

SELF-INTEREST AND VIRTUE*

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Being happy . . . is found in living and being active. . . . The activity of the good person is excellent, and [hence] pleasant in itself.

Perceiving that we are alive is pleasant in itself. For life is by nature a good, and it is pleasant to perceive that something good is present in us. And living is choiceworthy, for a good person most of all, since being is good and pleasant for him.

—Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*¹

I. INTRODUCTION

The Aristotelian view that the moral virtues—the virtues of character informed by practical wisdom—are essential to an individual's happiness, and are thus in an individual's self-interest, has been little discussed outside of purely scholarly contexts. With a few exceptions, contemporary philosophers have tended to be suspicious of Aristotle's claims about human nature and the nature of rationality and happiness (*eudaimonia*).² But recent scholarship has offered an interpretation of the basic elements of Aristotle's views of human nature and happiness, and of reason and virtue, that brings them more into line with common-sense thinking and with contemporary philosophical and empirical psychology.³ This makes it fruitful to reexamine the question of the role of virtue in self-interest.

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¹ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, ed. and trans. Terence Irwin (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1985), 1169b30–32 and 1179b1–4. All further references to the *Nicomachean Ethics* are to this translation, unless otherwise noted, and are abbreviated in the text as *NE*.

² See, e.g., Bernard Williams, *Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy* (London: Fontana Press, 1985); and David Gauthier, ed., *Morality and Rational Self-Interest* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1970), pp. 5–6. Some notable exceptions are N. J. H. Dent, *The Moral Psychology of the Virtues* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984); John Casey, *Pagan Virtue* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990); and David Brink, "Rational Egoism, Self, and Others," in *Identity, Character, and Morality*, ed. Owen Flanagan and Amélie O. Rorty (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1990), pp. 339–78. Brink gives a neo-Aristotelian, neo-Parfitian, egoistic justification of morality.

³ See, e.g., Terence Irwin's discussion of the human function, rationality, and happiness in Irwin, *Aristotle's First Principles* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), sections 193–98; John M. Cooper, *Reason and the Human Good in Aristotle* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1986); and Nancy Sherman, *The Fabric of Character* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989).

Given the variability of human psychology, practically no claim about human nature, the nature of self-interest, or its connection to morality can apply without exception to all human moral agents, much less to all members of the human species. But this no more makes psychological or moral generalizations useless than the variability of human physiology makes generalizations about health, or its connection to diet and exercise, useless. For such claims still apply to, and thus have practical value for, most of us.

In this essay I will attempt to make a case for a broadly Aristotelian conception of self-interest and virtue, and for the centrality of virtue to self-interest so conceived. My aim is not to conclusively *prove* that a fully virtuous character is indispensable to self-interest, but to show that a far stronger case can be made for this claim than is usually supposed. Since this essay is not an exercise in Aristotelian scholarship, I will discuss Aristotle only as a launching pad for my own discussion. I will use Aristotle's insights about virtue as a psychological and practical disposition, and about self-interest as an objective psychological and practical condition of happiness or well-being (*eudaimonia*), to examine the connection between individual self-interest and some major virtues. But I will include in my discussion virtues not explicitly discussed by Aristotle if there are good reasons to think that they are, in fact, required for happiness. And I will reject Aristotle's assumption, shared by a strong strand in philosophical and common-sense morality, that someone who is just, or who has integrity, in one domain of her life (for example, as a judge), must be just, or have integrity, in all domains (for example, as a friend, mother, etc.). I believe that Aristotle is right that the virtues are interconnected, so that one virtue implies all the others; but I also believe that this is true only within domains, not globally. I have argued for these claims elsewhere, and will simply assume them here.⁴

The claim that individual well-being requires virtue is stronger than the claim that all that well-being requires by way of morality is a *commitment* to moral principles. It is stronger because (Aristotelian) virtue goes far beyond commitment to principle. Yet it is also more plausible, because both virtue and well-being are connected with the harmonious, effective functioning of our cognitive, emotional, social, and physical capacities—with what I will call “practical efficacy.” Aristotle does not tell us in any detail exactly how virtue, practical efficacy, and well-being are connected. Doing this will be my main task in this essay. I will argue for the following claims: (1) virtue is essential to practical efficacy; (2) practical efficacy is essential to well-being or happiness; hence (3) virtue is essential to happiness. In other words, virtue not only makes us better, it also makes

⁴ See my essay “The Limited Unity of Virtue,” *Noûs*, vol. 3, no. 1 (September 1996). The empirical evidence against the assumption that the virtues are global is summarized in Owen Flanagan, *Varieties of Moral Personality* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991). My argument is made largely on the basis of philosophical considerations.

us better off. Virtue alone, however, is not sufficient for practical efficacy or for happiness—a degree of good fortune is also required. But virtue and a degree of good fortune are jointly sufficient for practical efficacy as well as happiness. Again, both practical efficacy and virtue are necessarily connected with the nature of our ultimate goals, and thus happiness is also connected with the nature of these goals. It is this connection with our ultimate goals that makes happiness an enduring, objective, psychological and practical state of well-being.

On this understanding of happiness, then, to say that happiness is objective is to say that happiness is not just a matter of pleasurable, tranquil, contented, or other positive feelings, but also a matter of leading a certain sort of life. A happy person, on the view I will defend, is a person whose positive feelings are a reflection of an efficacious life, and not only of a life marked by success and prosperity through the blessings of good fortune. For it is only insofar as positive feelings are a reflection of an efficacious life that they are firm and enduring, and it is only insofar as they are firm and enduring that they can be constituents of a firm and enduring thing like happiness.

It is worth noting that both practical efficacy and happiness come in degrees, so that, under circumstances of equally good fortune, someone with greater efficacy will also be happier. Further, goodness of character also comes in degrees, with virtue—moral excellence—representing the pinnacle of moral achievement. For these reasons, the claim that virtue is essential to practical efficacy and happiness should be read to mean “for the highest degree of practical efficacy and happiness.” Someone whose character is good without being excellent—virtuous—in most domains may still, barring misfortune, be relatively efficacious and happy. These issues are further discussed in Section II below.

Some conceptions of moral virtue are, no doubt, incompatible with the attempt to show that virtue is a constitutive component of an agent’s objectively conceived well-being. For example, conceptions that deny that virtue implies good ends, or that virtuous dispositions are, in part, emotional dispositions, are incompatible with the claim that virtue is a constitutive part of well-being. I have argued against these conceptions of virtue elsewhere;⁵ in this essay, I will restrict myself to giving arguments in favor of the Aristotelian conception (Section II).

In Section II, I will give a brief overview of Aristotle’s conception of human nature and human well-being, and of virtue and its role in well-being, to serve as a background to my own discussion. I will indicate which of his views are plausible on psychological or philosophical grounds, and which dubious. In the sections that follow, I will discuss the nature of practical efficacy and its role in well-being (Sections III and IV), and the

⁵ See my “The Limited Unity of Virtue”; “The Rejection of Ethical Rationalism,” *Logos*, vol. 10 (1989), pp. 99–131; and *Friendship: A Philosophical Reader* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), pp. 20–25.

connection between well-being and virtue (Section V). I will conclude by restating the main thrust of my argument, and indicating some further directions for development (Section VI).

II. ARISTOTLE'S THEORY OF HUMAN NATURE, WELL-BEING, AND VIRTUE

All men by nature desire to know. An indication of this is the delight we take in our senses; for even apart from their usefulness they are loved for themselves; and above all others the sense of sight.⁶

[W]e take the human function to be a certain kind of life, and take this life to be the soul's activity and actions that express reason. (*NE* 1098a12-13)

[T]hat man is more of a political animal than bees or any other gregarious animal is evident . . . [for] man is the only animal who has the gift of speech. . . . [T]he power of speech [*logos*] is intended to set forth the expedient and inexpedient, and therefore likewise the just and the unjust.⁷

As these passages show, Aristotle regards human nature as essentially rational *and* social *and* animal.⁸ These are the three most fundamental psychologically and morally relevant facts about human beings. For together with the nature of the world we live in, they constitute "the circumstances of well-being and of virtue," in that they give rise to, and explain, the fundamental goals, pursuits, and pleasures that constitute our good and ground the virtues.

The fact that we are finite, fallible, and mortal *animals* explains why we have an interest in physical satisfactions and pleasures, and in preserving ourselves by gaining control of our environment and acting effectively. As *rational* animals, moreover, we are also intellectually exploratory, imaginative, capable of puzzlement, speculative, deliberative, and evaluative—and aware of ourselves as such. Hence, we seek to exercise our rational

⁶ Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 980a22-28, trans. W. D. Ross, in *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, ed. Jonathan Barnes (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984). Further references to *Metaphysics* are given parenthetically in the text. The thought expressed in this passage is put in a dramatic context in a description of one of the main characters of Ayn Rand's novel *Atlas Shrugged*: "[H]e looked as if his faculty of sight were his best-loved tool and its exercise were a limitless, joyous adventure, as if his eyes imparted a superlative value to himself and to the world—to himself for his ability to see, to the world for being a place so eagerly worth seeing" (Rand, *Atlas Shrugged* [New York: New American Library, 1957], p. 652).

⁷ Aristotle, *Politics*, trans. Benjamin Jowett, in Barnes, ed., *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, 1253a7-15.

⁸ At *Politics*, 1253a7-15, Aristotle tells us not only that a human being is a social or political animal, but also that he is more so than other social animals, and that this has to do with his possession of rationality. For only a rational (*logikon*) being can perceive and communicate the good and the bad, the just and the unjust.

faculties and gain knowledge of ourselves and our environment not only for the sake of further ends, but also for their own sake, i.e., for the sheer pleasure of knowing, and for experiencing ourselves as knowers (*Metaphysics* 980a22–28; *NE* 1170a32–b1, 1174b14–23). Similarly, we seek to exercise and enhance our agency for its own sake, i.e., for the sheer pleasure of acting and experiencing ourselves as agents; and the greater the complexity of the activity, the greater the pleasure.⁹

The fact that we are *social* rational animals explains why we have an interest in interacting with others. Like all social animals, we need others of our kind in order to meet our survival needs. Unlike other social animals, we also need others in order to share our imaginative, speculative, deliberative, and evaluative lives (*NE* 1097b12, 1170a16–19). This, too, is an intrinsically valuable activity, something we engage in for its own sake.

All of these intrinsically valuable activities are in evidence in early childhood: the eager delight in seeing and touching, in exploring one's surroundings, in exercising developing motor skills, and in communicating with others.¹⁰ And when, in adulthood, these activities are informed and harmonized by reason, they are a constitutive part of living well. It is in this sense that we are “above all” our reason (*NE* 1168b27–33, cf. 1098a8–15).

Our self-interest as rational, social animals, then, is fundamentally both independent and interdependent, both a matter of our independent interactions with the world, and a matter of our shared life with others. These two sorts of goods, the independent and the shared, ground both the self-regarding virtues such as temperance or honesty with oneself, and the other-regarding virtues such as justice or generosity. The virtues, in turn, guide and help to specify the attitudes and goals essential to living a happy human life.

Since human beings are immensely complicated biological creatures—far more so than Aristotle realized—in an immensely complicated physical environment, we cannot take the claim about our nature being rational and social as applying to *all* members of the human species. And even with respect to those who *are* rational and social, the variability of human psychology and of social environments suggests that the conditions of human happiness can be specified only at a relatively abstract level, a level that leaves room for different individuals to fill in the details according to their different environments, experiences, interests, and tastes. The virtues specify the attitudes and goals essential to happiness at just

⁹ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1168a5–28, 1170a32–b3. Cf. John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971), section 65 on the Aristotelian Principle, esp. pp. 426–27.

¹⁰ Melanie Klein calls childhood curiosity a love of knowledge, *epistemophilia*, in her *Love, Guilt, and Reparation*; cited in Jonathan Lear, *Aristotle: The Desire to Understand* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), p. 3.

this level of abstraction. In this respect, virtue is to happiness as the most general and universal norms of physical health are to health. Just as many different sorts of diets and patterns of physical activity—many different lifestyles—are compatible with health norms, so many different patterns of activity involving different goals and pleasures—many different life-plans—are compatible with psychological and moral norms. Moreover, just as accidents and injuries can damage a person's physical functioning and health regardless of a healthy lifestyle, so great misfortunes, whether natural or caused by others' actions, can mar a person's practical efficacy and happiness despite virtuous dispositions. Thus, as noted in Section I, the virtues do not guarantee practical efficacy or happiness; they guarantee only the essential internal conditions of efficacy and happiness, namely, the appropriate ultimate goals and attitudes. In this way, they provide the best security available against the baneful effects of misfortune.

