ABSTRACT

Title of dissertation: THE VIRTUES OF SHARING

Nancy J. Matchett, Doctor of Philosophy, 1998

Dissertation directed by: Professor Michael A. Slote, Chair
Department of Philosophy

In "The Virtues of Sharing" I defend two central theses: that sharing is our most overarching ethical ideal, and that virtue ethics is able to serve as a comprehensive and free-standing approach to moral theory. My arguments for these theses are intertwined, because they are also designed to show how a virtue-ethical theory that treats the "Will to Share" as the basis of moral agency helps to resolve the contemporary Justice/Care Debate.

Although rooted in the history of western moral philosophy, this debate crystallized in response to Carol Gilligan's claim that there are two ways of thinking about morality. I contend that what she presents as a single contrast between a "justice-orientation" and a "care-orientation" actually points to two distinct tensions within moral thought. The first and most general is a tension in value orientation: some moral outlooks emphasize the separateness of persons, while others idealize various forms of interpersonal connection. I argue that neither set of values can be shown to have absolute primacy over the other, but that the ideal of sharing underlies both. The second tension concerns whether an adequate conception of morality must be

grounded in abstract and general principles. I argue that the rightness of actions can be understood as being entirely derivative from the goodness of their motives, and that agents need not be "acting on principle" in order to be acting morally. I further argue that morally good motives are best understood as expressions of an agent's practical desire or Will to Share both things and experiences with other people.

The formal structure of my response to the second tension is radically virtue-ethical, and when combined with the normative thesis that the Will to Share is a motivational ideal, results in an attractive and theoretically satisfying conception of morality and the ethical life. To demonstrate this, I show how an ethic of sharing explains and justifies our canonical moral judgments, while also providing us with the concrete guidance we seek from moral theory.

THE VIRTUES OF SHARING

by

Nancy J. Matchett

Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of the
University of Maryland in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
1998

Advisory Committee:

Professor Michael Slote, Chairman/Advisor
Professor Nancy Sherman (Georgetown University)
Professor Judith Lichtenberg
Assistant Professor Samuel Kerstein

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Nancy J. Matchett

1998

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction

The suggestion that sharing might serve as our most overarching ethical ideal may sound almost too good to be true, but I believe that it could be true, and in "The Virtues of Sharing" I endeavor to show how that ideal can help us to understand what sorts of motives and character traits are morally virtuous, and what sorts of actions are morally right, as well as what sorts of political arrangements are worthy of our allegiance and what sorts of institutional structures are just. My suggestion, in other words, is that the ideal of sharing lies at the core of our moral awareness, capturing what moral activity in both "private" and "public" contexts is most centrally about.

My title is deliberately ambiguous between three senses of the term 'virtue.' To begin with, it alludes to what I take to be the primary advantage of treating sharing as an ethical ideal — namely, the way that it unifies or even transcends a pervasive tension that seems to be deeply embedded within both ordinary and philosophical conceptions of morality. This tension is evidenced by Carol Gilligan's distinction between a "justice-orientation" and a "care-orientation," but as the arguments of my first chapter will show, the contemporary Justice/Care Debate is symptomatic of a much more general dispute about the relative moral significance of "separateness" and "connectedness" in human life. While some moral outlooks idealize autonomy, self-sufficiency or individual rights, others idealize community, interdependence or trust. A great many moral debates concern the proper ranking of these contrasting values and activities, and the main virtue of an ethic of sharing is the way it integrates these two, seemingly disparate aspects of moral thought.

My title also refers to the theoretical structure of my account, which is radically virtue-ethical. In recent years there has been a tremendous revival of

interest in the "ethics of virtue," and although there is still no widely agreed upon view of precisely what this approach to ethical theory entails, it is generally marked by two main characteristics. The first is its commitment to moral psychology, by which I mean the sustained philosophical inquiry into those features of the human psyche -- including perception, imagination, emotional sensitivity and motivation, as well as reason and judgment -- that condition our experience of morality and (help to) determine the strength and purpose of its requirements within the broader context of human life as a whole. The second general characteristic of a virtue-ethical approach is its grounding in aretaic concepts rather than deontic ones. Hence, virtue ethics differs from deontology, because while both treat the rightness of any action as having more to do with its motives than with its consequences, deontologists insist that in order to be morally good or virtuous, motives must always be constrained or conditioned by independently grounded principles of right. And virtue ethics differs from consequentialism, because while both treat deontic concepts like rightness and duty as being dependent on or derivative from aretaic concepts like goodness and virtue, consequentialists insist that in the last analysis, both the rightness of actions and the virtue of motives is a function of the goodness of the states of affairs they (are likely to) produce. Virtue-ethicists, by contrast, insist that motives and character traits can be morally valuable in ways that do not depend on either principles or consequences.

Much of what has been offered under the heading "ethics of virtue" in recent years has taken the form of critiques of both deontological and consequentialist theories for providing an inadequate and oversimplified account of moral agency and the ethical life. Nonetheless, many contemporary virtue-

ethicists proffer their views as only a complement or supplement to those other approaches (or occasionally as a rejection of moral theory altogether), and there remains a good deal of skepticism about whether virtue ethics can serve as a free-standing and comprehensive approach to moral theory. It is thought, for example, that such an approach would be objectionably egoistic or antinomian, and fail to make sense of the ways in which morality seems to involve living up to some sort of external constraint; alternatively, it is thought to be objectionably invasive, telling us "what sorts of persons to be" in ways that are excessively meddlesome. A background aim of this dissertation is to show that these sorts of concerns are unwarranted, and that both the rightness of actions and the justice of institutions can be understood as being entirely dependent on the (moral) virtue of the agents who perform and establish them. The most detailed defense of such an "agent-based" form of virtue ethics is given in Chapter Two. But in many ways this entire dissertation is an argument in its favor.

Finally, my title indicates the crucial task of this dissertation, which is to show that the moral virtues are best understood as the virtues of sharing. Specifically, I argue that the moral virtues are constitutive elements and situation-specific expressions of an agent's "Will to Share." This practical desire to engage in various kinds of shared activity is distinguished by its commitment to mutuality, and within such a Will, concern for self and concern for other people are "filtered through" one another such that the agent is moved to engage in activities that express and fulfill both types of concerns at the very same time. I defend the possibility that human beings possess or are at least capable of such a Will, which I take to be deeply rooted in our natural sociability, in Chapter Four. But one does not have to agree that the

Will to Share arises naturally in order to view sharing as an attractive ideal of moral character, and in Chapter Five, I demonstrate how an ethical theory that is based on the ideal of sharing can explain and justify our deepest moral convictions about virtue and right action. I also show how an ethic of sharing provides us with the concrete guidance we have come to expect from a moral theory (in order to assist us in situations where the proper course of action is unclear), and I argue that it is able to do so without relying on any action-guiding principles that are not themselves derived from the goodness of the Will to Share (that is, I argue that such an ethic is entirely agent-based).

The broad scope of this project means that certain themes -- such as the relationship between the virtues of sharing and practical wisdom, the role of the Will to Share within the overall structure of an agent's character, the best way to cultivate the virtues of sharing, and the extent to which individual agents should be praised or blamed for exhibiting or failing to exhibit those virtues -- will only be discussed in a highly abstract manner. Nonetheless, I believe my account is substantive enough to show how these more detailed questions might be fruitfully explored. As to whether the ethic of sharing to be developed in the following chapters is in fact too good to be true, I can only point out that while it does allow inherently mutual goods, such as friendship and love, to have an important place squarely within the moral domain, it also requires a high degree of responsiveness to others and can often be very hard work.

Chapter One:
Gilligan's Two Moral Orientations and the Contemporary "Justice/Care" Debate

Carol Gilligan is famous for the claim that women talk and think about morality "in a different voice" (1982). Her assertion was based on a series of interviews in which males and females (both young children and adults) were asked to describe their conceptions of morality and their experiences of moral conflict, as well as to respond morally to both actual and hypothetical dilemmas. Contending that males typically appealed to considerations of justice, autonomy and individual rights, whereas females were more likely to emphasize care for, responsiveness to and relationship with other persons, Gilligan argued that her data revealed the presence of two distinct moral outlooks. She labeled these two outlooks the "justice-orientation" and the "care-orientation," respectively. And she maintained that in addition to being the predominant or preferred moral outlook among women, the care-orientation embodied ideals and activities that were very different from the ones incorporated within the most influential theories of morality and moral development.

Gilligan's views sparked a contemporary "Justice/Care Debate" concerning both the cogency of her distinction and its implications for ethical theory.[1] Much of the literature has focused on whether she has adequate empirical evidence to support a correlation between moral orientation and gender, but I shall not be particularly concerned with that aspect of the debate

[1]Gilligan was not the first to point out that ideals of justice and caring might at least sometimes conflict, and neither was she the first to suggest that women and men might have different moral concerns. But her work remains a crucial reference point for contemporary thinking about these issues.

in what follows.[2] Part of my reason is that Gilligan has always sought to distance herself from the view that there are inherently "masculine" and "feminine" orientations to morality: her earliest work emphasized that the two voices were distinguished "not by gender, but by theme" (1982: 2, my emphasis), and although she does say that reliance on the care-orientation is "characteristically a female phenomenon in the advantaged populations that have been studied" (1986: 330), the most detailed evidence she and her colleagues have collected suggests that members of both sexes understand, or at least have some kind of psychological access to, both orientations from a very early age (Gilligan et. al., 1988: Chs. 3, 4 &6).[3] Perhaps more importantly, unless there is some discernible difference in the themes of the two orientations Gilligan identified, there could be no way to determine which orientation any particular individual was relying on, and so no way to substantiate a correlation between moral orientation and gender in the first place.[4]

In any event, none of the claims to be defended in this dissertation hinge on the presence or absence of such a correlation. For what I find most intriguing about Gilligan's work is the way it illuminates a pervasive tension in value-orientation that is deeply embedded within the western philosophical tradition, as well as within more ordinary forms of moral

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[2]The major contributions to this aspect of the debate are reprinted in Larrabee (1993). For a very detailed analysis and review of the evidence concerning gender differences in moral reasoning, see Flanagan (1991: Part III).

[3]There is also some cross-cultural evidence that something more akin to the care orientation is predominant among both males and females in non-western cultures (see Harding 1990; Holland 1993; and Schweder, Mahapatra, and Miller 1987).

[4]I do not take this to show that the discovery of a gender correlation would not itself be significant. The point is only that we must know what the differences between the two moral orientations are before the ramifications (moral, political, or otherwise) of such a correlation could be seriously explored.

thought.[5] Indeed, we will see that the Justice/Care Debate is linked to much more general disputes within moral philosophy about the ideal of impartiality and the role of the emotions in moral perception, deliberation, motivation, and judgment.[6] Because the western tradition is undeniably the product of male philosophizing, this means that any attempt to characterize Gilligan's two moral orientations solely in terms of a contrast between masculine and feminine moral outlooks cannot be entirely accurate. Nonetheless, it could still be the case that women, "for a variety of psychological and political reasons," are more likely to rely on the care-orientation than men (Gilligan 1995: 123).

Although I shall take it as a background assumption that no acceptable ethical theory will endorse or contribute to sexism, I shall also not be particularly concerned with questions about whether an "ethic of care" would be "feminine" or more actively "feminist."[7] To be sure, the leading advocates of an ethical theory based on the care-orientation have been feminist philosophers who maintain that in addition to being unable to capture the complexities of morality and moral agency, traditional ethical theories tend to obscure, devalue or simply ignore the moral experiences of women.[8] But

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[5]Gilligan herself frequently suggests that her distinction is symptomatic of a more enduring historical pattern, though she tends to portray it as one that treats care as a non-moral value (see especially 1982: 69ff; 1984; and 1993).

[6]It is also linked to disputes within social and political philosophy regarding the moral significance of community and the extent to which individual agents are "situated" in various types of relationships or "encumbered" by the ongoing traditions and practices of the larger society in which they live. For the reasons given in §1.2, however, I shall not address social and political issues in this dissertation.

[7]For clarification about this distinction, as well as discussion of the aims of feminist ethics more generally, see Card (1991: Introduction), Jaggar (1992) and Mansbridge & Okin (1993).

[8]When speaking of "care-ethicists," I have in mind primarily Annette Baier (1994), Virginia Held (1987; 1993), Nel Noddings (1984), Sara Ruddick (1989), and within political theory, Joan Tronto (1993). An important philosophical predecessor to the ethics of care is Iris Murdoch's (1971) defense of "loving attention" as a crucial moral capacity, an idea which

these two claims are separable,[9] and it should be noted from the outset that the Justice/Care Debate is as much of a dispute among feminist ethicists as between feminist critics and defenders of more traditional moral views. Feminists themselves are deeply divided as to whether the "different voice" Gilligan heard is genuinely or only symbolically female.[10] And while some view the development of an ethic of care as a way of promoting esteem for the morally valuable activities that have been traditionally associated with women, others maintain that this will do little more than encourage outmoded stereotypes that women, as well as human society as a whole, would be better of without.[11]

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was first articulated by Simone Weil and is relied on extensively by Ruddick and Tronto. And it should also be noted that both Noddings and Ruddick seem to have developed their ideas independently of Gilligan's own. More recently, Blum (1994: Part III) has drawn explicitly on Gilligan's evidence in order to explore and defend the "care-virtues," and Slote (1997; 1995: §5; cf. 1992: ch. 6) has argued that justice can be understood as a form of "balanced caring" within a virtue-ethical approach to moral theory. Finally, note that Nussbaum (1990) has also defended a conception of "loving attention" while discussing the relationship between literature and philosophy.

Advocates of the "ethics of justice" are somewhat more difficult to identify, since Gilligan treats this as a kind of default position associated with all western moral theories, and it is not always clear precisely what features of those theories she has in mind (Dancy 1992). I shall treat the ethics of justice as encompassing any theory which implies that it is impossible, absent some kind of fundamental commitment to justice or impartial decision-procedures, for any other genuinely moral ideals to be achieved, where these "other ideals" may or may not be thought to include caring, and where the "advocates" of such theories may or may not be explicitly reacting to or arguing against the ethics of care. Yet we will shortly see that even this very broad definition makes it difficult to identify the ethics of justice with the western tradition more generally.

[9]For an excellent discussion of this point see Calhoun (1988).

[10]Moody-Adams (1991) mounts a sustained attack on the idea that the care voice is fundamentally or essentially feminine, as does Tronto (1993: 82-94). For the contrasting view, see Held (1987: especially pp. 112-117) and Baier (1985).

[11]The major feminist criticisms of the ethics of care can be found in Hoagland (1991); see also Card (1990), Davion (1993), Jaggar (1992), Houston (1987) and League (1993). Noddings (1990a, 1990b) explicitly responds to most of these "feminist fears;" see also Tronto (1993: ch. 3).

1.1 Moral orientations and ethics

Having said all this, it might be wondered why I have bothered to appeal to Gilligan's evidence in the first place. After all, we have no guarantee that any of the people in her surveys live in circumstances that are likely to realize even their most authentic moral dispositions, let alone their most admirable moral traits, and if I am correct that the Justice/Care Debate is rooted firmly within the western moral tradition, her charge that care and related activities have been conspicuously absent from the most influential ethical theories must at the very least be overstated. Perhaps even more troubling, as many critics have pointed out, Gilligan's own interest in the relationship between moral orientation and gender may tempt her to "valorize" the care-orientation in a way that exaggerates its normative adequacy, as well as to adopt a misleadingly "binary" conception of morality that exaggerates whatever contrasts may exist between the two moral orientations.[12]

While I am sympathetic to these concerns, I believe there are a number of reasons for beginning a moral-philosophical inquiry with an analysis of Gilligan's views. To understand why, we need to be somewhat clearer about the relationship between "moral orientations" and "ethics" than Gilligan herself tends to be. She refers to justice- and care- as 'perspectives,' 'conceptions,' 'voices' and 'ethics' as well as 'orientations,' and although there is no discernible pattern in her choices about which of these terms to use, they are all clearly meant to imply a "way of thinking" about morality in the broadest sense which includes the features that moral agents consciously or uncon-

[12]Critical discussions of Gilligan's research methods can be found in Auerbach et. al. (1985), Blum (1994: ch. 11), Flanagan and Jackson (1988), Jaggar (1992), League (1993), Puka (1990) and Tronto (1987). See also Gilligan's "Reply" (1986).

sciously take to be (most) morally significant, and agents' most immediate moral responses to various types of situations, as well as the way agents formulate premises and the type of information they look for when actively working through a complex moral issue. In other words, her main aim is simply to provide an accurate description of the basic concepts, habits of perception, sources of motivation, and patterns of deliberation and judgment that characterize and differentiate people's day to day moral activity, and it is worth emphasizing that she does not claim that either orientation corresponds in any straight-forward way to a particular type of ethical theory (such as deontology, consequentialism, or virtue ethics). For clarity, therefore, I shall use the term 'orientation' when referring to Gilligan's claims about differences in people's more ordinary moral outlooks, and reserve the term 'ethic' to refer to relatively well worked out moral-philosophical theories or views about how our moral activity ought to be "oriented." In other words, I shall take moral orientations to be the sort of thing that moral philosophers seek to explicate and refine, and an ideal version of which their normative ethics (or moral theories) are ultimately designed to defend.

Now, it is certainly true that the normative adequacy of the justice- and care-orientations cannot simply be "read off" from any of Gilligan's findings. But neither can people's more day-to-day moral activity be completely ignored in the process of developing a philosophically satisfying ethic. This is not simply because the resulting theory will be practically useless if it sets ideals of character and conduct that turn out to be psychologically impossible for people to live up to (although that too is a relevant concern). The real problem is that no philosopher can even begin to demonstrate that a particular ethic is indeed satisfactory unless she can show that it intersects in

some way with people's more ordinary moral consciousness.[13] And precisely because she is willing to take people's day to day moral activity pretty much at face value, Gilligan's work helps to expose those baseline, intuitive assumptions about morality and its requirements that all people are at least implicitly relying on in order to identify moral situations and determine what should be done in them, and that philosophers themselves are at least subtly appealing to as they develop and defend their normative views.[14] It is those baseline assumptions that constitute the different themes of the two orientations Gilligan identified, and bringing those differences to light can therefore help to reduce the extent to which ethics that are founded on different baseline assumptions about morality will be condemned to simply talk past one another. It also allows us to subject those assumptions to more careful philosophical scrutiny than they might otherwise receive, or at the very least, enables us to see more clearly why certain theories seem to be locked into interminable disagreements.[15]

In addition, once we clarify the different themes of Gilligan's two moral orientations, I do not believe the overall picture will turn out to be objectionably binary. For while the tone of her writing sometimes suggests

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[13]A philosopher might purport to demonstrate that most, if not all, of what people ordinarily identify as moral activity is simply mistaken or deeply confused. But even to do that would require the philosopher to show that different activities were much more consistent with what people (confusedly) thought morality required of them in the first place. (Even Kant, who thought morality ultimately rested on a transcendental foundation, seems to have believed that this was true.)

[14]This point is Jean Hampton's (1995).

[15]Similar points have been made by MacIntyre (1981; 1988), who is particularly interested in the way different baseline assumptions are linked to rival historical traditions. For a discussion of the ways in which ethical theorizing is enhanced by a commitment to "psychological realism," see Flanagan (1991: esp. chs. 1-2). And see Blum (1994: ch. 9) for the view that important parts of people's day to day moral life, especially those Gilligan associates with the care-orientation, have mistakenly been "theorized away" by contemporary ethicists.

that she finds the care-orientation preferable, her official position continues to be that the two orientations are simply "different," that is, that both ways of thinking have considerable merit, and that neither can be fully assimilated within the other (1993: xiii). And although she does clearly believe that the differences between the justice- and care-orientations are sufficient to enable us to pick out which way of thinking is being relied on by a particular speaker or philosopher, she means to leave room for a good deal of disagreement as to what each outlook ideally involves or requires, as well as the extent to which they can be integrated.[16]

Even more importantly, at least for my purposes in this dissertation, Gilligan's work helps to identify the theoretical resources that might render the Justice/Care Debate significantly more tractable. For despite the fact that various elements of the care-orientation have indeed been incorporated within previous philosophical views, I shall ultimately contend that none of those views is adequate to capture an ethic of care as a unified whole. To a degree, this vindicates Gilligan's claim to have heard a genuinely distinct moral voice. And in any case, clarifying the ways in which an ethic of care differs from previous ethical views points the way toward a much more satisfactory integration of Gilligan's two moral orientations, as well as the much more general tension in value-orientation of which her distinction is symptomatic, than has thus far been achieved.

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[16]In fact, Gilligan acknowledges a "tension" that "remains unresolved" in her work: whether there is an "endless counterpoint" between the justice- and care-orientations, or whether the justice-orientation should "give way to" the care-orientation as an ideal form of moral thought (1993: xxvi). My own view is that both of these options are unsatisfactory, and that we need a more unified ethic. But we will not be able to see why until the differences between her two moral orientations have been more clearly identified.

1.2 Autonomy and caring

That being said, I want to suggest that Gilligan's initial attempt to describe the different themes of her two moral orientations in terms of a distinction between 'justice' and 'care' does tend to exaggerate the extent of the contrast between them, as well as the extent to which the care-orientation differs from some of the most influential ethical theories. To begin with, it suggests that care and justice are mutually exclusive or incompatible moral values, such that a person who is committed to either one of these values will necessarily have a fairly mitigated commitment to the other. Yet there is an important sense in which Gilligan and other advocates of care are calling for more justice, not less: they are insisting that people (perhaps more frequently female than male) who exhibit care and responsiveness toward others be given as much moral respect as people (perhaps more frequently male than female) who are primarily concerned with justice and individual rights. Gilligan sometimes relies on an analogy with the ambiguous figures of Gestalt psychology to argue that "the terms of one perspective do not contain the terms of the other" (1987: 30), implying that while individual agents may switch back and forth between the two orientations as often as they choose, it is impossible for any agent to incorporate both care and justice within a single moral outlook. Yet it is difficult to see why even this should be true. There may be situations in which care and justice each prompt a moral agent to act in different ways, but this sort of conflict seems to arise precisely because the agent feels the pull of both of these values at the same time (Flanagan 1991: 228ff).[17]

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[17] Although the Gestalt analogy obscures the ways in which moral perception is unlike visual perception, there is a straight-forward way of understanding how agents could be pulled in two directions which is perfectly in keeping with Gilligan's basic idea. For just as

Gilligan does not claim that either orientation is superior, so she may simply mean that agents must often lessen their commitment to justice before they can fully appreciate the moral significance of care in any given situation, and vice versa.[18] But she also tends to equate justice with non-interference and respect for individual rights, and to conceive of individual rights in only a negative form, that is, as rights not to be interfered with or harmed in certain ways. Since many conceptions of justice incorporate some number of positive rights, and since the concept of justice is much older than the modern concept of rights altogether, this rather narrow conception renders her contrast much less convincing at the theoretical level. Moreover, as Gilligan herself has increasingly emphasized, there is a crucial difference between the orientations of care and justice on the one hand, which Gilligan describes as comprehensive ways of "organizing the basic elements of moral judgment: self, others and the relationship between them," and the values or ideals of care and justice on the other, which presumably play a role within any comprehensive moral view (1987: 22; 1993; 1995).[19] The contrast between the

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it is mistaken to think, on the basis of one's most immediate visual perception, that the ambiguous "duck-rabbit" drawing is of only a rabbit, or only a duck, it may be mistaken to think, on the basis of one's most immediate moral perception, that a situation calls only for justice or only for care. In the visual case, a coherent understanding of our perceptions requires us to acknowledge that the underlying phenomenon is comprised of both elements; and Gilligan's suggestion could be that moral phenomena follow a similar pattern.

[18] *In a Different Voice* suggested that every person relies on one orientation or the other. But Gilligan reports a "watershed" in her thinking (1988: xxii; see also 1987) in response to a study by D. Kay Johnston (1988). Johnston found that although adolescents exhibited a tendency to rely on only one orientation (either care or justice) when asked open-ended questions about morally problematic situations, most were able to "spontaneously switch" to the other orientation when asked if there was a different way to think about the problem, and all were able to understand and apply the other way of thinking after its main features were pointed out to them by the interviewer.

[19] Specifically, Gilligan says that "attention to women's moral thinking led to the identification of a different voice and raised questions about the place of justice and care within a comprehensive moral theory" (1987: 26, my emphasis). Notice that the same point can be made using more Rawlsian terminology. In *A Theory of Justice*, he distinguishes the

two moral orientations, in other words, may ultimately have somewhat less to do with which of these values an agent is most deeply committed to than with the broader evaluative framework within which both care and justice are understood.

A second difficulty with Gilligan's original contrast is that it leads to some confusion about what domain of moral activity is under consideration. Contemporary ethicists have focused almost exclusively on justice as a virtue of social institutions, and even Plato, who sought to defend justice as a cardinal virtue of individuals, thought that the best way to do this required an elaborate analogy with the role of justice in the state. Yet care seems to be most easily and straightforwardly construed as a virtue of individual moral agents that is exhibited toward concrete other persons. Perhaps unsurprisingly, one of the most frequent criticisms of the ethics of care stems from the belief that it is ill-suited to deal with the sorts of issues that arise in relatively impersonal and institutional contexts. More generally, the ethics of care is sometimes equated with a way of thinking about individual moral activity within the "private" or interpersonal realm,[20] whereas the ethics of justice is taken to be the appropriate way of thinking about the "basic structure" of society, as well as about any individual activity that takes place

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concept of justice, "as meaning a proper balance between competing claims" from specific conceptions of justice "identifying the relevant considerations which determine this balance"(1971: 10). Presumably, each of Gilligan's two moral orientations incorporates a specific "conception of justice" in this latter sense (as well as a specific "conception of care").

[20]Alternatively, the ethics of care has sometimes been portrayed as helping agents to identify special obligations (Herman 1993: ch. 2) or imperfect duties (Nunner-Winkler 1984), as being concerned with the evaluation of persons, motives and character traits rather than the evaluation of acts (Kohlberg 1984; Putman 1991), or as constituting a supererogatory ethic in contrast to the minimalistic "ethic of justice" (Hampton 1995; Kroeger-Mappes 1994). For a much more extended discussion of why these sorts of portrayals are inadequate than I can offer here, see Blum (1994: ch. 10).

within an explicitly "public" or "political" realm.[21] As a result, the Justice/ Care Debate tends to be conflated with debates about where (or whether) to draw the line between "public" and "private" moral contexts, or about which set of considerations ought to take priority in an agent's moral thought.

Gilligan, however, seems to be primarily concerned with questions of individual moral agency. To be sure, she tends to portray both orientations as applicable across the entire range of moral contexts, and many of the women she identifies as relying on the care-orientation are quite explicitly concerned with morality writ large: one reports "a very strong sense of being responsible to the world" (1982: 21) while another worries about the specific, large scale social problems of poverty and overpopulation (Ibid.: 99). Still, Gilligan does not portray those women as making judgments about what laws or institutions ought to be like. Rather, they are concerned with their own obligations to strangers and distant others —obligations which can be classified under the heading of social justice, but can also be viewed as instances of individual humanitarianism.

The best way to keep the debate squarely focused on questions of individual moral agency is to describe Gilligan's two moral orientations in terms of a contrast between "autonomy" and "caring," where these are understood to be different or competing moral capacities (rather than

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[21]This tendency is encouraged by the enormous influence of Rawls's *Theory of Justice* (1971), as well as his more recent modifications of that theory as offering an explicitly political conception of justice that applies only to society's "basic structure" (1993: esp. §2, §5, and Lec. VII). But see Okin (1989; 1993) who argues that Rawls's theory must be extended to the "private" realm of the family, and Tronto (1993: Part III) who purports to give a political argument for the ethics of care.

different values).[22] And this characterization makes sense for two reasons. First, there is an historical link between the concept of autonomy (in individuals) and the concept of justice (in the wider society or state): the former term literally means "self-legislation" and was originally used to describe self-governing states (as opposed to colonies ruled by foreign powers), and thinkers like Kant and Rawls treat autonomy as an ideal feature of persons acting in the role of moral legislator.[23] In this role, persons take up an impartial point of view that is temporarily detached from their individual desires and interests, in order to adjudicate between competing moral principles (Hill 1987: 131ff; cf. 1992). That is the point of view Gilligan seems to identify with the "justice-orientation," and as we shall see, that is the point of view care-ethicists are particularly keen to criticize. And it also helps to explain why, despite their propensity to equate the "ethics of justice" with the western moral-philosophical tradition more generally, the specific criticisms that contemporary care-ethicists have made against previous moral theories have primarily been directed against kantian and contractarian moral views.[24]

Secondly, there are a number of reasons to think that this contrast provides a more accurate description of Gilligan's original project. The main impetus to her work was Lawrence Kohlberg's extremely influential "stage

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[22]It is also worth noting that this contrast is at least indirectly related to questions of large scale social justice insofar as autonomy and caring are capacities we need to rely on in order to figure out what the "basic structure" of society ought to be like.

[23]Given this link, it is not so surprising that the debate tends to slip between individual and political contexts.

[24]Gilligan cites adherence to "the Categorical Imperative" as an element of the justice-orientation (1987: 23), and Baier explicitly criticizes Kant, Rawls and Hobbes in her attacks on justice-based views (1994: chs. 1, 2 & 11; see also 1987). See also the introductory chapter in Kittay and Meyers (1987). We will soon see how the ethics of care differ from utilitarianism as well, but those differences are not quite as great.

theory" of moral development, according to which every person proceeds from the egocentrism of early childhood, through concern with relationships and obedience to parental and then more general social rules, to the highest stage in which their moral reasoning is governed by a set of universalizable moral principles (1981; 1984).[25] Kohlberg's formative research was based on an all-male sample, and he had reported that females in every age-bracket scored significantly lower than their male counterparts, displaying a marked tendency to get stuck at the middle stage of relationships and social conformity.[26] Gilligan hypothesized that these findings were due to females' reliance on alternative moral capacities not measured by Kohlberg's scale, and she proposed an alternative vision of "moral maturity" that was not dependent on the use of abstract principles.[27] Caring, as presented in this

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[25]Kohlberg frequently appeals to Rawls's *Theory of Justice* as an example of the highest stage, in which persons not only apply universal principles to concrete cases but also understand the justification of those principles. For a brief summary of Kohlberg's stages, see the appendix to his Volume 1 (1981: 409-12).

[26]Although initially reluctant to accept Gilligan's suggestion, Kohlberg eventually modified his position and claimed only to have identified the stages in the development of justice reasoning (1984). Meanwhile, studies by Lawrence Walker (1984) indicate that once various biasing factors (for example, the supposition that women come from the same class and educational background as their husbands) and statistical inaccuracies are corrected, males and females score equally well on Kohlbergian tests of moral reasoning. Walker's finding has no bearing on the question of whether there is an alternative way of thinking about morality.

[27]Gilligan originally linked this alternative vision to women's different developmental path, appealing to Chodorow's (1978) argument that since women are statistically more likely to serve as primary care-givers, female personalities mature by learning to identify more closely with the adults who support them, whereas male personalities mature by learning to differentiate themselves from others. Accordingly, Gilligan argued that the care-orientation reflected females' sense of themselves as embedded in relationships, whereas the justice-orientation reflected males' sense of independence and self-sufficiency (1982: ch. 1). Notice, however, that this account grants the possibility of vastly reducing such gender differences if men and women came to share equal child-care responsibilities (a point that has since been echoed in Okin's (1989) critique of Rawls). Meanwhile, Gilligan and her colleagues now contend that there are two types of universal, morality-grounding experiences that arise in early childhood and persist throughout adult life: the inequality and powerlessness (with respect to adults) that grounds a "sense of

context, is "a mode of thinking that is contextual and narrative rather than formal and abstract" (1982: 19), and one that refuses to "abstract the moral problem from the interpersonal situation" (Ibid.: 32). Agents who exhibit this capacity describe their moral deliberations as an effort "to try to be as awake as possible, to try to know the range of what you feel, to try to consider all that's involved, to be as aware as you can be of what's going on" (Ibid.: 99),[28] and they apparently view the answers to moral problems as ultimately depending on the concrete particulars of each and every case.[29]

To make this contrast stick, it is important that autonomy be construed very narrowly as the capacity for impartiality in the review and application of abstract and general moral principles. As Thomas Hill points out, there are two further "senses" of autonomy that are relevant to moral theory: autonomy as a right that every individual has to make certain decisions without undue interference (1987: §II), and autonomy as a goal for personal development, so that one's perceptions are not clouded by prejudice, self-deception, and the like, and that one's actions reflect one's genuine motivations, rather than distorted ideas about what one is really doing or truly cares about (Ibid.: §III). Gilligan, of course, did not want to deny that women were entitled to and capable of autonomy in either of these further senses, and although she does

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justice" or desire for equality or fairness, and the emotional attachment to and dependence on parents that gives young children at least a proto-understanding of the risks of abandonment and the need for people to actively take care of one another (Gilligan 1987: 20ff; Gilligan et al, 1988: esp. chs. 4 & 6).

[28]This is 30-year old "Sharon's" response to questions about "the right way to make moral decisions." When asked if there are principles that guide her moral decision-making, she says "there's not just a principle that once you take hold of you settle. The principle put into practice here is still going to leave you with conflict" (Gilligan 1982: 99-100).

[29]See Nussbaum (1985) and Blum (1994: chs. 2-3) for a defense of the sort of moral deliberation Gilligan seems to have in mind. And see Dancy (1992), who argues that the care-orientation amounts to nothing more than a commitment to "particularism" in moral judgment, though I shall later contend that this claim is incorrect.

believe that the primary moral-developmental obstacle for "caring" moral agents is learning to care for oneself as well as for others, whereas the primary obstacle for Kohlbergian or "autonomous" moral agents is learning to value the autonomy of others as well as oneself, she contends that mature moral agents eventually perceive all persons as being entitled to a basic level of moral concern regardless of the orientation on which they most frequently rely (1982: ch. 6; Gilligan et. al., 1988: chs. 4 & 6). And care-ethicists have also been keen to emphasize that moral agents who possess a highly developed capacity for caring are not rendered selfless or lacking in autonomy as a result.

It is also important not to over exaggerate the contrast between these two capacities. As Hill points out, the narrow conception of autonomy as impartiality in the review and application of moral principles appears to be rooted in Kant's idea that an agent's "true self" is the way she is when she is as free as possible from all of her transitory concerns and attachments. But the latter idea is not an essential part of the idea of autonomy, and in Hill's view should probably be rejected (1987: §I).[30] The belief that we ought to be impartial when considering what morality requires of us does not entail that we should strive to free ourselves from personal attachments in our day to day lives, or that a life of self-sufficiency is morally better than a life of intimacy and interpersonal relationships. In fact, it is completely "neutral" with respect to these questions (1997: §III). Nor does this sense of autonomy entail that basic moral principles must admit of no exception, or be discon-

[30]A richer conception of autonomy as a kind of "self-reflexive monitoring" that proceeds, as Kant suggested, via reflection on principles and rules but does not require total abstraction from one's emotional attachments, deep-seated interests and desires has recently been defended by Hill (1991) and Herman (1993). See also Sherman (1990; 1993b), who is somewhat more critical of Kant's position vis-a-vis the emotions.

nected from all our feelings and hence independent of all "contingent" empirical facts about our natures. All it implies is that when faced with fundamental moral conflicts, we should not give special standing to any particular person or group, but should view the situation "from a broader human perspective."[31]

Nonetheless, care-ethicists find even the very modest conception of autonomy to be problematic, when portrayed as the most important or superior moral capacity, in two main ways. First, it still treats autonomy as primarily an exercise in rationality, albeit one that may rely on the emotions as important supports to moral activity (e.g., as alerting us to situations that require a moral response, or as motivating us to act once we have determined what to do).[32] But care-ethicists tend to view the emotions as a constitutive medium of moral reflection, insisting that at least when properly cultivated, the emotions enable moral agents to perceive, understand and respond to the world in ways that simply could not be achieved without them.[33] And they

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[31]In Hill's view this capacity is perfectly compatible with compassion, and a very similar point is made by Piper (1991). Note, however, that compassion is a more generalized or universalizable moral attitude than caring, and hence may be somewhat easier to reconcile with the three senses of autonomy Hill discusses. On the ways in which "care" differs from related attitudes like compassion and benevolence, see Blum (1992).

[32]This stems partly from the more general feminist concern that since "rational" autonomy has historically been viewed as a masculine capacity while "emotional" caring has been viewed as a feminine one, any sort of contrast between them may contribute to both the devaluation of caring and the ongoing subordination of women. For a subtle and historically detailed discussion of the links between the concepts of autonomy and masculinity, and of the connections between such links and the devaluation of all things "female," see Lloyd (1984).

