotle's distinction between final and instrumental desiring (White 1995, p. 277). The distinction Aristotle draws between desiring something for itself and desiring it for something else appears to be neither the same as, nor compatible with, the distinction Mill draws.

Now, it can't be an argument against the common-goods view that Aristotle never entertained it: if I am right, it underwrites his important and frequent reference to friends as second selves, so such a charge simply begs the question. But is there an incongruity between the idea that friends can share goods — that the good of friend can come to constitute part of my good in the way I have suggested — and the distinction between final and instrumental desiring? I do not see any. If we take an ordered structure of ends and activities as an accurate representation of Aristotle's conception of the *selves* we most identify with and which determine our good, there is no apparent reason why the final/instrumental distinction cannot apply to the parts of our good which we share with others (that is, which is common to their good and our own, in the way I have sketched) in just the same way that it applies to those we do not.

Perhaps White's thought is that the final/instrumental distinction applies awkwardly, at best, to our desire for our friend's good as such: do we desire that good for itself, or instrumentally? Aristotle clearly answers that we desire it for itself, and I see no reason to doubt that response. But he also explicitly accepts the idea that there are things which are sought *both* in themselves and for the sake of something else (*NE* 1.7), and the common-goods approach reveals how that is perfectly intelligible for the good of one's friend.

Perhaps the first point — that cases of conflict bring out a tension in the *ways* we are thought to desire our own good and that of our friend — goes more to the heart of White's objection. After all, he argues vigorously for the view that in *NE* IX.8 Aristotle is arguing for a kind of self-love which in cases of scarcity of ethical good (*to*

*kalon*) amounts to substantive egoism (White 1995, p. 272ff). He seems to see this sort of “moral competition” as crucially determining how Aristotle should be read on friends’ goods, and the direction it points as away from common or overlapping goods.

Here White seems to have taken over significant parts of Kraut’s argument that scarcity of the moral good *requires* that we understand Aristotle’s conception of moral competition to be a zero-sum game, in which what one agent gains the other loses (Kraut 1988, 1989).<sup>254</sup> The details of the respective accounts differ as to how and why moral good should be thought scarce, but in any case the idea is that under some

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<sup>254</sup>Kraut is not as clear or consistent on this point as one would like. In his comment on Annas (1988), he says that Aristotle conceives of moral competition as a “real,” though mutually beneficial rivalry, and that since virtuous activity requires material resources that are themselves scarce, “it can happen that in taking an opportunity or resource for myself I leave less for others” (pp. 20-1). In his longer discussion in Kraut 1989, he develops the idea that occasions for moral competition arise in cases in which the “optimal good of individuals” conflict (p. 116). “Aristotle’s defense of self-love,” he says, “commits him to the view that there is a good that everyone should try to acquire, but that only one person can have — the good that consists in being the most virtuous member of one’s community” (p. 118). However, Kraut also thinks this good is not among the goods in which happiness consists; this raises the question why it should be thought a good at all. Kraut does not say, and thus leaves an unexplained oddity in Aristotle’s view.

In general, as Kraut recognizes, Aristotle does not suggest that happiness is determined by the *comparative* quantities of good one has relative to others (p. 119). However, Kraut holds that in the special case of virtue, this kind of comparative good *does* matter — that it is and ought to be an end for the virtuous person to outdo all others. The only apparent motivation for this claim is one ambiguous passage (IX.8:1168b25), and given its oddity, and the fact that it can be read more naturally and consistently with the balance of the chapter (i.e. in emphasizing the difference in kind of goods that distinguishes genuine self-love from the objectionable ersatz kind) by having Aristotle be consistent on this good as well, there is no reason to resort to Kraut’s (or White’s) take on the passage, with its consequent unexplained anomalous moral psychology.

More generally, Kraut observes, Aristotle thinks there are spin-off benefits to all involved — including the wider community — from such competition, so that the “loser” does not really lose, all things considered (p. 117). The analogy Kraut suggests is of a competition among musicians for the best performance: everyone gains from the music that results, and though there can strictly speaking be only one “winner” of the competition, even those who do not thus win benefit from the improvements in their own performance which the competition brings out. So the “zero-sum” reading in Kraut 1989 is mitigated by a number of considerations which undercut its force; it remains, however, a “zero-sum” reading for the good of being the *most* virtuous.