This is Aristotle's general picture of human nature, human well-being, and the role of virtue in well-being. But if we conjoin this general picture with other passages from his ethical works, we can derive a more concrete picture of happiness and virtue. From what has been said so far, we can see that a happy life must include both internal and external goods: goals worth pursuing, the mental and physical means to pursue them well, success (and more importantly, enjoyment) in the pursuit, and mental and physical security. We can also see, however, that not every way of incorporating internal and external goods is compatible with living well. For example, people who make the acquisition of external goods such as fame or political power their dominant aim in life, thinking these to be the chief sources of happiness, are easy hostages to fortune. For the acquisition and enjoyment of such goods depends too much on the opinions of others, whereas "we intuitively believe that the good is something of our own and hard to take from us" (NE 1095b25–26). The same is true of those who live under the direction of others, guided by *their* choices rather than their own. Nor do those who take their guidance from whim fare any better. All such people lack the security that characterizes a good life, the security that allows us to anticipate the future, and to strive to realize our hopes and dreams for the future. For such security is possible only with a degree of invulnerability to the vagaries of chance or whim or the choices of others, and such invulnerability is possible only if the central aspects of a person's life are under his own rational control.

Rational control, then, requires two things. It requires that a person be guided by his own reasoned choices (*prohairesis*)—deliberative choices made in light of his overall ends—rather than by others' choices, or by whim.¹¹ And it requires that he choose as central to his life only those goals or goods whose acquisition or enjoyment does not leave him too

¹¹ See Sherman's discussion of *prohairesis* as a reasoned choice expressing a person's ultimate ends or values and, hence, character (Sherman, *The Fabric of Character*, pp. 79–84).

vulnerable to the decisions of others or the vagaries of chance. For the choice of certain goals—for example, money-making or popularity—as central to his life will undermine his future ability to live by his own choices. In short, rational control over his own life requires a person both to live by his own reasoned choices, and to choose goods that will not make him an easy hostage to fortune.

But what about those who do not *need* to live under their own rational control to anticipate, and extend themselves into, the future? That is, what about those who have the socially backed assurance of being completely cared for by their families, so that their future is entirely predictable—as is surely the case with some women in traditional societies, including Aristotle's own? Why do *they* need rational control over their own lives? Aristotle himself, of course, does not think that women need such control to the same extent as men, for the simple reason that with their naturally defective rationality, they *cannot* exercise such control.¹² But if we can separate this unfortunate assumption from his general answer to the question just asked, we can see why even someone who does not need to exercise rational control over her life for the sake of security still has a need for it. Aristotle's general answer suggests that the chief importance of exercising rational control over our lives is that doing so exercises our nature as rational agents with choice-making powers—in current terminology, as *autonomous* agents. Such activity is crucial to happiness, because in such activity we actualize ourselves and experience ourselves as the independent causes of our actions and makers of our individual selves. Indeed, such activity is “the pleasantest” and “most lovable” of all activities.¹³ Those who fail to live autonomously fail to experience this deepest of pleasures.

Living the life of a rational agent whose dominant source of happiness is under one's own control is also necessary for forming deep friendships and fulfilling one's nature as a social animal. Such friendships, in which there is a sharing of lives, are possible, according to Aristotle, only between virtuous people.¹⁴ Whether or not we accept this claim, we can reasonably accept that it is only insofar as we exercise and develop our

¹² Aristotle regards women's deliberative capacity as *akuron*, lacking in authority (*Politics*, 1260a12–30, 1261a14). Ironically, women are still the primary moral educators of the young child. See the discussion of this issue in Sherman, *The Fabric of Character*, pp. 154–55.

¹³ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1168a15. Aristotle has in mind all rational productive activity: fashioning crafts, writing poetry, benefiting others, and loving (1167b34–1168a22). Two of the features of rational productive activity that make it valuable—the effort of production, and the knowledge that what is produced is yours—also apply to the nonrational productive act of giving birth (1168a25ff.). And while what is actualized here is not the rational self, Aristotle suggests that it is still, in some sense, an act of self-actualization.

Cf. Lawrence Haworth's view that autonomous choice is an expression of a fundamental aspect of our human nature, because it expresses “the desires to stand out, to make a mark, and to be responsible” (Haworth, *Autonomy: An Essay in Philosophical Psychology and Ethics* [New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986], p. 190; see also ch. 11, esp. pp. 186–90).

¹⁴ Aristotle, *Eudemian Ethics*, trans. J. Solomon, in Barnes, ed., *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, 1237a30ff.; *Nicomachean Ethics*, book VIII, ch. 3. Friendships between the virtuous are

capacity for rational choice, thinking our own thoughts, setting our own aims, shaping our selves, that we forge a life of our own to share with others. Moreover, a deep friendship results from a mutual choice of each other as “other selves,” and it is only insofar as we do thus make our own selves that we can choose, and be chosen by, another person as a second but “separate self.”¹⁵ Those who fail to lead autonomous lives may well be moved by their own neediness to make utility friends, or by a desire for pleasant times to make pleasure friends (*NE* VIII 3; *EE* VII 2–4). But such friendships are insecure because they are based on incidental and transient qualities. Nor do they provide the satisfactions of the best kind of friendship, in which friends love, take pleasure in, and help, each other for themselves, i.e., for the sorts of persons they are, their character.

Hence, Aristotle concludes, a happy life is a life shaped by the choice and pursuit of goods that play a fundamental and enduring role in a human life, the sort of life in which we actualize ourselves as rational, social agents. Given the plurality of happy lives that are possible, we should, I think, reject some of Aristotle’s candidates for fundamental goods. For example, political activity, insofar as this is distinct from merely social activity, is not an essential component of every happy life. We should also reject his claim that a truly happy life must contain *all* the fundamental goods—if this is, indeed, his claim. But we cannot reasonably reject his point that some goods play a more fundamental and enduring role in our lives than others, and that these fundamental goods have to do with our basic needs and abilities as rational and social agents. Nor can we reject Aristotle’s point that one of the most basic of these needs is the need to be autonomous and exercise rational control over key aspects of our own lives. For as we have seen, rational control of our lives is the only alternative to control by whim, the choices of others, or chance. The story of paramedic Robert O’Donnell (the daring rescuer of Baby Jessica), who took his own life when he lost his short-lived spot in the limelight, because life without fame lost all meaning for him, is only a

called “primary” friendships in the *Eudemian Ethics*, and “character” friendships in the *Nicomachean Ethics*. Further references to the *Eudemian Ethics* in the text are abbreviated as *EE*.

¹⁵ The phrase “separate self” is at *Eudemian Ethics*, 1245a35. The terms “other self,” “another self,” “another himself,” and “second self” are used in various places, including *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1170b7; *Eudemian Ethics*, 1245a30; and *Magna Moralia*, trans. St. George Stock, in *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, book II, ch. 15. The importance of choice in the best sort of friendship is brought out in various places in the *Nicomachean Ethics* and the *Eudemian Ethics*. “[T]he primary friendship, that of good men, is a mutual returning of love and choice. . . . This sort of friendship, then, is peculiar to man, for he alone perceives another’s choice” (*Eudemian Ethics*, 1236b3–6); and again, “the primary friendship is a reciprocal choice of the absolutely good and pleasant because it is good and pleasant” (*Eudemian Ethics*, 1237a30ff.). See also *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1170b6–7.

Cf. C. S. Lewis’s observation that to love a friend is to “care about the same truth” (Lewis, *The Four Loves* [Glasgow: William Collins Sons and Co., 1960], p. 62). “The very condition of having friends is that we should want something else besides friends,” for “[t]hose who have nothing can share nothing” (p. 63).

particularly dramatic example of the internal and external consequences of surrendering control of our lives to others.¹⁶ Further, as numerous psychological studies and theories have indicated, the exercise of rational control over our lives is a key component of a satisfactory life, both because it is self-actualizing and intrinsically pleasurable, and because it is productive of further ends.¹⁷

The best assurance of rationally choosing and successfully pursuing fundamental goods is a sound conception of particular fundamental goods as well as of the proper way to pursue them, and a reliable disposition to act accordingly. But to have such a conception and such a disposition, according to Aristotle, is to have moral virtue, i.e., the virtues of character such as justice, temperance, et al., informed by the virtue of reason: practical wisdom (*NE* 1144a30). When we have moral virtue, we have emotions and desires that are informed by reason, and a reason that is informed by our emotional and desiring nature. Hence, what we desire or find pleasant is what we justifiably believe to be good, and what we justifiably believe to be good is based, in part, on our recognition of our nature as feeling and desiring beings. Since the virtues are grounded in our common human capacities and enable us to satisfy our common human needs, their exercise is necessary both for the agent's good, and for others' good. Even the virtues that find their occasion in others' legitimate claims or concerns, such as justice or generosity, are essential to our own good because, as social beings, we share our lives with others, and the virtues are both means to, and partly constitutive of, shared activities.

But what, more precisely, is Aristotle's view of the nature of moral virtue? Moral virtue, on his view, is an emotional and rational disposition to feel, deliberate, and act "at the right [i.e., appropriate] times, about the right things, towards the right people, for the right end, and in the right way" (*NE* 1106b21ff.). Virtue enables a person to do this in a wide variety of different circumstances, because virtue enhances a person's perceptiveness, attuning her to subtle moral nuances (*NE* VI 5, 7, 8, 11-13). A decision that expresses a virtuous disposition expresses "truth agreeing with correct desire" (*NE* 1139a30) or correct desire combined with correct thought (*NE* 1139b5), and the act that expresses it is a fine, or morally admirable,

¹⁶ See Lisa Belkin, "Death on the CNN Curve," *New York Times Magazine*, July 23, 1995, p. 18. Eighteen-month-old Jessica McClure fell into a dry water well in October 1987; her plight, and her rescue by O'Donnell, were the focus of national media attention for months after the event.

¹⁷ Some of these studies and theories are usefully summarized in Roger Brown and Richard J. Herrnstein, *Psychology* (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1975), pp. 177-82. Particularly noteworthy are the neurologist Kurt Goldstein's definition of self-actualization as the impulse to fulfill one's potentialities, Abraham Maslow's classification of self-actualization as a "growth motivation" in contrast to various sorts of "deficiency motivation," and the emphasis placed by the psychologist Henry Murray and the anthropologist Clyde Kluckhohn on the intrinsic pleasures of activity done for its own sake. This is not to say that every detail of the analysis of rational control (mastery) or of self-actualization given in these pages is compatible with Aristotle's views.

act. A virtuous person takes pleasure in the rightness of an act, even if the act is painful in certain respects and, in these respects, unwillingly done (*NE* 1099a15–17ff., 1104b7ff., 1117b1–2, 7ff.). Someone who characteristically does the right thing for the right reasons despite a painful struggle is, no doubt, an upright person; but his struggle reveals a conflict between his practical reason, on the one hand, and his emotions and desires, on the other. Such a person is continent rather than virtuous, for his responses fall short of the integrated, wholehearted, pleasurable responses of the virtuous man. He is rational without possessing that excellence of practical reason which is practical wisdom, and he is rightly motivated without possessing that excellence of desire and feeling which is necessary for virtue of character.¹⁸ Hence, he also lacks the kind of fine-tuned perceptiveness and responsiveness that is characteristic of the virtuous. He would be a better, as well as a happier, person if he were virtuous, rather than merely continent or strong-willed.

Virtue is the practical analog of knowledge. Just as knowledge of a subject involves the cognitive disposition to assent to true and rationally justified claims about that subject, so virtue involves the cognitive and emotional disposition to value, desire, and act on what is truly valuable in human life. This is the heart of Aristotle's conception of virtue. This conception explains wide-ranging features of common moral judgment and experience. For example, it explains the distinction we make between those who *struggle* to act justly, and those who act justly from a *passion* for justice. It also helps explain why we praise those who help or give gifts to others "spontaneously" and "in the right spirit," rather than those who help or give gifts with an air of performing a painful, externally imposed duty. And it sheds light on why, as Woody Allen puts it in his film *Crimes and Misdemeanors*, it is so "hard to get your heart and head together in life," why, in so many cases, as, purportedly, in his, "they're not even friendly." The idea that practical reason shapes, and is shaped by, emotion—an idea that underlies Aristotle's theory of moral development—is also in line with our best scientific and philosophical theories of the nature of emotion.¹⁹ Further, the idea that such rational emotion and

¹⁸ That the continent man lacks practical wisdom, even though he understands the true worth of pleasure, wealth, honor, and so on, and deliberates and acts correctly in a variety of circumstances, is implicit in Aristotle's view that practical wisdom implies, and is implied by, virtue. I discuss this in "The Limited Unity of Virtue."