[33]Care-ethicists are not the only contemporary philosophers to suggest that some kind of emotionally-laden knowledge, rather than "pure" practical reason, is what ultimately grounds the moral response. See, for example, Blum (1980), Nussbaum (1986; 1990; 1995), Sherman (1989: esp. ch. 2; 1990; 1994), Stocker (1987a; 1987b) and Oakley (1992). Historical predecessors of this view include Aristotle, Schopenhauer, Hutcheson and Hume. For further discussion of what it means for the emotions to be "properly cultivated," see the interchange between Nussbaum and Sherman (1994).

are further convinced that caring -- "a felt concern for the good of others and for community with them" (Baier 1985: 19, emphasis mine) -- is a fundamental component of genuinely moral (as opposed to "merely" personal)[34] deliberation, and crucial to an agent's capacity for moral judgment, as well as her ability to perceive and respond appropriately to moral situations. Caring, on this view, is not just compatible with the "broader human perspective" achieved through the impartial review of moral principles. It is that broader perspective.[35]

Secondly, and closely related, care-ethicists object to the view that moral activity is primarily a matter of "acting on principle" or finding abstract and general reasons to justify what one proposes to do. As we have seen, to portray moral agency as an exercise in autonomy is to suggest that morality is ultimately grounded in a set of action-guiding principles which structure an agent's perception of moral situations and are at least implicitly appealed to in

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[34]Note that the care-orientation differs from the "personal point of view" defended by thinkers like Nagel (1986), Scheffler (1982) and Williams (1973; 1985). These thinkers contend that the personal point of view is distinct from the moral point of view, and is not always constrained by the latter when generating legitimate reasons for action, but they otherwise accept the identification of morality and impartial rationality. Care-ethicists, by contrast, insist that the care-orientation is a (or the) genuinely moral point of view, and one that generates legitimate reasons for action which are distinct from those generated by both more personal and more impartial perspectives. For more detailed discussion of this point, see Blum (1994: ch. 2).

[35]This may not be an entirely accurate characterization of Baier's position, since she describes care as a "less authoritarian humanitarian supplement" to the forms of moral reasoning embedded in more impartialist, Kantian-style views (1985: 2, my emphasis). Yet she also describes notions of obligation and promise-keeping as being "parasitic" on notions like love and trust (1994: esp. chs. 1, 2 & 14). In any event, this does seem to characterize the positions of Noddings (1984: chs. 2 & 4) and Ruddick (1989: ch. 3), and both Held (1995) and Tronto (1993: Ch. 5) have explicitly argued that 'care is the wider network into which justice must fit.' See also Murdoch (1970:102), who asks "Will not 'Act lovingly' translate 'Act perfectly,' whereas 'Act rationally' will not?"

his or her moral deliberations.[36] But to portray moral agency as an exercise in caring is to suggest that morality typically, or at least ideally, involves a much more direct, unmediated response to other persons in the world, and hence that moral thinking ultimately resides in a kind of "sensitivity to humanity" and "consciousness of your influence over what's going on" (Gilligan et. al: 21). Care-ethicists do not deny that moral principles may sometimes be useful, but Gilligan's findings suggest that people who rely on the care-orientation are extremely reluctant to appeal to such principles in order to justify their moral activity,[37] and care-ethicists are united in the conviction that acting on principle is seldom, if ever, necessary in order to be acting morally, and is definitely not the most admirable or ideal form of moral activity in a great many contexts (see especially Noddings 1984: 5-16, 24; 1990: 28-9).

Defenders of more traditional ethical theories sometimes object that care-ethicists treat moral activity as unreflective or merely instinctive, as well as objectionably partial. But here again, it is important not to over-exaggerate the contrast, for all care-ethicists portray caring as an important kind of thinking that can often be difficult work. Diana T. Meyers, for example, insists that autonomy is a "multifaceted competency" that can be exercised in at least two ways: the impartial and principle-governed method of the justice-orientation, and the "responsibility reasoning" of the care-orientation (1987).

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[36]This picture is developed in particular detail by Herman (1993: esp. chs. 4 & 7), who argues that moral agents rely on a set of "rules of moral salience," as well as the Categorical Imperative procedure.

[37]Recall Gilligan's concern that females were being inappropriately "downscored" on Kohlbergian tests of moral reasoning precisely because of their unwillingness to make such appeals. But note that there is still room, within the ethics of caring, for agents to rely on moral "rules of thumb" as a helpful heuristic device; the claim is only that the morality of an agent's action is not determined by its implicit or explicit conformity with any particular (set of) action-guiding principle(s).

In the latter, agents proceed by a kind of "imaginative introjection" and, instead of reflecting on principles that might be used to govern their behavior, they ask themselves questions like "Could I bear to be the sort of person who can do that?"[38] Similarly, Sara Ruddick is careful to note that she only objects only to "a certain idealized conception of reason as impersonal and detached ... rather than loving" (1989: 12). And Nel Noddings emphasizes that carers "can and do give reasons for their acts, but the reasons often point to feelings, needs, situational conditions, and a sense of personal ideal" (1984: 3; 96). The kind of "loving attention" thinkers like Ruddick and Noddings have in mind requires not allowing one's own needs, biases, and conscious or unconscious desires regarding the other person to get in the way of appreciating his or her unique needs and situation, and although this is not the detached form of impartiality that is idealized by a great many western moral theories, it does seem to be impartial in some sense of the term. Moreover, although they do agree that the capacity for caring tends to be exhibited most fully in fairly close, personal relationships, care-ethicists believe that it can also be extended, in a somewhat more limited fashion, to strangers and distant others.[39]

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[38]Meyers contends that both of these methods "depend on the honesty and humanity of the deliberator" and are only "as good as the practitioner is skilled," and her main point is that the responsibility reasoning that is characteristic of people who rely on the care-orientation is perfectly compatible with acting from one's most authentic concerns. This is because a responsibility reasoner who honestly reflects upon which of her choices "are compatible with or reinforce desirable aspects of her personal identity" may find that she sincerely "identifies with the interests of others and therefore most want[s] to secure those interests" (1987: 151-52).

[39]Noddings restricts caring to "face-to-face" relationships, but notes that these do not necessarily have to be ongoing: a moral agent can exhibit genuine caring for another person who, moments earlier, was a complete stranger and whom she may never again encounter. And other care-ethicists do not endorse this restriction. Virginia Held, for example, has convincingly argued that a caring agent can certainly know enough about the concrete needs and situation of "a starving child in Africa" to recognize steps she could take to improve the child's physical welfare, despite the fact that she is not in a particularly good position to respond the child's emotional needs (1987; cf. 1993). Similarly, both Murdoch (1971) and

1.3 A conflation of two debates

Characterizing Gilligan's two moral orientations in terms of a contrast between autonomy and caring is a way of emphasizing that the moral-philosophical debate that grew out of her findings is concerned, first and foremost, with questions about what agents must consciously or unconsciously be doing in order to act rightly or deliberate effectively about how to proceed. But there is a minor problem with this way of putting the contrast that is important to call our attention to -- namely, that it encourages us to confuse differences in the substance or focus of an agent's moral concern, i.e., differences in the most basic evaluative assumptions that might "orient" an agent's moral outlook, with differences in the conceptual structure of the agent's moral understanding and the methods that he or she relies on when construing moral problems and deliberating about their solutions. More specifically, it tends to conflate differences in the normative commitments that shape a particular "way of thinking" about morality, with differences in the way that moral principles or rules are used within that way of thinking. It is the former tension in value-orientation which Gilligan seems to have in mind when she speaks of a "difference in theme."[40] Yet it is the latter, somewhat more formal or methodological tension, which seems to be at stake in the dispute over whether a philosophically satisfying ethic must ultimately be grounded in abstract and general principles or rules. To be sure, acting

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Nussbaum (1990) contend that loving attention grounds a very wide-ranging form of compassion.

[40]Whether I am right about this is difficult to say for sure, since immediately after she emphasizes that the justice- and care-orientations are distinguished primarily by theme, Gilligan says that they also "highlight a distinction between two modes of thought" (1982: 2). Witt (1993) portrays "Gilliganism" as having solely to do with the assertion of different conceptual structures; see also Lyons (1988), Tronto (1993: 27-28) and Wingfield and Haste (1987) on this point.

autonomously is typically understood as acting on a particular kind of moral principle (the Categorical Imperative or "respect for persons"), and acting from care is typically understood as exhibiting a particular kind of moral sensitivity (a concern for the good of other people and for community with them). But either of these conceptual structures seems to be perfectly compatible with commitments to a wide variety of substantive moral norms -- including, for example, a commitment to non-interference or a commitment to actively promoting others' good.

The sort of conflation I am concerned about is evident throughout Gilligan's work. On the one hand, she distinguishes the justice- and care-orientations by their different "moral imperatives," contrasting the injunction "to protect from interference the rights to life and self-fulfillment" with the injunction "to discern and alleviate the real and recognizable trouble of this world" (1982: 100). On the other hand, she distinguishes them by their different methods of deliberation, contrasting moral outlooks that are "tied to the understanding of rights and rules" (Ibid.: 19) with those that "shift [moral] judgment away from the hierarchical ordering of principles and the formal procedures of decision making" (Ibid.: 100-101) and construct a "narrative of relationships that extends over time" (Ibid.: 28). But as Margaret Urban Walker has pointed out, these two ways of characterizing the difference "appear not only distinct, but mutually independent" (1989: §II).[41] After all, an agent need not value care and relationships in order to be a "particularist" or "contextualist" with respect to moral judgment: she might value self-realization or eudaimonia without valuing care, or think that care matters too,

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[41]See also Cannold, et. al. (1995); Dancy (1992); Tronto (1993: 79ff); Friedman (1993); and Jaggar (1995).

without seeing it as a specially dominant or highest-ranked moral value. Alternatively, an agent might endorse an "injunction to care" while at least implicitly relying on one or more action-guiding principle(s) or formal decision procedures for deliberating about what to do. Indeed, classical utilitarianism (and many of its contemporary variants) might be considered the "ultimate" in care perspectives along these lines. The utilitarian's only moral concern is with human (or sentient) happiness, and this is typically specified in terms of pleasure, preference satisfaction, or desire-fulfillment -- in other words, by what Gilligan calls "the well-being of others in their own terms" (1984: 78). And although utilitarians frequently pride themselves on being more sensitive to particular contexts than their deontological rivals, inasmuch as the rightness of any action-type ultimately depends on the actual or expectable utility of performing that action in each specific case (rather than its accordance with moral principles that are presumed to be ethically fundamental), they nonetheless contend that the principle of utility provides a formal decision-procedure for making such determinations, and this does seem to 'abstract the moral problem from the interpersonal situation,' inasmuch as it translates the concrete interests and preferences of particular individuals into commensurable units on an impersonal utility scale. Thus utilitarianism does seem to rely on a methodological structure that care-ethicists want to reject,[42] and yet, when the concern for happiness is combined with the requirement to maximize the aggregate amount of happiness in the

[42]For this reason, Urban Walker describes utilitarianism as a form of "administrative care" (1989: 127; see also Held 1996); and see Nussbaum (1985) for additional concerns about the formality of a utilitarian approach. It should, however, be noted that so-called "ideal" forms of utilitarianism may be somewhat immune from this criticism.

world, "the strenuousness of this caring seems hard to outdo" (Urban Walker 1989: 126).

The place of moral principles

If we are going to make sense of the claim that the ethics of care cannot be captured within any previous moral theory, it seems that we need to be much more specific about what each of these tensions involves. And the comparison with utilitarianism is instructive, since it may not be immediately obvious how the methodological structures of these two ethics differ. For example, Leslie Cannold, Peter Singer, Helga Kuhse and Lori Gruen have recently argued that while utilitarianism does differ from the ethics of care in its "impersonal focus" and the fact that it "has a basis in abstract principle rather than the context of personal relationships" (1995: 373), both of these ethics are fully "compatible with consequentialism," and hence the difference in their formal or methodological structures is not in fact a "significant distinction" (Ibid.: 368). In their view, the real difference between these two ethics is that utilitarianism places more emphasis on caring for persons generally, while an ethic of care places more emphasis on caring for persons with whom one is in some kind of special relationship. Although there is a degree of truth to this latter claim, however, to argue in this way is to overlook a fundamental distinction in conceptual structure, and hence to obscure what is perhaps the most distinctive moral insight generated by an ethic of care.

As evidence for their view, Cannold et. al. cite a passage in which Nel Noddings says

> the reasons [a caring agent] would give should be so well connected to the objective elements of the problem that [her]

> course of action clearly either stands a chance of succeeding in behalf of the cared-for, or can have been engaged in only with the hope of effecting something for the cared-for (Noddings 1984: 23; Cannold et. al. 1995: 366).

But Noddings begins that same passage by emphasizing the importance of an agent's "motivation in caring," and though she characterizes this motivation as being "directed toward the welfare, protection, or enhancement of the cared-for" (emphasis mine), her discussion strongly suggests that similar sorts of reasons would not be morally significant in the absence of that motivation. Moreover, she introduces her views by insisting that it is impossible, and even wrongheaded, to attempt to formulate a precise set of "action criteria" for caring, insisting that we must examine the ideal "from the inside" (1984: 9-16). And later on, she is even more explicit about this, arguing that the rightness of an action or moral decision can never depend on the outcome. "It is right or wrong according to how faithfully it was rooted in caring -- that is, in a genuine response to the perceived needs of others" (Ibid.: 53).[43]

What Noddings is here defending is the view that no action can be right in the fullest sense unless it is rooted in and so manifests the genuinely caring motivation of the agent who performs it. It is not enough, in her view, to simply act on behalf of other's welfare, for there are all sorts of motives that might prompt one to do so, only some of which are sufficient to render such actions morally appropriate. When understood in this way, her emphasis on those forms of caring that are most typical of close personal relationships (such as the relationship that is at least ideally forged between mother and child) is not simply an endorsement of more partial over more impartial forms of other-regard. Rather, it is part of her overall defense of the claim that

[43]Interestingly, Cannold et. al. also cite this passage earlier in their article (1995: 361).

a very deep kind of caring or loving attention, of a sort that can only be fully exhibited toward persons who are relatively near and dear, is the kind of practical attitude we morally ought to exhibit toward our fellows, not because of anything supposedly more ethically basic about its (likely) effects, but simply because of the kind of motivational state that it is.

As various commentators have pointed out,[44] this kind of emphasis on motives makes the formal structure of contemporary care-ethics much more similar to a virtue-ethical approach to moral theory such as the ancient philosophers preferred than to any form of consequentialism.[45] Yet care-ethicists have not tended to pursue this more traditional option, preferring a more "relational approach" to ethical theory. Indeed, Nel Noddings has even insisted that "caring is not in itself a virtue" (1984: 96) describing it as a "relational attribute" instead (1990: 120).

One reason for this seems to be the concern, widely held among contemporary philosophers, that virtue ethics can only be a supplement or complement to other, more "principled" or "action-focused" approaches to moral theory; since most care-ethicists want their approach to serve as a full-fledged alternative to theories like kantianism and utilitarianism, this view makes virtue ethics obviously unattractive (Tronto 1993: 148). Another, related concern is that virtue ethics is essentially conservative and can only "systematize" our commonly held opinions about what traits are virtues. It is

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[44]See especially Dancy (1992), Flanagan and Jackson (1987), and Friedman (1993).

[45]Kantian moral theory can also be said to place more emphasis on motives (or intentions) than consequences. But Kant holds both that the most important moral motive -- the motive of duty -- is a commitment to acting on the Moral Law (or Categorical Imperative), and that actions that conform to the Categorical Imperative can be right even if they are performed from morally questionable motives, and this places much more emphasis on moral rules than either consequentialist or virtue-based approaches. I discuss the structure of deontological or "principle-based" views at the end of this subsection.

no accident, according to one line of thinking, that Aristotle is both a virtue ethicist and the inspiration for many communitarians who are fairly reluctant to change our common practices,[46] and since care-ethicists want to transform our moral attitudes (and in particular our attitudes about what have traditionally been called the "feminine virtues") this also makes virtue ethics look to be a questionable ally (Friedman 1993). A third sort of concern surely stems from the fact that ancient philosophers exhibit precisely the sort of male-bias feminist philosophers want to overcome: Aristotle is notorious for his sexism, and even Plato, who was convinced that there could be philosophy queens as well as kings, did not think his philosophical monarchs would cultivate anything like the capacity to care. Indeed, he was one of the first western philosophers to insist on the "primacy of justice."

However, recent work on Aristotle has pointed to deep inconsistencies in his viewpoint towards women: on the one hand, he portrays them as the primary caregivers and early moral educators, i.e., the people most responsible for initiating new (male) members of the moral community; yet on the other, he portrays them as incapable of moral activity themselves. Given his emphasis on the importance of moral role-models, it is difficult to see how these two views can be reconciled (Sherman 1991: 151-56; cf. Schwarzenbach 1996). And of course, he was simply wrong to suppose that women were constitutionally incapable of engaging in all the activities that Greeks reserved for men. Similarly, the fact that Plato does not much emphasize virtues like compassion and care does not yet show that they cannot be articulated within a virtue-ethical framework: witness St. Augustine's Christian appropriation of

[46]The links between virtue ethics and Communitarianism are made explicit by MacIntyre (1981; 1988); see also Galston (1980). For a contrasting view, see Nussbaum (1988).

Platonic moral views. This does not, of course, make Augustine a model of feminist moral theorizing (see Lloyd 1989: 28-33), but it does at least suggest that it should be possible to incorporate care-ethical notions within a virtue-theoretic approach, and the fact that Plato portrayed women as the moral equals of men provides us with at least some reason to think that such an approach should be able to leave the taint of sexism behind. And in fact, I believe that a radically virtue-ethical, or "agent-based" approach to moral theory is in the best position to explicate the legitimate insights that arise from a care-orientation to morality, and a somewhat better position than the "relational" approaches contemporary care-ethicists seem to prefer. Demonstrating that this is the case will be the central task of Chapter Two, where I will also show how an agent-based approach to virtue ethics can overcome the more general criticisms about virtue ethics just mentioned.

There is a fourth kind of care-ethical concern about virtue ethics that merits a brief comment at this point. For care-ethicists also want to emphasize that relationships themselves are morally valuable, and it is not entirely clear that the sort of value they have in mind can be reduced to the practical attitudes or motivational states of the agents who engage in those relationships (Held 1995-96). This kind of point is not wholly unfamiliar to virtue-ethical theories, for it was made by Aristotle when he noted that while "friendly feelings" within two (or more) persons are essential to the establishment and maintenance of a friendship, the friendship itself is not "in" any of the parties involved, but seems to lie somewhere between them. And Aristotle was reluctant to call friendship a "virtue" in an unqualified sense for precisely this reason; rather, he characterizes it as an "external good"

(*Nicomachean Ethics*: I.8-10).[47] Nonetheless, we shall see in Chapter Two that Aristotle's approach to virtue ethics is not entirely "agent-based," and although I want to concede that there is a certain kind of value — what Noddings calls "joy" and I shall call the value of mutuality — that an agent-based ethic of caring cannot quite capture, I shall contend that the problem is not in the formal structure of such an ethic but in the nature of the caring ideal. Indeed, I shall ultimately suggest that contemporary care-ethicists make the value of mutuality a bit too peripheral within their accounts of morality and the ethical life.[48]

In the meantime, what is important to recognize about the distinction between the consequentialist claim that the rightness of actions depends on their outcomes, and Noddings's claim that the rightness of actions depends on their motives, is that there are at least two ways for a moral theory to limit the extent to which it relies on action-guiding principles. The first way, endorsed by Cannold, et. al., is to insist that the validity of any such rules must ultimately lie in actual or expectable consequences of adhering to them in specific situations. For although such an approach does endorse one highly abstract and general principle (some version of the Principle of Utility), it implies that in the last analysis, it is judgments about the (intrinsic) moral value of certain consequences or states of affairs that are crucial to our judgments about what we morally ought to do. The second way, at least partially endorsed by Noddings and by virtue-ethicists more generally, is to treat judgments about the (intrinsic) moral value of certain kinds of motiva-

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[47] That is, he describes friendship as something that is in an essential way outside the self. For discussion, see Sherman (1991: §4.2) and Nussbaum (1986: ch. 12).

[48] The complete argument for this will not be developed until Chapter Four.

tions as ethically fundamental. And although this approach can also be said to generate an abstract and general principle ('act virtuously,' or in Noddings's case, 'be caring'), it implies that the Principle of Utility will always be inadequate, because a perplexed moral agent must honesty reflect on her inner motivations as well as the (potential) effects of the various actions she might choose. Of course, the theoretical merits of such an approach can be disputed, and responding to various objections will form much of the subject-matter of later chapters. But unless we take this distinction quite seriously, I believe it is impossible to give due weight to the moral insights that are generated by the care-orientation.

Of course, the idea that the rightness of actions depends on something other than their consequences can also be found within deontological moral theories. But this sort of approach places much more emphasis on action-guiding principles and rules than do either consequentialist or virtue-ethical theories, and hence is the one that contemporary care-ethicists seem particularly keen to reject. For Kantian deontologists, our moral judgments ultimately come to rest in a single, overarching moral principle (the "Moral Law" or Categorical Imperative), which can be used to determine the validity of more specific rules or maxims we propose to act on in any specific case, and it is an agent's commitment to this principle that shows him to be motivated in ways that are morally good. For rule-deontologists like W. D. Ross, our moral judgments are ultimately grounded in a more complex set of moral principles, each of which has independent validity, but among which there is potential for conflict such that highly situation-specific judgments about which principle ought to be relied on will often have to be made. Yet this approach still insists that some principle or other will ultimately have to

be appealed to in order to reach a moral decision. Similarly, while contractarians suggest that our most fundamental moral judgments are about the principles that rational contractors would or should agree to, they too treat appeals to action-guiding principles as the basis for judgments about what we morally ought to do in any specific case.

This threefold distinction between consequentialist, principle-based, and motive-based theories makes it easier to see why kantians and contractarians tend to be the first to object that the ethics of care ultimately turn out to be objectionably vague and unprincipled. However, some contemporary kantians have wanted to resist the classification of Kant himself as a (traditional) deontologist, by taking seriously his claim that the only thing good without qualification is a "good will" (1785: 393), and attempting to derive the validity of the Categorical Imperative from his comments about the value of "autonomous willing" (see especially Herman 1993: ch. 10). If it could be sustained, this sort of interpretation would make Kant's views about the structure of moral thinking much closer to those of ancient virtue ethicists than is commonly believed, and hence make his claims about moral activity much more similar, in terms of their formal or methodological structure, to the claims of contemporary care-ethicists.[49] For reasons to be discussed in §2.1, I doubt that such an interpretation can be sustained. But what is important and interesting to note at this point is that even if such an interpretation turned out to be the most accurate, Kant's autonomy-based views would still differ significantly in their normative content (and hence in their practical implications) from the ethics of care. In order to see why, we

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[49]See my note about a kantian conception of "self-reflexive monitoring" in fn. 30, above.

need to get clearer about the tension in value-orientation, a tension which I believe is largely orthogonal to the methodological tension that has just been discussed,[50] and which constitutes the most significant difference in "theme" of Gilligan's two moral orientations.

Separateness/Connectedness

What is the best way to characterize this difference? The autonomy/caring distinction is a bit problematic since we have seen that it incorporates the distinction in conceptual structure alongside the distinction in normative outlook. However, Gilligan has lately suggested that the "theme" of the justice-orientation is "grounded in separation" whereas the "theme" of the care-orientation is "grounded in connection" (1993: xxvi; 1995), and this proposal seems fairly apt. Her plausible idea is that autonomous (or in her terminology, "just") moral agents are those who "focus on" the self as a separate individual who must protect the moral rights and/or respect the moral autonomy of others, but whose own rights and autonomy also place constraints on how much he or she may be required to do for those separate others. By contrast, caring moral agents are those who "focus on" the relationship between the self and others, and seek ways to enhance and maintain the morally valuable connections between them (1986; 1987; Gilligan et. al. 1988: Chs. 2-4). Gilligan is somewhat ambiguous as to whether these "connections" are understood by caring agents as instrumentally valuable to further goods like need-fulfillment or non-violence, or as intrinsically valuable in their own right. But these are not exclusive alternatives, and the care-orientation is easily interpreted as revolving around the idea that

[50] In Chapter Two (p. 81ff.) we will see that there is at least one reason for theorists who embrace the values of interpersonal connectedness to reject principle-based views.

interpersonal connections of varying kinds are important and fundamental goods in human lives, and help to sustain us in both our role as moral agents and our role as beneficiaries of moral action (Urban Walker: 128). The justice-orientation, by contrast, seems to revolve around what I shall call the values of individual separateness: goods like autonomy (construed very broadly as a trait that is valuable in ways that go beyond its usefulness to moral reasoning), integrity, self-sufficiency and independence, which are traits that most of us value in both self and others, as well as the minimal degree of respect and liberty we seem to require from others in order to sustain our self-esteem.

I believe this way of characterizing Gilligan's distinction makes her claim that "the moral domain is comprised of at least two moral orientations" (1987: 20-21) significantly more plausible, for two main reasons. First, both separateness and connectedness are persistent and unavoidable features of all human living. It is a simple and undeniable fact that, as we grow and mature, each of us develops a uniquely "personal" point of view that is wholly distinct from the point of view of any other individual. Not surprisingly, we typically enjoy discovering and pursuing projects that we can identify as "our own," and find it painful to have our interests and goals thwarted by the people around us. But it is an equally simple and undeniable fact that without the assistance of others we could not even survive our earliest years, that we continue to rely on the support of others throughout our adult lives, and that the very capacities that enable us to develop as separate personalities are shaped, in no small measure, by our linguistic and emotional interactions with other people. In addition, and perhaps more importantly, it is only in

and through relationships that some of our most coveted human values, such as friendship and love, can be realized.

This broader distinction in value-orientation is significantly less "binary" than Gilligan's Justice/Care distinction seems to be. Many critics point out that her contrast obscures the more subtle variations in moral personality. But she may simply be assuming that any more subtle variations in orientation will necessarily stem from more specific aspects of either separateness, connectedness, or both, and this assumption seems to me to be perfectly plausible.[51] For example, some moral agents may be especially concerned to exhibit integrity or conscientiousness without being particularly independent or struggling to live a wholly self-sufficient life, whereas others might be so concerned with personal independence that they fail to be just. Still, both of these personalities can be thought to exemplify a specific form or type of the more general "separateness-orientation" to morality. And consider Lawrence Blum's contention that there are "morally significant group identities" such as one's profession, one's ethnicity or gender, or one's family, local community or nationality, which Gilligan's justice/care distinction overlooks (1994: 244-59). Blum is surely correct that agents often reflect on these aspects of their personalities in order to orient their moral activity or to prioritize among competing moral responsibilities. But all of the examples he gives point to ways in which people's connections to some specific group of other people frequently shape their moral outlook -- that is, they all seem to be specific instances of the more general "connectedness-orientation" toward moral life. Since we have already found reasons to reject the idea that agents

[51]Note that although Gilligan never discusses any possibilities other than "justice" and "care," her explicit claim is only that there are at least two moral orientations (see esp. Gilligan 1987).

must rely on either a separateness- or a connectedness-orientation, but not both (recall p. 13, above), this broader distinction allows for a great deal of variation with respect to the types of moral personalities that actual agents might develop or consciously adopt. That is, it enables us to acknowledge a recognizable difference in theme, without suggesting that there are exactly and only two ways of thinking about morality and the ethical life.

The separateness/connectedness distinction is also broad enough to apply to a wide range of moral contexts, and to allow the concepts of justice and care to both play a role within either "separateness-based" or "connectedness-based" moral views. In addition, it is broad enough to capture important similarities in the baseline assumptions that govern competing moral theories, even if those theories also reflect different views about the structure of moral understanding. For example, it allows utilitarianism to be classified alongside the ethics of care as a moral theory that is grounded in the values of interpersonal connection, despite the fact that utilitarians and care-ethicists disagree about the role of formal decision procedures in an agent's moral thought.[52] In fact, if we temporarily set aside the debates about the role of moral principles and rules, I think we can see that the theme of "separateness versus connectedness" constitutes a recurring tension in the history of western moral thought. This is perhaps most obvious in the case of the modern moral tension between kantians, who are more likely to insist that every person is a separate individual whose rights and autonomy morally ought to be respected, and utilitarians, who are more likely to emphasize the ways in which the life and welfare of any individual will be inextricably tied

[52]A similar point is made by Cannold, et. al. (1995).

to the lives and welfare of at least some others.[53] But it is mistaken to think that this kind of dispute is necessarily linked to their further dispute about the appropriate place of moral rules, and in Chapter Three, we will see how the separateness/connectedness tension can be used to classify different strands of virtue-ethical (or motivation-based) theory as well.

The presence of this historical tension is my second reason for thinking that the separateness/connectedness distinction makes Gilligan's claim to have identified two distinct moral orientations -- two "ways of thinking" about morality that, while not fully compatible, are in some sense equally legitimate -- significantly more plausible. And at least for the purposes of normative ethics, I want to suggest that it is this more general "separateness/connectedness" tension that is the most important one to resolve. For although we have seen that the contrast between 'justice' and 'caring' is somewhat problematic, Gilligan's original choice of those terms certainly seems to have been intended to signify a difference in their normative commitments. More importantly, both Gilligan and other care-ethicists see the fact that an agent was genuinely committed to enhancing the good of others, or to maintaining her relationships with them, as not only motivating her moral activity but as ultimately justifying her moral response -- that is, as explaining why it is morally preferable to various alternatives. As we have seen, care-ethicists do not think of this commitment as a commitment to specific moral principles (e.g., a principle of beneficence or utility). But it is,

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[53]The emphasis on interpersonal connection is perhaps not as obvious in the case of contemporary utilitarians who frequently take up the position of a social engineer with a purely technical problem to be solved, but it is evident in the work of classical utilitarians who adopt the perspective of a benevolent spectator. See, for example, John Stuart Mill's claim that utilitarian morality is the expression of "the desire to be in union with our fellow creatures" (1861: ch. 3; par. 10).

first and foremost, a normative claim, and it seems unlikely that Gilligan would have created quite so much controversy had she simply reported that women and men relied on different methods of moral deliberation but otherwise shared practically identical moral values. More generally, it is the fact that people embrace different normative commitments that seems to lead to the most pressing moral conflicts, and similarly, it is the baseline commitment to different values or normative principles that most clearly differentiates competing ethical theories and views (regardless of the conceptual structures that those theories presuppose or explicitly appeal to).[54]

Exploring the separateness/connectedness tension in more historical detail will be the subject of Chapter Three, where I shall suggest that we have no good reason, moral or otherwise, to view either the values of individual separateness or the values of interpersonal connectedness as taking general priority over the other within the moral or ethical life. More specifically, I shall contend that theories which do give general priority to only one set of values are objectionably "one-sided," and hence that neither of the orientations Gilligan identified provides us with a satisfactory way of thinking about morality as a whole.

1.4 Toward a more constructive dialog

For the reasons presented in this chapter, I think the contemporary Justice/Care Debate is most profitably viewed as a specific instance of the much more general debate about the relative moral significance of separate-

[54]This point has been made by Slote (1996), who suggests that whatever one thinks of the methods Rawls uses to arrive at and defend his famous "difference principle," the idea that just institutions should maximize the well-being of the worst-off members of society was strikingly new, and that newness may account as much as anything else for the enormous influence of Rawls's work, including the interest in the picture of moral deliberation he sets forth.

ness versus connectedness in moral life. Advocates of the "ethics of justice" emphasize the values of individual separateness and defend a picture of moral activity that is at least implicitly structured by the impartial review and application of moral principles and rules, whereas advocates of the ethics of care give priority to interpersonal connectedness while also defending a more virtue-based account of moral responsiveness and moral judgment. Because the justice/care distinction is problematic in the ways mentioned in §1.2, and because the autonomy/caring distinction seems to incorporate both the tension in value-orientation and the tension in methodological structure, I shall continue to refer to the debate that grew out of Gilligan's work as the autonomy/caring debate. This has the additional advantage of keeping us squarely focused on questions about individual moral agency.

But assuming I am correct that the autonomy/caring debate is only an instance of the more general separateness/connectedness tension, it might be now be wondered why I have chosen to focus on this particular instance. The failure to distinguish the dispute over formal or conceptual structures from the dispute over baseline normative commitments has made the autonomy/caring debate significantly more intractable than it needs to be, because participants on both sides tend to criticize the other in ways that are at least slightly confused. The very plausible claims that care-ethicists make about formal structure, for example, are frequently rejected (by defenders of autonomy) for reasons that in fact have to do with the normative one-sidedness of caring. And the very plausible claims that defenders of autonomy make about the values of individual separateness are frequently overlooked (by care-ethicists) for reasons that in fact have to do with the formal structure of those views. Understanding why these sorts of criticisms

fail to hit their mark will help to bring the two sides into a more fruitful dialog. And I believe that engaging in such a dialog also illuminates the possibility of a more unified ethic. For once we isolate the debate about formal structure, we will find that a radically virtue-ethical (or "agent-based") approach to moral deliberation is much more plausible than it may at first seem, and even has certain advantages over both principle-based and consequentialist moral views. And once we isolate the debate about value-orientation, we will find that it is neither autonomy, nor caring, but sharing that is best able to serve as an overarching ethical ideal. Finally, because it is the practical desire or "Will to Share" both things and experiences with other people that ultimately grounds the goodness of shared activity, we will have further reason to suspect that a fully adequate moral theory will need to be agent-based. Focusing on the autonomy/caring debate, in other words, helps us to overcome both of the tensions embedded in the western moral-philosophical tradition via an agent-based ethic of sharing.

Chapter Two:
Agent-Based Virtue Ethics and the Ideal of Care

In Chapter One, I suggested that the conceptual structure of the "care-orientation" can be explicated most clearly within a virtue-ethical approach to moral theory, and in this chapter, I want to demonstrate why I believe this to be the case. I begin by distinguishing between 'agent-focused' and 'agent-based' approaches to virtue-ethics, because the latter approach seems best able to illuminate the distinctive claims of contemporary care-ethicists. All virtue-ethical theories seek to explain and justify moral, political and/or ethical ideals in terms of facts about character and the inner life, but whereas agent-focused approaches endeavor to flesh out our understanding of what it is to act rightly by providing a richly psychological description of moral agency, agent-based approaches insist that the moral status of various (types of) acts can be understood as being entirely dependent on the moral value of various human motivations and traits of character.[55] After defending the implications of an agent-based approach against a number of possible criticisms (many of which have also been made against the contemporary ethics of care) I demonstrate how an agent-based ethic of caring overcomes a number of difficulties that arise for the more "relational" approaches contemporary care-ethicists have tended to prefer.

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[55]Here and elsewhere I use the term 'moral status' as a catch-all to refer to the broad range of moral-action categories, including at least: wrong/impermissible, right/permissible (but not necessarily "noble" or particularly good), good (but not necessarily required), bad (but not necessarily impermissible), obligatory, and supererogatory/noble/fine. Similarly, when I refer to the 'moral value' of motives and character traits, I have in mind categories like evil, vicious, bad, good, virtuous, and admirable. But we will soon see that an agent-based ethic can also make the fine-grained distinctions these more detailed categories presuppose.

The upshot of the present chapter will be than an ethic of care cannot be rejected on the basis of its formal or methodological structure alone. By itself, however, this is not enough to show that an ethic of care is wholly satisfactory, for we have seen that the autonomy/caring debate also stems from a pervasive tension in value-orientation. Exploring that tension will be the task of Chapter Three, where I shall contend that both "separateness-based" and "connection-based" moral theories (including an agent-based ethic of care) provide us with an objectionably one-sided conception of morality and the ethical life. And that will set the stage for me to demonstrate, beginning with Chapter Four, how an agent-based ethic of sharing is able to unify -- and in a certain sense, even transcend -- the separateness/connectedness tension, thereby providing us with a much more philosophically satisfying way of thinking about morality. But first, we need to get clearer about the merits of an agent-based approach.