Kraut’s reading forces him to an odd answer to a question that arises as a direct result of his reading: whether we take Aristotle to mean that the virtuous person always wants to get the best kind of good whenever a division of goods is called for (p. 121). The kind of fairness in competition Kraut goes to great pains to explicate becomes a worry only given his needless assumption that Aristotle thinks there is a comparative good in moral excellence. Kraut also argues for a way in which virtuous activity “enlarges the pie” of fine activity. In this he is quite right. But there is nothing about this argument which depends on his claims about the comparative good of winning moral competition; the latter can be given up without detracting at all from the point that virtuous activity creates benefit for everyone.

The main point is this: it is not the regard for friends as *equals* that does the work for Aristotle’s account of “moral competition” (though of course the virtuous person does in fact regard his or her friends thus); Aristotle’s account turns on the fact that their good is to a significant extent shared — they mutually regard the other’s good as part of their own, and each sees the other as a second self.

circumstances (at least), the goods of friends will conflict. On Kraut's view, when they do the virtuous friend will seek to share the opportunities equally.<sup>255</sup> On White's view, Aristotle comes down unequivocally on the side of self-serving resolution to the conflict.

There are good reasons to object to this understanding of Aristotle's view of moral competition, only one of which is that it confines our choices to these unappealing alternatives. The first substantive point is that it overlooks the degree to which friends have their goods in common — each is a second self to the other. In an underappreciated passage in Book VIII, Aristotle claims that “in loving a friend men love what is good for themselves; for the good man in becoming a friend becomes a good to his friend” (VIII.5: 1157b32). The point here is not that friends fail to distinguish other from self, nor that conflicts cannot occur between the respective interests of each. It is that the way friends regard such conflicts is radically changed by the place the good of one's friend has in one's own overall good: it no longer is something alien, something to be weighed against one's own (proper) good. It is much more like conflicts between parts or aspects of one's own good.

Thinking about conflicts between the goods of friends this way, I believe, helps considerably in making sense of Aristotle without resorting to the desperate measures of Kraut or the pessimism of White. It is unproblematic (for outlooks that don't pretend to monism about value) that our lives cannot contain as much as we'd like of all the various things that can be good for us. Tradeoffs between goods are necessary. I cannot earn as much money as I'd like, or have as much leisure as I'd like, if I also want to study philosophy. I regard that tradeoff as worthwhile, so I make it. Life is nothing if not an endless series of such decisions, over minutiae and over life-changing matters. Aristotle's theory unquestionably recognizes and accepts these sorts of conflicts.

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<sup>255</sup>Kraut 1989, p. 125. Perhaps what he has in mind is something like the “possession arrow” in basketball, which evens out who gets possession of the ball when both teams can make equal claim to it (viz. what used to be a “jump ball”).

So it cannot be a problem for IE *merely* that aspects of the good of one's friend and of one's own (proper) self can conflict, because this is just an instance of the general problem of tradeoffs among competing goods. A problem would arise only from the claim that such conflicts should be resolved *only* along the lines of *whose* proper good is at stake. Only if Aristotle maintained that when goods conflict one should always choose one's own proper good over that of one's friend would there be a worry here, and of course Aristotle says no such thing.<sup>256</sup>

The closest he comes to saying anything like it comes in the debate over moral competition. Here, he says, the good man

is therefore assigning the greater good to himself. ...he may even give up actions to his friend; it may be nobler to become the cause of his friend's acting than to act himself. In all actions, therefore, that men are praised for, the good man is seen to assign to himself the greater share in what is noble. (IX.8:1169a29-b1)

White understands Aristotle as in effect giving a decision rule for conflicts between oneself and one's friend over doing noble action: Choose along the lines of one's proper self — take the greater share in the noble.<sup>257</sup>

But Aristotle need not be understood as giving such a rule at all. A much better way to interpret the passage is to see it as a *de re* description from the perspective of an observer of the course of action the virtuous person adopts. I will return to this below, after noting first that there is sort of a paradox in reading Aristotle as White does.<sup>258</sup> White's objection is that for the good person to do what he takes Aristotle to suggest seems rather tawdry: it is self-serving and objectionably egoistic. In effect,

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<sup>256</sup>Irwin claims that "Since I do not make my friend a part of myself, and do not make the two of us into one self, I am not indifferent about which of us gains the benefit" (Irwin 1988, p. 430). Irwin is right about not making friends into single selves, but (if my interpretation is right) he is wrong about making friends into part of oneself, or (more to the point) their good part of one's own good. Moreover, even if one is not "indifferent about to who gains the benefit," that does not show that the answer to that question will *determine* what choice to make; though not indifferent I might nevertheless be motivated to bring about the greater good for my friend or loved one instead of myself.