¹⁹ The cognitive nature of emotion is a common theme of much recent psychological and philosophical writing on emotion. Thus, the psychologist Nico H. Frijda, *The Emotions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), argues that emotions express our evaluations of situations or events as good or bad for us. More broadly, Ronald de Sousa, *The Rationality of Emotion* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1987), gives a philosophical defense of the claim that emotions apprehend real evaluative properties. The role of emotion in making us cognizant of evaluative facts is also a common feature of daily experience. For example, new mothers, once able to sleep through the sound of thunder, typically find that even the slightest whimper from the baby now has the power to wake them up: their concern for the child makes them susceptible to its needs.

emotional rationality are essential to virtue gets indirect support from empirical studies of the psychopath that show the importance of well-developed emotions for moral perception.²⁰ Thus, a variety of considerations converge to support Aristotle's conception of virtue.

Just as virtue is a disposition to desire, feel, and act rightly, so vice is a disposition to desire, feel, and act wrongly. It is a dispositional commitment to the bad, or indifference to the good. Someone who is wholly or partially vicious harbors inappropriate emotions toward others, emotions such as malice, spite, or envy, and has inappropriate aspirations for himself, such as the aspiration to dominate others. Indeed, his very perceptions of good and bad are distorted by his vice, as the sick man's perceptions of food and drink are distorted by his disease (*NE* 1113a26–29): "vice perverts us, and produces false views about the origins of actions" (*NE* 1144a35). Indeed, on Aristotle's view the vicious man sees the bad as good and the good as bad or, at least, as valueless.

We should not, however, conclude that the vicious man is completely ignorant of the good. For the fact that a vicious person can react with righteous anger or with resentment when *others* harm *him* shows that his "ignorance" of the good is compatible with a general, if schematic and stillborn, awareness of the difference between right and wrong.²¹ Hence, it seems that a vicious person's "false view" of the good is not entirely the *effect* of his bad emotions and desires, as Aristotle seems to think, but is also, in part, a strategy of dispositional evasion or self-deception in the *service* of these emotions and desires.

Not all bad actions, however, are the result of vice: they can be the result of incontinence or weakness. The incontinent man will sometimes behave like the vicious man, but his cognitive state and psychological dispositions will be different. For unlike the vicious man, the incontinent man deliberates and decides correctly, but succumbs to his contrary desires out of weakness. Thus, incontinence is to vice as continence is to virtue: a trait that differs from vice in its constitutive thoughts, emotions, and desires, yet leads to similar behavior.

Even with these distinctions, however, Aristotle's taxonomy of character types is incomplete. There may be individuals who are "satanically wicked"—individuals who make evil their goal *because* it is evil, in full

²⁰ Hervey Cleckley, *The Mask of Sanity* (St. Louis: C. V. Mosby, 1964), argues that the psychopath's failure of moral agency is due to his stunted emotional capacity rather than any deficiency in his ability for logical thought. For the psychopath is able to make rational inferences like anyone else and, indeed, is often unusually intelligent. Yet he is incapable of seeing the *significance* of things, of grasping value. See also the summary of psychological research on the psychopath's lack of affectivity, and especially of empathy and self-awareness, in Daniel Goleman, *Emotional Intelligence* (New York: Bantam Books, 1995), ch. 7. Lack of empathy, however, is neither the only, nor the necessary, cause of criminality.

²¹ See the discussion of "moral emotions"—emotions that express a sense of right and wrong, such as resentment or indignation—in Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, pp. 487–88; and Bernard Williams, *Morality: An Introduction to Ethics* (New York: Harper and Row, 1972), pp. 3–4.

awareness of its evil.²² Such individuals do not fit Aristotle's definition of vice. Nor do those who are committed to certain bad ends out of ignorance of some purely empirical fact. Such, for example, is the mistake made by D-503, the hero of Yevgeny Zamyatin's *We*, at least at the beginning of the story. D-503 believes that the One State is a noble institution because he mistakenly believes that it has rescued humankind from millennia of barbarism and has fostered an era of unprecedented scientific advancement, material prosperity, and close-to-perfect rationality and happiness. Analogously, Renaissance scientists who investigated alchemy and "natural magic" were simply mistaken in some of their empirical beliefs.²³ Hence, it is important to distinguish between being disposed to value bad ends for culpable reasons, and being disposed to value them from inculpable ignorance. In the former case the disposition is a vice, in the latter it is neither a vice nor a virtue, neither continence nor incontinence.

The variety of character traits allows for degrees of goodness or badness in a character. So does the fact that a person's traits can vary from one domain to another, so that she can be virtuous in one domain and continent or incontinent in another (though not, perhaps, virtuous in one domain and vicious in another).²⁴ Thus, if virtue is necessary for full happiness, then the degree of happiness in a life blessed by good fortune will also vary with the degree of goodness in that life. The best imaginable life, the life in which we successfully develop and effectively exercise—"actualize"—our independent and interdependent, mental and physical, capacities in all domains, is the life of virtue (and good fortune) in all domains. For virtue guarantees the chief internal condition of happiness, namely, the dispositions, goals, and perceptiveness necessary for living with the greatest amount of practical efficacy. The further we are from virtue in a particular domain, the further we are from efficacy and well-being in that domain; and the greater the number of domains in which we lack efficacy, the more widespread our lack of well-being.

In the sections that follow, I will analyze the notion of practical efficacy and the role it plays in independent and interdependent well-being (Sections III and IV), and justify the claim that virtue is necessary for practical efficacy and, thus, for happiness (Sections IV and V). I will start with a minimal notion of practical efficacy, and then show how an analysis of this notion leads to a fuller notion of efficacy and, thereby, to virtue.

²² See Ronald Milo's discussion of satanic wickedness in his book *Immorality* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), p. 7.

²³ For an account of the fascination with alchemy and natural magic in the Renaissance, see Marie Boas, *The Scientific Renaissance: 1450-1630* (New York: Harper and Row, 1966).

²⁴ I argue against such a possibility in "The Limited Unity of Virtue," on the grounds that vice in any domain entails a general and culpable ignorance of the good, whereas moral virtue in any domain entails a general knowledge of the good. Thus, the political viciousness displayed by people like Mao Tse-tung or Himmler or Pol Pot reveals such a warped notion of human nature that it could not possibly coexist with wisdom in *any* domain.

III. PRACTICAL EFFICACY AND INDEPENDENT WELL-BEING

Since we are purposive beings, we are efficacious to the extent that we act in a way conducive to our purposes, and seek purposes conducive to our needs as rational and social animals. And for this we need to satisfy certain psychological and practical conditions.

An efficacious agent is someone who can find appropriate means to her ends, and the appropriate ends given her means—her powers, abilities, and resources. Someone who adopts ends she has no capacity to fulfill, either because they outstrip human powers—for example, attempting to walk across the waters of the English Channel—or because they outstrip her individual talents or resources—for example, attempting to become a world-class violinist despite a tin ear and a history of clumsiness with the violin—is simply unrealistic. So is someone who, irrationally, tries to achieve all her many ends simultaneously instead of arranging them in a hierarchy, or who has incompatible ends. And someone who refuses to rationally choose her own ends at all, or chooses ends that undermine her future ability for rational control over her life, chooses a way of life that invites misfortune and deprives her of the pleasures of agency. Such a person lacks autonomy. If, on the other hand, she is both autonomous and realistic in her choice of goals, but neglects to discover or use the appropriate means to achieve them, she undercuts herself through incompetence. In either case, such a person courts failure, frustration, and disappointment—and, eventually, a serious breach of self-confidence.

In addition to being autonomous, choosing realistic ends, and pursuing them competently, someone who is practically efficacious must also find her ends *worth* achieving, as having genuine value. Without this sense of the worth of her ends, she will have little or no incentive to achieve them. Someone who is autonomous, realistic, and competent will, typically, also have self-regard, that is, will see herself as *worthy* of happiness and of other-regard, even if misfortune deprives her of happiness or of other-regard. But someone with unrealistic standards of self-worth may be prevented from feeling the self-regard she deserves to feel, and this, too, will affect her efficacy. If she feels unworthy of happiness, she will find little lasting pleasure or satisfaction in the exercise of her powers and talents, or in her achievements, whether in her personal relationships, or in her independent activities. If she feels unworthy of other-regard, she may be prevented even from *seeking* personal relationships. A fully efficacious person, then, will have self-regard in addition to the other components of practical efficacy. Together, the sense that she has control over her own life and that her ends are realistic and worthwhile, confidence in her ability to achieve them, and a sense of her own worthiness, add up to *self-esteem*.²⁵ Self-

²⁵ Cf. Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, section 67; and Nathaniel Branden, *The Six Pillars of Self-Esteem* (New York: Bantam, 1994), esp. ch. 2.

esteem is thus an individual's perception of herself as an efficacious individual.

A radical deficiency in realism or competence or sense of the worth of her ends will tend to undercut a person's autonomy and sense of autonomy, because each of these elements affects her capacity for rational control of her life. A lack of autonomy, in turn, will undercut a person's sense of self-worth. Thus, a radical deficiency in any one of the elements of practical efficacy will undermine a person's overall efficacy and self-esteem.

The practical efficacy and self-esteem under discussion are needed both in the activities we undertake for our independent good, and in the activities we undertake for our interdependent or shared good. Someone who is efficacious in the independent realm will find pleasure in activities—intellectual, material, artistic, psychological, et al.—that she values as both expressing, and continually reshaping, her life as a separate individual. Someone who is efficacious in the interdependent realm will find pleasure in the joint activities of friendship and other relationships, relationships she values as both expressing, and reshaping, her life as a social individual. Someone who is efficacious, then, is engaged both in self-expression and in self-creation.

It is possible to satisfy the requirements of practical efficacy in the two realms to varying extents. For example, someone with a high degree of practical efficacy in the independent realm might be insecure in the social realm for reasons of inexperience or lack of skill. However, just as a radical deficiency in any one of the elements of practical efficacy within a realm will affect a person's overall efficacy and self-esteem, so a radical deficiency of efficacy and self-esteem in one realm will affect her efficacy and self-esteem in the other. Thus, a deficiency of efficacy and self-esteem in the independent realm will affect one's ability to form close friendships, the sort of friendships that involve a sharing of lives. For, as already noted, a necessary condition for such sharing is that we forge a life of our own to share (Section II). Conversely, the absence of close friends will leave one without the encouragement and support to build up one's efficacy and self-esteem in the independent realm.

Practical efficacy serves both our independent and our interdependent or social good. And, I will argue, the virtues—whether self-regarding (such as honesty with oneself, integrity, and temperance) or other-regarding (such as justice, generosity, and kindness) or both (such as courage)—are essential for a high degree of practical efficacy. At first blush, it appears that there is little need for argument here, given the obvious baneful effects of the corresponding vices. Thus, someone who is characteristically dishonest with himself about his abilities or the worth of his ends will undermine his self-confidence in his ability to act effectively, or his motivation to try to pursue his ends. Similarly, someone who lacks integrity will betray his more important values when they stand in the way

of lesser, but more urgently desired, values such as professional success or social popularity. Again, an intemperate person will succumb to the temptation of easy pleasures whenever the going gets tough. Finally, an unjust or cowardly person will be untrustworthy, and an unkind or stingy person will be, at the very least, distinctly unpleasant and unwelcome company. And both untrustworthy and unpleasant people will tend to be excluded from contractual enterprises as well as friendships.