2.1 Two types of virtue-ethical theory

Most contemporary virtue-ethicists have followed Aristotle, who clearly believes that it is impossible to understand notions like rightness and obligation without understanding the ways in which various sorts of activity are constitutive of the overall excellence of an individual agent, thereby enabling the virtuous agent to "flourish" or live well.[56] According to his *Nicomachean Ethics*, a person acts rightly if she or he does what a virtuous person would do in the circumstances, and more importantly, does the action *as* a virtuous person would do it -- that is, if she or he performs the action in

[56]The literature here is vast, but I have in mind thinkers like Hursthouse (1991; 1995; 1996), Nussbaum (1986), Sherman (1991), Slote (1992; but note that Slote has since been working on agent-based approaches), and in more explicitly political contexts, Galston (1987) and MacIntyre (1981; 1988).

the right way, with the right feeling, and for the right reason (1105b5-8; 1106b20-22; 1109b27-29). In addition, Aristotle insists that a significant part of the value of right action lies in the fact that engaging in moral activity expresses or actualizes the virtuous person's innermost character (1105a28-34), with the result that this value cannot be wholly destroyed if the action fails to achieve its intended results. Truly "fine" action can therefore only be explained, on his view, by theories which make reference to standards of inner affect as well as to standards of external conduct. Yet Aristotle also allows that properly guided or momentarily inspired individuals can sometimes perform right acts even though the agents themselves are not (fully) virtuous (1103b14-21; 1104a34-b3), and he frequently characterizes the virtuous person as the one who sees or perceives what is right in any given set of circumstances (1109b15-23; 1126b4; 1142a23-30). And these latter comments suggest that even amongst the perfectly virtuous, the rightness of a person's actions will depend on factors that are in some sense external to, or independent from, the goodness or excellence of the person's character. (The perceptual metaphor, in particular, seems to imply this.)[57] To be sure, Aristotle does not say very much about what the independent standard of rightness is, and he repeatedly denies that it is possible to distinguish right acts from wrong ones at some abstract and general level. But this may stem more from his commitments to the particularism of moral judgment and the incommensurability of moral values than from the view that the rightness of an action is dependent upon the virtuous inner character of the agent who performs it. When Aristotle tells us that we must become virtuous if we want to be able to act rightly, it does not seem to be because, assuming we are

[57]See McDowell (1979) for an approach that takes this metaphor quite seriously.

successful in achieving inner virtue, we will then be able to confer a special kind of moral value on the actions we choose. Rather, it is because only after we have achieved inner virtue will we be in the position to recognize when morally problematic situations arise and deliberate effectively about what should be done in them.[58]

I am not convinced that any of this makes Aristotle's conception of ethics mysterious, conservative, or circular in ways that are sometimes attributed to him, though I suspect that how one views this issue will depend, in large part, on what one wants or expects a moral theory to do.[59] But I shall not explore those issues here. My point is simply that in an Aristotelian approach, personal virtue alone does not quite explain or determine the rightness (or "nobility," in the case of actions that are especially fine) of an individual's acts. For this reason, skeptics about virtue ethics have long been convinced that while a theory of virtue may be an important supplement to a theory of right action (for example, one that enriches our understanding of why some people are better at making right choices than others, and that helps us to understand the point of moral activity from a personal point of view), it cannot fully explain what it is about certain (types of) actions that makes them right or obligatory, and so cannot serve as a free-standing approach to ethical theory as a whole. But Aristotle's approach is arguably not the most radical or pure form of virtue ethics that can be articulated, and

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[58]Aristotle himself may not be as fully committed to an objectivist position on moral values as this phrasing suggests. But the passages just cited do suggest it, and putting it this way helps to sharpen the contrast between (roughly) "Aristotelian" and "agent-based" moral views.

[59]In particular, it will depend on whether one expects a moral theory to provide an explicit decision procedure capable of generating a single answer in response to any specific case. For discussion, see Annas (1993), especially pp. 3-10, 108-115, and 439-455; Hursthouse (1991), pp. 223-33; Nussbaum (1985; 1988), and Sherman (1989), esp. Chaps. 2-3.

following contemporary thinkers like Michael Slote and Jorge Garcia, I want to suggest that it is in fact possible to "treat the moral or ethical status of acts as entirely derivative from independent and fundamental ethical/aretaic facts (or claims) about the motives, dispositions or inner life of the individuals who perform them" (Slote 1995: 84; See also Slote 1998; Garcia 1990; 1992).[60]

In order to understand the contrast that I have just been drawing, it is important to be clear that an agent-based approach is a type of virtue-ethical theory that makes a very specific claim about the nature of our most basic, evaluative judgments in the area of morality. In a discussion of recent papers by Slote and Garcia, Julia Driver has suggested that "expectabilist" versions of utilitarianism might be described as agent-based (since expectation is an inner state of a moral agent), even though they are not virtue-ethical (since the moral value of that inner state is understood in terms of utility, and utility judgments attach to the consequences of motives or actions in the external world -- that is, to the states of affairs that the motives in question can be reasonably expected to produce) (Driver 1995: 281ff). But to argue in this way is to obscure the very feature that is most characteristic of agent-based views. As Driver herself makes clear, it is utility judgments that are doing the bulk of the explanatory work in an expectabilist approach: they are the most basic elements of the theory, and in the last analysis, it is those utility judgments that ultimately enable us to explain and identify both which (types of) inner states are morally virtuous, and which (types of) actions are morally right. Hence, the sort of theory she has in mind does not treat the moral status of

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[60] I shall not place particular emphasis on the fact that characterizations of agents and their motives are typically aretaic rather than deontic because, like Garcia (1990: §§ 2-3) and Slote (1992: ch. 10), I am not convinced that the latter concepts are of a fundamentally different kind than the former.

acts as derivative from independent judgments about the goodness, excellence, or admirability of an agent's character or motivation, and so are not agent-based in the relevant (and clearly virtue-ethical) sense.

For similar reasons, kantian moral theories do not seem to be completely agent-based. To be sure, kantians typically insist that there is some kind of connection between the "motive of duty" and right action, that the duty motive possesses a special kind of moral value, and hence that no action can have moral worth unless it is done from the motive of duty. But the special value of the duty motive is not characterized, within kantian moral theory, in a way that is independent and fundamental. Rather, it is characterized in terms of the moral agent's "resolve" or "commitment" to acting as morality requires no matter what her other motives and inclinations may be; as Marcia Baron puts it, the "definitive feature of someone who acts from duty is her commitment to doing what she really ought to do" (Baron 1984: 58; see Herman 1993 ch. 1; Hill 1995). But this understanding of the duty motive presupposes some further conception of what the agent "really ought to do," which Kant aims to provide with his various formulations of the Categorical Imperative, and which contemporary kantians typically interpret as only those specific (content-filled) maxims that would pass the categorical imperative test. In both cases, it is the fact that an agent is committed to acting on a certain kind of moral principle that explains why the "motive of duty" is especially, morally good, and while mere or accidental accordance with moral principles may not be quite enough in order to explain which actions have genuine moral worth (actions must also express the agent's genuine commitment to or possession of "the Moral Law within"), independently grounded moral principles are crucial to the kantian explanation of which types of

actions are morally right.[61] Indeed, Kant himself allows that an agent can do what is right even without performing the act from the motive of duty.

It may also be useful to distinguish between a 'virtue theory' and a 'virtue ethic,' as Roger Crisp has recently done (1996: Introduction). The former project involves giving either a descriptive, psychological account of what the virtues are in general (e.g., Aristotle's argument (*Nicomachean Ethics* II: 5) that virtues are motivational "states of the soul" rather than mere passions or faculties), or an analysis of what distinguishes one particular virtue from another (e.g., explaining how compassion differs from benevolence, or integrity from a sense of justice). But the latter project involves giving a normative or prescriptive account of which (set of) virtues we ought to cultivate and act from, and explaining why those virtues are ethically superior to others. Of course, the adequacy of any virtue-ethic will depend, in no small measure, on the plausibility of its (implied) virtue-theory: an ethic recommending we act from virtues that, on any plausible description of their nature, are practically impossible for creatures like us to achieve, would be highly suspect. More importantly, the nature of one's virtue theory will determine whether or not one's virtue-ethic can indeed be agent-based. Crisp

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[61]Contemporary kantians have increasingly wanted to emphasize that the fact that an agent was motivated by duty is seldom sufficient to explain why (or whether) she acted rightly, insisting that other motives may work alongside the duty motive and may be crucial to many sorts of moral activity (Herman 1993: ch. 1; Baron 1984). And they have even allowed that there is "something repugnant" about certain ways of acting from the motive of duty if it is not supplemented by further motives (Ibid.: 48). But they insist that those further motives cannot make the action right unless the duty motive (i.e., the requisite commitment to acting on principles that pass the categorical imperative test) is also present.

Nancy Sherman has reminded me that if one emphasizes that the various formulations of the Categorical Imperative are supposed to be principles of an agent's own reason, Kantians seem able to ally themselves even more closely with virtue-ethical approaches. But a fully agent-based approach resists the suggestion that being morally well motivated can always (and only) be understood as a matter of acting on principle.

contends that one might embrace a consequentialist virtue-theory, and yet still espouse a "virtue-based" ethic (Ibid.: 4), but he must mean what I have called an "agent-focused" or Aristotelian ethic in this case, since a theory that tells us we morally ought to act from certain virtues, and yet identifies those virtues by the consequences they produce, would not make action evaluation entirely derivative from independent agent-evaluations. As with the suggestion by Driver discussed above, Crisp's suggestion would make action evaluation derivative from virtues that are in turn identified by their consequences, and so would be a consequentialist moral theory at the deepest or most fundamental level. In other words, although the distinction I have been drawing between agent-focused and agent-based ethical theories is first and foremost a distinction within the area of virtue ethics, there are certain constraints on the sorts of virtue theory that can accompany and flesh out an agent-based approach. The virtues that ground such an approach will have to be understood as being intrinsically admirable in a way that cannot be fully captured by the consequences they produce or by any principles to which they conform.

What makes agent-based theories highly distinctive is the claim that our judgments about the moral rightness or wrongness of actions ultimately rest on our judgments about what sorts of motives and character traits count as virtues, where those virtue judgments are not thought to be based on any further evaluative notions. This does not mean that virtue judgments will not be closely, conceptually linked to other evaluative judgments, including judgments about right action; the Aristotelian and the agent-based virtue ethicist can agree that one of the best ways to clarify and refine our understanding of the virtues is to think about the kinds of actions that an agent who

possessed various motives and character traits would in fact be disposed to perform (Garcia, 1990). Nor does an agent-based approach necessarily imply that the central task of moral theory is to enable us to make accurate assessments of other people's motives, or to mete out praise and blame, rather than to help us determine how we should act and to help us see what should be involved in our first person deliberations about what to do (Ibid.). Here again, the agent-based virtue theorist might well agree with the Aristotelian (and a great many others) that the goal of moral theory is to enable us to become more effective moral agents in the practical world.[62] But an agent-based ethicist will insist that in the last analysis, "acts can be right or wrong only because they express virtuous or vicious attitudes" or motivations (Garcia 1992: 241), and hence that identifying which sorts of motivations are virtues is both necessary and sufficient to explain when and why particular actions are right. As we have seen, this claim is not one that Aristotle is clearly committed to. Yet this does seem to be a claim that contemporary care-ethicists are likely to find congenial, for as we saw in Chapter One (esp. §1.3) "an ethic of caring locates morality primarily in the pre-act consciousness" of the moral agent (Noddings 1984: 24). And since purely "agent-based" conceptions of ethics are a fairly rare phenomenon in western moral philosophy, recognizing this affinity makes it even easier to understand why care-ethicists have wanted to ally themselves against more traditional moral views.

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[62]That Aristotle's virtue ethic is "ultimately practical" is emphasized by Sherman (1991).

2.2 The formal structure of agent-based views

Although thinkers like Plato, Hume, Nietzsche, Augustine and even Kant all make the character of an agent's motivation at least fundamentally relevant to the evaluation of the agent's acts, each seems to rely on further evaluative assumptions in order to specify what types of actions are morally right. Meanwhile, the clearest historical example of an entirely agent-based view -- that of the 19th century thinker James Martineau -- is familiar to most contemporary philosophers, if at all, only because he was so effectively criticized by Henry Sidgwick in *The Methods of Ethics* (1907: 366-72). This might be taken as evidence that agent-based thinking must somehow be flawed: that it rests on excessively complex or unstable grounding assumptions, or that it inevitably fails to account for at least some of the moral judgments that we make. But in determining whether or not this is so, the crucial question to be asked is whether we have any reason to accept additional assumptions about what it is that "makes right actions right" than to rest on our most considered judgments about the intrinsic admirability of various motives (or, speaking at a somewhat more abstract level, ideals of moral character). In what follows, I shall contend that we do not.

As we will see, the adequacy of any agent-based ethic will ultimately depend on the plausibility of its claims about which types of motivations are (most) morally admirable, as well as the credibility of its depiction of what agents are doing when they manifest those motivations through the actions they perform. Nonetheless, there are a number of concerns about this way of thinking about morality that might arise even if one is in complete agreement with a specific (set of) claim(s) about the intrinsic admirability of certain character traits and motivations, and so I want to respond to those more

purely formal objections before exploring the implications of an agent-based ethic that is grounded in the ideal of care. In order to facilitate my discussion at various points, I shall occasionally speak as though a motive like benevolence or care is the only moral virtue, or as though a motive like malevolence or resentment is the only moral vice. But by the end of this chapter I hope to have demonstrated that a fully developed agent-based ethic need not be committed to such overly simplistic assumptions about our moral psychology (see especially §§2.4-2.5).

2.3 Three important distinctions

If we accept the idea that evaluations of actions are entirely dependent on independent and prior evaluations of agents' motivations, there are two somewhat disturbing conclusions that might immediately seem to follow. The first is that once we have determined a particular person to be morally virtuous, we will then be committed to the view that any and every action that person performs will automatically count as morally right; a conclusion which would be implausible insofar as it suggests that morality places no real constraints on individual activity, or that all that is required in order to meet the demands of morality is to get oneself into the right state of mind. And the second is that unless an individual is perfectly well-motivated, an agent-based ethic commits us to the view that he will be completely unable to do what he ought; a conclusion which will be disconcerting to many people insofar as it contravenes the widely held principle of "ought implies can." However, both of these objections overlook two important distinctions that lie at the core of any agent-based ethic, and one strand of the "ought implies can" objection overlooks a third.

(i) mere impulses vs. motivational states

The first is a distinction between virtues and mere impulses, passions or feelings. As the ancient philosophers emphasized, the former are motivational states; they incorporate both affective and cognitive dimensions, and so dispose the agent who possesses them to act in specific ways when the relevant situations arise (Annas 1993: Ch. 2).[63] When we describe a moral agent as benevolent, for example, we are not simply saying that he or she is the sort of person who is pleased by improvements in other people's welfare and troubled by their misfortunes, or who experiences a pang of grief or remorse when confronted with a concrete case of human suffering. Nor are we simply acknowledging that the agent has performed or inevitably will perform some specific action on behalf of other people. Rather, we are attributing to the agent a certain kind of practical attitude or desire: a felt concern for the good of others which directs his attention to the situation of other people, and disposes him to act in ways that contribute to others' well-being. This means that the benevolent agent will take facts about the level of well-being of other people into account in determining what he should do in any particular situation. He will not fail to notice when he encounters (in ordinary circumstances) another person who is in some kind of distress, and he will respond to that person in whatever manner best enables him to alleviate the other's suffering. In other words, the person who is genuinely benevolent is the sort of person who is actively aware of the situation of other

[63]The Stoics want to equate virtue and reason, and so may be said to downplay the affective dimension of moral motivation. But since their argument is based on the need for a rational transformation of the emotions in order to ensure that the objects of our affections are stable and genuinely worthwhile, it does not seem that they are denying the role of affect altogether. At the same time, it is not clear that they can accurately account for the role of the moral emotions, as we will see in Chapter Three.

people in the world, who is influenced by that awareness, and whose actions reflect the fact that he genuinely desires to see other people do well.[64]

Once we recognize this, we can see that to describe a person as benevolent is already to say that there are certain constraints on that person's activities: given the nature of his or her motivational state, the benevolent person's choices about what sorts of acts to perform will be conditioned, in no small measure, by beliefs about how those actions will affect the well-being of others, as well as by considerations about his or her own resources, abilities, and so forth.[65] And it is the presence of these sorts of internal constraints that Gilligan sought to call people's attention to when she suggested that females are more likely than males to exhibit a range of psychological traits -- including sensitivity to the needs of particular other persons, a heightened awareness of human frailty and vulnerability, the desire to provide others with emotional support and nurturance, and a general placing of value on the establishment and maintenance of human relationships -- that receive scant attention in the most influential theories of morality and moral development (1982; 1987).[66] Perhaps more importantly, while it is true that those constraints are properly described as operating on the agent "from within" (if she were not so benevolent, she would not be troubled by the plight of others and

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[64]See Blum (1980) for a much fuller account of the sort of person I have in mind.

[65]The fact that an agent's beliefs are involved raises important questions about the relationship between practical wisdom and moral virtue that, unfortunately, would take me too far afield to address fully. For reasons that will emerge throughout the remainder of this dissertation, however, I think it is a mistake to jump from this realization to the conclusion that we can assess the morality of actions without reference to the affective dimension of the motivational states that produce them, or that being morally well-motivated essentially boils down to utilizing the right sort of rational choice procedure regardless of what one's attitudes and feelings may be.

[66]Cf. Blum (1994: Part III) for a defense of Gilligan's claim that these traits should be viewed as distinctively moral qualities.

would not feel the need to respond accordingly),[67] there is no reason to think that an agent-based theory is committed to the view that every action a benevolent person does will automatically be morally right. Crucially, this would be true even if we were fully convinced that benevolence was the only moral motive, for there is a second important distinction between possessing an admirable or good motivational state and manifesting that state in one's actions.

(ii) possessing vs. manifesting a motivation

Assuming only the minimal degree of free-will compatibilism that seems necessary before any moral theory can get off the ground, even an extremely virtuous person will be capable of performing, and may even choose to perform, actions that fail fully to exemplify, exhibit, or express that inner virtue in the external world. Of course, there are many different reasons why this may be the case, some (but not all) of which may cause us to question our original assessment of the agent's motivational state. But what is important for my purposes here is to see that even when we are entirely justified in describing an agent as benevolent (i.e., even when our judgment that she does in fact possess an admirable inner state is entirely accurate), we are not thereby committed to the view that all of the agent's actions will have the same moral status. This is because an agent-based virtue ethic can and should acknowledge that not all of an agent's actions will manifest the moral value of the agent's inner state to the same degree. If she volunteers ten hours of time each week to a local soup kitchen, for example, she will exhibit more

[67]Slote notes that even this metaphor must be taken with caution: the "fit" between an agent's benevolence and the rightness of his actions is not all "one-way" (in the direction from agent to world), because the agent could not be meaningfully described as benevolent if he was not influenced by certain features of the world (1995: 85-7).

benevolence than if she gives a small amount of pocket change to a homeless person she passes on the street, and an agent-based ethic can properly characterize the former action as morally better because it more fully exhibits the agent's morally good motivation.[68] In addition, since the agent will presumably engage in a variety of actions (such as tooth-brushings and nap-takings) that exhibit neither benevolence nor a deplorable lack of it, an agent-based ethic can also make sense of the thought that there are a great many actions which, while surely permissible, are otherwise relatively uninteresting from an explicitly moral point of view (at least under ordinary circumstances).

This means that an agent-based ethic will also be appropriately context-sensitive in its assessment of individual acts. For example, although two agents may perform what looks like the 'same action' when described in impersonal terms (say, each gives $100 to a worthy cause), there may be reasons to think that one of the actions exhibits far more benevolence than the other (a $100 donation will exhibit greater benevolence, other things being equal, if it is given by an individual who is quite poor than by someone who is quite wealthy), and so is morally better and perhaps ought to be praised more highly, even though the other action is by no means morally wrong. Indeed, one of the attractive features of an agent-based account is its ability to make these sorts of fine-grained distinctions within the realm of morally permissible activity.

For similar reasons, an agent-based ethic does not immediately violate the principle of "ought implies can." According to this principle, it does not

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[68]Some people may find the notion of "expressing a virtue" to be unacceptably vague. I shall attempt to respond to this concern in §2.4.

even make sense to attribute obligations to people unless their motivational states make it at least possible for them to fulfill those obligations.[69] But in light of the distinction between possessing and exhibiting a motivation, it seems that even an extremely malevolent person will typically be capable of acting in ways that do not exhibit his or her deplorable inner state, and so will be able (and hence is meaningfully obligated) to perform acts that are at least minimally morally permissible. Meanwhile, even malevolent refrainings will admit of evaluative distinctions: an agent who does not take advantage of an easy opportunity to harm one person because she is busy plotting against some other person, for example, presumably acts in a way that is much worse than an agent whose restraint is motivated by purely self-regarding considerations such as fear of sanctions (the latter agent, that is, acts from a somewhat better motive than the former, despite the fact that both act from motives that are rather deplorable). Indeed, an agent-based ethic is just as fine-grained in the realm of impermissible activity as it is in the realm of permissible activity. Any action that manifests a deplorable inner motivation on the part of the agent who performs it will be (derivatively) assessed as morally wrong, but whereas acts of outright malevolence toward others will presumably be characterized by any agent-based ethic as vicious or evil, acts

[69]Charles Larmore points out that there are in fact two distinct issues to which the slogan "ought implies can" has been attached (1987: 84-9; 149-50). One concerns the relationship between obligation and feasibility (whether it makes sense to say that a person has an obligation if, try as she may and no matter how well-motivated she may be, the agent is completely unable to carry it out), and is more frequently raised in discussions of utilitarianism and "incident" moral luck. The other, which concerns the relationship between obligation and motivation (whether it makes sense to say that a person has an obligation if he lacks a motive sufficient to move him to carry it out), is the one that an agent-based ethic seems especially likely to violate, and is the one under consideration here.

which merely exhibit a deplorable lack of concern for others will be evaluated less severely.

Of course, an agent-based theory emphasizes that the best way for the malevolent agent to succeed in living up to even the most minimal obligations will be to cultivate a more virtuous character. And such an ethic does seem to imply that without such a change of heart, the malevolent refrainer will be unable to fulfill any more positive obligations that require the expression of genuine benevolence. As a result, it might still be thought that a person wholly lacking in benevolence cannot be under any positive obligations (duties of beneficence or mutual aid) within an agent-based ethic. It is certainly not obvious that any sort of malevolent refrainings will lead an agent to fulfill, say, a duty of easy rescue; so won't ascribing that sort of duty to the malevolent agent violate the principle of ought implies can?[70]

Kant seems to have believed that it would, and since he also believed that everyone (except the insane and children before the age of reason) does in fact have (imperfect) duties of beneficence that must be exercised at least some of the time, this led him to conclude that moral motivation must be "empirically unconditioned" and possessed by all persons (including those with malevolent desires) simply in virtue of their rationality. But it is not clear that we should accept Kant's conclusion on this point, for two main reasons. First, not everyone is convinced that the purely rational duty-motive Kant defends is sufficient to motivate genuinely beneficent (as opposed to merely prudent) activity. And second, even if the duty-motive is sufficient to do this,

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[70]Notice that an agent-based ethic does not imply that it is morally acceptable for the agent not to act in this situation; walking by a drowning child whom one could easily rescue surely exhibits a deplorable lack of concern for one's fellow human beings (and on an agent-based account is wrong for that reason), even if it is "the best" that we can expect of a malevolent individual.

Kant's defense of the idea that such a motive is always "summonable" (because "purely rational") in a way that more empirically-grounded motives like benevolence can never be, is not tremendously convincing.[71] Kant may be correct that it is always possible for any (rational) agent to understand what morality requires, but as John Deigh (1995) and Susan Okin (1989) have each argued, a more emotionally-laden capacity to empathize with the plight of other persons seems necessary in order for such knowledge to have genuine moral-motivational force.[72]

A less strict but more plausible version of the "ought implies can" principle, suggested by Charles Larmore (1987: 85-6), is that agents can meaningfully be said to have obligations if they presently have, or once had, or at least once could have had or could eventually be brought round to having, an empirically conditioned motive sufficient to carry them out. Everything we know about human moral agency seems to count in favor of this slightly weaker version, which acknowledges that agents are subject to a degree of "constitutive" moral luck, and that moral education, as well as attention to the development of one's own moral character, often plays a crucial role in our ability to do what we ought. And on this version of the principle, malevolent agents can also be under positive obligations, despite the fact that they are extremely unlikely to live up to those obligations without a change of mind and heart.

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[71]Herman (1993: ch. 1) has attempted to show this, but her arguments have been soundly criticized by Oakley (1993: ch. 3), esp. pp. 93-108.

[72]Psychologists have also stressed the role of empathy in moral development; see, for example Hoffman (1976), Eisenberg (1987), and the articles in Kurtines & Gewirtz (1987).

(iii) responsibility assessments vs. motive assessments

To many people it may seem that there is something particularly objectionable about the implication that someone wholly lacking in benevolence will have obligations he simply cannot live up to without changing his character — something that looks suspiciously like 'blaming the victim' in many cases (suppose the person's malevolence can be traced to an abusive childhood).[73] But it should be noted that nothing about an agent-based approach implies that individuals should always be praised for their morally good motivations or always be blamed or criticized for their morally bad ones. Indeed, nothing about the formal structure of an agent-based theory implies that agents should always be blamed even for the actions that exhibit or express their bad motivations. This brings us to a third distinction between two types of "agent-assessments." The first type, which I shall call "motive-assessments" and which an agent-based ethic takes to be crucial to the evaluation of individual acts, involves a judgment about the degree of moral value (e.g.: admirable, good, acceptable, bad, deplorable, vicious, etc.) of the motive(s) the agent exhibits or manifests in performing those actions. The second type, which I shall call "responsibility-assessments" and which seems to be involved in determinations of an agent's praiseworthiness or blameworthiness for performing certain actions, requires us to make an additional judgment about an agent's degree of responsibility for his or her motivational states. And although it is tempting to think that "motive assessments" and "responsibility assessments" always go hand in hand, notice that there is an important asymmetry here. For while we are often willing to praise a person who exhibits good motivations regardless of whether we think she is (wholly)

[73]This objection is raised by Driver (1995: 283).

responsible for them, we are typically reluctant to blame a person who exhibits bad motivations unless we can be quite sure she is (wholly) responsible for them.[74] I shall not attempt to determine why this is the case (though it presumably has something to do with the influence of Christianity and the idea that we have all "fallen from grace").[75] And I do not deny that our everyday assessments of the first kind may quite frequently be colored by assessments of the second kind. Nonetheless, I do want to emphasize that it is only motive-assessments that necessarily serve as the basis from which an agent-based theory derives its evaluations of the rightness and/or wrongness of specific acts.

This means that an agent-based theory can acknowledge that there are cases in which agents are not responsible or blameworthy for the actions they perform (because not responsible for the motivations that prompt them to act in those ways), while still insisting that the acts themselves are morally wrong (because they nonetheless exhibit bad motivations). And it seems to me that this is an extremely important result. For notice that in cases where we think that it is strictly impossible for a person to act in ways that do not exhibit deplorable malevolence towards others, we are typically inclined to wonder whether the person is capable of moral agency at all -- that is, we wonder whether it makes sense to say that he or she "ought" to do anything. Even when we think such persons cannot meaningfully be obligated, however, it is

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[74]To be sure, we also tend to praise agents who overcome deplorable or at any rate less than admirable motives in order to "do the right thing," as kantians in particular are often keen to point out. I shall take up this point in my discussion of "the sense of duty," pp. 79ff., below.

[75]Korsgaard (1993) makes some headway on this point by arguing that there are practical (as opposed to theoretical or metaphysical) reasons which explain why we hold one another responsible in the ways that we do.

still a bit odd to say that they do not perform wrong or impermissible acts, and an agent-based ethic can make good sense of this thought. For it allows us to say that the acts which such agents perform are impermissible (as actions), because those actions exhibit deplorable motivations, while at the same time acknowledging that the persons who commit such actions are not blameworthy (as agents), because they are not responsible for their deplorable motivations and hence cannot be morally obligated in any full-blown sense. (And of course, in cases where we do think agents are meaningfully obligated, an agent-based ethic allows us to say both that their actions are wrong and that they are morally criticizable or blameworthy for performing those actions.)

We have seen that an agent-based conception of morality does not commit us to the position that anything a well-motivated person does will automatically count as morally good, nor that a badly motivated person will have obligations he or she cannot live up to. It simply insists that right actions are those that exhibit morally admirable forms of motivation, and wrong actions are those that exhibit morally deplorable forms of motivation. It also points out that within each broad category (of permissible and impermissible actions), it is possible to make further and much more fine-grained distinctions in accordance with the extent to which specific actions exhibit the good or bad motivations of the agent who performs them. Of course, these further distinctions will not always be obvious or easy to pick out. Indeed, since an agent-based conception of morality contends that our ability to determine the moral status of any particular action is ultimately dependent on our ability to discern the motives that actually induced the person to perform it, and since it is often very difficult to sort out precisely what one's own motivations are, let

alone what another person's motivations may be, anyone who adopts this sort of approach must admit that our evaluations of individual acts will often be imprecise.[76] For example, we may characterize a particular act of charity as exhibiting an extremely high degree of benevolence and therefore being especially morally good, when in fact the donor was motivated solely by self-interested concerns (e.g., a desire to see his name on the outside of a university building, or to improve his reputation).[77] Indeed, we may even convince ourselves that we are acting benevolently toward another when in fact we are motivated by an objectionable kind of paternalism that has more to do with what we want than what the other truly needs. But this is a reason to be cautious (because we may be mistaken about what is motivating ourselves and others) and forgiving (because other people, like ourselves, may often be unaware of the motives that are prompting them to act as they do) in our assessments of moral agents; it is not, by itself, a reason to discard the theory as unable to help us understand what kinds of considerations ought ideally to enter into our moral deliberations and what kinds of actions are in fact morally right. It is simply mistaken to think that this sort of practical difficulty shows the theory itself to be flawed.

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[76]Kant's "anti-moralistic strain," and accompanying emphasis on the deliberative processes involved in our first-person moral activity, seems to be based on a similar view of the difficulty in determining precisely what moves a person to act as she does (see Hill 1978, Hill 1993 and O'Neill 1985). On the other hand see Hursthouse, who suggests that our ability to discern whether a person is exhibiting genuine virtues may be somewhat better than our ability to determine whether a specific action-type is morally right (1996: 24ff).

[77]If we are reluctant to describe the self-interested donor as acting wrongly, an agent-based conception of morality suggests that this is because we think that self-interest is, though not the most admirable of motives, at least not wholly deplorable, and hence that acts that are motivated by (certain forms of) self-interest are not, or not always, impermissible. Contractarian moral theories are predicated on this possibility, and a similar thought seems to undergird the 'cool' theories of virtue to be discussed in Chapter Three.

2.4 One central reinterpretation

There is a final objection to the idea of an agent-based approach that we now need to consider. For such an approach does require us to reinterpret the familiar distinction between doing the right thing for a good reason (or from a good motive), and doing the right thing for a bad reason (or from a bad motive); as well as the corresponding distinction between doing the wrong thing for a bad reason (or from a bad motive), and doing the wrong thing for a good reason (or from a good motive). This is because an agent-based ethic implies that when the agent's reasons are not right (when his motivations are not admirable), the action as performed in that specific case is in fact wrong (and vice versa). Since embracing the action/motive distinction requires us to be able to specify the rightness (or wrongness) of a person's action in a way that is independent of any given agent's motivations, an agent-based ethic is unable to fully accommodate it.

Two points are worth noting when considering whether a very strong distinction between the rightness (or wrongness) of actions and the goodness (or badness) of motives is appropriate. The first is that "events that are not personal actions or responses are not morally evaluated at all" (Garcia 1992: 239). They are not even considered to be morally right or wrong, let alone to be morally good or bad, and this already suggests that our judgments of moral rightness must have something to do with the practical attitudes of the person who performs them. And the second is that when we are inclined to invoke this sort of distinction, it is typically because we want to acknowledge a difference between agents who perform the same general type of action, but who do not appear to be equally meritorious (or criticizable) in their performance of that action type, because one agent performs the action from

motives that are morally better (or worse) than the other. An agent-based ethic can easily make this sort of distinction, since it will say that the agent who acts from better motives performs an action that is in fact morally better (or that an agent who acts from worse motives performs an action that is in fact morally worse), and hence is more meritorious (or more criticizable) on precisely those grounds. It seems, therefore, that an agent-based ethic is still able to capture this distinction's basic point.

Nonetheless, there are cases in which it seems appropriate to many people to say that an agent "did the right thing" even though we know that he or she did it from rather deplorable motivations. Sidgwick's example of a prosecutor who punishes criminals to the fullest extent possible under the law, but does so out of malice, might seem to be a depiction of this kind of case, and assuming we agree with Sidgwick that malice is not a morally appropriate motive, an agent-based ethic does imply that such a prosecutor in fact acts wrongly. Moreover, it implies that a prosecutor who performed the same type of action -- i.e., one who meted out exactly the same kinds of punishments in similar cases -- but who did so out of a more admirable motive (say, a concern for public welfare) would in fact act rightly. Interestingly, Sidgwick himself is quite sympathetic to the view that "a man who prosecutes from malice a person whom he believes to be guilty, does not really act rightly; for, though it may be his duty to prosecute, he ought not to do it from malice" (1907: 202, my emphasis). And it should be noted that an agent-based ethic does not imply that it would be morally acceptable for the malicious prosecutor not to mete out the punishments that he does, only that the way in which he does so is morally objectionable, and hence that it would be morally better for him to endeavor to change his motivations (assuming

that he could). It should also be noted that Sidgwick believes that a more admirable prosecutor would mete out punishments in this same way. For assuming we agree with Sidgwick on this latter point, I think an agent-based ethic can make some sense of the idea that it is, after all, the malicious prosecutor's "duty" to prosecute, and hence that there is something "right" about the general type of action he performs, if we are willing to adopt a kind of two-levels view. But before we can see why, we need to get clearer about the place of moral principles and rules within an agent-based account.

Virtue-ethical rules

We have seen that an agent-based ethical theory tells us, at the most general level, to act in ways that exhibit admirable or morally good motivations, and to avoid acting in ways that exhibit deplorable or morally bad motivations. Thus "act virtuously and do not act viciously" is its most general moral principle. And we have also seen that a fully developed agent-based ethic will include a defense of which motives are (most) admirable and which are (most) deplorable. Once that conception is in place, therefore, every virtue will generate a prescription ("act benevolently"), and every vice a prohibition ("do not act malevolently"). But an agent-based ethic can also generate "summary rules" of right action that are even more specific than this.[78] For it suggests that when we repeatedly condemn certain broad types of actions (e.g., lying) as morally wrong and commend other broad types (e.g., promise-keeping) as morally right, we are at least implicitly acknowledging how extremely unlikely it is that any person's decision to perform the former type

[78]The idea that an agent-based ethic can make use of the notion of "summary rules," which is familiar from discussions of utilitarianism and is anticipated by Adam Smith (1759), was first suggested to me by Slote who kindly provided me with some of his earliest written thoughts in this area.

of action could ever be attributed to an admirable motivation, and how similarly unlikely it is that any person's decision to perform the latter type of action could ever be attributed to a deplorable motivation.

To be sure, the normative validity of such rules is derived from the fact that they "summarize" the results of our normal empirical situation, which is one in which admirable motivations can be reliably expected to lead to some types of acts and not others. And because summary rules have no independent moral standing, an agent-based ethic leaves open the possibility that they might not apply, and hence that a specific agent ought not (or at least is not required) to follow them in any particular case. This means that blindly relying on such principles will not be morally admirable -- a point which care-ethicists have been particularly keen to emphasize. For example, Noddings insists that

> Because certain regularities of moral life have been established and observed, we are able to state certain principles, but these principles are minimally useful in new and genuinely puzzling situations. Here we do better to rely on a way of being, a basic condition of receptivity or empathy, that connects us to living others (1990: 28-9; cf. 1984: 5; 13).

Yet Noddings also says that "there is no objection to the unproblematic, day-to-day use of principles as general guides to dependable behavior" (1984: 10), and an agent-based ethic can make sense of this thought. This is because the normative validity of such rules can itself be derived from the theory's assumptions about which motivations are (most) morally admirable, and so an agent who relies on such principles in her day-to-day life will at least be indirectly exhibiting the kind of motivations that, according to the theory, we ought to (strive to) manifest in and through our various acts. So long as she is also attuned to situations in which the summary rules are not

straightforwardly applicable, there is no reason why she should be criticized within an agent-based account.

Of course, Sidgwick's malicious prosecutor cannot be described in this way: though his actions may accord with the summary rules of an agent-based ethic (for example, the "interiorized" version of utilitarianism to be limned in §2.5), we are told that he performs them from bad or deplorable motivations and hence an agent-based ethic commits us to the view that he does not act rightly. Nonetheless, I think an agent-based ethic does allow us to speak, at a highly abstract and impersonal level, of the "bare-permissibility" of certain actions if they are of the sort prescribed by the ethic's summary rules. Such statements about permissibility are "bare" in the sense that they are made without reference to the motivations of any actual moral agent, and in the final analysis, an agent-based ethic commits us to the view that they are merely a façon de parler that makes certain kinds of useful comparisons a bit easier to point out, or that enables us to make highly speculative assertions about the status of a person's actions in cases where his or her actual motivations are seriously in doubt. But since such bare (im)permissibility judgments do allow us to point to the salient features that abstract types of actions have in common – namely, that they are the sort of action toward which admirable motivations ordinarily prompt, I think we can use the façon de parler to say that the malicious prosecutor does the kind of thing that a person in his situation morally ought to do, even though we know that he himself does not act rightly when doing it. Precisely because he presently

lacks a morally admirable motivational state, it is impossible for him to confer any of his actions with moral value.[79]

To some people, refusing to say that the prosecutor acts rightly even though he does exactly the same the kind of thing that a more virtuous prosecutor would do will seem objectionably meddlesome, as though telling him "what kind of person he should be" in a way that is nobody's business but his own. But there are both theoretical and practical reasons to doubt that his motivations really are nobody's business. After all, the overall character of the prosecutor's activity when he takes malicious satisfaction in meting out severe punishments is likely to be very different from the overall character of a prosecutor's activity when he views severe punishments as a necessary evil -- different enough, according to an agent-based account, to alter the moral status of each prosecutor's acts (recall p. 76, above). And at a more practical level, we have every reason to believe that a malicious prosecutor will be more likely to overstep the bounds of the law and punish criminals much more severely than they truly deserve. Pointing out that such a person does not really act rightly even when (ex hypothesi) he does not overstep those bounds is a way of emphasizing the importance of paying attention to one's motivations, so that one will be able to check or redirect them if necessary.[80]

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[79]Notice that an agent-based ethic cannot follow Aristotelians who identify right actions as whatever a truly virtuous person would do. The difference between the virtuous and the non-virtuous moral agent lies in their motivational states, and according to an agent-based ethic, it is only by exhibiting an admirable inner state that an agent can act rightly. To admit that the non-virtuous can sometimes act rightly is at least implicitly to allow that something other than a good motive (e.g., the actualization of a value that the virtuous person is in a particularly good position to perceive, but that might be brought about more accidentally) is what really makes the action right. And it is precisely this conclusion that an agent-based ethic means to avoid.