<sup>257</sup>Cf. "the good man, seeing that in certain circumstances he can get the greatest good only by getting more than his friend, chooses to do so" (White 1995, p. 280).

<sup>258</sup>Something like this paradox is recognized by Price 1989, p. 112.

then, Aristotle has the good person making the *wrong choice*: genuine virtue, we might think, would dictate doing the opposite. The *really* noble thing for the good person to do would be to defer to his friend.

But once we say this, we are saying, paradoxically, just what Aristotle says. The point is that what the good person seeks *is* the noble. It is the noble that (*de dicto*) he chooses and which determines his choice, not his own proper good as opposed to that of his friend. In determining his choice by the noble, the good person makes the nobler and more virtuous choice. The air of paradox here can be dispelled simply by giving up the idea that what Aristotle is urging is a competitive stance over moral good. What determines the choice of the good person is what is noble, not competition for a scarce good.

In his essay, “First and Second Things,” C.S. Lewis argues that “You can’t get second things by putting them first; you can get second things only by putting first things first” (Lewis 1970, p. 280). One way of thinking about what Aristotle is proposing for the thoughts of the good person is that he has first things first: by choosing the noble, he also gets the greatest good for himself. Conversely, when one puts getting the greater good for oneself first (as in “the prevailing type of self-love”), one gets neither that greater good nor nobility.

We thus understand Aristotle best if we take him to be making a *de re* claim about what the good person chooses, when the good person chooses the noble. The object of choice is represented to the good person confronted with a choice to make *as* the noble, not as the greater good.<sup>259</sup> It is, as he says, always for the sake of the noble that the virtuous person chooses (*NE* 1116b30, 1138b21, 1140b6, 1144a18, *EE* 1230a27). There is no reason to attribute to Aristotle the idea that the end of the good person’s action — the object of choice — is explicitly represented as the greater good, even though (i) it is true that the noble *is* the greater good, and (ii) the good person is

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<sup>259</sup>I argued in Chapter 3 that the noble is not in the first instance represented to the virtuous person *as* noble, but instead as the value realized therein. So actually the way the choice of the noble is represented to the virtuous person is at *two* removes from a conception of it as the greater good.

capable of recognizing that this is so.<sup>260</sup> Where Aristotle refers to what the good person chooses as “the greater share in what is noble,” it is explicitly from the standpoint of an observer: “the good man *is seen to* assign to himself the greater share...” (1169a35, emphasis added).

It makes sense to see this as a *de re* description of what appears *de dicto* to the good man very differently, since Aristotle is concerned here to characterize the kind of choice which, on his view, differentiates the self-love of the virtuous person from the “prevailing type” of self-lovers — and that just is choice of the noble. The context of Aristotle’s topic in chapter IX.8 is the distinction between ersatz self-love and the real thing on the basis of the different goods which are the objects of choice in either case. Hence it is most natural to read Aristotle as extending his characterization of the object of choice for the genuine lover of self — as a further explication of his inclusivist doctrine of the human good — than to see him as making a superfluous if not gratuitous point about a moral competition that at most could represent an afterthought to his characterization of love and friendship.

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<sup>260</sup>Indeed, if pressed for a justification of his choice, his justifying reasons would ultimately terminate with such a claim. This is the cardinal tenet of eudaimonism.

It will be apparent that the argument I am pressing here is a restatement of the distinction Annas makes between what *motivates* the virtuous agent and what *explains* or *justifies* his or her good choices and actions (Annas 1988; Kahn makes a somewhat similar distinction in Kahn 1981), although White objects to this distinction (White 1995, p. 295, n. 32). I believe this reformulation withstands his objection.

## APPENDIX B: EUDAIMONIA AND SELF-SACRIFICE

The way commitment to others is compatible with eudaimonistic virtue theory helps to address the objection that on eudaimonist accounts self-sacrifice of a noble sort (e.g. death in battle or for a worthy cause) cannot be rational. Recall that Hardie maintained that Aristotle, for one, could not endorse the sacrifice of one's life for morally worthy objectives in view of his commitment to a "complete life" as a component of eudaimonia (Hardie 1965, p. 293).