But the apparent simplicity of this argument from self-interest is called into question when we consider the implication of the claim that practical efficacy requires virtue, and virtue is necessarily directed at good ends. For with this understanding of virtue, the argument implies that bad ends rob us of practical efficacy. But surely, someone might object, there have been, and are, effective and successful tyrants, gangsters, and other less obvious sorts of vicious characters—effective not for accidental reasons, but precisely because they have the requisite qualities: autonomously chosen realistic ends, competence, and a sense of their own worth and the worth of their ends. For there is no reason, it might be thought, why such people cannot have a sense of self-worth and the ability to autonomously choose realistic goals that *they* find worthwhile, even if their victims do not. Nor is there any reason why they cannot be, and experience themselves as being, competent to fulfill their goals. Moreover, it is common knowledge (the objector might add) that members of the same gang often have strong ties of affection, loyalty, care, and concern. Thus, they seem to be efficacious not only in the independent realm, but also in the interdependent realm.

To answer this objection, we need to step back and reconsider the notion of practical efficacy. In this section I will concentrate on practical efficacy and self-esteem in the independent realm, and in the next section, in the interdependent realm. I will begin by asking whether those with dramatically vicious ends can have practical efficacy, then move on to discuss those whose lives are a mixture of good and bad.

To the extent that tyrants, gangsters, and others prefer to live by preying on others, they display an unwillingness to live by their own independent efforts to create value, and a willingness to live through violent, parasitic dependence.²⁶ Thus, they display a lack of other-regard: an indifference to the well-being of those they prey upon, or a malicious or

²⁶ See, for example, Stephen Cox, *Blood and Power: Organized Crime in Twentieth-Century America* (New York: William Morrow and Co., 1989); and Nathan McCall's autobiographical *Makes Me Wanna Holler: A Young Black Man in America* (New York: Random House, 1994). Cox relates how well-educated Mafia members, with opportunities for professional jobs, still chose to follow in their fathers' footsteps of a life of blood and power out of a general ineptitude and an aversion to "hard, honest work" (p. 371). He also cites Harvey Bonadonna, a mobster's son, as stating that his friends and relatives in the rackets simply "did not want to work," that they preferred "to go out and prey upon the community, to steal" (p. 382). McCall's opportunities for interesting work were far more limited, but not as limited, he realizes in hindsight, as he thought when he drifted toward the relatively easy life of crime (p. 402).

spiteful hostility toward them.²⁷ Even if one of these—lack of other-regard or of a willingness to engage in the effort to produce value—is the primary motivation to begin with, the two tend to be mutually reinforcing.²⁸ Regardless of which—if either—motivation is dominant, to the extent that someone prefers the life of a predator, he prefers to live off the productive efforts of others without making a return. Thus, he rejects the choice to live as an equal among others, giving value for value.

Since my concern in this section is the independent realm, I will focus on the implications of the unwillingness to live by one's own independent efforts to create value. To simplify matters, I will often talk as though all predators are predators without qualification, and likewise all creators. Since this is often not the case, however, I should be read as saying: "to the extent that someone is a predator" or "to the extent that someone is a creator."

Someone who is unwilling to produce value because of ineptitude or lack of confidence in his ability to produce anything of genuine worth already seems to be confessing to a certain lack of efficacy in the realm of independent action. So is someone who is unwilling because he gets little or no pleasure from any sort of value-creation (since efficacy is productive of pleasure). And whatever the social or psychological constraints or liabilities that contribute to the erosion of someone's competence, self-confidence, or pleasure in the production of value, the fact remains that insofar as someone is unwilling to engage in the production of value from any of these motives, he shows a certain lack of efficacy.

But the recently encountered defense of the predator as someone with all the qualities needed for practical efficacy implies that it matters little if a person lacks confidence in his *productive* abilities, or enjoyment in their exercise. What matters is that he have confidence in his ability to perform his chosen task, whether creative or destructive, and that he enjoy ex-

²⁷ McCall recalls his penchant for holding a grudge, for hatred and vengeance (*Makes Me Wanna Holler*, p. 106), not only toward the oppressive whites, but also toward other blacks, the chief victims of his predatory activities (p. 86). And nothing beats the cold indifference of mobsters Greg Scarpa and Lefty Ruggiero. According to Scarpa's former attorney, Scarpa had the intelligence and ability to become a lawyer "or run any big business," but chose not to because "it would be no fun to him" (cited in Cox, *Blood and Power*, p. 420). What was "fun," Cox adds, was to get "the pleasures of deference and opulence, without the bother of working hard and earning them" (p. 420). Noteworthy, too, is the exultant exclamation of Lefty Ruggiero: "As a wiseguy, you can lie, you can cheat, you can steal, you can kill people—*legitimately*. You can do any goddamn thing you want. . . . Who wouldn't want to be a wiseguy?" (p. 420).

²⁸ McCall notes the effect of their violent lives on his own and his friends' minds, which, through disuse, slip out of their control and start to go "from logic to illogic" without their realizing it, until they are left wondering why they are "being pushed into the backseat of life and . . . [cannot] get at the wheel" (*Makes Me Wanna Holler*, p. 119). Again, Goleman discusses the research that shows how aggressive children become inept at their work thanks to their "impulsivity" or poor self-control, and eventually become unwilling to work (*Emotional Intelligence*, pp. 236-37). The evidence also suggests that the (aggressive) impulsivity that leads to delinquency also contributes to low IQ scores (p. 335, n. 18), and that the ineptitude and the aggression reinforce each other (pp. 236-37).

ecuting *that*. And surely a predator can have such confidence, and enjoy the skillful, ingenious use of his faculties to reshape the raw material of others' lives for his own purposes: witness the expert jewel thief or art forger, or the Unabomber.²⁹ Or, in the realm of personal relations, witness the confidence and pleasure with which Shakespeare's Iago manipulates people's souls. To be efficacious, then, someone who chooses the life of predation must have confidence in his ability to control and get the better of others, must enjoy honing and exercising his powers of exploitation and manipulation, and must find his activities worth engaging in for his own benefit. That he is not creative in the sense of producing, promoting, or preserving value is a *moral* issue, not an issue of efficacy.

This reply, however, does not take the predator very far. The creation of value, that is, of some good or service, material, artistic, intellectual, psychological, et al., that can enhance or preserve human well-being, is an objective requirement of leading a good life. Such value-creation may take place entirely in the domestic realm, or it may also (and more typically) take place in the public realm. Some creative activity, such as psychological and philosophical self-exploration, may be directly aimed at self-development, at the project of making ourselves certain kinds of persons; the rest may also be aimed at the development of some external value. The important point is that it is through value-creation that we establish an independent relationship to reality and, thereby, to others. For as value-creators we are, and experience ourselves as being, the autonomous agents of our actions and makers of our individual selves, able to give value for value and relate to others as mutual beneficiaries. To fail at the task of value-creation, not through misfortune, but by choice, is to willingly fail at the task of becoming the autonomous agents of our lives, free of any need for a parasitic dependence on others. The multifarious ways in which such a failure is incompatible with efficacy and self-esteem can be illustrated by comparing the predator's life of parasitic dependence with the creator's life.

A physically coercive predator in the independent realm is someone who chooses to bypass the challenge of value-creation by a violent, parasitic dependence on those who face it and meet it. It is because a predator produces nothing to offer in exchange for value, and lacks other-regard to boot, that he lives by extorting or otherwise expropriating the values produced by others. By contrast, the producer qua producer has nothing to gain from the predator: indeed, in a world without predators he could be *more* productive. Further, the predator's basic life choice, the choice of leading a life of predation, is entirely dependent, both conceptually and practically, on others' choice to produce: if there were no production, there could be no predation.³⁰ Once again, the converse does not hold for

²⁹ Regarding Unabomber suspect Ted Kaczynski, see "Tracking Down the Unabomber," *Time*, vol. 147, no. 16 (April 15, 1996), pp. 38-46.

³⁰ This is the (often misunderstood) lesson of the producers' strike in Rand's *Atlas Shrugged*.

the producer: the choice of leading the life of value-creation is neither conceptually nor practically dependent on anyone's choice to expropriate one's values.

It might be thought that this is false, because certain kinds of productive activity, for example, criminal law enforcement and criminology, are immediately dependent, both conceptually and practically, on the existence of predators. But since predation is itself ultimately dependent on production, and since the criminal code and criminal law enforcement, which are studied by criminology, exist for the sake of protecting (among other things) productive activity, what stands at the end of the conceptual and practical chain of dependence is, once again, productive activity.

It follows, then, that the predator's relationship to the producer is fundamentally unequal. In making the basic choice to lead a life of predation instead of production, he makes the choice of letting his life be shaped, in the final analysis, by *others'* decisions, not his own. Thus, the predator's life displays a dismal lack of self-direction, of autonomy.

There is a sense, of course, in which the lives of most of us are shaped by others' decisions insofar as what, when, and how much we create depends on what, when, and how much others choose to create. Even the most independent, original minds depend on the material, intellectual, or artistic creations of others. There are, however, major differences between the dependence of creators on other creators, and the dependence of predators on creators, namely, the difference between *mutually beneficial interdependence* in the former case, and *destructive parasitic dependence* in the latter. The following considerations make this evident.

First, everyone who lives productively has something to offer in return for what she gets, and how much she gets from others is proportional to how much she has to offer. Thus, her relationship to other producers is one of equality and reciprocity (through exchange, cooperation, and so on), rather than one of inequality and parasitic dependence. In relation to each other, creators are both benefactors and beneficiaries, and their interdependence is an example of mutually beneficial social existence. Secondly, although particular *forms* of production depend on particular other *forms* of production—for example, scientific experiment on technology, perspectival painting on the science of optics—production as such does not presuppose production. Robinson Crusoe was the sole producer on his desert island before he rescued Friday (another solitary productive act), the Homeric poems were conceived without the benefit of paper, and many a solitary child has drawn original sand figures. Nor is the basic *choice* to be productive, to establish an independent relationship to reality and, thereby, to others, necessarily dependent on someone else's similar choice. By contrast with predators, then, producers are autonomous in their relationship to other producers, and they are autonomous in this respect because, through value-creation, they establish an independent relationship to reality and become the autonomous agents of their lives.

In his unwillingness to create value, and his choice to live off the decisions and productive efforts of others, a predator's mode of existence lacks genuine worth as well as autonomy. But autonomy and a worthy mode of existence are essential to practical efficacy and genuine self-esteem—a self-esteem reflective of the facts of one's life. At this bedrock level of an individual's relationship to the world, then, the predator is utterly inefficacious and lacking in genuine self-esteem.

The objection might be made that whether or not his self-esteem reflects reality, a predator may well *have* self-esteem. And given that self-esteem is an important component of practical efficacy, if he has self-esteem, he will also have a high degree of efficacy. Further, he will have self-esteem if he sees himself as an independent, autonomous agent because he defies society and manages to get the better of his victims, and if he regards his vicious ends as admirable and himself as worthy of happiness and other-regard.

The predator may well have these attitudes—these beliefs and feelings toward himself—but if so, he is also committed to certain other attitudes that, I will argue, cannot be harbored without mental contortions that are incompatible with self-esteem. Thus, if the predator sees himself as admirable because of the kind of person he is, he must also see productive people as pitiable or contemptible, seeking to live as they do because they are too cowardly to defy convention and feed off others, or too weak or stupid or lacking in self-regard to claim the best for themselves. Or again, perhaps he finds them pitiable or contemptible because they find pleasure in their slavish activity of production instead of in the free, spontaneous power-play of the predatory. Indeed, the very fact that he regards productive people as fair game for his predatory activities implies that he has these attitudes toward them. There are, however, two problems with the line of reasoning that leads him to the conclusion that he is admirable and that productive people are pitiable or contemptible.

First, the view that predation is admirable implies that if someone should victimize the *predators*, the latter would have to acknowledge, no matter how *angered* they might be by the act, that the victimizer has acted admirably. For by their own standards, someone who can get the better of others is admirable. As we know, however, intergang or intragang warfare or cheating is typically *not* regarded in this way by those who are attacked or cheated. Rather, it is regarded as “disrespect” and disgrace, an insult inviting retaliation to reestablish one's honor, often at great risk of serious injury or death.³¹ Thus, their line of reasoning is internally inco-

³¹ That respect or honor is all-important in gangs, is attested to by various sources. Thus, McCall tells of how the most admired member of the gang was the one who “would shoot anybody for looking at him the wrong way” (*Makes Me Wanna Holler*, p. 61). And in her book about the Los Angeles gangs, the Crips and the Bloods, Leon Bing writes about the infighting among Crips over questions of respect, and reports one of the Crips as saying, “You got to be ready to do anything if somebody dis’ [disrespects] your ‘hood” (Bing, *Do or Die* [New York:

herent. It might be said on their behalf that there is no incoherence here, because their reaction is based not on their belief that *predatory* skills and proclivities are admirable, such that anyone who possesses them is admirable, but on their conviction that *they* are inherently superior. But if their conviction in their superiority is not based on their central characteristics, the characteristics that make them what they are, then it is not merely false—it is deluded. Thus, their attitudes are either internally incoherent, or utterly deluded.