[80]It should also be remembered that to say he acts wrongly is not necessarily to say that he is morally blameworthy for doing so (see §2.3(iii), above).

There is, of course, a parallel kind of case in which an agent acts from good motives and yet may seem to do the wrong thing, and it is sometimes thought that any virtue ethic (including an agent-based one) can easily be trapped into having to admit that such cases exist. But Rosalind Hursthouse has pointed out that this thought is typically the result of conceptual confusion (1995: 65). As we have seen, a virtue ethic does imply that the same general action-type can be either morally right or morally wrong, depending on the motives that induce an agent to perform it. But the truly virtuous agent who is forced by tragic circumstances to "dirty her hands" and act in ways she is loathe to do does not thereby act wrongly or non-virtuously — that is, she does not act from bad or deplorable motives like indifference or malevolence or greed. Rather, she acts with a certain degree of pain and regret, aware that although the horrible action is the "best" she can do, the action is horrible nonetheless. To be sure, such an action may not exhibit the agent's inner virtue to a particularly high degree, but neither does it exhibit deplorable motivations on her part (ex hypothesi it is truly the best she can do), and hence an agent-based virtue ethic is forced neither to admit that the agent in such circumstances is vicious nor that her action is morally wrong.[81]

Nonetheless, there may be some situations in which a person sincerely cares about others, wants to help them and tries her very best to do so, but due to errors in reasoning or ignorance of relevant facts, her wholehearted

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[81]Notice the difference between this case and the case of the incurably malevolent agent mentioned above. The malevolent may not be morally blameworthy and may be incapable of being under moral obligations, but because his actions exhibit deplorable motivations nonetheless, they can be described as morally wrong. The virtuous agent in tragic circumstances, by contrast, exhibits morally good (or at least acceptable) motivations and so acts rightly, even though she performs an action that, if performed by a less admirable character (e.g., if performed with indifference and glee), would be assessed as morally wrong.

attempts to help others fail to hit their mark. If we are convinced that the rational errors are not the result of some hidden resentment or indifference or what have you, an agent-based approach does imply that such failures will not be distinctively moral ones. But acknowledging this does not imply that a person needs perfect knowledge and/or a complete theory of the human good in order to act benevolently, (even though a benevolent person will try to learn as much as she can about conditions of human flourishing), any more than kantianism implies that a moral agent needs perfect knowledge in order to fulfill the imperfect duty of beneficence, or utilitarianism implies that a moral agent needs perfect knowledge in order to fulfill the general obligation to promote aggregate welfare. Indeed, commitment to such a theory might interfere with the agent's ability to respond to the (potentially idiosyncratic) needs of other persons. Hence, although it is committed to the possibility that a benevolent but incompetent person acts rightly in some minimal sense, an agent-based ethic can still insist that such a person's actions are far less morally good than they could or ideally should be. And as we have seen, it can also allow us to speak about the "bare impermissibility" of her action, by making indirect reference to the fact that it is something a benevolent and competent person would never choose to perform (using the façon de parler discussed above).

2.5 Moral deliberation

But now it may seem that an agent-based ethic is objectionable in another sort of way. After all, virtuous persons are often the first to admit that moral decisions can be quite difficult, and the questions of a sincere, yet genuinely perplexed moral agent typically have less to do with whether benevolence (or courage, or justice) is called for than with what would in fact

be the genuinely benevolent (courageous, or just) thing to do given the unique particulars of the case. Yet by tying the rightness of our actions so closely to our actual motivations, it may seem that an agent-based ethic is unable to illuminate the process of moral deliberation that even the most virtuous agents must surely go through when confronted by very difficult moral issues. Since at least one of the reasons for engaging in moral theory is to attempt to provide some practical guidance in situations where we are genuinely perplexed about what we should do, an inability to shed any light on the kind of deliberative process that might ideally lead us to the proper moral conclusions would presumably render an agent-based ethic seriously incomplete. And this sort of concern seems to underlie the objection, mentioned in §1.2, that care-ethicists treat morality as purely instinctive or non-reflective.

The first thing to notice about this objection is that it can only be a comparative claim. To be sure, theories like utilitarianism and kantianism are frequently said to be more "action-focused," in the sense that they endeavor to explain the rightness of actions in a way that is largely independent of the motivations an agent might have to perform them, and they are frequently said to be more practical because of this fact. Yet neither utilitarianism nor kantianism is likely to generate answers for the perplexed moral agent in any straightforward way: knowing that she should act in such a way as to promote overall utility, or act only on a maxim that she could will to be a universal law, does not, by itself, resolve her dilemma. To the extent that those theories, with their long and illustrious histories, are able to provide us with effective practical guidance, they do exactly what an agent-based virtue theory, when developed in sufficient detail, would do -- namely, provide

more concrete advice about what kinds of things she needs to know in order to figure out what benevolence (or courage, or justice) requires.[82]

In the agent-based case, this kind of guidance is made possible because the cognitive dimension of moral motivation effectively "doubles back" on the world, directing a moral agent's attention to specific kinds of information (depending on which motives are considered to be most morally admirable). For example, a theory that directs the perplexed moral agent to figure out how best to exhibit motivational benevolence is effectively telling her to find out as much information as she can about how, or whether, the various options available to her would contribute to the well-being of other people in the world (Slote 1995: 97-100). Since this will typically require her to integrate a great deal of information, it is not at all surprising that she will often be in doubt about what is the right thing to do, even if she is genuinely virtuous.[83] But notice that determining the right thing to do does not require her to perceive any mysterious "right-making" facts on this account. For although an agent-based ethic accepts that there is something essentially correct about the Aristotelian idea that the rightness of actions ultimately lies in the particulars of each and every case, it does not seem to be the virtuous person's perception

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[82]Consider, for example, Barbara Herman's (1993) interpretation of Kantian morality as resting on certain "deliberative presumptions" (e.g., against killing, coercion and manipulation) and incorporating sophisticated "rules of moral salience" that structure an agent's perception. This goes well beyond the formal structure of the theory. Similarly, consider J.S. Mill's (1863) various concrete demonstrations of what the Principle of Utility, when the facts are suitably interpreted, implies about the appropriate moral response to various sorts of situations.

[83]Hursthouse (1996) points out that in many situations, a confident answer may simply be unwarranted; there may be a number of genuinely benevolent (or courageous, or just) things to do. This does not mean the virtuous person (or anyone else) can (or should) simply flip a coin in such cases, since the willingness to do so would typically betray a callous moral attitude, and a person lacking in virtue might not even recognize that the situation calls for a moral response.

that enables her to choose and perform the right action, but is rather her admirable motivational state. The ordinary facts, we might say, are "processed through" her virtuous motive, and it is the expression of that motive, in a way that is responsive to the facts, that ultimately enables her to do the right thing. And notice too that this kind of process seems to be precisely what care-ethicists have in mind when they speak of the importance of exhibiting a kind of loving attention toward others. Sara Ruddick's discussion of "maternal thinking" (1989), for example, explicitly aims to provide an extremely detailed account of how this process works (See also Held 1987; Tronto 1993: esp. ch. 4).

Since the virtuous agent's attention will ultimately have to be directed toward possible consequences of her actions, it might be thought that the initial appeal to motives is wasteful or unnecessary. But there are reasons to suspect that this cannot be true. After all, if we judge actions only by their consequences or effects in the world, then it is impossible to distinguish accidentally useful or beneficial actions from those that are truly morally good (Slote 1995; Garcia 1992). And all of us know from practical experience that the overall character of an agent's action is likely to be at least subtly different when he acts from one motive than it is when he acts from another. This kind of point has been emphasized by thinkers like Lawrence Blum (1980) and Michael Stocker (1976) who note the difference between acts done "out of friendship" and very similar acts done "out of duty." And it seems to be for precisely this reason that Annette Baier insists that certain kinds of obligations — such as the obligations of parents to children — are parasitic upon the possession of "belief-informed, action influencing attitudes" like love or trust or care (1994: esp. chs. 1-2 and 5-9). An agent-based ethic simply endorses this

widely-held view by pointing out that a difference in motivation can often be great enough to alter the moral status of any specific type of act.

Although an agent-based ethic insists that moral judgment does not ultimately come to rest in evaluations of (expected) consequences, it should also be noted that nothing about this way of thinking about morality involves denying that virtuous motives aim at or are directed toward certain ends. For one thing, any motivation that might plausibly serve as a moral virtue would presumably have to be one that leads agents to pay attention to how their actions affect other people in the world. For another, specification of ends is crucial to our ability to distinguish individual motives from one another, since the ends form the intentional content of an agent's practical desire, and so define the possibility space within which the agent acts. But according to an agent-based conception, what is morally good about any virtuous motive has ultimately to do with the kind of intentional state it is, and not anything supposedly more ethically fundamental about its expectable or actual effects for human (or sentient) beings. In the last analysis, an agent-based ethic contends that certain motivations are simply the appropriate kind of practical attitude to take up toward our fellows.

Of course, an agent-based virtue ethic suggests that the first step in an agent's moral deliberation will often be reflection on her own motivations, and it has sometimes been suggested that such a process is inappropriately narcissistic (cf. Williams 1985: 10). But this complaint is largely unwarranted as well.[84] Williams may be correct that there are some objectionable kinds of moral self-reflection. But suppose, for example, that our perplexed moral

[84]It is also not unique to agent-based views: consider Susan Wolf's (1979) criticism of both kantians and utilitarians for portraying moral agents as being too concerned with their own "moral purity."

agent's doubts over what would be the most benevolent thing to do are not the result of inadequate knowledge but of inferior motivation — i.e., that she is harboring some kind of deep seated resentment toward the person(s) she is interacting with, and hence that her "confusion" over how to help is in fact rooted in a deeper conflict about whether she really wants to do what benevolence is prompting her to do. A theory that directs such an agent to reflect solely on the (expectable) outcomes of the various actions she could perform, or even on the moral permissibility of various maxims she might reasonably adopt, seems significantly less likely to help her uncover this inner conflict than a theory that directs her to examine, at a fairly deep level, her inner attitudes toward the other person(s) she is responding to (cf. Sherman, 1989: 25-7). But once our agent does discover her hidden resentment, she may be able to deliberate more clear-headedly about what to do, and even if she ultimately finds that she is unable to overcome it, she may at least recognize the need for assistance from someone else in order to resolve her dilemma. In either case, reflection on her own motivational state seems to be a crucial step in her efforts to act rightly.[85]

That attitudinal changes can indeed be a form of moral activity has been emphasized by Iris Murdoch.[86] And this kind of self-reflection seems to be what Diana T. Meyers has in mind when she characterizes "responsibility reasoners" as reflecting upon which of their choices "are compatible with or

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[85]Slote points out that we often do think along these lines (1995: 99), citing both vice-president Gore and Senator Michell as arguing, during the NAFTA debates, that the treaty ought to be signed because failure to do so would betray a deplorably fearful and cringing attitude on the part of U.S. citizens. To give a somewhat more homey example, notice that among the many reasons we typically give children for not hitting and not lying is the simple fact that doing so is "not nice."

[86]See in particular her famous example of the mother-in-law who comes to see her son's wife in a more favorable light (1971: 17ff.).

reinforce desirable aspects of [their] personal identity" (1987: 151), as well as what Nel Noddings is suggesting when she says that a caring agent's reasons for acting will make reference to "a sense of personal ideal" (1984: 3; 96). All of these accounts ultimately come to rest in certain claims about which (types of) motivations are (most) morally admirable.[87] And that is precisely what an agent-based ethic implies about the conceptual structure of our moral thought.

The sense of duty

Nonetheless, there are at least some situations in which even very sincere moral agents recognize that they morally ought to do something other than what they are (most strongly) motivated to do. This is typically described as the experience of conscientiousness or a "sense of duty," and deontologists in particular are likely to suspect that an agent-based ethic simply cannot account for this real and recognizable moral phenomenon. This is because conscientiousness appears to be a classic case of "acting on principle" – that is, of conforming to the dictates of an action-guiding principle or rule that specifies or identifies which actions are right, in a way that is clearly independent of one's motivation to perform them (because the clearest example of a sense of duty arises when one is in fact motivated to do something else). Since we have seen that any agent-based ethic cannot explain the goodness of any form of motivation primarily in terms of a commitment to acting on principle, it may seem that an agent-based ethic cannot admit that a genuinely virtuous person would ever experience the kind of inner conflict

[87] See also Tronto, who has emphasized that an ideal conception of care "provides a standard by which we can judge [the] adequacies" of actual caring activities (1993: 110).

that a sense of duty seems to presuppose. Yet many people do find a sense of duty to be morally admirable.

An agent-based approach does imply that actions are morally better to the extent that they flow more seamlessly from an agent's inner character, but it is not obvious that defenders of such an ethic need to apologize for this implication. For if we take seriously that idea that benevolence (or loving attention or care) is the kind of practical attitude we morally ought to take up toward our fellows, then Bernard Williams (among others) seems right to suspect that a person who is always keeping an eye on moral rules will frequently have "one thought too many" (1973). This is because what is particularly admirable about those kinds of motivations is the way in which they "connect" a moral agent's interests directly to the interests and concerns of other people, and this means that there will be at least some situations in which an agent who appeals to moral rules like "treat others as ends only and never as mere means," or even "promote the general welfare," shows herself to be less genuinely benevolent, or less deeply caring than a person who acts on another's behalf without needing to appeal to such rules.

Of course, if one does not believe that benevolence and caring are morally admirable then one may not be particularly impressed by this point. And whether the example given by Williams, in which a man can either save a total stranger from drowning or save his wife, is one of those cases will depend on what one takes the most admirable form of motivation to be.[88] But

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[88]An ethic that endorses more partial forms of care seems to suggest that it would be "one thought to many" for the man to check on the permissibility of saving his wife, because it contends that a direct concern for those with whom one is in some kind of ongoing relationship legitimately overrides a concern for total strangers in situations of this sort. But an ethic that endorses more universal forms of benevolence suggests that it would be entirely appropriate for such a situation to give the man pause (even if he ultimately opted to save his

many people are convinced that there is at least something right about Williams' example, and in the context of the autonomy/caring debate this point takes on a great deal of importance. For it suggests that there is also something right about Nel Noddings's claim that "principles function to separate us from one another" (1984: 5, emphasis mine), and hence that the insights of the care-orientation cannot be explicated within a principle-based ethic. Given the distinction I made in §1.3, it might at first seem that Noddings is conflating the methodological debate about the place of moral rules with the much more overarching separateness/connectedness debate about the primary moral values. Hence, it might also seem that there is no reason for her to reject a principle of beneficence or utility. Once we recognize that even moral agents who rely on connection-based moral principles will frequently show themselves to be less fully connected to other people than Noddings (like Williams) presumably believes we morally ought to be, however, it turns out that care-ethicists do have understandable reasons to reject more traditional moral views. To the extent that they are correct to insist that certain kinds of deep interpersonal connections are morally appropriate, it seems fairly clear that an agent-based ethic will be in a much better position to capture the moral significance of those connections than any more rule-governed account.

Even if we agree that it is better to act benevolently than from a sense of duty, however, we must surely also admit that it is better to act from a sense of duty than to act malevolently. Hence, an agent-based ethic must be able to explain why a sense of duty leads to acts that are at least minimally

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wife in the end) since his direct concern for his wife would compete with his direct concern for the strangers.

morally permissible, even if they are not especially "noble" or "fine" (as Aristotle would say). But given what we have seen about the way in which an agent-based ethic generates a derivative account of moral rules, it is in fact possible for such an approach to endorse a sense of duty in at least a conditional way.[89] And if we think clearly about what makes a sense of duty morally admirable, this conditional understanding is not obviously inappropriate.

The first thing to notice is that a purely conventional sense of duty is not particularly admirable, as Jonathan Bennett points out in his article on "The Conscience of Huckleberry Finn" (1974). When Huck agonizes over whether to disclose the whereabouts of his friend Jim (an escaped slave), it is a sense of duty that appears to be telling Huck that he ought to alert the authorities, and some other motivation (benevolence, friendship, fellow-feeling, or some such) that is prompting him not to do what his conscience says. Some people may think that Huck ought to have followed his conscience in this case, but most of us believe he is to be admired for disobeying it – a judgment that is presumably based on the further judgment that Huck's beliefs about what duty requires were simply false. But if we are prepared to say that, then it seems that when it comes to the admirability of a sense of duty, simply acting on principle is not what is important; rather, what is important is acting on the right sort of principle (namely, a morally appropriate one).

Given this fact, a deontologist may want to insist that because Huck had false beliefs about morality, he did not in fact possess a sense of duty at

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[89]Here again, I am grateful to Michael Slote for providing me with his as yet unpublished writings on this issue.

all. To do this is to adopt a more specialized notion of duty, of which Kant's notion is surely the most famous. But Kant's idea that duty is a matter of adherence to autonomously made laws that are subject to procedural categorical imperative checks is surely not the only way of understanding our sense of duty.[90] To return to Bennett's example, therefore, we might also want to say that Huck did in fact have a sense of duty, and one that (almost) led him astray.[91] And if we are prepared to say that, then we are well on the way to understanding how a sense of duty can be morally admirable according to an agent-based view.

We have already seen that an agent-based virtue ethic does provide us with a derivative account of which sorts of principles are morally appropriate (in the form of summary rules). Hence, I think we can say that an agent who sincerely believes, for example that universal benevolence is the most admirable moral motive, and who conscientiously abides by the "summary rules" of a benevolence-based ethic in situations where she is not moved by benevolence more directly, will exhibit a motivation that is surely good enough to make her actions morally permissible. Feeling the pull of one's sense of duty in the face of motivations to do otherwise will certainly be less admirable than feeling the pull of admirable motivations more directly or more overwhelmingly. But if one does feel the former sort of pull, then one's overall motivational state does at least seem to be subject to the sorts of motivations that, according to an agent-based ethic, ultimately make one's actions right.[92] Of course, an agent-based ethic will only find an agent's

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[90]I owe this point to Nancy Sherman.

[91]Julia Annas says this about the "hero" in the novel Effi Briest (1988).

[92]I owe this point to Michael Slote. See also Garcia (1990: 85ff), who suggests that the conscientious agent has two reasons to act: the virtuous motive which (on Garcia's agent-

recognition that a certain action is "the right thing to do" to be admirable if it is based on her (tacit) acceptance of the summary rules endorsed by a particular agent-based account.[93] But unless we are utterly convinced that the deontologist's moral principles are in fact correct, there is no obvious reason why we should reject this way of understanding what is admirable about a sense of duty.

2.6 Sidgwick's oversight

If the foregoing is correct, then there is nothing particularly implausible about the care-ethical claim that a moral agent's reasons for acting will often make reference to "a sense of personal ideal" (recall Ch. 1, p. 24, above). Nonetheless, many philosophers seem convinced that assumptions about the admirability of certain motives are too complex and unstable to bear the kind of foundational weight they are given within agent-based views. Since that claim has to do with the formal structure of the theory, we need to understand why it too is unwarranted. And the best way to see this, I think, is to see why Sidgwick's criticisms of James Martineau ultimately fail to hit their mark.[94]

In the second volume of his *Types of Ethical Theory*, Martineau develops an extremely detailed scale of human motivations that places reverence for God at the apex, followed very closely by compassion, and proceeding

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based account) grounds the judgment that a certain action is wrong, and the conscientious desire not to do what is wrong. In his view, this shows that conscientiousness is not the highest moral phenomenon, since the conscientious agent requires more reasons to act morally than the more virtuous person.

[93]I do not mean that agents must be moral philosophers in order to possess a sense of duty. But the agent must at least believe, for example, that benevolence *is* an admirable motivation, and that the action which she is motivated to perform would exhibit a deplorable lack of benevolence, in order to "recognize" that she ought to do something else.

[94]For discussion and historical context, see Schneewind (1986, Chap. 8).

through lower motives which include, in this order: love of power for oneself, resentment toward others, love of gain for oneself, love of ease or sensual pleasure, and vindictiveness towards others. His defense of this ranking is based on a particularly odd bit of moral psychology; in his view, we always experience our inner motivations in pairs.[95] By reflecting on the various pairs of motives we experience at different times, he argues that any individual will eventually come to embrace the same ranking he provides, and he contends that if people disagree about his rankings, this is because they have not yet experienced enough pairs of motives (1891: 37-48). In addition, he argues that an action is always right if it is done from the better (or higher) of the two motives that are inciting the agent to action at the moment of moral choice, and that an action is always wrong if it is done from the lower of the two motives (Ibid.: 270). Even the best of moral agents may still be subject to "rational" or "prudential" errors while attempting to determine the most effective means for realizing their highest motives. But that sort of error is not, in Martineau's view, the distinctively moral one, and hence, the moral value of the action lies solely in the quality of its motive (Ibid.: 232-5; 275).

Martineau's rigid ranking of motives entails that, with respect to any pair that might be "co-present" within an agent, one of them is always the better motive to act from (i.e., it is always better to act from compassion than from resentment, always better to act from love of gain than love of ease). It is this latter claim that Sidgwick finds implausible, insisting that "it is impos-

[95] Although the assumption pairs of motives is odd, the basic point is not: Martineau is attempting to distinguish "voluntary" actions, which do admit of moral assessment, from "spontaneous" actions which (in his view) stem from a single motive and therefore do not (1891: 33ff). Agents need not have explicit knowledge of the ranking of motives in order to act morally, however; they need only "a feeling, true to the real relations of duty, that this is worthier than that" (ibid.: 58).

sible to assign a definite and constant ethical value to each different kind of motive, without reference to the particular circumstances under which it has arisen, ... and the consequences to which this [motive] would lead in any particular case" (1907: 369). More specifically, he argues that "it is by no means to be laid down as a general rule that compassion ought to prevail" over resentment in all cases (Ibid.: 371), and similarly, he suggests that "love of ease" might sometimes be legitimately regarded more highly than "love of gain." Interestingly, however, he does not immediately say that the problem with Martineau's ranking lies in its lack of sensitivity to the results of a person's acting on various motives in peculiar circumstances. Rather, his first objection is to Martineau's failure to appeal to the right sort of motives:

> I think that though the struggle might begin as a duel between resentment and compassion, or between love of ease and love of gain, it would not be fought out in the lists so drawn; since higher motives would inevitably be called in as the conflict went on, regard for justice and social well-being on the side of resentment, regard for health and ultimate efficiency for work on the side of love of ease; and it would be the intervention of these higher motives that would decide the struggle (Sidgwick, 1907: 372, my emphasis).

This suggests that the problem with Martineau's approach has less to do with his attempt to begin with an assessment of human motivations, than with the specific motives he takes to be ethically basic. In Sidgwick's view, he fails to realize that resentment may sometimes be an expression of a more overarching or "supremely regulative" motive, like "regard for justice" or "concern for social well-being." Once we realize this, the real question is whether compassion or regard for justice is the better motive.[96]

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[96]Notice that the pair of "supremely regulative" motives Sidgwick picks out seems to exemplify the "separateness/connectedness" tension that, as I suggested in Chapter One, characterizes a great many normative debates in western moral thought. It is thus not

Put another way, Sidgwick's point is not so much that resentment is in fact something we judge to be better, as a motive, than compassion (a claim which I think would be highly unintuitive), but that given Martineau's assumption that motives always come solely in pairs, it is impossible for him to give place to the "regard for justice" that Sidgwick deems necessary to ground our judgments in this kind of case. It is important to notice, however, that it is the fact that it appears to be better to act from compassion rather than resentment only on some of the occasions when these two motives are at odds that makes Sidgwick wonder about the need to invoke a higher or more supremely regulative motive in order to settle conflicts at lower levels.[97] And the same seems to be true with the motives of "love of ease" and "ambition." Hence, Sidgwick's criticism tells us something important about the motives on Martineau's list -- namely, that they do not seem to be the most ethically significant or overarching motivational phenomena. But this does not yet show that it is impossible to defend a ranking of these more overarching motives, without thereby producing counterintuitive conclusions about the relative value of lower motives and hence the (derivative) rightness of specific acts.[98]

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surprising that he finds it difficult to determine which of these two candidates is the most admirable.

[97]Whether resentment should in fact be viewed as an expression of justice has received considerable attention of late. Jeffrie Murphy defends the position Sidgwick seems to be holding, and Jean Hampton argues against it, in their joint volume, *Forgiveness and Mercy* (1988: especially Chaps. 1-2). See also Nussbaum (1993), who argues that justice always requires us to exhibit compassion.

[98]Schneewind points out that this is precisely what Sidgwick thinks he must show. His disagreement with Martineau is "over the issue of whether what is central to a moral theory is consideration of the goodness or badness of the character of moral agents, or consideration of the rightness or wrongness of the acts moral agents perform." Contemporary moral philosophers have tended to assume that if either position is correct, it is the latter. But "Sidgwick did not think the matter entirely obvious," and held that "Martineau's position must therefore be judged as [any] theory is judged, in terms of its

Sidgwick goes on to insist that "if a serious question of conduct is raised," he cannot conceive of "deciding it morally by any comparison of motives below the highest" (1907: 372). It is easy to see why it would be attractive to find a "supremely regulative" motive of this sort, though it is perhaps not as obvious as Sidgwick takes it to be that we should expect to find one.[99] In any event, he does not stop to consider the possibility of a plurality of regulative motives. And what is especially important for our purposes here is to notice that Sidgwick immediately interprets the idea of regulation by a supreme motive in a consequentialist fashion:

> the comparison ultimately decisive would be not between the lower motives primarily conflicting, but between the effects of the different lines of conduct to which these lower motives respectively prompt, considered in relation to whatever we regard as the ultimate end or ends of reasonable action (Ibid.; emphasis mine).

The suggestion here is that it is (achievement of) the goals of the "supremely regulative" motive (whatever it ultimately turns out to be) that will ultimately fix the motive's value. And this is simply assumed without argument. But as a great deal of work in moral psychology has recently emphasized, there are many kinds of motivation that we do, in fact, admire without necessarily believing that they help to achieve any kind of "ultimate end," and indeed there seem to be a number of motives that we admire even while thinking that

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ability to account for the data and to meet the other requirements which theories must meet" (Schneewind, 1986: 247; cf. 256).

[99]Note that Kant seems to think of the "motive of duty" as supremely regulative in this way. As we have seen, however, he interprets the idea of regulation by a supreme motive in terms of the agent's commitment to the Moral Law, and so his view is also not entirely agent-based.

they are in some sense counterproductive or likely to produce less than desirable effects.[100]

It is, of course, a fairly small step from Sidgwick's suggestion to the claim that conflicts between lower motives can be resolved directly, by reference to their "ultimate ends" -- a step which Sidgwick himself immediately takes. And from there, it is perhaps an even smaller step to the claim that actions themselves can be evaluated in terms of their effects, thereby obliterating the need to make any reference to motives at all. But consequentialism produces notoriously counterintuitive conclusions in many cases, and Sidgwick has not yet shown that it is necessary to rely on a rigid ranking of motives (as does Martineau), nor to evaluate motives solely in terms of their consequences (as does Sidgwick himself), in order to resolve potential conflicts between motives and develop a more unified account of what the moral life is like.[101] For if we could articulate and defend a more overarching motivational ideal, or "ideal of moral character," we could then evaluate potentially conflicting motives (or complexes of motivations) in terms of how well, or to what degree, each of them exemplifies or serves as a necessary constituent of that ideal.

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[100] Annette Baier (1991) interprets Hume as defending a theory of virtue including numerous motives of this sort; less historical discussions are found in Flanagan (1991), Foot (1983), Slote (1983), Williams (1981; 1985), and Wolf (1982). Of course, many of these motives may not be morally admirable. The point here is simply that there is no reason to accept Sidgwick's assumption that if we consider a motive to be good, we must do so on the basis of further assumptions about what ends are good.

[101] Although he is generally sympathetic to Sidgwick's criticisms, Schneewind points out Sidgwick never quite comes to grips with Martineau's claim that only the assessment of motives is "a matter of distinctly moral concern" (1986: 255-6).

To see this, consider the implications of a theory treating universal benevolence as an ideal of moral character. On such a view, the most admirable form of moral motivation would be a deeply felt concern for human (or sentient) beings generally. More limited (complexes of) motivations such as compassion and kindness would then be evaluated directly in terms of the extent to which they approximated universal benevolence, and actions would be judged derivatively in terms of the relative value of the (complexes of) motives that produce them. Such an approach may seem too monolithic for our pluralistic age, but it would certainly be no more monolithic than utilitarianism. And indeed, it would seem to serve as a kind of "agent-based analog" of the utilitarian moral outlook Sidgwick himself seems to prefer.[102]

Meanwhile, I think it is a mistake to conceive of universal benevolence — or any other ideal of moral character that might be proposed — as a unitary form of motivation, and hence I suspect that an agent-based ethic of universal benevolence would turn out to be much less monolithic than utilitarian moral views. For a motivational ideal is best conceived as an overarching practical attitude that would presumably be the result of a highly complex set of motivations, and while it serves as a touchstone by which an agent-based ethic evaluates various motivational states, in much the same way that the ideal of utility serves as a touchstone by which a utilitarian ethic evaluates various states of affairs, it seems clear that the motivational ideal might very well be constituted or realized in different ways by different moral agents. There are presumably some core motivations that would have to be character traits of

[102]Slote (1995: §4) offers a much more thorough discussion of this point than I can provide here.

anyone who was genuinely possessed of a specific ideal (e.g., compassion and kindness in the case of universal benevolence), but there may well be a large number of motives of which it is important for every moral agent to have at least some, but of which it is by no means necessary, or even possible, for any given moral agent to have every one. In other words, while the notion of a motivational ideal sets certain theoretical constraints on the sorts of motives that are thought to be involved in moral activity, it allows that the specific pattern of motivations which enables actual moral agents to live up to or realize any given motivational ideal might differ significantly from one person to the next.

In addition, notice that the claim that the particular moral virtues are to be specified in terms of their relationship to the complex motivational ideal is not the claim that the particular virtues are all and only forms of that ideal. Some character traits might simply be possible supports of the ideal: courage or fortitude, for example, might be thought necessary to live up to the ideal of universal benevolence in many cases, and so count as genuine virtues, even though it seems undeniable that acting courageously will not always or inevitably be an actual expression of benevolence. Similarly, other traits might be highly situation-specific expressions of the ideal: more partial forms of care, for example, might count as genuine virtues insofar as they are occasionally compatible with a more universal benevolence, even though an agent-based ethic of universal benevolence implies that it is better to act on more universal forms of concern whenever possible. For both of these reasons, we might require an extremely detailed virtue-theory (recall the distinction in §2.1) in order to fully characterize the particular virtues that are crucially involved in the overarching ideal (and to distinguish them from one

another), let alone to characterize all the other character traits that might be related to the motivational ideal in some people but need not be present in every virtuous agent. But an agent-based ethic does not (like Martineau's theory) require us to defend a rigid ranking of motivations or to assume that motives will always come in pairs, and neither does it assume that any single motive is "supremely regulative" in the way that the kantian motive of duty, or the utilitarian commitment to producing aggregate welfare, is commonly taken to be. Rather, it insists that any given complex or pattern of motives that makes up an agent's motivational state can be assessed in terms of how fully they exemplify (or enable the agent to "live up to") the more overarching ethical ideal.

In light of Sidgwick's doubts about the ability of Martineau's theory to resolve conflicts between various motives, it is worth mentioning briefly how an agent-based ethic that was grounded in the ideal of universal benevolence would effect such a task. Since universal or generalized malevolence — that is, a practical desire to harm other people — represents not only a failure to live up to the regulative ideal, but a motivational state that is in fact antithetical to it, it would clearly be considered the most deplorable form of motivation, with malevolence toward specific groups (e.g., racial or religious communities) being only slightly less problematic, followed by malevolence toward specific individuals. Meanwhile, benevolence directed toward any specific individual (including oneself) would be assessed in a fairly positive light, but benevolence towards larger groups of individuals would presumably be even better, and universal benevolence would of course be considered the best motivation of all. Meanwhile, since motives like courage seem to contribute to the overall goodness of any benevolent motivational

state, but might equally well contribute to the overall badness of any malevolent motivational state, they will not be assigned a definite moral value independently of the other motives that are present.

It may seem to some people that assessing motives by how well they "approximate" an ideal of moral character is unacceptably vague. Interestingly, however, recent work in the philosophy of mind lends credence to the view that this is in fact what we are doing when we make any kind of judgment. According to the views I have in mind, deliberation proceeds by comparing new exemplars of a phenomenon to a stored prototype in order to see how closely they resemble one another, or by "seeing that" a decision with which one is confronted is analogous to a paradigm case or instantiates a certain pattern.[103] And if these accounts are correct, then it may not be possible, even in theory, to specify the necessary and sufficient conditions for judging that a particular motivation is morally admirable. Meanwhile, even if it ultimately does turn out to be possible to specify such conditions in theory, they will certainly be highly complex – complex enough to make it very unlikely that any moral agent is able to rely on them when confronted with a new and difficult case. For practical purposes, therefore, it seems entirely appropriate to use the notion of "approximating an ideal" as a touchstone for our evaluations of various motives.

Justifying motivational ideals

Critics sometimes complain that any virtue-based ethic inevitably treats a particular theorist's own (idiosyncratic and/or culturally conditioned) beliefs about what sorts of motivations are most morally admirable as certain

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[103]For some recent discussions of how these process might be involved in moral judgment, see Churchland (1996), Dworkin (1995) and Johnston (1996).

and immune to correction in a way that is intellectually offensive as well as morally troublesome. But this sort of problem is also not unique to virtue-ethical theories (Hursthouse 1991: 228ff). Consider the debates among utilitarians about whether morality requires us to maximize or simply satisfice with respect to the general welfare, or whether the principle of utility should be applied to specific acts or to general rules; and among kantians over how much information can and should be included in an agent's maxims, or about what kind of categorical imperative test to employ in assessing the moral permissibility of those maxims. In many cases, these sorts of intratheoretic disagreements (like disputes about what general theory-type is best to adopt) seem to be generated by pretheoretic disagreements about what sorts of conclusions a moral theory needs to be able to generate, and those latter conclusions are thereby taken to be "immune to correction," relative to other parts of the theory as a whole. Virtue ethicists are no more exempt from these difficulties than proponents of any other type of moral theory. But if they differ, as a group, from proponents of other approaches, it is surely only with respect to their views about what types of judgments are most morally basic (namely, judgments about motives rather than judgments about action-guiding principles or states of affairs) and not with respect to their willingness to test those judgments and revise them if necessary.

In fact, agent-based theories are able to test their ground floor assumptions about moral motives in two distinct ways. First of all, any claim about moral motivation must be compatible with our knowledge of human psychology more generally. Empirical evidence cannot, by itself, tell us what motives we ought to admire, but facts about the types of creatures we are -- including facts about our natural sociability as well as our existence as

separate individuals -- do place certain limits on the ideals of character that can be set forth as humanly possible, as well as on the specific motives we can reasonably expect to be able to cultivate in ourselves and others (cf. Flanagan, 1991: especially Chap. 2). And secondly, since an agent-based virtue ethic uses its judgments about motives as a basis from which to derive claims about right and wrong actions, those derivative claims can in turn be used to test the validity or reasonableness of its grounding assumptions. Sometimes, the theory may generate "answers" to certain cases that are simply impossible for us to accept without radically revising a great many of our moral attitudes and beliefs. Other times, the theory may generate the "right" answer but seem to do so for the wrong reasons, or for reasons that would only be accepted by people who share additional and extremely localized normative commitments. In either case, the theory will have to be adjusted, by altering its grounding assumptions, or by providing additional arguments to show that what looks like the wrong answer is actually based on mistaken beliefs. However, the fact that our views about which motives are most morally admirable will need to be tested for their ability to explain our deepest intuitions about which sorts of actions are morally right does not show that the relative value of various sorts of motives can simply be reduced to the kinds of actions they tend to produce, and does not show that claims about what sorts of motives are most morally admirable can be dispensed with altogether as being irrelevant to our evaluations of specific acts, for reasons we have already discussed (see also Garcia 1990).