This is, I believe, both to burden Aristotle's conception of the "complete life" with an unduly quantitative interpretation and to miss the nature of the commitments that the virtuous agent can have which can justify such a "sacrifice." (The scare quotes around the word are necessary because, while the loss of one's life surely counts *as* a loss, on Aristotle's view, it is being exchanged for something one counts as more valuable, and it is not clear that such an exchange should count as a "sacrifice".) In Aristotle's own terms, the virtuous agent is committed to and motivated by the *kalon* (the fine or noble), and comes to value it in such a way that it matters more than the value of one's life, especially a life without the *kalon*: "bravery consists in following reason, and reason bids ones choose the noble" (*EE* III.1: 1229a2). The virtuous man can choose both eudaimonia and the sacrifice of his own life in circumstances that require him to do so, because to do otherwise would require him to reject the noble in favor of a lesser good.

It is not the case, as some have suggested, that such a decision cannot be rational. The objection is that, if one chooses to save one's life there will be many more opportunities for the exercise of other virtues, more than counterbalancing the loss of rejecting the noble in this one case. That way of understanding the situation misses completely the nature of commitment, whether the commitment is to the *kalon*, or to friends or loved ones. Violating such a commitment when circumstances press a choice does not leave one unchanged, and in position to "even the score" with better, less consequential, decisions down the road. It shapes one's nature and character in a

distinctive way. A person who backed down from commitment at that point would know something about himself —would have to live with a deep blemish on his conception of himself and his history. Metal once bent can never be strong again, and choices such as these are the occasions in which men’s souls are tested and either vindicated or bent.

A modern example of this sort of choice confronted a number of German citizens during the Second World War, when circumstances forced them to choose between acquiescence to the Holocaust or giving their own lives to repudiate Naziism.<sup>261</sup> Those that chose the latter did so because, in a crucial way, doing otherwise would have cost them everything. Alfred Schmitz-Sas, executed by the Nazis in 1943 at the age of 48, wrote in his cell:

As in the game of chess, so too in life it matters not  
Whether the duel be fought with pieces carved of wood or  
gold.  
How one plays, and what one plays for, that alone  
Reveals the man.

Whether, upon post-mortem, menials hurry off the corpse,  
Or obsequies of state consign one to a splendid tomb,  
How one dies, and what one dies for, that alone  
Reveals the man. (Gollwitzer *et. al.* 1956, p. 176)

His attitude in confronting death was far from one of self-sacrifice: “I stand face to face with the world in inexpressible purity, stand at its center, and these last hours are in truth the zenith of life — the zenith of life” (*ibid.* p. 178).

Nor was this exalted sentiment the singular expression of an older man, whose life perhaps could be considered “complete” even at 48. Consider the words of Kim Mathe-Bruun, tortured and executed in 1945 at the age of 22 for resistance to the Nazi regime:

I travelled a road that I have never regretted. I have never  
evaded the dictate of my heart, and now things seem to fall  
into place. I am not old, I should not be dying, yet it seems  
so natural to me, so simple. It is only the abrupt manner of

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<sup>261</sup>Here I am indebted to Philippa Foot’s sensitive and provocative treatment of this remarkable testimony in Foot 1988.



it that frightens us at first. The time is short, I cannot properly explain it, but my soul is perfectly at rest...(*ibid.* pp. 84-5).

It is hard to regard a life experienced from within as Mathe-Bruun's was as anything *but* complete. Whether these martyrs were fully virtuous or not is not for us to determine, but what emerges from their missives is that they were *committed* in the way that Aristotle and eudaimonist virtue theories can and do commend, and to something that was clearly worth that commitment. As George Shuster observes: "What makes their plight ... so breathtaking is that there was no charge to bring against them save that they had loved the good" (*ibid.*, p. xvi). It is this love — whether for the good, or for the good of another — which the eudaimonist commends as part of the best kind of human life. Circumstances may be so adverse as to require in the service of such commitments that one give one's life, but even that exchange is not open to the shabby sort of calculation that Hardie attributes to the virtuous agent. Commitment is wholly compatible with what we have reason to choose in view of our own eudaimonia, and neither immediate and unstinting concern for the welfare of others, nor the willingness to lay down one's life when conditions require it, compromise a fundamental commitment to eudaimonia.

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