Second, the predator's view that the life and pleasures of the producers are slavish conflicts with the undeniable appearances to the contrary, namely, that unlike slaves, producers engage in voluntary production and exchange, and are at liberty to stop producing. Again, unlike slaves, producers engage in their chosen activities freely and openly, without fear or favor. Indeed, in this respect it is *predators* who are akin to slaves, for it is they who must keep their true desires secret and fear being found out. Further, the view that producers are slavish and predators masters of their own fate runs afoul of the already-noted fact that it is predators who, like voluntary slaves, give up their autonomy.³²

The only remaining ground for regarding the activities and pleasures of the productive as "slavish," then, is the assumption that creative activity is a burden, a constraint on our nature, rather than a realization of it. On this view, it is parasitic activity that is a form of freedom and self-realization, a way of achieving our human potential. The problem with this view is that the *human* potential is something whose realization by different individuals is compossible (mutually compatibly realizable), and whose realization plays an essential role in human well-being. But on the view under discussion, if most people *did* realize their human potential, most people would perish. In other words, this view implies, absurdly, that the human potential is a potential for self-destruction, and that self-actualization is a form of self-annihilation. Even if we overlook the inherent absurdity of this claim, it is hard to see why, if freedom and pleasure lie in preying on others, most members of any functioning society attempt to lead productive lives, and teach their children to do likewise. The answer cannot simply be: "fear of being caught out and punished," for this merely raises the prior question of what sustains a social structure of punishment for predatory behavior and reward for productive behavior. It is because such a system rests on widespread social support that producers can conduct their business freely and openly, and predators cannot; and it is because a system of production and vol-

HarperCollins, 1991], p. 23). The importance of honor in all organized criminal societies is well described in Francis A. J. Ianni and Elizabeth Reuss-Ianni, *A Family Business: Kinship and Social Control in Organized Crime* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1972), esp. ch. 7.

³² Cf. Aristotle's conception of the "natural slave" as someone who does not have "a deliberative faculty" and, consequently, cannot make his own rational choices (*Politics*, book I, chs. 5 and 12).

untary exchange is a requirement of human well-being that it has widespread social support.

In short, insofar as predators deny that their ends are worthless and that they themselves are radically dependent and deficient in autonomy, their denial requires for its sustenance a whole array of “sleights of mind”—obfuscation, rationalization, evasion, self-contradiction, fantasy, and projection. And such a mental existence is not compatible with a sense of oneself as a freely thinking, freely acting, efficacious agent—that is, with self-esteem. On the other hand, if predators face the truth about themselves, they must see themselves as they are: dependent on the minds and productivity of others, and on their ignorance and mistaken trust, as on a crutch that might any day be yanked out from under them. Hence, whether they face the truth about themselves or not, they cannot have self-esteem. And this is true for anyone to the extent that he lives the life of a predator.

This analysis of the predator as radically lacking in efficacy and self-esteem helps explain another commonly noted feature of predators, namely, their other-directed, reactive, and mistrustful attitudes. Although these attitudes are not limited to physically violent predators—or, even, to aggressive people in general, whether physically violent or not—it is not hard to see why predatory behavior should reinforce and exacerbate them. Recall, first, that to the extent that the predator substitutes predation for a life of independent creation, he substitutes dependence on others for autonomy. Second, to the extent that he seeks to regain a sense of efficacy by controlling others, he makes himself further dependent on their actions and reactions. Thus, lacking a sense of his own worth, relying for his self-esteem entirely on the deference and honor afforded by others, and used to an unreflective mode of life, the predator, like the prototypical Nietzschean man of *ressentiment*, is constantly on the lookout for slights and insults, ever-ready to interpret innocent remarks as signs of “disrespect,” ever-threatened and ever-vengeful.³³ And the more he indulges his anger and resentment, the more self-righteous his view of his own behavior.

The portrait of the predator presented so far is of someone whose mental existence is incompatible with even the successful pretense of self-

³³ See, for example, McCall’s description of how his sense of powerlessness fed his fascination with the power of guns (*Makes Me Wanna Holler*, ch. 8), and of how his sense of his own vulnerability led him to look upon guns as “life’s great equalizer” (p. 68). The psychology of *ressentiment*—the reactive, vengeful affects it involves, and the sense of powerlessness and insignificance it feeds on—is analyzed by Friedrich Nietzsche in, among other places, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, essay 1, trans. Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale (New York: Vintage House, 1967). This analysis is further borne out by research on deeply insecure children, typically the products of parental mistreatment. Such children, whether they respond to their mistreatment by becoming bullies at school or withdrawn social outcasts, share a “deep perceptual bias,” perceiving “slights where none were intended,” interpreting an “innocent bump . . . as a vendetta” (Goleman, *Emotional Intelligence*, p. 235). Aggressive children, especially, proceed on the “presumption of malevolence rather than innocence,” becoming more “muddled” in their thinking as they become more angry and hostile (pp. 235–36).

esteem. But is it not possible, even if highly unlikely, that someone might internalize his self-deceptions to such an extent that they become "second nature" to him, that he might embed them so deeply in his life that evasion and projection become, in Sartrean language, a way of "being in the world" that is hidden from him? On Sartre's own theory of the mind as a transparent unity, this is impossible. But this theory of mind is rather implausible, and nothing less seems to quite rule out the hypothesis under consideration here. Hence, the possibility that a person's self-deceptions might become second nature to him must be granted. But if so, then it follows that a person's self-deceptions can blot out any vestige of self-knowledge and free him from inner conflict and feelings of worthlessness. Aristotle suggests the possibility of this kind of amnesia when he contrasts the vicious with the incontinent person: "[T]he vicious person," he says, "does not notice that he is vicious, while the incontinent person notices that he is incontinent."³⁴ Taken in by his own facade, such a person may even project his own fraudulence on others, and bury his self-estrangement under a sense of estrangement from this putatively fraudulent world. He may then self-righteously see his viciousness as justified by the world's injustices toward him, or by its general moral decay. This may well be the case with the technology-hating Unabomber, and may have been the case with some Nazis. Whether or not such total self-unawareness is possible, however, the important point for the present discussion is that the absence of inner conflict and the measure of deluded self-esteem that it affords cannot protect a person from conflict with, or alienation from, the world. Thus, whatever he gains in practical efficacy from his deluded inner state, he loses through conflict with, and alienation from, the world, a conflict and alienation far greater than that of the self-conflicted predator. Nor can the self-estranged predator's moral amnesia make him any less reactive and other-directed, living as he does in an unjust world that is out to get him—or a decadent world that is out to destroy his most cherished ideals.

³⁴ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1150b35; cf. 1144a3. Later, however, Aristotle tells us that a vicious person's "soul is in conflict" and that he hates and shuns himself (1166b14–20). So either Aristotle is of two minds about the nature of a vicious person, or he has two sorts of vicious persons in mind: people who are responsible for "many terrible actions" in the later passage (1166b14–20), and people who express their vice in less destructive ways in the earlier passage (1150b35, 1144a3).

The idea of such total loss of self-knowledge as a kind of amnesia is from the poet Adrienne Rich, who likens lying "as a way of life" to amnesia, "the silence of the unconscious" (Rich, "Women and Honor: Some Notes on Lying," *On Lies, Secrets, and Silence: Selected Prose, 1966–1978* [W. W. Norton and Company, Inc., 1979]; reprinted in *The Experience of Philosophy*, 2d ed., ed. Raymond Martin and Daniel Kolak [Belmont: Wadsworth Publishing Co., 1993], p. 563).

Jean-Paul Sartre also compares the initial act of self-deception to putting oneself to sleep, but likens the ensuing state of self-deception to a dreaming state that the self-deceiver continually perpetuates (Sartre, "Self-Deception," in Walter Kaufmann, ed., *Existentialism: From Dostoyevsky to Sartre* [New York: New American Library, 1975], p. 326).

I have talked only about those whose lives are dramatically deficient in practical efficacy, and who attempt to compensate for this deficiency through a policy of physically coercive control over others. Most of us, of course, are not so thoroughly deficient in practical efficacy that we are led to live a life of physically violent predation. But most of us do have good reason to entertain *some* self-doubt about our autonomy, or competence, or the worth of our ends, or all three, in *some* aspects of our independent lives. And many people may also sometimes experience such warranted doubt about their self-worth. That lack of self-esteem is a major cause of unhappiness, even among those possessed of abundant external goods, is evident not only from everyday experience, literature, and film, but also from reports of the clinical experience of the vast numbers of flourishing psychotherapists.³⁵

To the extent that we have reason for such self-doubt, but refuse to acknowledge it to ourselves, attempting instead to gain a sense of efficacy by controlling others through psychological manipulation or exploitation, we, too, are engaged in predation. Hence our lives, too, must be characterized by the same sort of parasitic dependence on others and the same sort of reactive, other-directed, unself-reflective emotional and cognitive glitches, projections, and conflicts.³⁶ And even if we succeed in totally deceiving ourselves and escaping from inner conflict, we will be, for all that, no less reactive, other-directed, and alienated from self or others.

There may be yet other psychological possibilities. Thus, it is possible that some people are simply naturally deficient in the rational or emotional capacities required for growth to full efficacy and self-esteem. Such people might be able to prey on others with a kind of primitive innocence that prevents any need for self-deception or other mental contortions.

All the same, if we go by the evidence provided by clinical psychology and by literature, the sorts of psychologies I have described are the most plausible and widespread ones. And what they show is that, if we lack efficacy and self-esteem, the only self-interested course of action is to face our deficiencies and take the responsibility for overcoming them. Until we do, good fortune cannot protect us from unhappiness.

³⁵ See, for example, Carl Rogers, "Toward a Modern Approach to Values: The Valuing Process in the Mature Person," and Abraham Maslow, "The Good Life of the Self-Actualizing Person," both in *Moral Problems in Contemporary Society*, ed. Paul Kurtz (Buffalo: Prometheus Books, 1969); and Nathaniel Branden, *The Six Pillars of Self-Esteem*. Albert Ellis also sees lack of autonomy and lack of self-esteem as the major causes of unhappiness, and his Rational Emotive Therapy focuses on helping the patient to regain these. For a useful summary of his ideas, see Gregory Kimble, Norman Garmezy, and Edward Zigler, *Principles of General Psychology*, 4th ed. (New York: The Ronald Press Co., 1974), pp. 574-75; this book also summarizes the ideas of Rogers (p. 573) and Maslow (pp. 243-46).

³⁶ For a remarkable depiction of the cognitive and emotional state of mind of a man in self-deception, see Fyodor Dostoyevsky's *Notes from the Underground* (New York: Dover Publications, 1992). See also Sartre on the "opacities" and "evanescence" of a self-deceived consciousness, a consciousness that has convinced itself that "the metastable [unstable] structure is the structure of being and that non-persuasion is the structure of all convictions" ("Self-Deception," pp. 299-328).

IV. PRACTICAL EFFICACY AND INTERDEPENDENT WELL-BEING

Practical efficacy in the independent realm both serves, and is served by, interdependent or social well-being. It serves interdependent well-being insofar as it enables us to express and actualize our social natures in multidimensional ways. In particular, it enables us to fulfill our need as social beings to love, trust, and admire others, to open our imaginative, speculative, evaluative, and deliberative lives to them, and to participate in theirs. And it enables us to do this because, as we have seen, a precondition of such mutual sharing is that we forge a life worth sharing, a life that is shaped by our own purposes and animated by our own aspirations, a life that justifiably inspires self-confidence and a sense of self-worth. Conversely, interdependent well-being serves practical efficacy in the independent realm in various ways. In particular, cooperative relations extend one's agency and enhance one's ability to achieve one's independent goals; and close friends do this in ways that mere contractual partners cannot. For one thing, in friendship—the shared life of “conversation and thought” (NE 1170b11–14)—we can participate vicariously in activities and interests we are unable to pursue on our own, discover and come to appreciate new sorts of activities and interests, and expand our stock of experiences.³⁷ Thus, our agency is extended both by vicarious action, and through an enrichment of our goals and of our imaginative lives. Again, close friends enhance our powers of deliberation and practical judgment, and thus our agency, by affirming—or questioning—the value of our goals and aspirations through ongoing, caring, and reliable feedback.