Finally, it should be noted that there are three options that any agent-based theory might pursue in its evaluation of specific motivations and actions. First, it can insist that actions are wrong unless their motives totally

approximate, that is, are actual instances of the motivational state that is held to be supremely regulative. Second, the theory may adopt a more satisficing view, according to which acts are permissible if they reflect a motivational state that well-enough approximates to the motivational ideal. Each of these options enables an agent-based theory to distinguish between permissible and impermissible actions; the second seems somewhat better able to capture our sense that some acts are supererogatory. But, and this is the third option, a theory could also adopt a scalar view according to which there is no baseline threshold of moral permissibility, and acts are simply judged as better or worse according to how closely their motives approximate to the theory's ideal of character. It might even turn out that some of our moral judgments are scalar in character, while others are much more rigid. But whichever option ultimately turns out to offer the most satisfactory explanation of morality and moral agency, it seems clear that there is an approach to ethical theory that Sidgwick, despite his detailed and systematic comparison of alternative moral conceptions, simply overlooked. While an agent-based ethicist's claims about the admirability of certain motivational states may be somewhat more complex than the consequentialist's claims about the goodness of certain states of affairs or the deontologist's claims about the normative validity of certain principles, it is simply not clear that this degree of complexity is unwarranted.

2.7 Caring as a motivational ideal

We are now in a position to see why an ethic of care is most plausibly interpreted in agent-based terms. Such a view is quite similar to an agent-based ethic of universal benevolence, but the two are not identical. For rather than exhorting us to be concerned about the welfare of people generally and

to exhibit and express this fairly undifferentiated concern through our actions, an agent-based ethic of caring exhorts us to concern ourselves first and foremost with the welfare of those persons with whom we are in some kind of concrete relationship. By "concrete relationship," I mean one that is constituted by something more than the fact that the parties stand in some abstract relation to one another (such as being fellow members of the moral community), for an ethic of caring also assumes that, other things being equal, the more concrete the relationship (the more specific details of the parties involved that are important to the characterization of the relationship), the more morally important it is that the relationship be enhanced or sustained. In other words, an agent-based ethic of caring insists that a degree of partiality is morally justified, but not for the sorts of reasons that have traditionally been given in favor of keeping one's moral activities fairly close to one's heart and one's home. In particular, the theory does not imply that friends and family are legitimately viewed by a moral agent as being of greater moral (as opposed to personal) importance than other individuals, and it does not rest solely on the empirical claim that an agent's caring tends to be more effective if it is directed toward those who are relatively near and dear. Instead, it insists that a degree of partiality is morally justified because there is something especially admirable about the very deep kind of concern for and sense of connectedness with other persons that is most clearly exhibited within fairly close and enduring personal relationships like friendships, romantic partnerships, familial relationships, and so forth. The value that is commonly attached to broader and more impartial forms of moral concern (like universal benevolence) must then be explained in terms of the ways in

which those attitudes serve as more or less imperfect instances of or approximations to the more overarching ideal of caring.

Since it is Nel Noddings who has engaged in the most systematic attempt to develop an entirely care-based ethic, it is her views that I want to focus on here. The bulk of her work is devoted to "characterizing the ideal" of caring, and it is clear that she understands it primarily as what I have been calling an ideal of moral character. She points out, for example, that the value of an agent's caring lies in the attitude it expresses as well as in the actions to which it leads, and she contends that it is impossible, and even wrongheaded, to attempt to formulate a precise set of "action criteria" for caring, insisting that we must examine the ideal "from the inside" (1984: 9-16). And she describes the psychological capacities involved in this motivational ideal in great detail (1984, especially Chaps. 1-3). The caring agent is open and receptive: she is willing to take facts about the "natures, ways of life, needs and desires" of other people into account in determining what she should do in any particular situation (Ibid.: 14). Like the benevolent individual, she will not fail to notice when she encounters another person who is in some kind of distress, and this includes psychological or emotional distress that may not be immediately evident to the more casual observer (Ibid.: 31-35). The caring agent is also responsive to the condition of others and committed to protecting or enhancing their good, and she is more likely than many people to (strive to) cultivate her own capacity to discern and alleviate the hardships of others. But she can be distinguished from the benevolent individual by her "longing for relatedness," or desire to establish deep emotional connections with other persons (Ibid.: 6; 104), and it is because of this that she focuses her attention primarily on the good of people with whom she is in some kind of relation-

ship. These need not be ongoing relationships: Noddings is eager to point out that a moral agent who possesses a sufficient degree of imaginative awareness can become deeply, emotionally engaged with another person who, moments earlier, was a complete stranger and whom she may never again encounter. But genuine caring does require some sort of "face-to-face" interaction with the other (Ibid.: 47-8; 85-6). In Noddings's view, an agent can be described as caring only if her attention is directed toward specific, concrete individuals, as opposed to "all sentient creatures" or "all rational beings" (cf. Benhabib 1987).

This restriction on the scope of a genuinely caring motivation enables Noddings to emphasize the moral significance of what she calls "motivational displacement."[104] She contends that "caring involves stepping out of one's own personal frame of reference into the other's" (1984: 24; cf. 34), and what she seems to find especially admirable about the caring agent is her ability to care so fully about the other person's interests and goals that she is "impelled to act as though in [her] own behalf, but in behalf of the other" (Ibid.: 16). In other words, caring agents not only consider the other's point of view, but become so emotionally engrossed in the other person that their own feelings track the other's joys and sorrows, hopes and fears, satisfactions and dissatisfactions, etc., and hence that they become motivated to do for the other person what the other is motivated to do for him- or herself. At the same time, Noddings is careful to insist that the caring agent does not relinquish herself completely as a result of this process: though she puts her motive energy "at

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[104]This seems to be an extreme form of what other care-ethicists call "loving attention;" in addition to preventing one's own needs, biases, etc. from obscuring one's perception of the other person's needs, motivational displacement involves actually putting oneself in the other's shoes and feeling his or her motivations. For contemporary defenses of this capacity and its role in moral agency, see Gordon (1996), Goldman (1995; 1996) and Deigh (1995).

the service of the other," she must always consider whether acting on the other's behalf is compatible with her own commitment to caring (i.e., compatible with her commitment to the other people she is related to in various ways), and so cannot excuse herself for what she does (or fails to do) to one person in the name of some other person's good.[105] The caring agent will also have to consider whether what the other person wants for himself is rational or will indeed contribute to his well-being (a genuinely caring mother, for example, will not buy candy for her child every time the child desires it).[106] In other words, her moral deliberations will be guided by her commitment to caring as an overarching motivational ideal.

Noddings's restriction of caring to actual encounters with specific other persons also enables her to call attention to a "special affect" that arises out of some kinds of caring relationships and represents "a major reward" for the caring agent (Ibid.: 132). It is this affect which she calls "joy," and she is careful to distinguish it from the more practical desire that motivates the moral agent to engage in caring activity. Caring itself is always directed toward other concrete individuals, and involves an assessment of how their lives are presently going as well as what might be done to enhance their good. But when one experiences joy, there is no clear object of one's consciousness or appraisal of either one's own situation or the situation of others. There is

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[105]Noddings does not say quite as much as one might like about how a caring agent who is experiencing "motivational displacement" can simultaneously retain her own motivational states and so use her own commitment to caring as a reference point from which to assess the needs and interests of others. For some useful suggestions as to the kinds of psychological mechanisms that might be at work, see Gordon (1996).

[106]Like the universally benevolent agent, a caring agent must consider both objective and subjective features that contribute to another person's good. Hence "when I care, ... [m]y motive energy flows toward the other and perhaps, although not necessarily, toward his ends" (Noddings 1984.: 33).

simply a "sense of connectedness, of harmony, ... of being in tune" with another that is "linked" to both oneself and the other, but is "focused somewhere beyond both" (Ibid.: 144; 137). Noddings believes that this joy points to the deep significance of relatedness in human life, and helps to sustain us in our moral endeavors. And she repeatedly suggests that an agent's caring is morally better to the extent that this sense of connectedness is experienced. But she insists that joy is not a necessary feature of moral activity, and is not by itself a morally worthy motive. Moral activity, in her view, flows directly from an agent's caring for others, and everyone is obligated to care regardless of whether they are experiencing this special joy.

The main reason that Noddings restricts caring to the domain of face-to-face encounters, however, stems from her conviction that the "ethical goodness" (or admirability) of caring ultimately lies in the "natural goodness" of actual caring relationships, and in particular, of the very deep kind of relationship that is typically — or at any rate, ideally — forged between mother and child (1984: Chap. 4).[107] All of us, she insists, have fond memories of caring and being cared-for, and it is by drawing on those memories that we can see the point of ethical caring and motivate ourselves to care for others in situations where it does not come so "naturally."[108] While this may be an accurate psychological claim about many people, however, there are undoubtedly some (and unfortunately, there may in fact be a great many

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[107]The significance of the mother/child relationship for both moral and personal development is a persistent theme in the writings of most care-ethicists, and is the focal point of works by Ruddick (1989) and Held (1987). For discussion of its psychological underpinnings, see Benjamin (1988) and Chodorow (1978). Greenspan (1989) and Stern (1985) have all emphasized the significance of a much wider variety of affective bonds in human life.

[108]Cf. "The source of my obligation is the value I place on the relatedness of caring" (Noddings 1984: 84).

people) who have few, if any, of the requisite memories. Hence, if a person's obligation to act as "one-caring" arises solely out of that person's memories of natural caring, it is simply not clear that those who lack such memories can be under the same obligations as the rest of us.[109]

An agent-based ethic avoids this difficulty by insisting that the moral value of caring lies solely in the kind of practical attitude or motivational state that it is -- namely, an attitude that, while particularly attuned to the special joys that can be found only in and through relationships, is nonetheless directed toward, and responsive to facts about, the well-being of specific other people primarily for their own sakes.[110] This does not mean that there are no reasons that can be given to explain the value we attach to caring (and derivatively, to caring activities). Annette Baier has emphasized that "we begin as helpless children, ... at almost every point of our lives we deal with both the more and the less helpless, [and] equality of power and interdependency, between two persons or groups, is rare and hard to recognize when it does occur" (1994: 28), and I think that much of what we admire about actual caring agents stems from their keen awareness of these facts, as well as their ability to discern and respond to the specific ways in which others are needy and vulnerable, without demanding or even expecting that those others (will) reciprocate their actions completely.[111] In addition, Noddings is surely correct that we admire a caring agent's openness and receptivity: in allowing herself

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[109]There is, of course, a good deal of empirical evidence that victims of abuse and/or neglect are often lacking in various moral capacities, and there is certainly no reason to think that such persons should be blamed for their (deplorable) characters. But only in extreme cases does it seem appropriate to say that they are under no moral obligations whatsoever.

[110]Cf. Lawrence Blum's (1980) discussion of the moral value of all the "altruistic emotions."

[111]In Chapter Three I shall attempt to defend this claim more fully.

to be emotionally engaged with other people, such a person demonstrates a kind of clear-headed acceptance of her own inevitable vulnerability to at least some others that avoids both excessive paranoia, on the one hand, and more naive kinds of trust, on the other. She also demonstrates a willingness to take other people's thoughts and feelings seriously, without worrying about whether the claims that others might make will threaten her own sense of what is valuable or somehow jeopardize her own pursuits. These sorts of traits have obvious practical value, since being too quick to judge, or to interpret another's experiences in one's own terms, can often lead an agent to respond inappropriately to another even when the agent is otherwise well-meaning. And they are crucial to the development of close personal relationships that most of us find to be especially worthwhile. For all of these reasons, caring seems to be a highly appropriate attitude to take up toward our fellows.

Using these sorts of psychological facts to help to explain why we admire caring and why we ought to engage in activities that exhibit or express it does not entail that we are under any general obligation to let ourselves be cared-for. But conceiving of care as a motivational ideal does allow us to insist that even a person with few memories of genuine caring ought not to act in ways that exhibit a failure to care (even if we can be sure that, as a result of the person's unfortunate upbringing, it is quite likely that he or she will not), and it also helps to explain why we typically praise persons who succeed in cultivating a caring attitude toward others even though we do not always blame persons who lack such attitudes.

Three further implications of Noddings's relational ethic are even more problematic. First, if the goodness of the caring relationship is used to explain

our general obligation to actively care for other people, it would seem to follow that we must also be under a general obligation to receive caring from other people (Slote 1995: §5). Noddings insists that "for (A,B) to be a caring relation, both A (the one-caring) and B (the cared-for) must contribute appropriately" (1984: 19, my emphasis). The plausible assumption is that both contributions serve as necessary constituents of the best and most personally rewarding (most "joyful") kinds of human relationships. But if this is the ultimate ground of our moral obligations, then the duty to act as cared-for will presumably be every bit as strong as the duty to act as one-caring, and there is surely something odd about the thought that we ought to be seeking out ways to be cared for by others. An agent-based ethic that takes caring as its most overarching motivational ideal avoids this problem, since it entails that persons who are content throughout their lifetime to simply receive care from others without acknowledging and/or reciprocating that care in any way are justifiably criticized for exhibiting a deplorable lack of other-regard, and in particular, a lack of engagement with and gratitude toward the specific persons who contribute to their lives in various ways.

Noddings's own view is that it takes surprisingly little effort to discharge our duties to receive or "complete" another person's care: we may respond with an appropriate attitude such as recognition and/or gratitude (Ibid.: 19; 65), or we may simply show evidence of the personal growth and development that the "one-caring" intended to bring about (Ibid.: 69; 74; 151). But this raises a second kind of difficulty. The claim that the person being cared-for must "complete" the caring in order for the agent's activity to be considered fully morally good leads Noddings to the conclusion that an agent will be "ethically diminished" if her attempts to care are unsuccessful, or if she

finds herself in relationships with others who fail to acknowledge, let alone reciprocate, her care for them in any way (1984: 113-120).[112] And as numerous commentators have pointed out, this is simply too demanding.[113] Noddings does say that the caring agent "properly pays heed to her own condition" (Ibid.: 105) and may legitimately withdraw from relationships that threaten her own caring abilities, yet she repeatedly suggests that the need to do so betrays some kind of motivational lack on the agent's part, and hence that a caring agent who wants to avoid this diminishment must continue caring for the other until she finds some way to get the other to respond and "complete" the caring relation. Noddings may be right that many people withdraw from relationships too easily when they could provide genuine care. But the other person's failure to respond does not always indicate that the agent's motivations are lacking.[114]

It is important to distinguish the kind of case Noddings has in mind, where a caring agent acts on behalf of another who does nothing to recipro-

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[112]Cf.: "The [caring agent] considers always the possibility that the one-appearing-to-do-evil is actually in a deteriorated state, that he is acting under intolerable pressure or in error. She retains a responsibility, then, to relieve the pressure and to inform the error; indeed, she remains responsible for the actualization of the other's ethical ideal" (Noddings, 1984: 116, emphasis mine).

[113]This criticism is raised by nearly all the contributors to the Review Symposium on Noddings's original book in Hypatia (1990: Vol. 5, no. 1), and is particularly explicit in Hoagland (1991: 250-52). Virginia Held, who relies heavily on the mother/child relationship, points out that such relations can become oppressive for both parties, and suggests for this reason that reliance on the economic-exchange model that is familiar from social contractarianism may also be a useful source of moral insight (cf. 1987: 114-17). Similar concerns fuel Jean Hampton's interest in "Feminist Contractarianism" (1993: especially pp. 238-46), as well as Annette Baier's interest in relationships constituted by trust and trustworthiness (1994: Chaps. 6-9). In Baier's view, all parties must be both trusting and trustworthy in order for a relationship to be morally good.

[114]It is important to distinguish epistemological concerns from strictly theoretical claims about what makes an agent's motives and actions morally good and/or right. The fact that the person being cared for fails to complete an agent's "caring" may be a sign that the agent was not in fact motivated by genuine caring and so was not appropriately responsive, but such evidence is seldom definitive.

cate or complete her care, from the kind of case discussed near the beginning of §2.2, where an agent was imagined to possess deplorable motivations but not to be responsible or blameworthy for them. If the person being cared for in Noddings's case is abusive over a long period of time, this may have the effect of "diminishing" the agent in the sense of eroding her capacity for, and willingness to care. This is, I think, an important psychological truth that Noddings is correct to call our attention to. But Noddings's approach seems to commit her to the view that an agent always acts wrongly in some sense if others fail to "complete" her care, and there is no reason to think this is true.

Claudia Card (1990) has raised the related concern that agents who exhibit motivational displacement will be unable to resist evil, in the sense of being unable to avoid complicity in the evil deeds of others (cf. Houston 1987). Her worry is that since caring has the consequence of supporting other people in their projects and attitudes, the caring agent may lack the ability to adequately distinguish the projects and attitudes (of others) that ought to be supported from those that ought not. It is clear that Noddings wants to avoid this difficulty by making reference to the caring agent's personal ideal. Hence she says that if another person has attitudes or projects that violate the ideal of caring, those attitudes and projects can and should be considered by the moral agent as wrong.[115] And she also suggests that an agent who is genuinely caring will simply be unable to endorse uncaring attitudes, will make every effort to convince other people to give them up, and will certainly not endorse other people's uncaring projects "as if" they were her own. However, it should be noted that some of Noddings's examples do suggest a

[115]See also Tronto (1993: ch. 5, esp. pp. 137-45) for a fairly detailed discussion of when genuine caring shades into "culpable ignorance" and other morally problematic inner states.

disturbing willingness, on the part of the caring agents she depicts, to allow objectionably uncaring (abusive, sexist and racist) attitudes to be continued to be held by others, and occasionally even to act in ways that do seem to endorse or validate those attitudes (see esp. 1984: 109ff). And I think the reason for this also stems from Noddings's view that to reject those attitudes would require the agent to give up the value of an (otherwise) caring relationship.

An agent-based ethic can capture what seems correct about Noddings's project without being committed to these more troubling claims. For example, promoting the "actualization" of the caring ideal in other people can be said to exhibit an admirable kind of caring on the part of moral agents, since cultivating another's moral capacity is surely one way of enhancing their good.[116] Moreover, it seems likely that anyone who is genuinely committed to caring for others and who recognizes the limits of her own time and energy will be motivated to cultivate other people's capacities for caring so that they, in turn, will be able to care more effectively for at least some of the people that she herself is simply unable to reach, or to make up for her occasional and inevitable mistakes. But an agent-based care-ethic does not force us to the conclusion that an agent is "ethically diminished" when, try as she may, the other persons she is interacting with fail to "complete" her caring in any way. So long as the agent exhibits genuine caring, not only her motives but also her actions will be assessed as morally good. In addition, since refusing to criticize a friend's uncaring (racist or sexist) attitudes would betray a deplorable lack of concern for the other people those attitudes might hurt, a

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[116]Consider Aristotle's discussion of "virtue-friendships" (*Nicomachean Ethics*: Book VII), esp. chs. 3-4. And notice that while this assumes that virtue is indeed a personal good, it does not imply that virtue is the only personal good.

truly caring agent would presumably be able to avoid the complicity in evils about which Card is concerned.

Card suggests that these examples illuminate a gap within Noddings's specific account of caring -- namely, that it "does not explicitly include the idea of valuing individuals for themselves" (1990: 106). And this points to the third problem that results from Noddings's relational approach: it suggests that the moral significance of persons lies primarily and perhaps even exclusively in their potential to contribute to naturally or ethically good relationships. As a result, Noddings often suggests that caring agents should (continue to) support people they are already or inevitably in some kind of relationship with, even if doing so leads them to disregard the needs and interests of other people with whom they are not (so closely) bound up, and even if doing so leads them to discount many of their own needs and interests that are not fulfilled by the relationship. Noddings also concludes that we have no obligations whatsoever to distant strangers: though we may choose to do something for the sake of, e.g., starving children in Africa, and though it may often be good to do something for them, we are not obligated to do so because there is no possibility for developing a meaningful, ongoing relationship with starving African children without being forced to leave our friends and family and so "abdicate" our caring for them (1984: 86). Yet there is something very odd, as well as morally disquieting, about these sorts of restrictions. After all, the same sort of imaginative awareness that enables the caring agent to respond in an emotionally engaged way to a stranger she actually encounters can surely enable her to respond in a less specific fashion

to the plight of distant others.[117] Of course, we do frequently distinguish between the very deep kind of care and responsiveness that most of us feel and exhibit toward (only) a fairly select group of people, and a broader kind of concern that is directed toward human beings generally. But while our depth of concern for a few people often seems to conflict with our broader concern for humanity, there is no reason to think that these motivational states are not constituted by extremely similar psychological capacities.[118] Indeed, it seems extremely plausible, phenomenologically speaking, to suppose that as we narrow the scope of our attention toward a smaller number of people whom we can know about in greater detail, we tend to experience a greater degree of emotional engagement with them. Once we see this, Noddings's restriction of caring to the domain of face-to-face encounters appears to be morally arbitrary.

An agent-based ethic of care can still incorporate the insight that the distinctively moral task is not a matter of finding universalizable reasons for acting but of exhibiting a kind of "loving attention" to the concrete reality of individual persons. But while such an approach implies that enhancing the good of our family and close friends should be given general priority over caring for people we interact with on a less regular basis or with whom we have not formed particularly deep, affective bonds (e.g., our professional colleagues and fellow citizens), and while those forms of caring will, in turn, be given priority over humanitarian concern more generally, an agent-based

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[117]Virginia Held notes that a starving child in Africa is still a particular individual, and we do not need to know all the specific details of his concrete reality in order to recognize ways in which we might improve his welfare. Moreover, there are many things we might do without sacrificing our ongoing relationships in any way (1987: 118).

[118]This point has been made explicitly in recent work by Slote (1998, forthcoming).

ethic of caring does not entail that we have no obligations to strangers: complete indifference toward any person is simply antithetical to the caring ideal. As a result, an agent-based ethic can acknowledge that there may be situations in which an agent can be meaningfully said to exhibit more caring by helping a stranger (say, someone who has just been in an accident), and so morally ought to do so, even if that means missing a personal engagement with a long term friend. Indeed, so long as the "floor" of humanitarian concern is not set too low, such an ethic could presumably deal with questions of justice and basic moral rights in a distinctive and plausible way (Slote 1995: §5; 1997).[119] In other words, while an agent based ethic of caring evaluates motives and action types in a way that Noddings (and other care-ethicists) is (are) likely to find congenial, it is based upon the ground floor admirability of caring for others as individual persons (rather than as potential contributors to a caring relation), and so entails that a complete lack of concern or total disregard for anyone will always be morally criticizable.

It should also be noted that an agent-based ethic of caring is significantly less monolithic in its conception of value than Noddings's own. Her view suggests that moral agents ultimately care about the creation and maintenance of those close personal relationships that are often accompanied by joy, and this has led some critics to object that she ultimately directs us to "care about caring."[120] Part of the objection is that this is simply unrealistic:

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[119]It should be noted that Noddings's more recent writings have conceded that she needs to incorporate some ground floor concern for everyone within her approach.

[120]This criticism is particularly explicit in Urban-Walker (1989: 128-9) who points out that although the women Carol Gilligan identifies as relying on a "care-orientation" to morality do possess an "overriding concern with relationships" and recognize "the continuing importance of attachment in the human life cycle" (Gilligan 1982: 16; 23), it does not seem entirely appropriate to describe them as caring about care itself. They often invoke values

even if caring is something that all people should value to some degree, and even though many of the most significant human goods, such as friendship and love, are achievable only in and through relationships, participation in such relationships is surely not the only thing we do value, nor the only contributing factor to the goodness of individual human lives. But the objection also stems from plausible concerns that an agent who cares first and foremost about maintaining and/or enhancing her ongoing relationships with others will be likely to overlook the possibility that both she, and the other person(s) with whom she is involved, might also benefit from more individualistic pursuits. This represents a serious stumbling block for any effort to understand morality solely in terms of the goodness of certain kinds of relationships (Davion 1993). But notice that once caring is conceived as an overarching motivational ideal that directs an agent's attention toward individuals with whom we are (or could be) in relationships, rather than toward relationships to which other persons potentially contribute, then to care about caring just is to be committed to the good of other persons and capable of responding to them in an emotionally engaged way. Because those persons may themselves be committed to a wide array of moral values, including the value of choosing and pursuing projects and goals of their own, the agent who hopes to care effectively for and have meaningful relationships with others will need to appreciate the significance that values other than caring can often have in individual lives.

Nonetheless, those other values still get into such an account only in a derivative fashion: an agent-based ethic of caring exhorts us to pursue goods

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such as equality, honesty, authenticity, personal growth, and even self-preservation (Ibid.: 64, 64, 52, 111, 129, 159).

like autonomy, for example, only to the extent that is necessary to care effectively for others, sustain "joyful" relationships with them, or enhance our own capacity to care. In other words, an agent-based ethic of care still gives moral priority to what I earlier called the values of interpersonal connectedness (§1.3), and it is not clear that this is entirely appropriate. Indeed, that a value-orientation grounded in care and connection is morally appropriate is precisely what more autonomy-based ethics deny. Hence, we now need to explore the more overarching separateness/connectedness tension in a bit more detail.

Chapter Three:
"Separateness" and "Connectedness" in Western Moral Philosophy

"Separateness" versus "connectedness" is, in my view, the most significant difference in the "theme" between the two moral orientations Carol Gilligan identified (recall Ch. 1, pp. 40ff.), and in this Chapter, I want to show how this distinction can be used to classify some of the most influential philosophical conceptions of morality as well. It should be noted from the beginning that nearly all normative ethics acknowledge the significance of both aspects of human living, and that there are many other differences among moral theories which this classification will simply gloss over.[121] It should also be noted that "separateness-based" and "connectedness-based" moral theories do not necessarily disagree about what kinds of situations are morally problematic, nor about what kinds of activity we ought to engage in or what types of institutions we ought to set up (although they at least sometimes disagree in these ways).[122] But theories do disagree about the fundamental values that make certain situations especially problematic or that justify certain action-types as constituting the most appropriate moral response. While some idealize values like autonomy (broadly construed to include the capacity for self-sufficiency and self-reliance, as well as the capacity to adjudicate between competing moral principles or ideals), personal liberty or respect for individual rights, others give pride of place to

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[121]These include the differences in methodological structure which can also be used to differentiate between Gilligan's two moral orientations, and were the main focus of Chapter Two.

[122]This also fits with Gilligan's findings. In most of the hypothetical examples Gilligan's interviewees are asked to respond to, males and females ultimately arrive at the same decision. The normative concepts they appeal to in justifying those decisions, however, are quite distinct. See especially the famous "Heinz dilemma" (Gilligan 1982: 25-31), and the examples discussed in Gilligan 1987.

various forms of interdependence and to activities grounded in benevolence, fellow-feeling, caring or trust.

Because Gilligan's work stresses the correlation between a person's conception of the self, and his or her conception of morality, debates about the relative moral adequacy of these two normative orientations are frequently conflated with metaphysical debates about whether the self is inherently "separate" or "social." But I think it is a mistake to focus too exclusively on questions about the essential nature and/or constitution of the self. For one thing, I doubt that either position in the metaphysical debate is tenable in any pure form.[123] For another, I doubt that resolving the debate at the metaphysical level would be sufficient to resolve the debate at the normative one. Even if we were fully convinced that each of us is nothing more than the product of our social interactions, it might still be worthwhile to (strive to) achieve as much independence from others as is possible for beings like us, and/or to create social conditions that make it more likely for individuals to develop with highly distinctive personalities. And even if we had good reason to think of our "true selves" as completely, metaphysically separate from one another, we might still prize friendship, love and participation in various sorts of group interaction over more individualistic forms of activity, and we might still think it was morally important to cultivate various affiliations and emotional attachments to one another. In any event, exploring the metaphysical debate would take me well-beyond the scope of this dissertation, and it is only the moral significance of separateness and connectedness in human living that I shall be concerned with in what follows.

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[123]See Flanagan (1991: Pt. II) and Pettit (1993) for helpful recent discussions in this area.

I shall understand separateness and connectedness as two general assumptions about what is of primary value in the moral or more broadly ethical life. To say that a (set of) value(s) is "primary" — or "basic" or "fundamental" — in the sense intended here is not necessarily to say that it is the "highest" or most important (set of) moral value(s), nor is it to contend that all other values must be justified by or derivable from the primary one(s). But it is to contend that the primary (set of) value(s) is the most overarching, in the sense that any other values must stand in some kind of non-accidental relationship to it, and that absent some kind of baseline commitment to the primary (set of) value(s), it is extremely unlikely that any other moral values can be achieved. Put another way, it is to insist that the (set of) value(s) is primary for moral understanding, in the sense that it structures an entire moral outlook or moral theory, and thereby establishes what that outlook or theory is most centrally concerned with or about.[124]

Demonstrating that the separateness/connectedness tension is embedded within the western philosophical tradition will help to explain why the contemporary Justice/Care Debate has been so intractable. And seeing some of the variations within each broad type of moral theory will shed further light on the way in which the ethics of care differ from other connection-based views. But the main aim of this chapter is to show that both ways of thinking about morality are objectionably "one-sided." Theories which give priority to individual separateness portray moral agents as being detached from other persons in ways that can cause significant moral harms: not only do such agents deprive other people of important sources of (moral)

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[124]On this broader notion of "primary" ethical concepts, see Annas (1993: 7-10), who argues that ancient moral philosophers made primacy claims, if at all, in only this broad sense.

value, they themselves are cut off from those sources, and far from preserving what is valuable about our autonomy, this can foster a debilitating sense of anomie. Meanwhile, precisely because they place so much significance on the values that arise through our attachments to or affiliations with others, theories which emphasize interpersonal connection threaten to absorb moral agents completely in relationships, leaving them with too little time and/or energy to pursue their own, more autonomous or individualistic pursuits, and perhaps even compelling them to remain involved in relationships that are personally debilitating. The upshot will be that we need some way of integrating these two ways of thinking, and in Chapter Four, I shall argue that the ideal of sharing is able to do just that.

3.1. An ancient debate

Because the separateness/connectedness tension is particularly evident within modern moral disputes, and because it is modern moral theories (including their contemporary variants) that care-ethicists have been particularly keen to criticize, it is those theories I shall mainly focus on. But in §3.3, we will see how a very similar tension arises within "agent-based" conceptions of morality (including the ethic of care). Meanwhile, the separateness/connectedness tension is already evident within ancient philosophical disputes between thinkers like Plato and the Stoics, who encourage agents to cultivate the inner strength and self-sufficiency of their individual souls, and Aristotle, whose conception of the virtuous life tends to presuppose a pre-existing network of interpersonal connections, and who seems to have recognized, more than any other ancient thinker and a great many modern thinkers as well, the distinctive value that relationships have in

human life.[125] Hence, it is useful to see why the tension is not quite so pronounced in this case.

Much of the reason has to do with what some have called the "formal self-centeredness" of ancient theorizing -- the fact that the ancients begin by reflecting on the question of "how one should live" rather than on the question of "how one should act" towards other people. As Julia Annas has emphasized, this does not mean that questions about what we should or should not do to and for others play no role at all in ancient ethical thought: a great many of their debates concern the precise ways in which both self-regard and other-regard will figure into the best human life, and very few ancient thinkers treat the latter as a mere species of the former (Annas 1993: chs. 10-14). Still, there does seem to be a kind of self-oriented weighting that attaches to all their discussions of virtue (Cottingham 1996). For example, while Aristotle praises the "friend of humanity" (*Nicomachean Ethics*: 1155a16-22) and characterizes "great souled" individuals as being magnanimous as well as healthy and wise, he also says that the honor that is due to such individuals stems from their ability to accomplish more for themselves than is the norm for human beings (1122b29-1124a25, emphasis mine).[126]

In addition, while most ancient theories do acknowledge virtues like friendship, generosity, and even mercy, an emphasis on care and compassion, and in particular, the thought that these might serve as distinctively moral ideals that ought to govern our interactions with one another, seems to have

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[125]See Nussbaum's discussion of Aristotle's commitment to "relational goods" (1986: ch. 12), as well as Sherman's discussion of his emphasis on "the shared life" (1991: ch. 4). Aristotle's views have also had a good deal of influence on contemporary communitarians, most famously Alasdair MacIntyre (1981; 1988).

[126]See Sherman (1988) for constructive criticisms of this element of Aristotle's thought.

emerged most clearly only in the wake of the Judeo-Christian tradition.[127] Thus, while Aristotle does not necessarily think that the rest of us are to be blamed or criticized in comparison to the most virtuous people, neither does he portray his "great-souled" individuals as necessarily feeling or being obliged to raise the less fortunate up to their level. Some people, he suggests, will simply not do as well as others, and this stands in fairly sharp contrast to the biblical command to "be your brothers' keeper." In other words, while Aristotle clearly gives a certain primacy to interpersonal connections, the implications of this are somewhat less demanding or other-regarding, within his moral outlook, than they tend to be within modern moral views.[128]

To turn to the opposite kind of case, notice that while the Stoics occasionally speak of a "brotherhood of all men" and encourage us to give the same concern to "the remotest Mysian" that we are typically more inclined to give to ourselves, this is very different from the Christian mandate to "love thy neighbor as thyself."[129] This is because the Stoic recommendation is based on the view that we should "extirpate" all those passions that lead us to be excessively concerned with achieving any sort of external goods for ourselves or any other person, and this includes the sorts of "attachment emotions"

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[127]This fact is emphasized by Anscombe (1958), who famously argued that modern ideas about moral obligation depend on the notion of a "divine law," and that contemporary philosophers who are no longer willing to appeal to beliefs in a divine lawgiver must turn their attention away from deontic concepts like duty and obligation in favor of aretaic concepts like virtue and vice, i.e., in favor of the sort of theory the ancients preferred. See also Hursthouse (1995; 1996) on this point.

[128]Notice that I do not claim this is inappropriate. Below I will explore ways in which connection-based views tend to be objectionably other-regarding, but whether Aristotle is able to escape this charge without going too far in the other direction is not a question I will explicitly take up. For discussion, see Annas (1993: ch. 12), Nussbaum (1986: ch. 12), and Sherman (1988; 1991: ch. 4).

[129]Note, however, that the Roman Stoics have a conception of mercy that anticipates Christianity in certain ways. See Nussbaum's discussion of Seneca (1993: 98ff).

which might lead us to be deeply moved by the plight of others. As a result, the concern we are to give the remotest Mysian is restricted to a fairly detached acknowledgment of his basic humanity -- his (capacity for) rationality and virtue. And their emphasis on goods like self-sufficiency and self-reliance aligns the Stoics more closely with the "separateness-based" side of the western moral tradition (along with thinkers like Kant, upon whom they had obvious influence).

3.2 Modern theories of separateness

When we turn to modern moral philosophy, the practice of treating the separateness of persons as morally primary while giving interpersonal connections only a secondary moral role is probably most clearly exemplified by Thomas Hobbes. He viewed moral agents as independent centers of activity who naturally endeavor to direct their capacities and resources to the fulfillment of their individual interests,[130] and he assumed that what is of value -- moral or otherwise -- is whatever an individual agent desires or prefers. Accordingly, there is nothing that moral agents ought to strive for beyond the things that will in fact satisfy their individual preferences, and there is nothing that morality encourages or demands beyond the satisfaction of individual interests.

Hobbes took this to mean that we can only make sense of moral activity if it can be shown that the agent has interests that such activity is likely to serve. And the explanatory power of this way of thinking about morality stems from his argument that there are at least some interests that any

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[130] "Consider men as if but even now sprung out of the earth, and suddenly, like mushrooms, come to full maturity, without all kind of engagement with each other" (Hobbes: *The Citizen*, p. 205).

individual can reasonably be expected to have. He begins by pointing out that all individuals have a natural desire for self-preservation, and notes that in a world with limited resources, we must acknowledge that there are at least some cases in which the specific desires of separate individuals are likely to conflict. Once we recognize this, Hobbes suggests, we are forced to conclude that every individual is at least a potential threat to the interests of every other, and to acknowledge that the desire for self-preservation, if left unchecked, would eventually lead to "a war of all against all" (1651: ch. 13). Because such a war is obviously undesirable from every individual's point of view, Hobbes argued that the desire for self-preservation eventually leads each of us to develop the further desire for social peace (Ibid.: ch. 14). This, in turn, makes it rational to form a social contract, agreeing to abide by a system of rules designed to (1) guard against the likelihood that destructive conflicts of interest will arise, and (2) arbitrate in those situations where such conflicts are simply unavoidable (Ibid.: ch. 15). It is those rules, on a hobbesian account, that constitute the most basic moral norms, and they are presumed to be morally binding on everyone insofar as they can be shown to be compatible with each individual's natural desire to satisfy the interests and goals that flow from his separate personality.

The contractarian elements of this approach make it possible to build in certain features of morality that point to our inevitable connectedness with one another, and although he is often criticized for portraying us as much more self-sufficient than we actually are, Hobbes does at least acknowledge that there are some benefits to social cooperation. But he is committed to the view that there is no specifically moral value to be found in actively caring about others' welfare or in promoting others' interests, nor in cultivating

ongoing relationships with them, unless this can be shown to satisfy individual preferences. This does not quite mean that relationships can only have value as the means for achieving more egoistic desires, since specific individuals may in fact desire various kinds of human connection simply for their own sake. But it does mean that there is no reason to enhance or even maintain our connections with other people beyond the contingent emotional sentiments that any specific individual may or may not feel. Hence, any values that are found only in human relationships seem to lie squarely outside the moral domain.

Hobbes's suggestion that we need not think of ourselves as connected to one another in any morally significant way has a number of troubling implications. To begin with, there seems to be no obligation to directly consider the welfare of other people when one is deliberating about what to do; at most, there is the acknowledgment that the benefits agents receive for themselves by constraining their individual pursuits in ways that are conducive to social peace will frequently coincide with similar benefits to others. Though Hobbes assumes that separate individuals are in a position of roughly equal power vis a vis one another,[131] he does not portray persons as being entitled to a basic level of moral concern from their fellows, and is notorious for the claim that "a human being's worth is his price" (1651: ch. 10). As a result, the widely held belief that morality at least occasionally stems from and may even require a direct concern for others' welfare, and simply for their own sakes, is not one that his approach seems easily able to accommodate. Hobbes's approach also suggests that there will be few, if any,

[131]Feminist philosophers have been especially keen to point out that the assumption of "equal power" is highly questionable unless we severely limit the class of moral persons.

so called "positive duties" to help the less fortunate members of any social group. Since the very young, the weak and the infirm cannot pose any serious threat to the people Hobbes set forth as the human norm, it appears that there is simply no reason to establish or abide by moral rules that constrain our interactions with them.[132] Finally, it is commonly thought that even the "negative duties" of non-interference that do seem likely to be included in the social contract are placed on a relatively weak foundation. Constraining our more individualistic pursuits in situations where ignoring the moral rules would clearly be a more effective way to satisfy our long-term interests and goals is simply irrational from a Hobbesian point of view, and it is not entirely clear whether (or how) his theory allows him to criticize such opportunistic activity as morally questionable. Indeed, because Hobbes himself thought the opportunities and temptations to break the social contract would be far too great unless people were willing to grant an absolute sovereign the authority, and the power, to enforce the moral rules (1651: Part Two), he is sometimes viewed as a better political than moral philosopher.[133]

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[132]It is this feature of hobbesian contractarianism that contemporary care-ethicists (among others) find especially disturbing.

[133]More recently, David Gauthier (1986) has sought to show that Hobbes's rather pessimistic conclusion is unnecessary, because certain types of "mutually advantageous" cooperative ventures afford each of their participants benefits that none of them could expect to achieve on their own. Although he contends that we are dependent on others in order to achieve "the fullest realization [of human activity] that is possible for each of us" (1986: 352), however, Gauthier still does not present the fact that we are interconnected in this way as grounding any of our moral obligations or as motivating our moral activity, and he remains "committed to showing why an individual, reasoning from non-moral premises, would accept the constraints of morality on his choices" (1986: 5). Because he follows Hobbes in equating "reasoning from non-moral premises" with reasoning egoistically, his argument hinges on the empirical claim that the benefits of co-operative ventures are pervasive enough, and our ability to detect cheaters is sophisticated enough, that there are in fact no situations in which an individual can more effectively advance his or her own (long-term) self-interests by breaking the moral rules. Like many commentators, I find it highly unlikely that this is true.

Hobbes also believed that the benefits of having a moral code made it rational to agree to this sort of arrangement, though many of his contemporaries expressed serious doubts about this. As John Locke famously put it: "This is to think that men are so foolish that they take care to avoid what mischiefs may be done to them by pole-cats or foxes, but are content, nay, think it safety, to be devoured by lions" (1690: §93). In any event, one way to avoid these sorts of difficulties, while still giving priority to individual separateness, is to rely on the Lockean notion of individual rights.[134] On this approach, persons are still conceived as separate individuals who naturally endeavor to satisfy their own interests, and morality is still thought to serve the natural interest in self-preservation that all human beings share, as well as the more idiosyncratic interests that distinguish us as separate personalities. But because Locke identified moral activity with activity that protects each person's natural rights to life and liberty (which he takes to include the pursuit of property), he was able to build in the idea that we are obligated to treat one another in certain ways even before any kind of social contract is in place:

> Every one as he is bound to preserve himself...; so by the like reason when his own Preservation comes not in competition [with others], ought he, as much as he can, to preserve the rest of mankind, and may not unless it be to do Justice on an Offender, take away or impair the life, or what tends to the Preservation of the Life, Liberty, Health, Limb or Goods of another (Locke 1690: §6).

Notice, however, that doing "as much as we can" to preserve the rest of mankind actually amounts to fairly little on a Lockean view: we are specifi-

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[134]Note that Grotius (1583-1645) seems to have been the first to hold that every person, simply in virtue of his nature as an individual, possesses rights which must be respected by everyone and which therefore give rise to natural obligations.

cally told not to take away or impair the life, liberty, or goods of any other, but we are not specifically told to actively concern ourselves with the good of others. And notice that there is still very little recognition that interpersonal connectedness is morally valuable in its own right. The reason agents are given for "preserving" the life of other people is very similar to the reason they have for "preserving" themselves: namely, the recognition that all people are naturally "bound" by self-preservation, and hence that each person has rights that are simply inalienable — that is, impossible for the individual to surrender or for other people to ignore. In other words, while this approach does acknowledge that any individual's actions will almost inevitably have an impact on the lives and welfare of at least some others, the fact that others may sometimes be dependent upon an agent's assistance is not presented as the feature that obligates the agent to "preserve" them. Not surprisingly, even thinkers who defend a fairly positive conception of individual rights (that is, a conception of rights as requirements to actively help those who possess them) are still committed to the view that whenever an agent's own rights come into direct "competition" with the rights of others, the agent is always morally entitled to act on his or her own behalf. In this way, the separateness of moral agents is given priority over their connections to others.

Locke's own writings leave it somewhat unclear just how much assistance we morally ought to provide to other people. However, many contemporary rights-based thinkers, including John Hospers (1971) and Robert Nozick (1974), are quite insistent that so long as an agent does not directly infringe upon another person's life or liberty, he is under few obligations to attempt to improve their situation or alleviate their suffering, even if doing so would require the agent to make little or no sacrifice. Put

another way, their view is that morality directs our attention to other people primarily insofar as their rights serve as constraints on what we may do for ourselves; it can never compel us to promote or enhance others' welfare, nor does it encourage us to engage in more affiliative pursuits. Of course, nothing prevents moral agents from helping others if they wish to do so, but this sort of activity is thought to lie outside the domain of morality proper. Hence, this libertarian strand of rights-based thinking might be said to attach even less moral significance to interpersonal connectedness than contractarian views which at least acknowledge that certain benefits can be achieved through cooperation with others.

Kant emphasizes the separateness of persons in a slightly different way when he locates the source of our moral obligations in our (capacity for) autonomy (1785).[135] He held that this capacity gives human beings a special kind of "dignity" since, rather than simply being compelled to pursue ends that are given to us by nature or nurture, we are in some sense able to "will" our own ends.[136] At the very least, we decide which of our competing ends to pursue, and how to achieve as many of those ends as possible within a single, coherent life. Even more importantly, the capacity for autonomy makes moral activity possible for us, because it enables us to be literally self-legislating, and so to recognize the impermissibility of certain kinds of actions -- namely, actions that violate the Categorical Imperative to "act only according to that

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[135]See especially the discussion of "Autonomy of the Will as the Supreme Principle of Morality" (1785: 440ff). Page references are to the standard Prussian Academy version of Kant's text; my citations are from the English translation by Ellington (1983).

[136]"The dignity of humanity consists just in its capacity to legislate universal law, though with the condition of humanity's being at the same time itself subject to this very same legislation" (1785: 440).

maxim whereby you can at the same time will that it should become a universal law" (1785: 421).[137]

Kant calls this universal law formulation the "only categorical imperative" (Ibid.). Yet to many people, it seems to work best as a procedure for testing the moral permissibility of the acts we propose to engage in after we have already formulated a more specific maxim; it is not very helpful in uncovering moral actions that might not otherwise occur to us, or in helping us to determine the best thing to do from among a range of permissible alternatives. However, autonomy also figures into Kant's theory in a more substantive way, as is brought out by his "practical imperative" to "act in such a way that you treat humanity, whether in our own person or in the person of another, always at the same time as an end and never simply as a means" (1785: 429). On a minimalist interpretation of this end-in-itself formulation, the autonomy of persons functions primarily as a constraint on how we may act toward others: we must never act in ways that force other people to treat our autonomously chosen ends as their own. Yet Kant also recognized that we are finite rational beings: that we are vulnerable to various sorts of hardship and harm, and that we frequently depend upon various kinds of cooperation and assistance from one another in order to achieve many of the ends we

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[137]Of course, existentialists such as Sartre reject the idea that there are any maxims a genuinely autonomous agent would necessarily choose, and there is a bit of a puzzle about whether Kant's idea of an autonomous will that is nonetheless constrained by a "natural" moral law can be made coherent (for one recent attempt, see Herman (1993: ch. 10) who contends that the constraints Kant places on practical rationality amount to a conception of value). I do not include existentialism in the brief survey above because, while it certainly emphasizes the values of individual separateness, it is more often posed as a challenge to normative ethics than as a particular view about the content of moral norms. But notice that insofar as it does embody a moral conception, it is one that gives primacy to the values of individual separateness while at the same time rejecting the view that morality is ultimately grounded in principles and rules.

autonomously choose. And on a more positive interpretation of this formula, it seems that morality requires us, at least on occasion, to take up the (morally legitimate) ends of other people and to actively promote their ability to successfully achieve the various ends that they choose.

It is worth emphasizing that Kant is not simply defending a set of reciprocal obligations: he does not argue that we ought to help specific others because they have helped us in the past, or only when we know we will almost certainly depend on those others at some point in the future. Rather, his claim is that the fact that an end has been autonomously chosen by another (finite) agent gives that end a special kind of value, and one that provides the rest of us with at least some reason to pursue it. This does not necessarily mean that it gives us a sufficient reason to do so, since there may be other, competing ends that we have autonomously chosen and that we may pursue without violating the universal moral law. However, it does provide the basis for a wide, imperfect duty of beneficence: "For the ends of any subject who is an end in himself must as far as possible be my ends also, if that conception of an end in itself is to have its full effect in me" (1785: 430). To go through life without ever being actively committed to achieving the good of any other, Kant suggests, is to fail to fully respect their autonomy, and so to fail to treat humanity, "in the person of another," in the way that morality commands.

This goes even farther than other separateness-based views in suggesting that we are morally required to concern ourselves directly with the lives and/or welfare of others, and simply for their own sakes. Yet it still does not treat the bonds that occur between individuals as having basic or fundamental moral value, and while it may allow our relationships with various others to influence the content of the specific maxims we act on, it still

does not treat our connectedness as grounding our obligations to one another.[138] In other words, a kantian conception still suggests that moral activity has less to do with the establishment and maintenance of interpersonal relationships than with the cultivation of and respect for individual autonomy.[139] In so doing, it portrays moral agents as being psychologically detached from one another in ways that make it very difficult to acknowledge the moral significance of inherently mutual goods, such as friendship and love, that depend for their realization on a complex tying together of thoughts and emotions that two or more people share. As a result, more affiliative endeavors, in which the ends of any one individual cannot be clearly distinguished from the ends of all the others, seem to drop out of the moral domain (cf. Baier, 1994: ch. 2). And this stands in marked contrast to "connection-based" moral views.

3.3 Modern models of connectedness

Modern moral philosophers who give primacy to the connectedness of persons have emphasized this feature of human living in two main ways. One way is by adopting an explicitly causal or consequentialist model which stresses the fact that the actions of any individual will inevitably have an

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[138]For example, although Barbara Herman says that the regulative priority of the duty motive (the motive that moves an autonomous will) does not translate into the value priority of that motive over various "motives of connection," she also insists that motives of connection have no independent moral value and must always be constrained by the motive of duty in order to be morally good (1993: ch. 9, esp. 188ff). See also Baron (1984), who argues that all other motives must be "filtered through" the motive of duty in order to have moral worth.

[139]In the *Doctrine of Virtue* Kant portrays our moral activity as a kind of unsteady balance between "the principle of mutual love" which directs us "constantly to approach one another," and 'the principle of respect" which directs us "to keep [our]selves at a distance" (1797: §24). And see Wood for discussion of Kant's more general picture of human beings as characterized by an "unsociable sociability" (1991).

impact on the lives and/or welfare of at least some others and exhorts us to promote the common good. The other way is by embracing a much more psychological model which emphasizes our "natural sociability" and the value we place on various emotional attachments, as well as the role of those attachments in motivating moral activity. The first model is familiar from classical utilitarianism, which identifies morality with activity that produces "the greatest good for the greatest number" of human (or sentient) beings.[140] And the second approach is most clearly exemplified by the 18th century moral sense theorists such as Francis Hutcheson, Adam Smith, and David Hume. But elements of these two models are often combined.

The moral sense theorists were united in the conviction that people posses various kinds of benevolent affections which create what Hutcheson calls a "secret chain between each person and mankind," and dispose us to morally "approve" of those actions which "are generally imagin'd to tend to the natural Good of Mankind, or of some Parts of it" (1725: 121). They also insisted that both moral motivation and moral judgment were built on this feature of our psychological make-up. In support of this view, they pointed out that we frequently morally praise people for exhibiting qualities that can be of absolutely no benefit to us, but that do contribute to the good of other people. If we did not care about those additional others, why would we bestow our moral praise in this way? They further suggested that if we sincerely reflect on our own natures, we will find that we often care as much,

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[140]Actually, the moral sense theorist Francis Hutcheson may have been the first to articulate the greatest happiness principle (Schneewind 1992: 864). However, in his view this principle is derived from the more basic idea of a benevolent moral sense that naturally approves of the types of actions that universally benevolent persons perform; in utilitarianism, such a principle is ethically fundamental and is itself the basis of our "moral sense."

or more, about achieving goods for other people as we do about achieving goods for ourselves. In other words, it is not simply that our benevolent affections give us (non-moral) pleasure; we morally admire ourselves for being this way and are morally glad to find that we have these sorts of sentiments toward others (Schneewind 1992: 862ff).[141]

The moral sense theorists were also convinced that the moral point of view is entirely distinct from the point of view of individual self-interest: it is the point of view of an impartial and universally benevolent "spectator" who is able to "sympathize" with the motives and actions of other people. Hence, they all made a distinction between the particular moral sentiments (such as benevolence, compassion, and generosity) which are crucial to our role as moral agents and literally "connect" our own interests to the interests of others; and the "moral sense," or sympathy mechanism by which we make moral judgments in our role as moral spectators observing the moral activity of others.[142] Because both of these capacities were seen as primarily emotional, the relationship between them can be difficult to disentangle.[143] But while the former are portrayed as motivating reasons which presuppose some sort of affection or disaffection toward their object (e.g., a person in

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[141]It is noteworthy that males were presumed by the moral sense theorists to possess these qualities, since they are typically associated with "women's morality" among thinkers -- both past and present -- who defend a correlation between moral orientation and gender (Baier 1994: ch. 4; Tronto 1993: ch. 2).

[142]This distinction in sharpest in Hutcheson, who argued that the moral sense, having been implanted in us by God, is analogous to the other five senses and enables us to grasp moral qualities immediately and non-inferentially. Hume and Smith were more scientifically-minded and hence reluctant to posit a moral sense in addition to the more familiar and obvious psychological capacities, but both believed that humans posses a natural capacity for sympathy, which is not itself a moral sentiment, but which serves as a mechanism by which we may enter into the sentiments of others. And like Hutcheson, they both insisted that it was this capacity (as opposed to instrumental reason or rational autonomy) that undergirds our moral judgment.

[143]For a very detailed discussion specific to David Hume, see Snare (1991).

need), the latter appears to be more reflective or responsive faculty which "sympathizes with" or "endorses" the morally good motivations of other people, and is made "indignant by" or "hates" the morally bad ones. And while the moral sentiments were believed to be dependent on an agent's specific interests and attachments and so to be exercised by different individuals toward different particular objects, the moral sense/sympathy mechanism was considered to be a universal capacity which operates in substantially the same way in all moral agents, and whose approvals and disapprovals were wholly independent of "any advantage or loss to redound to" the spectator (Hutcheson, 1725: 124).[144] In other words, the moral sense/sympathy mechanism is what enables us, according to moral sense theory, to determine which sorts of motivating reasons are justified, and hence what sorts of activity people morally ought to engage in, in the abstract. However, it is not typically involved in our first person moral activity; in their view, we act morally simply by acting from our moral sentiments.[145]

This conception of morality is distinctive in the conviction that each of us morally ought to cultivate and act from the sorts of emotional interdependencies that make it difficult, if not impossible, to distinguish our "own" needs and interests from the needs and interests of all the other persons we are connected to. For example, Hutcheson argued that our various moral sentiments (in our role as moral agents) could be sorted into three main kinds:

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[144]Hume believes we morally approve of things which are useful or agreeable to ourselves or to others, but agrees with Hutcheson (and Smith) that "the minds of all men are similar in their feelings and operations" in this regard (1740: 575-6). That is, all three agree that the moral sense approves of qualities that are beneficial (useful or agreeable) to humankind generally, and give no special moral weight to qualities that are beneficial to the self.

[145]Adam Smith seems to be something of an exception here, as discussed in my text below.

(1) "particular passions," like love or pity, that establish an emotional connection between the moral agent and a specific other person; (2) "kind affections," like friendship and patriotism, that link the moral agent to the needs and interests of a much broader group of individuals; and (3) a more "universal benevolence" that ties the moral agent's concern to the welfare of human beings generally. As a result of these sentiments, moral agents suffer when others suffer, feel pleasure when others feel pleasure, and generally desire to see others do well. Hence, they are directly motivated to act on others' behalf. Of course, the moral sense theorists did not suppose that the needs and interests of all the other persons a moral agent was emotionally connected to would inevitably complement one another, and it is important to notice that they were not simply suggesting that we should act on behalf of the persons we are immediately inclined to care about (e.g., persons who are relatively near and dear). Indeed, the morally best individual, in Hutcheson's view, was the one in whom the sentiment of universal benevolence prevailed and regulated over the other two kinds. And in a similar vein, both Hume and Smith portray the central moral task as that of "eliminating the conflicts that would inevitably arise for individuals who were aware of both their own and their fellows' desires and needs, including emotional needs" (Baier 1994: 56; see also 1991).[146]

It might be thought that the moral sense theorists portray us as much more widely altruistic than we actually are.[147] But Hutcheson seems to have

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[146]Although Baier is only explicitly concerned with the moral theory of Hume, her characterization applies equally to Hutcheson and Smith.

[147]On the other hand, recent research on European "Rescuers" of Jews during World War II, as well as Gilligan's work, lends credence to the view that at least some people do feel themselves to be connected to the lives and welfare of others, and are directly motivated by this fact. "Claire" is quoted by Gilligan as equating morality with the sense that any "other

believed that in many cases, a degree of partiality could in fact be understood as the appropriate expression of a more universal benevolence:

> "This universal Benevolence toward all Men, we may compare to that Principle of Gravitation, which perhaps extends to all Bodys in the Universe; but, the Love of Benevolence, increases as the Distance is diminish'd, and is strongest when Bodys come to touch each other. Now this increase of Attraction upon nearer Approach, is as necessary to the Frame of the Universe, as that there should be any Attraction at all (1725 198-9).

Hume also argued that there was no contradiction between "the extensive sympathy, on which our sentiments of virtue depend, and that limited generosity which [he had] frequently observed to be natural to men" (1740: 481). To be sure, Hume was more concerned to show that we are able to avoid bias in our spectator judgments, despite our natural tendency toward self-love (and hence the likelihood that we will morally approve of people whose actions benefit us or our friends). But Smith later argued that we could eventually learn to use these spectator judgments to guide even our own moral conduct: once "internalized," they served as our moral conscience.[148] At this point, the moral sense theorists part company, for while Smith does not clearly distinguish between the moral value of acts motivated by conscientiousness and those motivated directly by moral sentiments like benevolence, Hutcheson is quite explicit that only the latter have true moral worth, and Hume seems happy to endorse moral motives that come in a wide variety of

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person is part of the giant collection of everybody" (1982: 57). And many of the Rescuers (who risked their lives for others) insist that they were not struck by the thought that it was their duty or even " the right thing" to do; rather, it simply felt like the only thing to do given the circumstances (Blum 1994: ch. 6; Badhwar 1995; Monroe 1996).

[148]This process was thought to be itself motivated by our desire to not only be judged (by others) as acting "properly," but also to merit such judgments (1759: 137ff; 262ff).

different forms (as well as the natural "talents" which support them).[149] Still, none of these thinkers assumes that morality is always a straightforward expression of natural altruism, and they all acknowledge the need to "correct" those sentiments that might otherwise attach us to the needs and interests of some people while completely disregarding the needs and interests of others.

This way of thinking about morality presupposes that there are at least some "first order" desires or basic human needs for benevolent moral agents to be responding to. And the distinction between the particular moral sentiments and the universal moral sense, which was needed to explain why different individuals exhibit different patterns of moral activity, also makes room for the separateness of persons in their role as moral agents insofar as it acknowledges that the moral sentiments of one individual may differ from those of another. But the moral sense theorists were convinced that our emotional connections are morally valuable in ways that go well beyond their instrumental use in satisfying any other, purportedly more basic human needs.[150] The desire for connection just is a basic moral interest, in their view.[151] Hence, when we cultivate and act from our moral sentiments, we are not simply respecting or responding to the interests and needs of separate

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[149] A compilation of the virtues endorsed in Hume's *Treatise* can be found in Baier (1991: 199ff).

[150] "Useful or agreeable" is Hume's phrase. Note that on some readings, Hume even seems to suggest that a motive or character trait in any given individual -- even a motive like benevolence -- could not count as a genuine or complete moral virtue unless and until it was "sympathized" with by another: "it is the nature, and indeed, the definition of virtue, that it is a quality of the mind agreeable to or approved of by every one, who considers or contemplates it" (1752: 68n; emphasis mine). This would make his view "connection-based" at a second level. See Baxter (1990) for discussion on this point.

[151] Cf. Adam Smith (1759: 9): "However selfish soever man may be supposed, there are evidently principles in his nature, which interest him in the fortune of others, and render their happiness necessary to him, though he derives nothing from it except the pleasure of seeing it."

others, but are also fulfilling at least some of our own desires at the very same time. That is why it makes sense to say that it is the connections between individuals, as opposed, for example, to actions done to or for individual others, that are seen as primary within this conception of moral life.[152] This makes it possible to give ground floor significance to interpersonal relationships, but it also leads to two sorts of difficulties with their view.

To begin with, it leads to a fairly demanding and/or other-regarding conception of morality -- not, as we have seen, because it rests on unfounded assumptions about the extent of our natural altruism, but because it threatens to absorb moral agents almost completely into relationships with other people. As Rawls has pointed out, the equation (most evident in Smith's view) of moral activity with the type of activity that would be chosen by an impartial and universally benevolent moral spectator results in the "conflation of all desires into a single system of desire" (1971: 188). The problem is not that the agent's own needs and interests carry no moral weight within this "single system," but that they have only the weight of one person among many. As a result, they are likely to be overwhelmed by the needs and interests of all the others, and the sense that there must surely be at least some limits on what any individual can be morally required to do for other people is difficult to explain. Moreover, although activities like friendship and love, which create and sustain the moral community, are treated as possessing a very high degree of moral value in the abstract, the concrete attachments that

[152]Note that our capacity for emotional connections is also treated as absolutely central to the processes of (third person) moral judgment: whereas Rawls's ideal moral agents were portrayed as completely detached from any and all particular others and hence being concerned only with the abstract interests that all human beings can be presumed to share, the moral sense theorists' ideal spectator is portrayed as actively sympathizing with the concrete concerns of as many people as is humanly possible, attempting to bring their actual interests into harmony.

help to shape any particular moral agent's separate personality turn out to have relatively little moral significance in actual situations (since they must always be tempered by a more universal benevolence). And even Hutcheson's suggestion that it is often morally proper for agents to keep their benevolence close to home falls prey to this sort of difficulty. For it still gives an agent's affiliations with others a certain moral priority over all of his or her more individualistic projects and goals, and it is far from clear that such an absolute ranking is appropriate or even desirable.[153]

The portrayal of all human needs and interests as part of a "single system of desire" also admits the possibility that the welfare of any individual a moral agent may be responding to will need to be sacrificed for the "Good of Mankind." Hence, the second difficulty for moral sense theory is to explain why we frequently think lying, theft and other "injustices" are wrong even in cases where they are plausibly motivated by benevolence toward at least some "Parts" of humanity, let alone toward humanity as a whole. Hume's response was to argue that justice is an "artificial" virtue, and is beneficial only because it makes our social world, and hence the types of activities and relationships we naturally value, more secure. Put another way, what is useful is the system of justice, which includes rules (against lying and theft) which everyone is to follow, even in those cases where doing so may not be immediately "useful or agreeable" to either oneself or others (1740: 587-9).

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[153]Indeed, it is this aspect of connection-based moral thinking that leads many feminists to balk at the ethics of care. For, it tends to encourage the stereotype of women as wives and mothers -- that is, as people who are very good at caring for and supporting others, and who perhaps ought to be admired for this aspect of their moral personalities, but who are nonetheless incapable of pursuing more independent lives. And it seems objectionable for a moral theory to insist that any (group of) person(s) should accept such a limiting social assignment, even if that is indeed a life that many people would in fact choose if left to their own devices.

And Smith similarly held that in the case of justice, we are acting from a regard to general rules which "summarize" the results of our sympathetic judgments regarding our own and other people's conduct, and so counteract any tendencies toward injustice on grounds of self-love or distorted perceptions of what our genuine motives are. But it remains very difficult to show, as Hume clearly saw, that exhibiting the artificial virtues would be useful and agreeable to humankind generally in every instance, and hence difficult to explain why one should not be a "sensible knave" and take advantage of all the exceptions.[154] In short, if there are fundamental constraints on how any individual may treat any other, it is difficult to see how this approach can accommodate them.

These sorts of difficulties are, of course, familiar from contemporary criticisms of utilitarianism -- a fact which is hardly surprising given that it followed directly in the moral sense theorists' footsteps.[155] But utilitarianism emphasizes the connections between individuals in a somewhat different way by simply insisting that moral agents should (strive to) promote overall well-being, regardless of what their natural, artificial and/or "corrected" moral

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[154]Natural virtues, for Hume, do not simply arise naturally, but are also useful or agreeable to humankind in any circumstances. Artificial virtues, by contrast, are only useful or agreeable once certain social conventions have been established, and even then there might be cases where breaking them will be even more useful and agreeable (1751: Appendix III).

[155]Hutcheson in particular is frequently cited as a transitional figure who "set the stage" for utilitarianism, for while he contends that universal benevolence is the morally best of human motives, he also contends that actions are to be evaluated as better or worse in terms of how well they further the goal(s) of benevolence (and not in terms of whether, or the extent to which, they exhibit genuine benevolence on the part of the agent who performs them). His view thus represents an interesting hybrid lying between an agent-based theory that takes benevolence as the most overarching moral ideal, and classical utilitarianism. And if my argument in §2.6 is correct, the consequent rise of utilitarianism is something of an historical -- or at any rate a conceptual -- accident. Hutcheson's view might just as easily have been developed in a purely agent-based fashion.

sentiments may prompt them to do. This is true of most contemporary variants as well as the classical formulation of the theory, for they all insist that the moral value of any action ultimately lies in the aggregate amount of human (or sentient) well-being that is (reasonably expected to be) produced in the world, and is only indirectly affected by the way in which it is distributed among individuals, or by the emotional attachments that might lead agents to (strive to) produce it.

This does not mean that utilitarians attach no moral weight to individual separateness. After all, Jeremy Bentham's famous slogan that "each counts for one, none counts for more than one" insists that the happiness of every individual must be given strictly equal weight in the overall utility calculus. In addition, the happiness of any given individual is typically assessed by a standard that is fairly sensitive to his or her subjective point of view. But as Bernard Williams has pointed out (1973), utilitarianism still abstracts from the separateness of persons in two main ways. Most obviously, it abstracts from their separateness as beneficiaries of moral action, since what matters is whether the action maximizes (or optimizes, or can be reasonably expected to maximize or optimize) the benefits to persons overall, but not that any particular person was in fact the one to benefit. And it also abstracts from their separateness as moral agents, since what matters is that overall happiness was (or could have reasonably been expected to be) produced, but not the fact that any particular individual was the one who (attempted to) produce it.

One way for utilitarians to minimize this sort of difficulty is to adopt a version of rule-utilitarianism along the lines set forth by J.S. Mill (1863), or the more "ideal" utilitarianism G.E. Moore (1912). But these formulations still

have notorious difficulties explaining our moral convictions in the area of justice and rights, as many critics, including rule-deontologists like W.D. Ross (1930), have pointed out. For it is difficult to explain why anyone whose moral outlook was shaped by a fundamental concern for the general welfare would refuse to sacrifice the rights or autonomy of one person if, for example that were the only means by which the welfare of a significant number could be greatly improved, or why such a person would keep a promise to one individual in when breaking it would make it possible to help several others. Yet many people are convinced that we morally ought to avoid rights infringements and promise-breakings at all costs. The situations that are problematic for utilitarians may be fairly rare, but it is surely the case that they sometimes arise. Not surprisingly, some utilitarians have wanted to supplement their approaches with an independently grounded account of basic individual rights.[156] And the refusal to make any concessions to the separateness of persons may help to explain why J.J.C. Smart's view that when our common moral beliefs conflict with the dictates of utility, it is "so much the worse for the common moral consciousness" (Smart & Williams, 1973) has fairly limited contemporary appeal.

3.4 Implications of the modern debate

This brief survey may not be sufficient to show that there is no way for separateness- or connectedness-based theories to overcome the one-sidedness with which they are associated. But it does at least suggest that there is no obvious reason to favor one way of thinking about morality over the other, and that neither is fully satisfactory. It also suggests that moral theories

[156]For a concise, recent defense of such a modified utilitarianism, see Rachels (1993).

cannot be criticized for being objectionably partial simply because they emphasize the values of interpersonal connectedness, for we have seen that both moral sense theory and utilitarianism give impartial concern for human beings a kind of general priority over concern for those who are relatively near and dear. And it further suggests that separateness-based views are not the only ones that tend to limit the role of the emotions in moral deliberation: though moral sense theory and communitarianism both allow agents' emotional attachments to others to play a crucial role in their moral decision-making, classical utilitarianism demands that moral reasoning be isolated from more emotional pulls.

This survey also helps to explain why Gilligan's original distinction often leads to confusion about which domain of moral activity is under consideration (recall §1.2). For the most influential modern theories of separateness do tend to focus more on political concerns and to have fewer difficulties in the area of justice and rights. In addition, the survey indicates that the assumed link between a separateness-based value orientation and reliance on moral principles may not be entirely accidental. Precisely because they do not give moral primacy to our more emotional connections to others, such views rely on moral principles as a way of building a (derivative) kind of other regard into their theories. Interestingly, however, this survey suggests that the ability to justify what are commonly called deontic constraints may have less to do with the formal structure of moral theories than with whether or not they are separateness-based, for all of the connection-based views discussed above tend to have difficulties in this area.

In the context of the autonomy/caring debate these are very important results. For we have seen that an agent-based approach to moral theory is able

to make sense of the basic concepts and distinctions that are often considered to be the hallmarks of principle-based thinking (recall §§2.4-2.5), and this suggests that an agent-based ethic that incorporated notions of individual separateness might be able to overcome the sorts of problems that plague an agent-based ethic of care. Of course, an agent-based ethic that treated individual separateness as primary is likely to have difficulties of its own. Hence, we now need to consider how this tension plays out within an agent-based approach to moral theory, in order to see if they are any better at avoiding the forms of one-sidedness that plague modern moral views.

3.5 Cool vs. warm ideals of character

In §2.1, I pointed out that the historical record does not give us many clear-cut examples of agent-based theorizing. But it does include a great deal of philosophical reflection on the admirability of various motives and character traits, and it suggests that such reflection tends toward two general types of motivational ideals. We have already seen that Martineau takes compassion to be second only to reverence for the deity in terms of its moral value (recall p. 84, above), and if we set aside his religious assumptions, his entire scale of motivations can be said to reflect an underlying conviction that any motive which falls under the general rubric of concern for others will be better than a motive that does not reflect such concern (this includes motives that reflect excessive concern for oneself -- e.g. "love of ease" and "love of power," as well as motives that reflect outright malevolence towards others -- e.g. "vindictiveness" and "resentment"). Similarly, Augustine claims that all virtues are instances of love of God, and if we recall that Augustine's God commands us to love our neighbors as ourselves, he can be plausibly interpreted, in a more agent-based fashion, as suggesting that motives are

better to the extent that they reflect the agent's love for specific others. This line of thought can also be found in more secular thinkers. Schopenhauer, for example argued that compassion is the only moral motive, and Hutcheson claimed that virtue consists wholly in various forms of benevolence. Contemporary claims about the moral value of caring seem to be the most recent manifestation of this general point of view, albeit one that places a bit more emphasis on relationships with others than the desire to do things for others (in this way, care-ethicists are closer to Aristotle).

Plato, on the other hand, bases his ethical views on a markedly different sort of claim -- namely, that virtue (or admirable motivation) can be understood in terms of the beauty, health, harmony, and/or "inner strength" of the individual soul.[157] The Stoics seem to be expressing similar convictions when they defend an ideal of autarkeia in terms of ataraxia -- a freedom from disturbance that requires detachment from or "indifference" to worldly goods. This, in turn, requires cultivation of one's rationality in a way that renders the virtuous individual far less vulnerable to various human infirmities, as well as to tragic fortune, than his or her fellow human beings.[158] And Nietzsche, too, is impressed by our capacities as individuals, exhorting us not to take pity on the weaker and less fortunate, but rather, to exercise our own "will to power." Although Nietzsche in particular is eager to jar people out of a kind of complacent and unthinking altruism that he sees as ultimately debilitating

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[157]This is particularly evident in the his *Republic*, §§407, 444, and 591.

[158]The Stoics' notion of "indifference" is not our ordinary one. Briefly, they hold that anything lacking in intrinsic goodness is "indifferent," and this includes everything except one's own inner virtue and/or rationality. However, within the (extremely large) class of indifferent things, many instrumental goods (such as health and to a lesser degree, even wealth) are to be "preferred" (cf. Annas 1993: 159-79, 388-411; Long and Sedley 1987: 354-59; and Nussbaum 1995).

to its recipients as well as to the altruistic agent (cf. Bergmann 1985), he does not quite say that we should be solely concerned with ourselves. In fact, we will see in a few moments that all of these thinkers are able to give a surprisingly firm grounding to the morality of other-regarding activity. Hence what unifies them is not so much their devaluation of motives like benevolence and compassion, but their level of esteem for human character traits that fall under the rubric of self-sufficiency[159] and self-reliance.[160]

Perhaps the most intuitive way to describe the difference between these two main historical strands of thinking about human character is that the former idealize agents who are "warmly" motivated whereas the latter idealize those who are relatively "cool" towards others.[161] And while this is a distinction to be made within agent-based theories, it is quite clearly an instance of the more general separateness/connectedness distinction. "Warm" agent-based theories emphasize connectedness, in the sense that they make benevolence, compassion, and/or concern for others basic to moral motivation (in contrast with utilitarianism, for example, which explains the moral significance of an individual agent's connections to others solely in terms of

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[159]Note that "self-sufficiency," as I shall understand it, is meant to signify an admirable motive (or complex of motivations) that exhibits an agent's inner strength. Self-sufficiency was also used as a standard marker for the notion of the "final good" from Plato onward, but when thinkers like Aristotle suggest that the complete and "self-sufficient" life will include friendships and political relationships, they are using the term in a very different sense than I am relying on here.

[160]It will be noted that Aristotle – although one of the most famous virtue-ethicists – is conspicuously absent from this scheme. This is because his normative orientation is quite difficult to classify. On the one hand, he is clearly interested in inner harmony and self-sufficiency, and his discussion of "magnanimity" anticipates much of what Nietzsche says about generosity. On the other hand, he places great emphasis on the (quasi) virtues of friendship and political affiliation, and thinks external goods are extremely important to the best human life. Later on (esp. in Ch. 6) I shall suggest that his view may be an early expression of the ideal of sharing. But I do not attempt to defend this explicitly.

[161]The terminology is Slote's (1995).

the fact that his or her actions will inevitably have some kind of effect on their well-being). Similarly, "cool" agent-based theories emphasize separateness by insisting that self-sufficiency and self-reliance are basic to moral motivation (instead of beginning with claims about the rights and autonomy of moral agents, in the manner of most modern, separateness-based views). Characterizing agent-based theories as "warm" or "cool" is a way of emphasizing that they make the moral value of actions derivative from the inner attitudes and motives of the agents who perform them, but in the same way that modern or "action-focused" theories tend to portray one broad type of value as derivative from or of secondary importance to the other, virtue-ethicists typically portray one broad type of motivation as being derivative from or of secondary importance to the other. And this leads to familiar problems for both points of view.