At least as importantly, in such a relationship a basic cognitive and emotional need—the need to be seen by, and to see oneself in, another self—is fulfilled more deeply and pervasively than is otherwise possible. There are several reasons why having this need fulfilled is intrinsically valuable and a constitutive part of our well-being.³⁸ To be seen as we are by another person, and to perceive oneself in another, are intrinsically valuable because they allow us to see ourselves from the outside, as it were, making us visible to ourselves by giving us an objective reality, a reality out there in the world. The experience of “visibility” through another's accurate perception of us is also intrinsically valuable for another reason: if our self-perception is accurate, and we have no reason to

³⁷ On this and the following point, see Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1169b5–6, 1170a5–7, 1170b12–14. See also Irwin, *Aristotle's First Principles*, pp. 393–95; Brink, “Rational Egoism, Self, and Others,” pp. 355–57; and David Schmidtz, *Rational Choice and Moral Agency* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), ch. 5.

³⁸ Most of the points in this passage are derived from Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, book IX; and Nathaniel Branden, *The Psychology of Romantic Love* (New York: Bantam Books, 1980), pp. 68–85. Aristotle argues that perceiving oneself in another is pleasant because the good is pleasant, and if one's life is good or “choiceworthy,” observing oneself will also be pleasant, and one can observe oneself better in another person. The notion of “visibility” is Branden's.

hide from ourselves, visibility is an important source of pleasure. Visibility of both forms—through being perceived by, and through perceiving ourselves in, another—is valuable for other reasons as well. It gives us a heightened sense of connection with others, thereby satisfying a basic need of our social natures; and it contributes centrally to self-knowledge and to self-growth, thus satisfying a basic need of our natures as rational, self-conscious, agents.³⁹

To the extent that we lack self-esteem in our interdependent lives, but seek personal relationships with those who do not, we cannot see ourselves as their equals, but only either as willing tools for their purposes, or as parasitic dependents on their creative activities, pure consumers of the values they create. Or we can see ourselves both as tools and as parasites, like the narrator of Dostoyevsky's *Notes from the Underground*, who combines slavishness with a parasitic manipulation and exploitation in his relationships with people.

This is not to say that those who, in violent opposition to civil society, seek only the companionship of others like themselves, will succeed in forming close friendships. Although they may well forge emotional attachments, their reactive, mistrustful attitudes will undercut the possibility of friendships that constitute the shared life of "conversation and thought," the friendships of "privileged trust" and mutual disclosure in which people seek and find mutual visibility.⁴⁰ The quest for self-knowledge and self-growth cannot coexist with the quest for self-deception, self-gratification, and domination of others.

With rare exceptions, even the sort of goodwill that exists in lesser friendships—the desire for the other's independent well-being essential to any relationship of genuine caring—is absent in those who choose a life of predation.⁴¹ For obvious reasons, the affective and cooperative ties of gang members are based almost entirely on the assumption of loyalty to the power-hierarchy of the gang, a loyalty that is enforced through violence or the threat of violence.⁴² Hence, the care and concern of gang

³⁹ Cf. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1172a13–14, on self-growth and self-knowledge; and John M. Cooper, "Aristotle on Friendship," in *Essays on Aristotle's Ethics*, ed. Amélie O. Rorty (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), pp. 301–40.

⁴⁰ The phrase "privileged trust" is from Laurence Thomas, *Living Morally: A Psychology of Moral Character* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1989), ch. 4. Cf. Aelred of Rivaulx: "[O]nly those do we call friends to whom we can fearlessly entrust our heart and all its secrets; those, too, who, in turn, are bound to us by the same law of faith and security" (*Spiritual Friendship*, book I, 32, in Michael Pakaluk, ed., *Other Selves: Philosophers on Friendship* [Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co., 1991], p. 137).

⁴¹ That there are rare exceptions is attested to by Bing in *Do or Die* (*supra* note 31). Bing describes how some of the same people who can torture outsiders to death for no worse fault than being outsiders can also, sometimes, help the younger boys go to school and get out of the gang.

⁴² See, for example, Virgil W. Peterson, *The Mob: Two Hundred Years of Organized Crime in New York* (Ottawa: Green Hill Publishers, 1983), on the use of torture and murder to punish double-crossers, and the use of the fear of violence to maintain "rigid discipline" (p. 426). See also the minutes of the Oyster Bay Conference of organized-crime-control specialists,

members for each other, and their willingness to help in times of need, are highly defeasible. Even among the family-oriented Mafia, rarely do fathers encourage their sons to use their education and opportunities to seek a safer and more enriching life for themselves. Their affective ties, then, not only fail to enhance the agency of individual gang members, they constrain it.

Thus, despite the romantic portrait of gang life often found in movies and books, the overwhelming evidence is that gang culture is generally characterized by a dominate-or-be-dominated code, a love of "glory," and a competition for power that often erupt in violent rivalry not only between gangs but also within gangs. This is especially true of street gangs, whose ranks are filled by young people with reactive, other-directed, unself-reflective psychologies, and violent, short lives. Their lives thus tend to bear out Thomas Hobbes's observations about the internal and external condition of the life of individuals in the state of nature.

It is also possible for people with impoverished lives to form mutually exploitative and manipulative relationships, relationships based on a tacit consent to engage in subtle deceits and power-games and to use each other for their own agendas. Such would be an alliance of mutual deception between two people who need from each other, and are willing to give to each other, constant and uncritical reassurance of their worth. To a larger or lesser extent, such tacitly agreed-upon mutual deception is a feature of many "love" relationships. At their worst, such relationships can become like a drug addiction, as they progressively constrict the possibilities of self-knowledge and self-growth for both people, narrowing their world to each other at their lowest level of self-esteem.⁴³

A relationship between two manipulative people can also be aimed at harming others. In the worst case, it might be a partnership in vicious aggression against others, as exemplified in the plotting and scheming relationship of the Marquise de Merteuil and the Vicomte de Valmont, the chief characters of Choderlos de Laclos's *Les Liaisons Dangereuses*.

In all these cases, those who seek to dominate and control the minds and actions of others do so because it is only or largely in the reactions of others that they can gain a sense of their own power and agency. Similarly, those who seek through tacit or explicit consent to be controlled and used by others do so because it is only or largely through their value to others that they can get a sense of self-worth. Thus, they live "second-hand," their relationship to the world and to themselves mediated by

describing the structure of various organized-crime groups: "They are totalitarian in nature. . . . The leader of the organization has absolute authority over the life and death of the organization's members" (cited in Dwight C. Smith, Jr., *The Mafia Mystique* [New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1975], p. 247).

⁴³ For an insightful discussion of the mutually exploitative and manipulative—and finally addictive—relationship of two such people, see Stanton Peele (with Archie Brodsky), *Love and Addiction* (New York: Taplinger, 1975).

others' perceptions and purposes.⁴⁴ What none of these relationships can do is satisfy the need for an independently forged life, or supply the joys of sharing such a life with another.

The fuller conception of practical efficacy and self-esteem provided in this and the previous section makes it clearer how and why efficacy and self-esteem are essential for well-being. Insofar as we are efficacious, we have the central component of personal well-being: a life of unimpeded active engagement with the world, based on a realistic appraisal of ourselves and others, and the accompanying awareness of ourselves as "fit" for the world. Such an awareness is pleasurable for the same kind of reason that the awareness of the healthy, unimpeded activity of one's body is pleasurable. And this is how we expect well-being or happiness to be, since, in Aristotle's words, we "all think the happy life is pleasant and weave pleasure into happiness" (*NE* 1153b13-15).

The analyses and arguments given in these sections also support the claim that virtue is both necessary and, in the absence of misfortune, sufficient, for practical efficacy and happiness. For they suggest that in the absence of external impediments to efficacy or happiness, the lack of efficacy in fundamental areas of human concern and, thus, the lack of happiness in a person's life, imply a lack of practical wisdom and virtue. Insofar as we lack autonomy, we either fail to live by our own reasoned choices, or we choose ends that rob us of the continued ability to live by our own reasoned choices. Insofar as we lack worthy ends, we lack either the ability to make sound value-judgments, or the ability to act on them. Insofar as we lack realism in our choice of ends, we lack either the ability to accurately gauge our capacities, or the ability to live by our perceptions. Insofar as we lack the competence to pursue worthy ends, we lack either the ability to deliberate rationally, or the ability to live by the results of such deliberation. If we have both competence and autonomously chosen realistic and worthy ends, but lack a sense of self-worth, we lack either sound standards of self-worth, or the ability to appraise ourselves by them. But the ability to realistically and autonomously choose and pursue worthy ends, using sound standards of value to appraise ourselves and others, is part and parcel of practical wisdom and virtue. Hence, lack of practical efficacy in the absence of external impediments implies a commensurate lack of practical wisdom and virtue.

When we are fully efficacious, we are not only rightly self-directed, acting in ways conducive to our natures as rational and social animals and, thus, to our well-being, we also take pleasure in our power of right self-direction—our autonomy. It is then that autonomy becomes a virtue, and our autonomous choices exhibit wisdom and virtue, for it is then that

⁴⁴ The term "second-hand" is Ayn Rand's. The nature of the independent individual versus the nature of the second-hander is the central theme of her novel *The Fountainhead* (New York: New American Library, 1968). The addictive lovers described by Peele and Brodsky in *Love and Addiction* are also examples of two second-handers.

our emotions and desires become integrated with reason. And it is only when our choices exhibit virtue that we are fully rationally self-interested.⁴⁵ For it is only then that we are appropriately responsive to our own human and individual capacities and needs, and take pleasure in exercising our capacities, expressing our emotions, and satisfying our appetites, in the right circumstances, in the right manner, at the right time, and to the right extent. Further, in recognizing our own human capacities and needs, we recognize our commonalities with others and, thus, the capacities and needs of others.⁴⁶ In this way, the virtues put us in touch with various aspects of reality, our own and others', free us of the control of skewed perceptions and irrational emotions, and enable us to feel at home in the world. The virtues, in other words, empower us.

A deeper analysis of practical efficacy supports a picture of the virtues as "emergent properties," qualities of character that emerge hand-in-hand with increasing efficacy and self-esteem, qualities that represent excellence in the functioning of our cognitive, emotional, and social capacities.

In the next section I will use extended examples to show this connection between virtue and happiness—as well as the connection between lack of virtue and lack of happiness.

V. SELF-INTEREST, WELL-BEING, AND VIRTUE

What was I created for, I wonder? Where is my place in the world?
 . . . Is there not a terrible hollowness, mockery, want, craving, in that existence which is given away to others, for want of something of your own to bestow it on?⁴⁷

The sort of giving away of one's existence to others that Caroline, in Charlotte Brontë's novel *Shirley*, has in mind here, is the giving away in self-sacrificial service that is often taught to women.⁴⁸ But there are many other ways of giving away one's own existence to others, and many ways of not having a life of one's own that do not involve others. In each case, some ways are more culpable than others. In all of them, however, as the following examples show, there is a hollowness and mockery, a deficiency

⁴⁵ Cf. Aristotle's remark that the virtuous person is a self-lover because "he acts for the sake of his reasoning part, which is what each person seems to be" (*Nicomachean Ethics*, 1166a16-17); and: "[T]he excellent person, in so far as he is excellent, enjoys actions expressing virtue, and objects to actions caused by vice, just as the musician enjoys fine melodies and is pained by bad ones" (1170a8-10).

⁴⁶ I argue for this in my "Moral Agency, Commitment, and Impartiality," *Social Philosophy and Policy*, vol. 13, no. 1 (Winter 1996), pp. 22-25.

⁴⁷ Charlotte Brontë, *Shirley*, ed. Herbert Rosengarten and Margaret Smith (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), p. 174.

⁴⁸ For a fascinating discussion of this sort of self-abnegation, see Jean Hampton, "Selflessness and the Loss of Self," *Social Philosophy and Policy*, vol. 10, no. 1 (Winter 1993), pp. 135-65.

of rational self-direction and of self-love. Hence, in all such ways of life there is lack of both virtue and well-being, with the extent and depth of the first lack reflected in the extent and depth of the second.

As we have seen, the very vicious, those who live a life of aggression against others, whether through physical violence or through psychological manipulation, are also radically lacking in the willingness to be the autonomous agents of their own lives and establish an independent relationship to reality. Whatever the initial cause of their vice, their extreme injustice and deceitfulness toward others express their lack of autonomy and self-esteem, and strengthen and exacerbate their unhappiness. For the more they aggress and scheme against others, the less they live lives of their own; and the more they succeed in rationalizing their behavior to themselves, the less they see a reason to make lives of their own. Their callous attitude toward others' well-being is reflected in a like attitude toward themselves, an attitude of indifference to their moral selves, their characters.⁴⁹ Thus, they rob themselves not only of the pleasures of living lives of their own, but also of the pleasures of friendship.

The callousness, and the deliberate, cultivated purposelessness, of the lives of the Marquise de Merteuil and the Vicomte de Valmont serve as a case in point. The destruction of others' reputations and lives through sexual intrigue, seduction, and betrayal is the leitmotif of their liaison, and amusement and diversion from boredom are its only purpose. Every victory over others confirms them in their sense of superiority to others—yet every victory leaves them dissatisfied and in search of an ever-greater variety of amusement and refinement of cruelty. For the Vicomte, this search culminates in the project of seducing and destroying Madame de Tourvel, a woman who stands aloof from the surrounding intrigues and scandals, and whose greatest charm is her radiant virtue. She must be seduced and destroyed *precisely because* she is self-possessed and virtuous. When, contrary to his own expectations, he starts to fall in love with her, experiencing the first genuine passion and love and happiness he has ever felt, he is led by the shallowness of his own character, as by a destiny, to reject his feelings as pusillanimous. His project comes to an end only when he has destroyed her—and his own happiness.

Similar considerations apply to those who, in lesser and more limited ways, attempt to manipulate or exploit others instead of living through their own agency. Whatever the initial cause of their (more limited) vice, their attempts to use others as mere means to their own ends perpetuate their lack of autonomy, and hence their lack of well-being. For example, the narrator of Dostoyevsky's *Notes from the Underground* seeks

⁴⁹ Such indifference to the self may also be called the vice of *sloth* or *acedia*, from the Greek *akedeia*, "without care." Thomas Aquinas discusses sloth in the form of "spiritual apathy," which he defines as "sorrow over spiritual good," and in particular, the divine good; see Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* (New York: Blackfriars and McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1972), 2a2ae, question 35, article 2.

ever more elaborate—and ever more absurd—techniques to prove his worth to himself and others. When such manipulation and exploitation are mutual, each party is caught in a spiral of escalating game-playing to gain a sense of his or her own agency and value through the other's actions and reactions. For every success prompts further attempts, and every failure creates a need to invent a new technique for outwitting each other.

There are also other ways of living through others that involve only a willingness to *be* manipulated and exploited. Such is the case of someone who sacrifices his autonomy and integrity for the sake of pleasing others and being liked by them. The character of Leonard Zelig, in Woody Allen's film *Zelig*, is the epitome of someone who has taken self-surrender to its logical conclusion. In countless acts of phony agreement with others' opinions and tastes, in innumerable shifts of preference and belief to tailor his personality to "fit in" with the crowd, Zelig ends up a chameleon-like personality whose identity, and sense of identity, become entirely dependent on the identity of those around him. As he perfects the skill of blending in with the environment, he loses all sense of his own separateness and distinctness: when with doctors, he becomes a doctor, when with actors, an actor—and when with fascists, a fascist.

Like the Marquise, the Vicomte, and the Underground Man, Zelig's failure of autonomy and integrity is also a failure of courage, the courage to confront the feelings of insecurity and worthlessness that lead him to try to gain the esteem of others through utter conformity to their values. Insofar as he denies these feelings, it is also a failure of honesty with himself. Like the others, too, Zelig shows a lack of spiritual ambition, a lack of concern for his moral self, and, thus, for his own well-being.

But feelings of insecurity and worthlessness are not the only starting points on the route to such conformity and cowardice and dishonesty. Someone brought up on the wrong moral code, a code that preaches self-sacrifice and service to others as the highest moral ideals, can, if she fails to challenge this code, end up where Zelig starts: radically heteronomous, cowardly, and compromised—her life a pretense in the name of an ideal.

A person might also live in an uneasy balance between total self-surrender and autonomy, self-betrayal and integrity. Consider a woman who, like Brontë's Caroline, has been raised in a culture that devalues independence and rationality for women, and severely constrains their opportunities for discovering the value of these traits. But unlike Caroline, who questions her culture's code, this woman unthinkingly accepts it as right and tries to act on it. She tries this, but never fully succeeds, because she never fully internalizes the "womanly virtues" of abiding by the decisions of the male authority, and of defining her interests in terms of his. And she never fully internalizes them because she cannot quite surrender her own vision of things or see herself as inferior. Thus, she

sacrifices the virtues of autonomy and of pride without ever quite acquiring the vices of slavishness and humility.⁵⁰ Likewise, she sacrifices the virtues of integrity, and of a truthful view of herself in her self-presentations to others, without falling into total self-betrayal and self-deprecation.⁵¹ Hence, she retains some sense of her own potentialities and of self-worth, without ever forging a life of her own.

All of these are ways of not having a life of one's own because one has given it away to others. But a person can also lack a life of his own not necessarily (or even primarily) because he has given it away to others, but because he has given it up for the easy pleasures of immediate gratification or inertia—the “false pleasures,” as Plato would call them, of avoiding pain by avoiding gain. Such a person might be simply incontinent or weak-willed, rather than indifferent to, or committed to, the bad. Unlike some of the cases discussed above, an incontinent person knows well the difference between the good and the bad, in principle and in application. But he lacks the wherewithal to act on this knowledge, because he lacks the strength to counteract his inertia or his desire for immediate gratification. And so he fails in temperance, integrity, and spiritual ambition. Thus, he fails to pursue the ends he recognizes as worth pursuing and, rationally, wishes to pursue, in favor of ends that seem more immediately pleasing or in some way easier. He aspires to make something of himself, but his aspirations remain a blueprint buried under the pleasures of immediate gratification, or of effort-avoidance. His self-indulgence reinforces his weakness of will, creating a gulf between his aspirations and his actions, and leading to derailed goals, recurring regrets, a sense of failure, and an ever-lower self-esteem.

If and when he becomes continent, he will regain much of the self he has frittered away in easy pleasures, or create the self he has never had. He will not only have a general understanding of what is humanly important, he will also have a more realistic understanding of his own strengths and weaknesses, and will act resolutely on his well-considered decisions. Thus, he will accomplish the goals he rationally wishes to accomplish, regain much of his lost (or never-gained) self-trust, and have reason to feel pride instead of regret.

Nevertheless, even a continent person does not have the psychological prerequisite for a high degree of well-being. For a continent person lacks the depth of conviction and fullness of purpose that come only with an

⁵⁰ A person who claims less than he should, says Aristotle, “would seem to have something bad in him because he does not think he is worthy of the goods” he is worthy of, and “he would seem not to know himself” (*Nicomachean Ethics*, 1125a20–23). Again, someone who never gets angry when insulted and, thus, never defends himself, but is willing “to accept insults to . . . [himself] and to overlook insults to . . . [his] family and friends is slavish” (1126a6–8).

⁵¹ Cf. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1127a32–b35, where Aristotle contrasts the virtue of truthfulness about oneself with the deficiency of self-deprecation and the excess of boastfulness.

integration of understanding and judgment with emotion and desire. When nearby or easy pleasures beckon, he needs to struggle to resist their beckoning. He does what he judges to be important, but wishes it could be otherwise and looks for reasons that might justify making an exception. His deliberations and actions, though finally successful, are still impeded by his wayward feelings and desires. Hence, he lacks the enjoyment inherent in activity that engages one's emotions and desires. Thus, even in the event of good fortune, his well-being is impeded by his lack of virtue: his inability to wholeheartedly desire what he rationally wishes to do, and does. Conversely, to the extent that he is happy, he is happy for the same reason that he is morally upright: he perceives what is important in a human life and in his own life, and why, and he commits himself to living up to this perception.

A high degree of well-being—*eudaimonia*—requires the virtues, the virtues of character informed by practical wisdom. For, as argued in Section II above, it is only insofar as someone is virtuous that she has not only the correct general conception of the things worth striving for and the best means to them, but also the perceptiveness to see the subtle shadings of value in the particularities of their daily manifestation. And it is only insofar as someone is virtuous that she possesses the wherewithal to create a life of her own, in a world of her own: freedom from the blandishments of rejected desires, independence of the temptations of conformity, and equanimity in the face of misfortunes. For it is only insofar as she is virtuous that she feels and desires in harmony with her reason (and reasons in harmony with her feelings and desires) and is able to act wholeheartedly and pleasurably in ways that express her understanding, perceptions, and emotions. Thus, it is only insofar as someone is virtuous that she possesses the dominant internal source of full efficacy and happiness.

Charlotte Brontë's portrait of Jane Eyre, in her novel of the same name, is in many ways the portrait of such a person. In one scene in the novel, we get a description of Jane Eyre by Edward Rochester, the novel's other main character. We are told that Jane Eyre has eyes that are "soft and full of feeling," yet also proud and reserved; a mouth that is "[m]obile and flexible," that "delights at times in laughter," and is "meant to speak much and smile often"; yet also a brow that declares that she can live alone if necessary, for she has "an inward treasure" which can keep her alive "if all extraneous delights should be withheld; or offered only at a price" she "cannot afford to give."⁵² She also has "passions" that "may rage furiously," but her judgment always has "the last word in every argument, and the casting vote in every decision."⁵³ And as the events of the novel, and Jane Eyre's own words, reveal, she has also yearned for

⁵² Charlotte Brontë, *Jane Eyre* (1847), ed. Sandy Lesberg (New York: Peebles Press International, Inc., n.d.), p. 242.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, pp. 242–43.

“an original, a vigorous, an expanded mind” such as Rochester’s, and delighted in it when she has found it.⁵⁴

The picture we get is of a person who is firmly independent, courageous, proud, and resourceful, gentle, sympathetic, and giving, delighting in conversation and the life of the mind, passionately loving, and passionately rational. For such a person, doing wrong by others is as much an anathema as the idea of doing wrong by herself for the sake of “extraneous delights” (including, as the story reveals, the delights of a life with the only man she has ever loved). For being just or honest with others is as much a part of her sense of who she is, as is having the self-regarding virtues. Indeed, being just and honest with others follows from her self-regarding virtues, and conversely. Because she is autonomous, she does not wish for any value from others that she cannot get in a fair exchange, or as a freely given gift. Hence, she lacks any reason to exploit or manipulate others. Moreover, because she has a justifiable sense of self-worth—the virtue of pride—she would disdain becoming a dependent on the mistaken trust of the victims of her deception. Because she has courage and pride, she neither fears the judgment of others, nor needs their unearned approval. Hence, she has reason neither to flatter others, nor to deceive them about herself. Since she is honest with herself, she knows herself well and wishes to know herself better; and therefore she seeks honest interaction with others. Because she has self-regard, she approaches others with the same presumption of self-regard; and therefore she extends the same honesty to others. Each of these dispositions is a part of her sense of who she is; hence, her sense of integrity requires that she live in truth to all of them. And in so doing, she succeeds in living a life of full engagement with the world.

Her success, however, is not achieved without a degree of good fortune. Everything turns out well in Charlotte Brontë’s story: Jane marries Rochester when she can do so without compromising her principles. But circumstances *could* have conspired to deprive her of a life worth living, thanks to her unwillingness to compromise. Hence we must now consider the possibility of conflict between the internal and external conditions of well-being—i.e., between virtue and good fortune—and their relative weight in well-being in case of such a conflict.

If Jane Eyre’s virtues had invited disaster, would she have had a self-interested reason to *change* who she was, if she could? Would it be true to say that she would have been better off if she had had less integrity, so that, in case of conflict, she *could* have compromised it for the sake of gaining or preserving some of those “extraneous delights”? Since certain sorts of external goods are also essential for human happiness, it is entirely possible for someone with less integrity to do better in terms of external goods than someone with the integrity of a Jane Eyre, and thus

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 306.

to preserve a life worth living where the other fails. But this in itself does not imply that the person with less integrity will do better overall than the person with more integrity. For the intensity of happiness of a short-lived life might outweigh the paler pleasures of a longer life. It is only in cases where virtue invites the sort of disaster that leads not to death but to extreme lifelong suffering, the sort of suffering that breaks down a person's inner resources, that it is clear that (other things being equal) a person of lesser virtue would have done better overall.