Cool agent-based ethics

It might be thought that any "cool" ethics of virtue will be completely unable to account for our ordinary sense of justice, and hence that they are importantly unlike modern theories of separateness in this respect. Wouldn't the willingness to run roughshod over the interests and rights of other people exhibit at least as much inner strength as the willingness to restrain one's own pursuits when they conflict with the legitimate pursuits of others? Thinkers like Plato and the Stoics seem to have thought otherwise, however, and if we focus our attention on certain aspects of inner strength -- in particular, volitional and intellectual forms of self-reliance -- "cool" ethics of virtue can go surprisingly far in grounding the general obligation to avoid infringements on others' rights, as well as more specific duties like truth-telling and promise-

keeping.[162] After all, part of what we are attributing to a person we describe as self-reliant is a practical desire to (learn how to) take care of and do things for herself, and the agent who acts out of this sense of self-reliance, as opposed to a kind of motivational parasitism or practical desire to be taken care of, exhibits a degree of independence with regard to other people that we typically admire. Indeed, if we did not value this kind of self-reliance (or 'sense of industry'), if would be difficult to explain why independently wealthy people often choose to work rather than simply live off their trust funds, as well as why the rest of us think more highly of them when they do so.

It is noteworthy in this context that the moral force of the charge of "parasitism" or "dependency" attaches to one's motive rather than some kind of achievement. For example, we typically think more highly of people who exhibit a practical desire to take responsibility for themselves than those who are willing to be taken care of by others regardless of how successful they are; in this sense, the physically weak and socially vulnerable members of society can often be just as 'self-reliant' in their motivations as the more able-bodied and well-to-do.[163] And our admiration for this form of inner strength helps to explain why, for example, lying and failing to keep one's promises is morally objectionable. As Kant rightly emphasized, the deceitful promiser is frequently motivated by a desire to manipulate or use another person in order to gain some kind of advantage for himself, and insofar as this is in direct

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[162]Slote (1993) offers a much more detailed discussion, with a particular emphasis on the way in which such an approach might be used to ground a theory of social and political justice. However, he no longer believes such a view is adequate.

[163]Slote (1995: 90) points out that we admire handicapped persons who strive to be as independent as possible even if their efforts are often frustrated and even though they may be unable to achieve the same ends as the more able-bodied.

opposition to the desire to make one's own way in the world or a sense that one is able to do so, it does seem to betray a deplorable "parasitism" or lack of inner strength.

Intellectual self-reliance also seems particularly important to our understanding of human dignity. This does not mean that the most (morally) admirable person will never allow herself to be influenced by the beliefs and opinions of others, any more than the admirability of self-sufficiency implies that people ought to strive to avoid the practical and emotional dependency on others that is involved in cooperative endeavors and is necessary for the achievement of human goods like friendship and love. To the extent that we are creatures who do, in fact, depend on other people in order to live rich and meaningful lives, attempts to avoid or rebel against necessary kinds of reliance on others serve to undercut, rather than enhance, the inner strength that any of us may be capable of. At the same time, individuals who simply "buy" their beliefs and opinions wholesale from others seem to be lacking an appropriate sense of personal identity or integrity (Erikson 1968; McFall 1987). And the ability not only to make one's own way in the world, but also to choose, for oneself, what sorts of activities to engage in and care about, seems to explain (as well as anything does) our conviction that every individual has a unique kind of value simply as the particular person she or he is.

Notice, however, that the conception of human dignity at work in this model is a variable one: individuals have dignity to the extent that they possess the various motivational states that are constitutive of a strong and

self-sufficient inner life.[164] By itself this may not be objectionable, since theories that insist on an invariable notion of dignity have notorious difficulties explaining what we should say about, as well as how we should treat, those persons who fail to meet the standard of dignity even if this failure is through no fault of the person's own. On the sort of agent-based view under consideration here, even children and the insane presumably have minimal dignity insofar as they have some unrealized capacity for self-sufficiency and self-reliance, though they clearly do not have the same dignity as those who possess and exhibit the kinds of inner strength that cool virtue ethics portray as the most admirable forms of human motivation. However, the variable notion of dignity becomes somewhat more distressing when we notice that such an ethic seems to direct an agent's moral attention primarily toward facts about his own inner life rather than toward facts about others.

Indeed, it might be thought that thinkers who espouse "cool" ethics of virtue must have little or no interest in the morality of other-regarding activity. But one aspect of inner strength that receives considerable attention in all the thinkers mentioned above is what we might call self-sufficiency with respect to the good things of this world, and this kind of motivation does enable them to justify a certain kind of other-regard. Both Plato and the Stoics instruct us to "rein in" our potentially insatiable appetites as well as our more unruly passions, and the "most noble type of man" is characterized by Nietzsche not as constantly desiring or seeking more power and other good things for himself, but as possessing a sense of "superabundance" (1886: §260). The suggestion is that the truly strong individual will, other things being

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[164]Such a variable conception of dignity is particularly evident in Plato's famous "myth of the metals" (*Republic*: Book IV).

equal, tend to be fairly moderate in his desires simply because he is satisfied with what might not be enough for others. And perhaps the most intriguing element of Nietzsche's ethical thought is the suggestion that the strongest and most self-sufficient individual will not only make the rest of us seem needy and greedy by comparison, but will feel that he has more than enough to spare, and so will naturally tend to exude or exhibit his inner strength through acts that have a beneficial impact on others. Of course, Nietzsche says that such a person "honors whatever he recognizes in himself," and in that sense, his action amounts to a kind of "self-glorification." But the truly noble individual does not give good things to others in order to glorify himself; to do that would betray a neediness on his part.[165] Rather, the noble individual is prompted by "the feeling of plenitude, of power that seeks to overflow" and "the consciousness of wealth that would fain give and bestow" (1886: §260). Elsewhere, Nietzsche indicates that the person who is motivated by a sense of superabundance "imparts" values to the actions he chooses (1887: §55; cf. §61 and §382), and in this way he gives a very agent-based account of generosity as an expression of the ideal of inner-strength. The claim is that the most self-sufficient individual will be motivated to "bestow" excesses in his material goods, time or emotional resources on those who are less fortunate or more needy than the agent himself, and that we think of his actions as morally good because of the way they exemplify his admirable inner strength.

Nonetheless, because such an approach derives the moral significance of acts of beneficence and generosity from the self-sufficiency of agents who perform them, it does not seem to imply that we have any ground floor duties

[165]In *Joyful Wisdom*, Nietzsche describes the superabundant individual as possessing "a bravery without the desire for honor" (1887: §55).

to care about or even respect other people in their own right. Moreover, while it does suggest that we ought to be aware of situations in which we have enough to spare for others, and while it does contend that the morally best (and most strong) individual will often be moved by that kind of awareness to engage in acts of overflowing beneficence, it is simply not clear that the self-sufficient moral agent will in fact be good or sensitive enough to discharge such duties effectively (Hursthouse 1993). My concern is not that such agents will be too selfish; it may very well be true that the most completely self-sufficient agent will not be moved by any self-regarding desires for personal glorification or honor. But neither is he clearly moved by the desire to help the other people he "bestows" personal excesses upon, or by anything more than the very minimal awareness of others that enables the agent to recognize when he has "enough to spare." This increases the likelihood that the self-sufficient agent will make erroneous choices about how best to distribute excess goods, giving them to people who don't really want or need them. And more importantly, I think, even if he does choose the most effective methods of distribution, the self-reliant agent may be "detached" from the persons he is helping in ways that diminish the moral quality of his acts. It is far from clear, for example, that he will express, or even feel, the regret or sadness at the plight of the less fortunate that enable the beneficiaries of his overflowing generosity to retain a healthy sense of self worth; but unless the moral agent does express those sorts of other-regarding emotions, the beneficiaries of his actions are likely to feel that they are mere objects of the agent's supera-bundant desires, rather than individuals whose needs and interests matter in their own right. Similarly, it is not obvious that a self-reliant moral agent will convey an attitude of respect toward other people when he refrains from

interfering with them; he may simply be "doing his own thing" in such a way that thoughts about other persons cannot get a foothold in his deliberations.

In saying this, I am not denying that "doing one's own thing" may frequently be permissible. But an agent-based morality of inner strength suggests that it is better to be more concerned with our own (ability to achieve our) autonomously chosen goals and pursuits, than with how things are going with others, and that, I think, is too strong. To begin with, the expression of various inherently other-regarding attitudes on the part of the agent frequently confer added benefits to the persons the moral agent is responding to. And even where these benefits are not obvious (e.g., in situations where the moral agent is more accurately described as interacting with others than responding to their needs), the possession of those attitudes increases the agent's moral sensitivities and is a sign of the agent's general level of "moral sincerity."[166] Moreover, such an agent is unlikely to experience the special affect of "joy" that, as Noddings points out, arises out of a sense of deep, emotional connectedness with others. Without such other-regarding attitudes, in other words, the moral agent may remain psychologically detached from other people in a way that can cause tremendous moral harms: not only does she deprive others of important sources of (moral) value, she also cuts herself off from such values in a way that can foster a debilitating sense of anomie. These attitudes may not be wholly incompatible with motivational self-sufficiency and self-reliance, but they are certainly not entailed by those forms of motivation, and so a morality of inner strength will give them, at best, a kind of derivative value that obscures their actual moral significance.

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[166]On the notion of "moral sincerity," see Williams (1973: Ch. 13). Sherman (1990; 1994) and Nussbaum (1990) have also discussed the important role of various emotional attachments to others in moral motivation.

Warm agent-based ethics

"Warm" agent-based theories neatly avoid this kind of one-sidedness, by insisting that some degree of emotional connection to others is basic to our conception of moral motivation, and hence fundamental to our understanding of morality and its requirements. They particularly emphasize the fact that the possession of such attitudes can often confer added benefits on the recipient of moral activity, since acts are evaluated as morally better to the extent that they more fully exhibit and express the agent's concern for and commitment to others' well-being. However, warm agent-based views threaten to make moral agents so completely responsive to the situation of other people that they have very little time and/or energy to engage in their own, more individualistic pursuits. And in the worst case scenario, they encourage moral agents to be self-abnegating in ways that are morally objectionable (cf. Hill 1991: Chs. 1-2).

The first sort of difficulty is illustrated most clearly by an ethic of universal benevolence. We saw earlier (§2.6) that such a view, like utilitarianism, is self/other symmetric: if an agent acts out of a concern for himself in a situation where he is in no position to benefit anyone else, his act will be evaluated just as highly as if he acts out of a concern for some other individual in a situation where he is in no position to benefit anyone else (including himself). However, because it gives moral priority to a concern for human welfare overall, such a view entails that an agent's actions are morally better to the extent that they exhibit a greater or stronger practical desire to improve human well-being, both in terms of helping as many people as possible, and in terms of responding as fully as one can to each person's concrete needs and desires. Opportunities to benefit others are, of course,

pervasive, and though the universally benevolent agent's concern for his own well-being is treated as no less significant than his concern for the well-being of any other individual, the mere fact that there are so many other people means that his legitimate self-concern will seldom be exhibited and expressed in his acts, or at least, in those acts that are assessed by the theory as especially morally fine. In other words, since the moral value of self-concern is derived from (or treated as an instance of) the more overarching value of concern for the general welfare, attention to one's own needs and interests will inevitably play a minimal role in the universally benevolent agent's deliberations. As a result of this feature, an agent-based morality of universal benevolence is committed to an extremely demanding conception of moral agency, and has difficulty explaining our conviction that, at least in ordinary circumstances, there must surely be limits on what morality can require any individual agent to do.

An agent-based ethic of care can also be said to be demanding in this way: though the emphasis on caring deeply for specific others suggests that an agent's legitimate self-concern is somewhat less likely to be lost among her concerns for vast numbers of other people, there are still no (deontological) restrictions on what she can be required to do for others. And as we have seen, an ethic of care encourages agents to care for as many people as they (effectively) can, and to accept a great deal of responsibility for promoting the caring capacities of others.[167] But an ethic of care is especially prone to the second kind of difficulty mentioned above -- the problem of self-

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[167]Urban-Walker has suggested that "the fact of human connectedness that makes for endless vistas of responsibility (both with respect to any person and with respect to all)" (1989: 130), accounts for the strain that is often heard in the voices of Gilligan's female respondents.

abnegation.[168] This results from its emphasis on what Noddings's calls "motivational displacement." To be motivated in this way is to care about others so deeply that fulfilling their needs and interests takes top priority in one's life and in one's deliberations about what to do. Hence, an ethic that is based on the admirability of this type of motivation implicitly treats the well-being of the other person(s) a moral agent is (or could be) responding to as in some sense more morally important than the well-being of the agent herself (Houston, 1987: 117), and correlates with a highly extra-regarding conception of morality, in which an agent's motives and actions are evaluated as morally better to the extent that they exhibit more care and concern for other people, but agents are only said to be morally justified in formulating and pursuing their own good after the needs of others have been met. Similarly, it seems to entail that agents are obligated to promote the good of others, but have no corresponding obligation to promote their own good beyond the point which is necessary to fulfill their (more basic) obligations of caring for others. But this produces a tension deep within the theory. On the one hand, the theory suggests that morality has centrally to do with enhancing the quality of individual human lives, yet on the other hand, it suggests that morality directs each person to pay very little attention to the quality of his or her own life. And one does not have to reject the idea that interpersonal connections are valuable to find this a bit odd. Even if we agree that moral agents must never make special exceptions for themselves or be predominantly concerned

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[168]Note that this differs from the problem of "complicity in evils." That problem reflected the concern that a caring-moral agent will support the evil projects of people with whom she is in relationships. As we are about to see, the problem of self-abnegation stems from the likelihood that a caring agent (as characterized by Noddings) will always put the establishment and maintenance of ongoing person relationships ahead of more individualistic pursuits.

with promoting their own good, why should agents be forced to treat their own good as in some sense less morally significant than the good of all others? It is in this way that warm virtue-ethics are most obviously "one-sided," implying that other people should take on a kind of moral import within an agent's deliberation that the agent himself presumably lacks.

Care-ethicists are not unaware of this difficulty. In attempting to overcome it, Noddings has emphasized that her ethic does place limits on what anyone can be morally required to do for others: people are "excused" from caring whenever they recognize that being motivationally displaced poses a danger to their physical or ethical self. But she also says that people form their ethical identities by being other-directed (1984: 14; 49-51; 99), and so it is reasonable to ask, as many feminists have done, whether a caring agent will in fact be able to recognize threats to her own well-being (Houston (1987); Shogun (1988); Card (1985)). Noddings also points out that her ethic is meant to be universal: everyone ought to act as "ones-caring," so a caring agent should receive as much support from others as she is willing to provide to them. Still, nothing in Noddings's ethic guarantees that this will occur: it is perfectly possible that a moral agent will find herself involved only in relationships where she is the one caring and others are content to be cared for. Similarly, Noddings emphasizes that the best relationships are "doubly caring," that is, that they are ones in which it is very difficult (and perhaps makes no sense to even try) to determine which person is acting as the "one-caring" and which person is the one who is being "cared-for" (1984: 69ff). It is in these relationships that caring is most likely to be accompanied by the special affect she calls joy, and in which the ideal of caring is most fully achieved. But here again, there is no guarantee that every moral agent will

find herself in such joyful relations, and as we have seen, Noddings does not allow moral agents to withdraw from relationships simply because they are not joyful.

Michael Slote has attempted to avoid the one-sidedness of warm, agent-based view in a slightly different way, by advocating an ideal of "balanced caring" (1995: §5; 1997). This differs from a morality of universal benevolence, because rather than attempting to derive concern for self and concern for other(s) from a more undifferentiated concern for the general welfare, Slote treats them as two distinct modes of the most overarching motivational ideal. And it also differs from the ideal of caring, because rather than treating concern for strangers and distant others as a somewhat less ideal form, or highly situation-specific expression, of the very admirable kind of caring that is typically exhibited toward those who are relatively near and dear, it divides the class of others into (roughly) two groups: those with whom the moral agent is in fairly concrete relationships (friends, family, colleagues, etc.); and strangers and distant others with whom he is not. The motivational ideal, in Slote's view, amounts to a three-way balance between care for oneself, care for the class of people who are near and dear, and care for the class of distant others, where the latter two groups are portrayed as factoring into the agent's motivations in sensu composito rather than in sensu diviso.[169] This means that the claims of those persons with whom one is engaged in ongoing relationships will be far less likely to be outweighed by the sheer numbers of distant others, although there may still be situations in which the extreme neediness and vulnerability of strangers and distant others (when taken as a group) will counterbalance the interests of the agent's

[169]For discussion of this distinction, see Slote (1992: 229-30).

colleagues, friends and loved-ones (also taken as a group). And similarly, it means that the agent's concern for his own well-being or desire to engage in more individualistic pursuits will be somewhat less likely to be outweighed by the sheer numbers of both near and distant others, though the fact that he must balance his own concerns against two groups of other people means that any self-regarding concerns will need to be fairly weighty in order to tip the scales in the agent's favor.[170] In this way, Slote hopes to acknowledge what is admirable about a caring motivational state, without suggesting that moral agents should be completely alienated from their own interests or welfare when they are engaged in moral deliberation. [171]

Slote's ethic seems significantly less likely to result in the kind of self-abnegation that plagues other care-based views, and it also has the advantage of avoiding the objectionable "detachment" of the self-sufficient agent without implying that agents should devote all of their motivational energies to care and concern for others. As a result, it seems somewhat better able to acknowledge the significance of both separateness and connectedness in moral life. The balanced-carer, one might say, is "neither a parasite nor a pushover."[172] Yet however appropriate a degree of self-concern may be, it does not seem quite as admirable as a sense of self-reliance/self-sufficiency, and insofar as the former attitude stems from a recognition of human neediness and vulnerability, a "balanced care-ethic" still seems to give a certain primacy to the connectedness aspect of our natures. Moreover, because

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[170]For a more detailed account of how this balancing process occurs than I can offer here, see Slote (1992: Ch.6; cf. forthcoming).

[171]Note that Gilligan may have been the first to suggest that "balanced caring" is a moral ideal (1982: esp. ch. 6).

[172]Slote himself does frequently say this, at least in conversation.

it suggests that moral situations are typically ones in which agents must strike an appropriate balance between doing things for the other persons they are connected to in various ways, or doing things for themselves, it also tends to obscure or push to the background what is perhaps the most distinctive element of the "care-orientation" Gilligan identified — namely, the way in which relationships themselves were morally valued.

3.6 From autonomy vs. caring to sharing

In some ways, Noddings's more relational ethic may be better able to capture this idea. Her claim that the morally best human relationships are doubly caring is meant to suggest that in the best case scenario, to act morally is to engage with others on the basis of a mutually held commitment to caring for the other. And when Noddings describes the object of a caring agent's joy as linked to both oneself and the person(s) one is caring for, yet as being focused somewhere beyond both, I believe she is pointing to the distinctive value of a "sense of harmony" with others that arises when agents engage in genuinely shared activity.[173] However, because Noddings restricts the domain of mutually held commitments that constitute morally good interactions to the commitment to caring, mutual engagement and mutual responsiveness are treated as a kind of epiphenomena to moral activity, rather than as being morally significant in their own right. My own view is that these are in fact crucial moral-motivational capacities. Hence, I want to suggest that sharing (rather than caring) is a more appropriate candidate for our most overarching moral ideal.

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[173]Similar phrases have been used by Nancy Sherman, who also emphasizes the moral value of sharing (1993; 1997: ch. 5; see also 1991: ch. 4).

Interestingly, a related point has recently been made by Christine Korsgaard, who acknowledges her intellectual affinity with separateness-based thinkers like Rawls, Nozick and Kant (Korsgaard 1993). Noting that "moral philosophers have persistently assumed that the primal scene of morality is a scene in which someone does something to or for someone else," she argues that it is in fact a scene "in which we do something together" (Ibid.: 24). Her idea seems to be that in the primal moral scene, concern for self and concern for others cannot be clearly distinguished within the psyche of any individual agent, and there is no need to "balance" the two sorts of concerns, because they are not in essential competition with one another. As Korsgaard puts it, the task of moral agents "is to find the reasons they can share" (Ibid.: 25).

Korsgaard herself believes that this realization "[brings] us back to Kant" (Ibid.: 49). And although I believe that a principle-based account of moral agency is inadequate to capture the extremely rich moral psychology that is involved in genuine sharing (this will be the subject of Chapter Four), I do not think it is surprising that the ideal of sharing has been alluded to by proponents of both separateness-based and connection-based views. This is because the psychological features involved in sharing include both "warm" and "cool" forms of motivation: a kind of openness and responsiveness to others that is accompanied by a sense of superabundance or desire not to be merely a parasite on other people. In order to be genuinely sharing with another person, an agent must of course be responsive to that other's needs. But the agent must also bring something of him or herself to the interaction as well – that is what makes sharing different from caring (and other more purely altruistic activities).

The moral psychology of sharing not only integrates motives from both sides of the separateness/connectedness tension, however; it also seems to transcend that tension altogether. For there is something to Noddings's suggestion that the affective joy that one experiences when engaged in shared activity is focused somewhere "beyond" one's attitudes toward self and other; the sharing agent is unique not so much because she lacks a baseline concern for either herself or for others, but because she also possesses an additional kind of concern for "us." It is that sense of mutuality that is most clearly expressed through the sharing agent's acts, and I believe that it gives us a basis from which to explain the special value that seems to attach to moral reasons, and the special status that such reasons seem to have by comparison with more prudential or egoistic reasons to act. In any even, a normative outlook based on the ideal of sharing seems to be in a much better position to avoid the forms of one-sidedness that plague both separateness-based and connectedness-based moral views than any of the ideals discussed in this chapter.

Chapter Four:
The Will to Share

I began this dissertation by suggesting that the contemporary Autonomy/Caring Debate has been so intractable in large part because its participants tend to conflate two distinct tensions, both of which have historical roots within the western philosophical tradition. The most general is a tension in "value-orientation" or the substance and focus of moral concern, and I argued (in Chapter Three) that we have no good reason to view either the values of individual separateness or the values of interpersonal connectedness as morally primary. In this chapter, I endeavor to show how the ideal of sharing integrates these two set(s) of values, providing us with a much more unified way of thinking about morality and the ethical life.

The second tension has to do with the structure of moral understanding and corresponding methods of moral deliberation, methods which ethical theorists typically claim to be explicating, and an ideal version of which they are ultimately hoping to defend. In this respect, the Autonomy/Caring Debate roughly parallels the dispute between defenders of more principled or "action-focused" accounts of moral judgment (including both deontological and consequentialist moral views), and defenders of more virtue-ethical or "agent-focused" accounts. And here I sided more clearly with defenders of the ethics of care, suggesting that they are correct to insist that individual agents need not be "acting on principle" (neither explicitly nor implicitly) in order to be acting morally. Even more radically, I argued that it is in fact possible to defend an entirely "agent-based" account of morality and the ethical life, and that the ethics of care become significantly more plausible when understood in agent-based terms. Accordingly, I argued that we (can)

understand the moral status of actions as being entirely derivative from the intrinsic, or independently grounded admirability of the motives and character traits that are exhibited or made manifest by the agents who perform those actions, and that moral deliberation can best be understood as an exercise in what has been called "reflexive self-monitoring" or "responsibility reasoning" -- that is, of choosing to act in ways that reflect one's (most) admirable motivations, or at the very least, refraining from acting in ways that are prompted by one's (most) deplorable motivations.

Of course, this way of thinking about morality and moral agency presupposes some conception of what types of motivations are in fact best (i.e., of what motivational states count as genuine moral virtues), and so any agent-based ethic that hopes to have normative import will have to say something about the character of the moral-motivational ideals we should strive for and against which more limited or imperfect (complexes of) motivations and character traits are to be assessed. Defending a particular motivational ideal is a specific way of answering the question about the appropriate substance or focus of moral concern, and this means that even if care-ethicists are correct (as I believe they are) to insist that the rightness of any action depends crucially on the value of its motive, they may still be wrong to insist that "connection-based" motives like care and responsiveness have, or should be granted, general primacy over all other sorts of motivations, not the least of which include the forms of self-sufficiency and self-reliance that are typically emphasized within more "separateness-based" views. And in fact, I have argued that care-ethicists are wrong about this, for "warm" agent-based ethics (including an ethic based on an ideal of universal benevolence and an ethic based on the more partial ideal of caring) are

objectionably one-sided in the direction of the other people to whom the caring agent is morally connected, and idealize forms of moral agency that can be excessively demanding or even self-abnegating. I also argued that "cool" agent-based ethics of the sort that might take their inspiration from Plato, the Stoics and Nietzsche are objectionably one-sided in the other direction, and idealize the character of agents who are in fact "detached" from other people in ways that can cause significant moral harms. It may seem, therefore, that adopting an agent-based approach to moral theory brings us no closer to resolving the more substantive tension in value-orientation, and hence that defending this structure of moral understanding has relatively little practical bite.

If the argument of the present chapter is correct, however, then that conclusion is perhaps a bit too hasty. For in the process of demonstrating that the ideal of sharing unifies -- and in a certain sense, even transcends -- the separateness/connectedness tension that is deeply embedded within both ordinary and philosophical moral thought, I shall also be suggesting that it is best understood in agent-based terms. More specifically, I shall contend that the practical desire or "Will to Share" both things and experiences with other people is a basic moral attitude that lies at the core of an unmistakably human form of moral agency, and that the intrinsic admirability of such a Will can be used as a basis from which to explain and justify the other types of moral judgments that we make. It turns out, in other words, that the best way of overcoming the tension in value-orientation may be to think about morality in agent-based terms.

The complete argument for this claim will extend into Chapter Five, where I explore the implications of an agent-based ethic of sharing in the

individual moral realm. This chapter lays the foundation for that further inquiry by identifying the central features of a Will to Share, suggesting that it is deeply rooted in human sociability and so is psychologically possible for us to cultivate and act from, and defending the claim that such a Will is intrinsically admirable.

4.1 Two modes of shared activity

In order to understand what is morally good about sharing and shared activity, it will be useful to distinguish between two main aspects or modes. The first and perhaps most obvious is the "distributive mode" which can be used to characterize children sharing toys, roommates sharing an apartment, or parents sharing responsibility for raising a child. But there is a second, and in my view much more distinctive "experiential mode" which is characterized by various forms of mutuality. Here there is no connotation of dividing things up, but rather of doing things together, or of going on what Nancy Sherman has aptly described as a "shared voyage" (1993; 1997: ch. 5). I believe it is this mode that distinguishes genuine or full-blown sharing, of the sort that is morally good and proper, from the "mere" or accidental distribution of things, and I shall ultimately argue that the experiential mode is what accounts for the intrinsic admirability of the Will to Share and explains the special value we typically attach to moral activity. But before we can see why, we need to get clearer about what each mode of sharing involves.

Distributive sharing

Even the very short list of examples just mentioned indicates that the "objects" of distributive sharing can be quite diverse. Sometimes the object is a divisible good, such as a toybox full of building blocks or an apartment with

several similarly sized rooms, that people can simply divide up into separate portions for each to enjoy or make use of on his or her own. Other times, it is a non-divisible good, such as the only swing on a playground, or the coziest armchair in an apartment; in these circumstances, people engage in distributive sharing by taking turns. The "object" of distributive sharing can also be an activity, like reading a bed-time story, and people can and often do engage in distributive sharing with respect to relatively undesirable objects of this sort, such as when roommates take turns performing menial household chores, or parents take turns changing diapers or getting up early to see the kids off to school. But it is also important to notice that many objects of sharing are not like any of these cases.

When parents share responsibility for raising a child, for example, the responsibility seems to be something that each parent has in full and all the time regardless of what the other parent thinks or feels or does. Though they may of course take turns performing specific acts on behalf of the child, one at least hopes that they each take responsibility for parenting in a way that is independent of considerations about whose turn it is to read a bedtime story, attend an after school sporting event or piano recital, or what have you. And they may also share their parenting responsibilities without engaging in any explicit turn-taking or dividing up of specific tasks. Indeed, it seems that parents who share their responsibilities most fully are not primarily concerned with how those responsibilities are distributed between them. Put another way, sharing parental responsibility seems to have less to do with dividing things up than with coordinating one's activity with another person.

In using this example, I do not mean to suggest that it is impossible to be a good parent without sharing one's responsibility with someone else, nor

do I mean to suggest that parents must continue to be romantically involved with one another in order to share responsibility for their children. As Sherman has pointed out, a divorced couple may engage in activity that is "highly orchestrated as part of an overall plan to promote their daughter's welfare," and this may include "joint deliberation in the planning and reliability in its exercise; a devotion to a common cause and shared values in its realization" (1993: 281). Sherman also points out that if the parents no longer have any warm feelings for one another, certain values that typically characterize shared activity will be lost. I shall return to this further claim in a moment. For now, my point is simply that parents who can be described as genuinely sharing their responsibilities with one another will (need to) interact in ways that go well beyond a concern with the mere distribution of things.

The case of parental responsibility is particularly instructive in this regard because it also makes clear that even distributive sharing frequently involves something more than simply having interests and concerns in common. It is unfortunately all too obvious that merely having a child in common with someone else is not enough to ensure that one will share responsibility for raising that child.[174] And it seems that even having common

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[174]To be sure, we often say that a "dead-beat dad" shares responsibility for his children even though he refuses to take it, and more generally, we attribute moral and legal responsibility for a child's upbringing on the basis of biological parenthood. When we use the term 'sharing' in this way, we do seem to be merely pointing out that people have something interesting or important in common (e.g., 'being a biological parent of Chris'). Nothing in my account of shared activity is meant to deny such usage or requires that we reject it, but my focus here is on the somewhat narrower sense of the term 'sharing' that connotes active agency. That is, I am interested in what an agent is consciously or unconsciously doing (thinking, feeling or aiming at) when she or he is sharing with someone else. Hence, to share parental responsibility (or any other activity) in the sense I am interested in here requires that one be actively involved in a child's upbringing and engage in that activity with someone else.

interests in the child's welfare, common goals for the child's upbringing, or common beliefs about how best to ensure the child's good may not be enough. For example, a divorced parent or jilted lover who is extremely vindictive or resentful toward the other parent may do everything possible to prevent that parent from being involved in the child's upbringing, despite the fact that they share strikingly similar parental goals. It might be thought that the vindictive parent lacks at least one crucial belief that the other may very well have -- the belief that the other parent has a right to be involved in the child's life, for example, or that the child will be better off if both parents are involved in his or her upbringing. But even this is not necessarily the case. An ex-husband may very well recognize that his ex-wife is a capable mother who has a legitimate interest in spending time with her kids, but nonetheless prevent her from seeing them as a way of punishing her for whatever it was that led to their divorce. Alternatively, a woman might fail to even tell an ex-lover that he does have a child, simply because she can't bear the thought of having to coordinate parenting with him, while still being aware that his participation might benefit the child in various ways, and/or knowing that he would want to be involved in the child's upbringing.[175] In short, while a common interest in protecting and nurturing a child may be a necessary condition of their shared parenting, it alone does not seem sufficient. The parents must also at least be willing to coordinate their activities if they are going to share their responsibilities in any meaningful sense, and while this does not require that they be in love, it does require that they take up certain practical attitudes toward one another as well as toward the child who is the

[175]Of course, the father in this latter case would lack the knowledge that he has a child. But even if he did know about his child's existence, the mother might still fail to share parenting responsibilities with him.

more central object of, or basis for, their mutual concern. Each of them must have some interest in parenting with the other person.

Similarly, when colleagues share the success or failure of their firm's most recent business venture, or when teammates share the glory of winning or the agony of defeat, our judgment that they are engaged in shared activity seems to have somewhat less to do with the ways in which they distribute or divide things up than with the fact that they can be meaningfully described as doing something together. This notion of 'doing things together' is rather difficult to specify with precision,[176] at least in part because it seems to be a phenomenon that admits of degrees. For example, a group of colleagues who can all be reliably counted on to perform their specific tasks and who are all careful to ensure that their own contributions fit within the overall business plan, but among whom only one or two have any interest or involvement in structuring that plan, seems to share the firm's success or failure to a much lesser degree than a similar group of colleagues who also engage in joint strategy sessions and work out the business plan together. Similarly, most of us recognize the difference between a sports team made up of "showboaters" all seeking to be the highest scorer or MVP, and one made up of players who not only admire each others' talents, but also share a common love for the game and genuinely enjoy the activity of playing together regardless of whether they win or lose. Margaret Gilbert (following a suggestion by Charles Taylor) has also pointed out that a fairly radical change seems to occur when two strangers walking side by side in a desert begin to communicate with one another: although the fact that it is very hot is surely common knowledge

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[176]For some recent discussions see, in addition to Sherman (1991: ch. 4; 1993; 1997: ch. 5), Bratman (1992; 1993), Gilbert (1994; 1989), May (1992), Nagel (1979), and Tuomela (1988). And see my own text beginning on p. 169, below.

before they speak, when one says "it's hot" and the other replies "you bet," that fact becomes something "entre nous" in a way that was not clearly evident before (1994: 12). And despite their mutual interest in their daughter's welfare and concern for their daughter's good, the divorced parents in Sherman's example are unlikely, as she points out, to "interact with the spontaneity and enthusiasm of sharing in each other's thoughts and feelings" (1993: 281), and so seem to be doing things together to a lesser degree than a couple who continues to enjoy sharing their lives and experiences with one another (perhaps including, but certainly not limited to, the experience of helping their children grow). The difference, in the cases that involve a higher degree of sharing, seems largely independent of the fact that they possess common interests or are seeking jointly-held goals, and involves a unique kind of mental and/or emotional interdependence.[177] Hence, these kinds of examples point to the second, and in my view much more distinctive, "experiential mode" of shared activity.

Experiential sharing

In order to genuinely share their responsibility, success or failure, glory or agony with one another, parents, colleagues and teammates must be mutually engaged. At a minimum, this requires that they be mutually attuned: each must pay attention to, take an interest in, and be concerned about whether the others are willing and able to fulfill specific tasks. And in order to be at all successful in their shared endeavors, they must also be

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[177]Sherman takes this to show that "it is not just formal features that are decisive" in determinations of when (or whether) sharing has occurred (1993: 281). And this kind of point is also emphasized by Gilbert (1994; cf. 1989), who characterizes 'doing things together' as the most highly "social" form of human activity, arguing that sociality is a "philosophically significant category" that, while oft overlooked, is indispensable for an understanding of the human condition (and cannot be further reduced).

mutually responsive: each must coordinate his or her own activities in ways that "mesh" with the activities of the others, and each must be ready to make necessary adjustments and fill in as needed if, for some reason, the others fall down on the job or are unable to fulfill their particular role. This "meshing" process does not require that all of the participants have exactly the same goals or intentions.[178] But it does seem to require that each of the participants wants or intends for the whole group to perform the shared activity in a way that will not thwart any of the participants' more individualistic "sub-plans" (Bratman 1992: 332; cf. 1993). And as we will see in §4.2, it is this kind of practical desire to do things together that distinguishes full-blown sharing from the "mere" or accidental distribution of things.

We are now in a somewhat better position to see why "doing things together" is a phenomenon that admits of degrees. For it seems that fairly minimal kinds of mutual engagement will frequently take place for the sake of more personal goals, such as when colleagues develop a business plan together so that each of them can carve out a desirable niche for themselves within the firm. A somewhat richer or more substantial form of mutual engagement occurs for the sake of a jointly-held goal, such as winning a tournament. But, and this is especially important, the ends of mutual engagement can also be internal to the shared activity itself, as when friends simply enjoy "hanging out" together, or when teammates play together even after the tournament has been won (or lost) simply for the fun of the game. This is characteristic of the most highly mutual or shared forms of human activity, and in these situations, "interaction that shows mutual interest and

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[178]For an attempt to make this "meshing" process explicit see Bratman (1992; 1993), but note that his account is limited to what he calls "shared cooperative activity" -- activity that is instrumentally valuable and engaged in for the sake of some further, jointly held goal.

responsiveness is valued simply for its own sake" (Sherman 1993: 279; see also Adams 1988).

Sherman points out that children seem to value this sort of mutual engagement from a very early age, seeking playmates who are not only fair, sympathetic, and willing to play by the rules, but with whom they can "invent a shared world" (1993: 280).[179] And experiential sharing characterizes the best sort of adult interaction too, as is the case with good conversation:

> In the ideal and perhaps inspired case, there is the thrill of being in conversation with another, of seeing the other's point, of her seeing yours, of hitting on salience together, of acknowledging that the discovery is not proprietary to me or you but to us, of realizing that even if it is proprietary to one but not the other, the real pleasure is in sharing, in making it public to the other who acknowledges a comparable pleasure in its apprehension, and then, of going somewhere with it, together (Ibid.: 279).

Put more generally, the experiential mode is perhaps most clearly exemplified in situations where two (or more) people can be described, if only momentarily, as sharing a point of view. In such situations, the object of sharing is something that neither person would or could have if each possessed only a portion of it, or even if each embraced a very similar point of view without being aware that the other embraced it as well. This is because a shared point of view is inherently mutual: part of what makes it the point of view that it is stems from its being the case that each person recognizes and cares about the fact that the other has beliefs and attitudes that are strikingly similar to his or her own, and that each person appreciates the other's

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[179]Note that the same kind of point was made by Jean Piaget, who observed in the 1930s that the back and forth social rhythm of taking turns on a swing often seems to be just as enjoyable for young children as the back and forth physical rhythm of actually being on the swing.

appreciation of this similarity.[180] This typically gives the point of view a special kind of significance or value for each of the persons who share it that would otherwise be lacking; indeed, it is this fact that makes sharing a point of view something quite different from simply having the same point of view in common with someone else. And notice that this value is highly distinctive: it is a value that no person can achieve or experience for herself without the active participation of others, and that no person can provide to or bestow on other people simply out of a desire to benefit them (Adams 1988: §IV). It seems appropriate to characterize this mode of sharing as "experiential," therefore, because what is shared in the purest case is a unique kind of experience -- not just of tracking and being responsive to another person for the sake of some further end, but of "being in tune" with another's feelings and thoughts.