But if someone retains her virtue even in catastrophic circumstances, then neither she, nor those who know and admire her, can think that she would have been better off if she had been a different sort of person. She cannot think this because her conception of her self-interest cannot be prised apart from her conception of herself, and her conception of herself cannot be prised apart from her moral virtues. A person's virtues are deep-seated dispositions that she identifies with and loves, expresses in her thoughts, feelings, and actions, has produced by her actions, and is partly the product of. Most importantly, however, she cannot wish to be without her virtues because she recognizes them as the source of her most cherished possessions: her sense of freedom and her capacity for enjoyment. Likewise, those who admire her and wish her well also cannot wish her to be without her virtues. For when they have a full-enough conception of her life to admire her, they can see how her virtues have enhanced her life, and cannot conceive of any life as a good life for her independently of her virtues.

To take a real-life example: it was largely Socrates' virtues that led to his execution, but it would be false to say that Socrates would have been better off without his passion for self-knowledge or his honesty in the quest for it, or without the sense of justice that led him to refuse to participate in the unjust trial of the Athenian Generals or to cooperate with the Thirty Tyrants. For these are the intellectual and moral virtues that made the life of Socrates what it was. And it is hard to imagine a fuller life than Socrates', combining as it did the harmonious exercise of all his human capacities—rational, emotional, social, and appetitive—and his intense pleasure in such exercise.⁵⁵ Even if he had been killed at, say, the age of forty, instead of at the age of seventy or seventy-one, his life would have been fuller than most people's lives anywhere. It is also hard to imagine how someone whose virtues are confined to fewer areas of life could have as rich a life as Socrates'. For it is only too clear how Socrates' virtues made for the richness of his life—and for the fascination of his character for his friends and admirers, past and present. It is hardly surprising, then, that neither Socrates nor his well-wishers regretted his courageous, just, or other virtuous dispositions or actions.

⁵⁵ Such, at least, is the portrait of Socrates presented in Plato's *Symposium*, trans. Michael Joyce, in *The Collected Dialogues of Plato*, ed. Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961), especially in Alcibiades' speech at 219e–222a.

Do similar considerations apply to a vicious person as to a virtuous one? Must a vicious person find it impossible to conceive of himself as better off without his vices?⁵⁶ Just as the virtuous person identifies with his virtues, a vicious person will identify with his vices. But unless he is totally self-deceived and self-alienated, he cannot see himself as efficacious or happy, and thus he cannot see his vices as promoting his well-being—even if he also cannot quite see how virtue can promote anyone's well-being. If he *is* totally self-deceived, however, he will see others, rather than his own character, as the cause of his problems, and live in a state of self-alienation, as well as of alienation from, and conflict with, others. Insofar as a vicious person cannot conceive of himself as better off without his vices, then, it is either because he cannot conceive the possibility of better people than himself, or because he cannot conceive the possibility of better people having better lives. But if he is, in rare moments, capable of conceiving these possibilities, then he is also capable of conceiving of himself as better off without his vices. For at such moments he is aware that it is his vices that deprive him of efficacy, cause his resentments, and create the constant need to posture and try to outwit others. Thus, he is aware—as are those who observe him—that it is his vices that deprive him of freedom and the enjoyment of life.

Furthermore, the salience of the fact that heroic figures are sometimes struck down by those who fear or envy or resent them should not lead us to forget that those who are wholly or largely lacking in moral virtue are also subject to certain sorts of misfortunes, precisely on account of this lack. This is the chief moral lesson of *Zelig*. In the movie, *Zelig* starts by sacrificing assorted opinions and preferences, proceeds to sacrifice his very identity and capacity for moral judgment, and eventually becomes the prey of fascist propaganda. History shows that lack of integrity and autonomy and pride do not have to reach *Zelig*-like proportions before we make ourselves vulnerable to such propaganda: the Nazis succeeded in attracting millions of ordinary human beings to their cause by playing on their feelings of impotence and worthlessness. And experimental psychology and everyday experience show that this historical lesson has relevance beyond its time and place, because the habits of conformity, and of obedience to authority, are widespread and deep, much deeper by far than integrity or justice or goodwill.⁵⁷

Nor does the possibility of becoming the tool of another exist only where there are individuals with totalitarian aspirations. For individuals with aspirations to control us exist everywhere—in the school, the streets,

⁵⁶ I thank Daniel Shapiro for raising this question.

⁵⁷ For experimental evidence of the depth and scope of habits of conformity and of obedience to authority, see Solomon Asch, *Social Psychology* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1952); and Stanley Milgram, *Obedience to Authority* (New York: Harper and Row, 1974), respectively. Conformity also plays a role in the phenomenon of “the unresponsive bystander”; see the description of the experiments conducted by Bibb Latane and John Darley in their book *The Unresponsive Bystander: Why Doesn't He Help?* (New York: Appleton, 1970).

the office, the home, the government—and come in many forms—school bullies, gang leaders, autocratic bosses, fathers, or husbands, cult leaders, organizers of paramilitary groups, politicians with loyal fiefdoms, et al. Given the right circumstances—and the circumstances are only too often right—the step from “ordinary” conformity to the status of victim—or victimizer—is only a short one. As victim, one may be the passive object of another’s cruelty, or the eager self-abnegator who sacrifices her or his own perceptions and goals in the hope of finding salvation or meaning in life through submission to another; as victimizer, one may be the reluctantly obedient subject who visits cruelty on others, or the eager conformist to the group’s norms of brutality.⁵⁸ Whatever the case, the result is the same: the loss of a self and a world of one’s own. Only those who wholly or largely lack virtue are struck by such misfortune; and only those who have the virtues of autonomy, integrity, pride, justice, goodwill, et al. are assured of averting it.

Even in the absence of such misfortune, there is the daily grayness, or the frequently recurring anxiety, of many lives. As I noted in Section III, the psychological and other evidence points to widespread unhappiness even among people blessed by good fortune—unhappiness resulting from self-doubt and low self-regard, from a sense of inauthenticity, of not being one’s own person, and so on—in short, from lack of autonomy, integrity, pride, and honesty. Since most people are not vicious, since they do not endorse the obviously immoral, the lack of these virtues can only take the form of the daily moral shortcuts—the compromises, the surrenders, the evasions, the petty manipulations and injustices—that characterize so many people’s actions and affect so many relationships, at home and in the workplace. It is true for vast numbers of us, then, as many psychologists have recognized, that moral virtue is an indispensable part of our self-interest.⁵⁹

⁵⁸ In Philip Zimbardo’s disturbingly fascinating “prison experiments,” college students assigned to play prisoners and guards soon started to exhibit alarming levels of self-abnegating obedience as prisoners, or cruelty and brutality as guards. This happened spontaneously, without pressure from the experimenters. What sufficed for the extreme results were the deliberate creation of an atmosphere of degradation in the “prison camp” by Zimbardo, his tacit permission to the students to do as they liked within the parameters of the experiment, and conformity on the part of the students to their respective peer groups. Owing to the unexpected brutality, Zimbardo had to call off a planned two-week experiment after six days. This experiment, and the Milgram and Asch experiments cited in note 57, are well discussed in John Sabini and Maury Silver, “On Destroying the Innocent with a Clear Conscience: A Sociopsychology of the Holocaust,” in their book *Moralities of Everyday Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982).

⁵⁹ Since the virtues just *are* rational and emotional dispositions to recognize and respond to value, and since such recognition and response are part and parcel of practical efficacy and happiness, this is hardly surprising. Thus, in “Toward a Modern Approach to Values” (*supra* note 35), Rogers talks about the psychologically mature person as being “sensitively discriminating” (p. 87) and “accurate” in his responses because he is in touch with the “totality of himself” (p. 89), i.e., his perceptions, feelings, and thoughts, and in touch with “the realities of the objective world” and of other people (p. 92). Such a person comes to value being “real,” tolerant, and self-accepting, and acquires pride. Thus, he moves toward the “universal values” (p. 93) of “sincerity, independence, self-direction, self-knowledge,

Hence, even though a person's virtue might invite unusual misfortune, a misfortune that deprives him of a great part of happiness and that would not strike someone with a more accommodating character, we cannot wish, for any future person to whom we wish happiness, that she grow up to be less than morally admirable. For to wish a person to grow up to lack virtue is to wish her to acquire less of the most essential resource for a truly happy life, for the sake of avoiding an unusual—and, therefore, unlikely—circumstance. It is only in the event of a misfortune so great that it tears down a person's inner resources, that goodwill must lead us, in retrospect, to wish that she had had the ability for moral compromise.

I have assumed all along that the virtues need not extend, and typically do not extend, across all domains of a person's life. This means that even the most morally admirable people are likely to fall short of virtue in some area of their lives. Socrates, for example, despite his courage and his sense of justice, seems never to have spoken out against the injustice of slavery in his society. Yet this moral limitation did not, as far as we know, tarnish his happiness. It is possible that Socrates did not even *notice* the injustice of slavery, that he had a culturally induced blind spot regarding its injustice.

This suggests that if a person's injustice in certain domains of his life is due to blind spots, and the victim of injustice does not protest or resist it, the injustice of the partially unjust person will not undermine his sense of rectitude. And since a sense of rectitude is a major component of a person's self-esteem, and thus of his well-being, it follows that his limited injustice will not undermine his overall well-being. But even if the injustice is due to evasion, if a person's life is otherwise full enough and rich enough owing to his virtues, then the injustice will not affect it so significantly that he is robbed of his overall happiness. Such might have been the case with Thomas Jefferson. Jefferson seems to have combined great courage and justice and integrity in many areas of his life with a shocking lack of these in at least one area: slavery. He spoke out against slavery, and was clearly troubled by his own involvement with it, apparently spending sleepless nights over it. Yet he was not troubled enough (or principled enough) to free his slaves during his lifetime or, indeed, even after his death, when he had them sold to pay off his debts. Although his happiness was tarnished by his injustice, it was not tarnished enough to deprive him of a fairly rich and satisfying life.

social responsivity, social responsibility, and loving interpersonal relationships" (p. 95). Similarly, in "The Good Life of the Self-Actualizing Person" (*supra* note 35), Maslow talks about the self-actualizing person as moving toward "truth, justice, beauty, and virtue," and thereby coming to feel "loving and admiring" toward herself (pp. 73–74). Again, in *The Six Pillars of Self-Esteem* (*supra* note 25), where Branden discusses why self-esteem is an indispensable component of happiness, he includes "personal integrity" as the "sixth pillar" of self-esteem, and lists the following virtues as the main components of personal integrity: practicing what one preaches, promise-keeping, honoring one's commitments, and "dealing with other human beings fairly, justly, benevolently, and compassionately" (p. 165).

None of this should be surprising. If happiness is analogous to physical health, then given the fact that some people can stay healthy despite their violation of certain health norms, it is to be expected that some people will lead more or less happy lives despite their violation of certain moral norms. Hence, they will not have sufficient—or, if the violation is due to blind spots, any—motivation to do the right thing, independently of appropriate reactions by their victims. In such cases, the importance of each of us standing up to those who do injustice to us is both self-regarding and other-regarding. Moreover, if we are truly concerned to stay in touch with ourselves and others, we will be concerned about the possibility of our own blind spots and injustices. Hence, it is important that each of us also want others to stand up to us when we do injustice to them, and that we heed them when they do.

VI. CONCLUSION

I have argued that virtue is essential to practical efficacy—to our ability to function well as beings with certain sorts of rational, social, and physical powers and needs—and hence, that virtue is central to well-being. For both well-being and virtue involve facing ourselves and others and the circumstances of our world realistically, and taking pleasure in acting accordingly. But virtue is neither identical with, nor sufficient for, well-being. Great misfortunes can mar a person's well-being by impeding her practical efficacy, regardless of her virtues. The virtues guarantee only the essential internal condition of practical efficacy and well-being, namely, the appropriate ultimate goals and dispositions.

I have suggested some ways in which the self-regarding and other-regarding virtues (and vices) are connected; but there is much more to be said about the connections. In particular, the suggestion that the other-regarding virtues are required for an adequate conception of, and concern for, ourselves requires development. What I hope to have shown, however, is that most of us have as much reason to develop the virtues as we do to seek happiness.

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