Talk of 'sharing experiences' and 'being in tune' often has associations of intimacy,[181] so it might be thought that experiential sharing can only occur between people in relatively close and ongoing personal relationships. But "the mutual tracking that goes on in good conversation doesn't presuppose the bonds of enduring friendship or previous affiliation" (Sherman 1993: 280), and a sense of being in tune can occur in a brief moment and often quite by surprise:

> There are shared voyages we take simply by being drawn into casual conversation with others, by playing with another through verbal repartee, by singing together the same tune, by

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[180] Iterations of this mutual appreciation may go on indefinitely (each party may appreciate that each appreciates the other's appreciation, etc., etc.), depending on how deeply the point of view is shared.

[181] See, for example, Thomas Nagel's famous discussion of the role that multiply iterated levels of mutual awareness plays in sexual attraction (1979).

> knowing that others endorse brand x over brand y, by putting weight on the same point and acknowledging it through a shared glance or head nod, by concurring about some matter of taste or fact, and acknowledging the consensus (Ibid.: 282).

Here too, "the value of affiliation is conspicuous apart from the specific ends it promotes" (Ibid.: 280). And as these kinds of examples make clear, experiential sharing is a pervasive and commonplace event in most of our lives.[182]

4.2 The primacy of the experiential mode

The fact that the experiential mode is such a commonplace may help to explain why the moral significance of sharing has not been fully appreciated. For if we focus too exclusively on the distributive mode, it may seem as though the moral goodness of sharing can be explained in terms of each agent's commitment to more familiar ideals of justice, or by the fact that their actions conform to principles of "fairness" or "equality" with respect to the distribution of things. And if this line of thinking were correct, then the ideal of sharing would neither be particularly distinctive, nor the most ethically basic or overarching ideal we seem to rely on or to be able to articulate. But we have seen that the mutuality that characterizes experiential sharing is highly distinctive, and I believe that this mode grounds the moral goodness of distributive sharing as well. Indeed, the experiential mode is crucial for determining when (or whether) genuine sharing has occurred (that is why I characterized the distributive and experiential as two modes of shared activity, rather than as two discrete types).

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[182]The importance of "being in tune" to personality development has been emphasized by child psychologists. See especially Greenspan (1989) and Stern (1985).

We can begin to see why if we consider the difference between what child psychologists call "parallel play," and the more interactive forms of play to which (following Sherman) I earlier referred. As an example of parallel play, imagine two children who have each taken their favorite vehicle out of a toybox: one is happily driving a fire-truck around the room, while another is happily driving a sports-car. There is no animosity or envy between them (assume each is perfectly content with his own vehicle and has plenty of room to entertain himself), but neither do they take any particular interest in one another; they are simply off in their separate fantasy worlds, playing side by side.

Many people would be reluctant to describe these two children as genuinely sharing the toys: it is not clear at this point that either child is even aware (let alone cares) that the other child is enjoying himself, and there is no obvious sense in which the children can be described as even dividing things up (let alone as doing something together). Each child is simply "doing his own thing," and while it just so happens that there were enough suitable toys to go around in this case, there might have been quite a fight if there was only one toy in the toybox, or if both had desired to play with the same vehicle. It is this type of situation that I have in mind when I speak of the "mere" distribution of things, and I submit that our reluctance to describe these children as sharing[183] shows that the fact that an object has been distributed in a particular way is not enough to explain what is involved in genuine or full-blown sharing. In order for people to be truly sharing with one another,

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[183]If we do describe the parallel players as sharing the toys, it is only in the more passive sense in which we say that inanimate objects share a property (being a liquid, being blue), and has very little to do with what the children are in fact doing or the aims and structure of their agency (cf. footnote 174, above).

something distinctive must be going on in each of their minds — something that the parallel players appear to lack.

What is this something? Following, Michael Bratman (1992), I want to suggest that some minimal level of mutuality (of the sort that characterizes the experiential mode) must be present in order for full-blown sharing to occur.[184] Even when people are engaged in what he calls "shared cooperative activity" – activity in which participants divide up tasks in order to achieve a further goal — "each person's intention must favor the other's participation as an intentional agent" (Ibid.: 333) and each must "treat the relevant intents of the other as end-providing for [him or] herself" (Ibid.: 335). As a result, each person feels obliged to consider the efficacy of the others' activities as well as of his or her own (Ibid.: 333), and each is committed to finding some way of doing the activity (or distributing the tasks) that satisfies the other people's ends as well as his or her own. That feature accounts for the unique kind of mental and/or emotional interdependence noted above, and enables us to determine when people are genuinely doing things together.

Bratman points out that the mutuality requirement explains why a kidnapper and his victim cannot share the activity of going to New York together. For even if the victim is largely cooperative, this is surely because he views the trip as the best means to secure his personal survival, and not because he wants to see the kidnapper's intentions satisfied. Indeed, the victim is likely to thwart those intents at the first (reasonably safe) opportunity! Similarly, opposing soldiers on a battlefield cannot really be sharing, despite the fact that they may be highly attuned to one another's

[184]Bratman notes that his account is "broadly individualistic," in the sense that it tries to understand shared activity in terms of the attitudes and actions of the individuals involved. For a less individualistic account, see Gilbert (1994).

activity and responsive to one another's moves. Because each soldier intends to hurt or kill his adversary, neither can seriously treat the other's intent as end-providing for himself.

In this way, the mutuality requirement enables us to distinguish genuinely shared activity from activity marked by competition and coercion. Although agents engaged in the latter may be highly attuned and responsive to one another's moves, their engagement will be "egoistic" in the sense that each agent participates for the sake of his or her own good. And it is important to notice that truly mutual engagement differs from reciprocal altruism as well. Reciprocal altruists will each be engaged with the other for the sake of that other person's good. But the engagement that characterizes genuine sharing is mutual in the sense that none of the agents participates solely for the sake of the other(s), and none participates solely for the sake of him or herself. Rather, both participants "give and take in a way that not only contributes to the satisfaction of their individual needs, but also affirms the larger relational unit they compose" (Held 1995: 60).

4.3 The significance of the Will

Earlier I pointed out that the object of experiential sharing is something that no person can attain without the active participation of others (p. 170), and in general I have treated sharing as an activity engaged in by two or more persons. But terms like "mutuality" and "mutual engagement" have a motivational sense as well as an achievement sense, and there are reasons to think that only the former is appropriately used as a criterion for determining whether an act of genuine sharing has occurred. Demanding that an intrinsically valuable sense of "being in tune" must actually be experienced would be far too restrictive, since we have seen that people can and do engage

in (more) distributive forms of sharing for instrumental reasons – that is, for the sake of a further goal. But we have also seen that such agents must at least desire to find some (mutually agreeable) way of doing things together, because it is this latter feature that distinguishes genuine sharing from the "mere" or accidental distribution of things. Unless we appeal to the agents' motivations, for example, it is difficult to explain our sense that some parents truly share responsibility for child-rearing, whereas other simply divide up their parental tasks. At a minimum, people who engage in (more) distributive forms of sharing must desire to find some way of doing the activity that fulfills other people's sub-plans as well as their own.

A second reason to think that the desire for mutuality (rather than the achievement of mutual experience) is the distinguishing feature of shared activity stems from the fact that there are all sorts of cases in which it makes sense to describe one person as sharing with (or performing an act of sharing toward) another even though that other person is completely unresponsive in return. Suppose, for example, that one of our parallel players offers the other a turn with his toy, and the second child simply takes it and runs off to the other end of the room. In that kind of case, there is no mutual tracking going on, and yet it may still seem appropriate to say that the first child shared his toy with the second. But here again, it must be evidence of the first child's desire to play cars with the other that explains our inclination to say he was sharing (rather than giving his toys away). If he was motivated by a desire to make the second child happy, it would be more appropriate to characterize the first child's act as altruistic, and he would presumably be perfectly satisfied when the other child trotted away. But if he was motivated by sharing, he will presumably show signs of frustration and hurt.

The desire for mutuality need not be an agent's only reason for engaging in shared activity; more exclusively self-regarding or other regarding motives may also be at work. But the mark of the sharing agent is his or her overarching desire for mutuality. Appeal to this kind of overarching desire enables us to explain, for example, how friends can share the activity of playing a competitive game, despite the fact that much of their engagement is superficially like that of opposing soldiers on a battlefield. Insofar as each friend intends to be the winner, neither can treat the other's intent as fully end-providing for herself. But friendly competition can be distinguished from warfare, once we recognize that the most overarching intent of agents involved in the latter is to play a game together regardless of who wins or loses (cf. Bratman 1992: 340). Of course, each agent will still act in ways she believes will enable her to win. But an overarching commitment to playing the game helps to explain why friendly competitors are willing to abide by rules even when losing, and indeed, the lack of any such commitment seems to be a characteristic feature of the "sore loser" or the "poor sport." Meanwhile, no such overarching commitment is likely to be found in the case of opposing soldiers, whose most overarching intent is presumably to be the sole survivor or victor when the conflict ends.

Appeal to an overarching desire for mutuality also enables us to distinguish cases of genuine sharing from cases of pure altruism. John Rawls has convincingly argued that a group of pure altruists would not be concerned with questions of justice, since in order for such questions to arise "at least one person must want to do something other than whatever everyone else wants to do" (1972: 189). Because pure altruists want only to fulfill other people's interests, they will never have the requisite wants. But sharing agents

will be concerned with such questions, because their desire to fulfill other people's interests does not immediately override or outweigh their desire to fulfill their own. More importantly, their overarching desire for mutuality means that they will also want to bring their own interests "in tune" with the interests of others.

Because of the importance of motivational features, I shall henceforth contend that the practical desire or "Will to Share" both things and experiences with other people is the distinguishing mark of genuine sharing. The Will to Share is characterized, first and foremost, by an overarching desire for mutuality, and because of this desire, concern for self and concern for others are "filtered through" one another such that the agent is moved to act in ways that express and fulfill both types of concern at the very same time.

4.4 Sharing and natural sociability

In order to serve as an ideal of moral character, it must be psychologically possible for agents to cultivate and act from the Will to Share.[185] But some people might suspect that the desire for mutuality is one that arises only for agents who happen to enjoy the experience of doing things together, and hence that it is not a desire we can expect all agents to possess. However, there is every reason to suspect that experiential sharing "is a human good rooted in the sociality of our natures" (Sherman, 1997: 266). To acknowledge this does not require us to adopt a conception of human nature that is fixed or value-free, but only to recognize that "finding pleasure in the

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[185]Recall from §2.6 that demonstrating that a motivational ideal is psychologically possible is one of two ways to defend it. The other is to show that the ideal grounds plausible derivative claims about the other types of judgments that we make, which will be the task of Chapter Five.

mutuality of shared projects is not simply a contingent end, like enjoying carpentry or dance or music." Rather, it is an end that stems from "psychological facts about human beings that are persistent and that bridge local differences of taste and talent" (Ibid.).[186]

The psychological facts I have in mind are already evident in early childhood. Consider the difference there would be in the activity of the young playmates I described above if the one with the sports car "crashed in flame" and the one with the fire-truck "came speeding to the rescue." When we imagine this new scenario, it seems much more appropriate to describe their activity as genuinely shared (instead of "playing cars" side by side, they are now "playing crash and rescue" together). And the most obvious explanation for this seems to lie in the fact that each of the children has undergone some sort of change in inner attitude; as a result of these inner changes, they are now taking a much more active interest in one another. This is especially evident in the case of the child with the fire-truck, for while the sports-car driver might have crashed quite by accident or without any explicit regard to whether the other child would notice this, the fireman has not only noticed but has also responded to the first child's activity. Only as the rescue scene gets played out will we be able to determine whether their engagement is in fact mutual, but let's assume that the children continue to stage increasingly elaborate crash and rescue scenes, perhaps even fetching more cars from the toybox so they can make the accidents more exciting and the rescues more

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[186]This kind of point is probably emphasized by Aristotle more than any other philosopher. Not only does he famously claim that "no one would choose to live without friends" (*Nicomachean Ethics*: 1155a5); he also contends that the very wisest persons, who are the most self-sufficient among human beings, may be better able to engage in contemplation (and hence achieve as much wisdom and self-sufficiency as creatures like us are capable of) with their fellows (Ibid.: 1177a35).

complex. The important question to ask at this point is what motivates them to pursue this more interactive form of play (rather than returning to more solitary activity).

How we answer this question will depend somewhat on the age of our imagined playmates. Child-psychologists widely agree that prior to approximately age four, most children are unable to clearly differentiate between their own mental states (beliefs, desires, emotions, needs, etc.) and the mental states of others.[187] However, children do exhibit the capacity for empathy from a very early age: some psychologists trace this capacity to infancy, and nearly all believe that children experience what Piaget called "emotional contagion" by at least the age of two. By 'empathy,' I mean the ability to share another's feeling, not by putting oneself in the other's shoes and imagining what you (or "any person") would feel if you (or "any person") were really in that situation, but much more directly, by experiencing an affective state of one's own that is highly similar to the affective state of the concrete other person with whom one is presently engaged.[188] In its more complex or highly developed forms, empathy may include the capacity for "perspective-taking," or imagining oneself to be in the other's shoes, so that

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[187]This is borne out by children's responses to a scenario in which (i) "Maxi" sees his mother store some goodies in a tin on the counter, (ii) Maxi then leaves the room, and during his absence, (iii) the mother moves the goodies to a new location. When Maxi comes back in to look for the goodies, only older children (four to five years of age and above) accurately predict that he will look in the tin (the location in which he himself saw the goodies placed). Mistakenly assuming that Maxi has all the information that they themselves have, 3-year olds predict he will look in the new location.

[188]This definition is based on a discussion by Eisenberg who is careful to distinguish empathy -- "an affective state that stems from the apprehension of another's emotional state or condition and that is congruent and quite similar to the perceived state of the other," from sympathy -- "an emotional response stemming from another's emotional state or condition, that is not identical to the other's emotion but consists of feelings of sorrow or concern for another's welfare" (1989). See also Wispe (1987), who discusses the historical evolution of the term 'empathy,' the usage of which is by no means consistent even today.

one not only feels what the other is feeling but also sees the world from the other's point of view (making it much more likely that one's empathic responses will be directed toward the same objects that the other person's affective states were originally directed toward).[189] And by adulthood, most of us are able to imaginatively participate in the lives and experiences of people with whom we are not presently, and perhaps never have been nor ever will be engaged (including distant strangers and even fictional characters) to a not insignificant, although lesser, degree. But children show evidence of empathic awareness in face-to-face contexts long before they have developed this further capacity, and long before it makes sense to describe them as responding to another's pleasure or distress. For example, infants as young as two days old frequently cry when they see another child crying (and when other possible causes of their distress have been ruled out), and similarly, they often giggle and show other signs of delight when they see another person smile. That is, they do not seem to be happy or sad because another person is happy or sad (or in response to the other's psychological state), but seem to be feeling a facsimile of the other's happiness or sadness for themselves.

Skeptics about the ability of any person to genuinely share another's feelings sometimes suggest that such an ability would require a mysterious, quasi-perceptive or special intuitive faculty with which to grasp the other's mental states. However, it has long been recognized that children mimic first, the facial expressions, and later, the "gaze" of the people around them, and

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[189]This process does require the ability to distinguish self and other, so that one can (i) recognize that the other is in a different situation than oneself and so may be having different experiences than oneself, and (ii) attempt to experience the situation from the perspective of the other, distinguishing the (likely) responses of the other from one's own responses.

psychologists now hypothesize that mimicking another's smile or frown triggers one's own emotional centers, thereby causing one to have what will often feel like an authentic, first-person emotional response. In other words, the emotional mechanisms of the person who is experiencing an empathic state (temporarily) run "off-line" and simulate the emotional states of another (Gordon 1996; cf. Goldman 1993; 1996).[190] It is easy to see how some such capacity might serve an important learning function: facial mimicry (of a parent) would enable a young child to experience fear, for example, even without any understanding of the source of the danger, and by tracking the parent's gaze back toward the source of the parent's (authentic) emotion, the child might eventually come to understand that the source (say, a strange dog) is a fearful or threatening one.[191] In any event, this sort of capacity does not require any mysterious faculties beyond those emotional mechanisms we already know we possess.

In addition, many of the activities of young children are difficult to explain without the assumption of natural empathy. An important part of the emotional maturation process involves learning to distinguish between the

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[190]The truth behind the skeptic's position is that accurate empathic awareness is very difficult to achieve among adults, since adults tend to repress facial expressions of emotion in most situations, and since adult beliefs about what the other "must be" thinking or feeling, including false beliefs that result from wishful thinking on the part of the person attempting to empathize, may also distort the simulation process. But there is evidence that facial expressions do trigger emotional centers even in adults: witness the fact that simply forcing one's face into a smile can help to combat a bad mood even in the absence of something genuinely worth smiling about. And it is noteworthy that adults do not typically repress facial expressions when interacting with young children.

[191]Later on, children apparently learn to use this process in the reverse in order to figure out how they should feel in unfamiliar situations. A child who encounters a strange object for the first time and has no idea how to react will typically look around for someone whose gaze is directed toward that same object. Empathic awareness of that other person's mental states then provides the child with information about whether to be pleased, afraid, etc.

first-person, affective responses one has toward features of the external world (which frequently include sympathetic responses to one's empathic awareness of others), and the empathic responses one consciously or unconsciously "catches" from other people. Precisely because they are not yet able to do this, however, children who are empathically aware of others frequently act in ways that betray their "egocentric confusion" over whose affective states they are experiencing. When young children see other children crying, for example, they run to their own parents for comfort (suggesting that they experience the other's sadness as if it were their own). And in a particularly charming and oft-cited sort of example, a toddler will sometimes bring his or her own mother to comfort a friend who is crying, even though the friend's mother (who is familiar to the toddler) is equally available. (In such cases, the toddler seems to have at least some recognition that the friend is the one who is primarily in need of comforting, but is not yet able to fully distinguish the friend's "desire for Mommy" from his or her own.)[192]

Returning to our playroom, therefore, we can fairly confidently conclude that unless our interactive playmates are over the age of four, it is probably inappropriate to ascribe clearly other-regarding states, such as sympathy (or any authentic, first person emotion that arises in response to one's awareness of another person's emotions) to them. However, it is safe to assume that they are empathically aware of one another, and this enables us to make sense of the evidence that interactive play is indeed "more fun" for each the children involved. Given their capacity for empathy, it is easy to see how the process of tracking the activity (including the emotional responses) of

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[192]For additional evidence of empathic capacities in young children and their role in personal and moral development, see Benjamin (1988), Blum (1994: ch. 9), Eisenberg and Strayer (1987), Flanagan (1993: passim), Hoffman (1976), and Stern (1985).

one another gives each of them access to a much wider range of affective experiences than either could have on his own. Presumably, it would have been the empathic awareness of the sports car driver's surprise or delight that motivated our fireman's interest in the crash, and once he came to the rescue, the sports car driver is likely to have caught the fireman's heightened interest and delight. As their play continues, this sort of process is likely to repeat itself, so that both children experience more enjoyment by playing together than by engaging in more solitary pursuits. Hence, it is not surprising to find that young children seem to especially delight in the symmetry and predictability of turn-taking (Piaget 1932; cf. Damon 1988: 32ff).

Notice too how their empathic awareness would lead our playmates to be mutually responsive even before they are able to clearly distinguish, psychologically, between self and other. Suppose, for example, that our sports car driver tires with the crash and rescue scene and begins to drive away. If the fireman is disappointed by this, the sports-car driver will presumably feel (a facsimile of) this disappointment and have at least some incentive to engage the fireman in some new way, if only to rid himself of this empathic disappointment. Of course, he is unlikely to see himself as trying to satisfy the fireman's interest in continuing the game: from the sports car driver's perspective, it may simply feel as though he himself has an interest (unwittingly "caught" from the fireman) that is being thwarted. And of course, his other interests may simply override that interest: he may be too bored with the game to be seriously moved by his empathic awareness of the other's desire to continue. In addition, even if he is moved by that empathic awareness to try out some new form of interactive play that might relieve his boredom while still satisfying the interests he has caught from the other child,

he may not be very successful at actually finding such an activity. But similar incentives will presumably be at work on the fireman's part, and as each tries to satisfy both his (more) authentic and his (more) vicarious interests and desires, the two children may eventually hit on some new form of interactive play that results in their mutual enjoyment. Of course, it is also possible that they will not. Children are not always moved by their empathic awareness, and while "sharing is one of the playful rituals of childhood that young children spontaneously discover and enjoy" (Damon 1988: 32), their initial forays into shared activity are erratic and "usually more bound to the needs of the self than those of the other" (Ibid.: 33). Nonetheless, what the presence of these empathically grounded incentives to shared activity does suggest is that children who do engage in interactive play are motivated by a very distinctive kind of desire -- the "desire for mutuality" -- that is neither exclusively self-regarding nor exclusively other-regarding, but lies in a kind of penumbra region somewhere in between. It is a desire be "in tune" with (an)other person(s) (cf. Greenspan 1989; Stern 1985).

Since I have allowed that the children involved in the crash and rescue game need not have been capable of distinguishing their own mental states from the mental states of others, it may no longer seem clear in what sense they can be taking a more active interest in one another than they did while engaged in mere parallel play. Each of them, we might say, is still just "playing cars," and while part of the fun each is having turns out, in this case, to be (vicariously) caught, their activity might still seem too egocentric or self-oriented to count as genuine sharing. I want to allow that this line of thought may be appropriate insofar as the children do not yet seem capable of full-

blown agency. However, three points are worth noting before we accept it outright.

First, even if neither child can clearly think of himself as responding to the activity of the other, it is still the case that they are mutually engaged. That is, even if both children are in a state of egocentric confusion, unable to recognize how much of their enjoyment has been "caught" from another child who is in fact separate from themselves, they are still attuned to one another's emotions and still responsive to one another's acts.[193] Secondly, even if the children are unable to think of themselves as playing with one another, they are undeniably doing something together: they simply could not be playing this kind of game, could not be having this kind of fun, without the active participation of the other. This remains true regardless of whether they can recognize or care about this fact. Thirdly, while it does seem inappropriate to describe either child as acting 'for the sake of the other' or 'on the other's behalf' (e.g., as playing crash and rescue because the other wants to), it seems equally inappropriate to describe either child as acting solely for his own sake.[194] This is not simply because their interaction is intuitively much less self-oriented than when they were engaged in parallel play. For even if it makes sense to say that each child is motivated by an overarching personal desire to have more fun, the very fact that each finds it "more fun" to engage

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[193]I believe Nagel (1979) is making a similar point when he describes sexual attraction as arising through a series of multiply iterated "sensings" (Romeo senses Juliet, Juliet senses Romeo's sensing of her, Romeo senses Juliet sensing his sensing of her, etc.), rather than multiply nested plans or intentions. Presumably, there is some point at which Romeo knows that part of his sexual attraction to Juliet stems from her sexual attraction to him, and vice versa. But in Nagel's example, Romeo and Juliet begin tracking one another's moves and experiencing sexual attraction long before such an explicit recognition occurs, and long before either of them has any concrete intentions with respect to the other person.

[194]Recall my discussion of how truly mutual engagement differs from both egoism and altruism, p. 175, above.

in interactive play shows each of them to be motivated in a very distinctive way. They may not yet be able to recognize it, but when either child acts out of the desire for mutuality he is not only motivated to secure his "own," more authentic enjoyment but is also, at least in part, motivated to secure the other child's enjoyment as well.

4.5 Sharing and moral development

The foregoing suggests that the desire for mutuality is one that all human beings have psychological access to. And it is fairly easy to see how the same sorts of incentives that motivate our interactive playmates to work out a mutually enjoyable crash and rescue scene together might also motivate them, in situations of scarcity or inherent conflict of interest (that is, in what are typically considered the "circumstances of justice") to work out a mutually agreeable distribution of things. Suppose, for example, that they tire with the crash and rescue scene and go to the toybox in search of new props, only to discover that there is just one toy left. Assuming that each child has an empathic awareness of the other's desire to play with the toy as well as a desire to get the toy for himself, the presence of a more overarching desire for mutuality would give each of them an incentive to find some way of satisfying both his (more) authentic and his (more) empathic desires at the same time (so that they could continue playing the game together). And if this more overarching desire was effective, the process of tracking one another's responses as they struggled over who should get the toy might eventually lead the two children to hit on the solution of taking turns. Even if neither child paid much attention to the other once the turn-taking pattern had been established (that is, even if they did not seem to be sharing experiences in any rich sense), it does seem appropriate to describe them as sharing in this kind

of case, and I believe this is due to the fact that the distribution of the toy stems from, and indeed manifests their desire for mutuality, rather than (as in the example of parallel play presented in §4.2) the mere happenstance that there are plenty of toys to go around.

Similarly, consider a different pair of children who are using a set of blocks to build a castle together, and suppose that although their play has been highly interactive for a time, their goals for the castle begin to diverge, such that it becomes increasingly difficult for them to work out a design for the castle that they both like. Frustration and anger might well be the result. But if a more overarching desire for mutuality prevails, they might eventually hit on the option of dividing up the remaining blocks so that each could create one specific section of the castle to precisely her own specifications. Despite the fact that the resulting activity may look like parallel play to a more casual observer (after all, they would end up building their own sections of the castle side by side), it nonetheless seems appropriate, given what we know (ex hypothesi) about the motivations behind their activity, to describe these two children as sharing the building blocks with one another. This is because their actions also seem to reflect an underlying desire for mutuality (manifested in their attempts to find some way of continuing to build the castle together).

Notice that this kind of sharing -- full blown distributive sharing -- is extremely unlikely to occur until after children begin to develop the capacity to distinguish between themselves and others.[195] A child in a state of egocentric confusion would presumably be able to recognize that the (empathic) disappointment or sadness which accompanies his (authentic)

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[195]Put another way, it requires some sense of individual separateness as well as an empathic connection to the other person's interests.

pleasure when he has the only toy in the playroom is really a facsimile of the other child's sadness at being deprived of the toy, and so would be unable to see that the best way to get rid of that disappointment is to share the toy with the other. The need to overcome egocentric confusion is perhaps even more manifest in the example of the children building a castle together. This is because a child who was unable to reference her empathic desires to the activity of her playmate would not be able to represent the conflict she is experiencing as a conflict between the interests of two separate beings. Hence, she would not be able to see her playmate as having interests that can only be satisfied by compromising some of her more authentic (or selfish) interests, or to see that she herself has at least some desire to satisfy her playmate's interests. Indeed, the desire for mutuality in combination with egocentric confusion would likely lead to precisely the sort of frustration that would prompt a child to destroy the whole project: it would feel as if she was simply unable to build a castle that measured up to all of her expectations no matter how hard she tried. But the ability to reference her self-regarding and other-regarding mental states in this way would transform the desire to bring one's (more) authentic interests "in tune" with the interests one has vicariously "caught" from others into a desire to work out some form of activity that is mutually agreeable (that is, into a full fledged desire for mutuality). Without the assumption of some such desire, it would be very difficult to explain why a child in such circumstances would either seek, or be satisfied with, a solution which enables her to continue building the castle together with a playmate. If more purely self-regarding desires were overriding, she would presumably try to force her playmate to conform to her design for the castle; alternatively, if her more other-regarding desires were overriding, she would

presumably just go along with her playmate's castle design. But if her more overarching desire for mutuality prevails, a compromise solution would presumably be highly attractive.

In appealing to such a desire, it might be objected that I am positing (mental) entities without necessity. But I do not claim that the desire for mutuality requires psychological pathways or cognitive mechanisms that are wholly distinct from those involved in other forms of desire; my point is only that the desire for mutuality is a form of desiring that is distinct from both (more) altruistic forms such as benevolence and sympathy, and (more) egoistic forms such as prudence and self-gratification. Many philosophers and social scientists have contended that the self-regarding/other-regarding (or egoism/altruism) dichotomy does not seem to exhaust the domain of possible reasons for action,[196] or that at the very least, such a dichotomy is misleading insofar as it suggests that the two sorts of reasons necessarily conflict.[197] And a recent study conducted by John Barresi, Carol Thompson and Chris Moore (1997) offers at least some empirical confirmation that a desire for mutuality does motivate early childhood activity -- including that which exhibits the (more) distributive mode of sharing.

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[196]An early expression of this kind of position can be found in Aristotle's various discussions of friendship and civic activity; consider also Rousseau's notion of actions done from a "general will." For more recent discussions, see Adams (1988), Badhwar (1993), Blum (1994: chs. 3, 7 and 9), Gilbert (1989), Hazlitt (1972; exp. ch. 13); Monroe (1995); Tuomela (1988); and Sherman (1991: ch. 4; 1993; 1997: ch. 5). See also the articles collected by Paul, Miller and Paul (1993).

[197]This claim is common to British moral sense theory, and Bishop Butler may put it best when he says that self-love and benevolence "are not to be opposed but only to be distinguished from each other" (1726: Preface), adding that "their mutual coinciding, so that we can scarce promote one without the other, is equally a proof that we were made for both" (1726, First Sermon, emphasis mine).

When children between the ages of three years and five-and-one-half years of age were offered a choice between receiving one sticker for themselves, or receiving one sticker for self and one for their interviewer, children across all age-brackets tended to prefer the shared reward. This might be interpreted as a purely egoistic choice, since if the children couldn't clearly distinguish between stickers for self and stickers for others, they might simply have felt that more was always better. However, when given the choice between two stickers for self, or one for self and one for the interviewer, most of the children still preferred the shared reward, and this indicates that a distribution of the stickers was in some sense more attractive or desirable.

Interestingly, when given the choice between one sticker for self now, or one for self and one for the interviewer later, only the four and five year-olds (and not three year-olds) continued to prefer the shared reward. This indicates that four- and five year-olds (but not three year-olds) have the capacity to distinguish between present and future-oriented mental states (gratification now vs. gratification later), a hypothesis which was confirmed by the finding that when given the choice between one sticker for self now, and two stickers for self later, only the four- and five-year olds (and not three year-olds) preferred the latter, deferred but greater, reward. This too could be interpreted as a more egoistic choice based on egocentric confusion: if unable to clearly distinguish between self and other, but able to distinguish between past and future, the children who chose the "shared" reward might simply be thinking that more is better (even if self-gratification is delayed). By and large, however, the same older children who preferred a distribution of stickers later to one sticker for self now also preferred a distribution of

stickers now to two stickers for self now. Thus, a distribution of stickers still seems to be more desirable in some sense.

In reporting these findings, Baressi et. al. originally hypothesized that the imaginative capacity of four- and five-years olds to represent conflicts between (their own) present-oriented and future-oriented mental states was the same capacity involved in the capacity to distinguish between one's own mental states and the mental states of others, and hence that at least in the case of these older children, the preference for shared rewards indicated the presence of an altruistic desire to benefit the interviewer -- or what they called a "sympathetic desire to share" -- that was strong enough to override the (presumed) egoistic desire for more immediate gratification.[198] In correspondence, however, Baressi has indicated that at least some of the older children emphasized that they were "playing stickers" with the interviewer and may have been moved by that fact (i.e., by the sense that they were doing something with the interviewer and a corresponding desire to keep everybody "in the game") as much as by more purely altruistic desires.[199]

The foregoing suggests that the desire for mutuality may undergird a great deal of what has traditionally been viewed as "other-regarding" activity. Meanwhile, there is also some evidence to suggest that the desire for mutuality provides children who can distinguish clearly between self and other with their first "intrinsically moral sense of obligation to share," thereby

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[198]It should be noted that none of the choices tested whether the children would complete forego a reward for self in order to achieve a purely altruistic reward (e.g., choose two stickers for the interviewer (and none for themselves) rather than one sticker for self), or whether they would prefer a shared reward over an even greater aggregate reward for self (e.g., choose one for self and one for the interviewer over three stickers for self).

[199]The correspondence was between Baressi and Michael Sloto, who informed Baressi of my interest in mutuality as the basis for moral psychology, and then shared his correspondence with me.

engendering their "earliest concerns over distributive justice and fairness" (Damon 1988: ch. 3; cf. Blum 1994: ch. 9; Eisenberg and Strayer 1987; Flanagan 1993: chs. 7-8; Kochanska 1997). That is, there are reasons to think that the desire for mutuality really does underlie our (first person) judgments about the morally best ways of interacting with our fellows.

According to child-psychologist William Damon, toddlers will occasionally offer to share their goodies (toys, candy, etc.) as a way of enticing other children to play with them, and they seem to view distributive sharing as the "price of admission" to more enjoyable forms of social activity.[200] This kind of activity, which is still closely tied to the personal desire to have "more fun," appears to be partly the result of natural empathy, and partly the result of adult encouragement.[201] Shortly after they discover that (experiential) sharing is indeed "more fun," however, children begin to display an expectation that (distributive) sharing will occur in any interpersonal context (that is, they begin to view sharing as a norm for human interaction), and by their fourth year of age, children also begin to engage in distributive sharing on occasion even when they do not necessarily see this as the best way to have fun.

When they are asked why they engage in distributive sharing, such children typically give "empathic" (Chris will feel sad if I don't share my candy) and "pragmatic" (Mary won't play with me anymore if I don't give her a turn) rationales, as well as blatantly self-serving ones. And what Damon finds especially striking about children's responses to questions about why

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[200]Note that to do this effectively requires at least some facility at perspective taking, in order to figure out what other children desire or like.

[201]It is probably not coincidental that parents frequently tell children that they should share because otherwise their siblings and playmates will "feel sad."

they think they should share is that the urge to obey adult commands is conspicuously absent -- a finding which runs counter to the more traditional assumption that moral development proceeds via the internalization of rules laid down by external authority figures.[202] Of course, Damon's findings might be taken as evidence that the internalization process occurs much earlier than was previously realized, such that the parental commands no longer figure into the child's active consciousness. Yet these same children do make explicit reference to obeying authority in other contexts, and authority figures do of course tell children that they should share. Thus, if moral understanding really were based on the commands of adult authorities, it is certainly very difficult to understand why it is only in this context that children fail to make explicit reference to such commands. Moreover, when they are asked what they would do if a parent or other authority figure told them not to share, even four-year-olds will often say they would disobey because a parent who said such a thing would be "mean" or "wrong," and this is certainly not the type of response one would expect from a child whose moral understanding was based solely on obedience to parental authority. Hence, Damon concludes that while "parental advice and prodding certainly help foster" children's commitment to sharing, it is their natural desire for interaction, combined with "the give and take of peer requests, arguments, conflicts, and acts of generosity" that provides the most immediate spur (1988: 43).

The fact that children do not typically appeal to parental rules means that "the day-to-day construction of fairness standards in social life must be

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[202] In a similar study by Eisenberg (1987), not one of the children interviewed referred to authoritative dictates. And see Flanagan's critique of Piaget's and Kohlberg's (rule-based) accounts of moral development (1993: ch. 7-8).

done by children in collaboration with one another," (Ibid.: my emphasis). And Damon finds that when members of a play-group are confronted with a distributive conflict, younger or weaker children are much more likely to appeal to standards of benevolence or distribution according to need, whereas older or stronger children are more likely to appeal to considerations of merit or distribution based on age and experience. That is, children tend initially to appeal to standards that are most likely to end up benefiting themselves.[203] But the mutual interaction among the members of a play group "forces each individual child to refrain from unadorned assertions of self-interest" and prompts them to search for solutions that are mutually agreeable (Ibid.: 45).[204] Over time, their strategies become less self-oriented, so that by age eleven or twelve, they not only display an expectation that sharing will occur in situations of distributive conflict, but are also beginning to articulate the judgment that they ought to share with others even when this is not demanded. That is, they are beginning to feel a sense of obligation to share that transcends their desire to stay in the good graces of their playmates, and even extends toward strangers. In Damon's view, this is a crucial step on the path toward autonomous moral agency,[205] and he believes that it is "precisely

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[203]By age five, children begin to appeal to the more abstract notion of equality, which they understand as strictly equal treatment, but within one or two years after that concern arises, appeals to considerations of merit and benevolence can also be heard.

[204]Damon himself is somewhat vague as to whether this is due primarily to their altruistic desire to satisfy other's interests, or by what I have called the desire for mutuality.

[205]Note that Piaget, who held a more rule-based account of moral development, also believed that around the age of ten a child's moral consciousness undergoes "complete transformation," such that moral standards no longer appear as external laws demanded by others, "but as the outcome of a free decision and worthy of respect in the measure that it has enlisted mutual consent" (1932: 65, emphasis mine). Nancy Eisenberg also finds that children use appeals to authority (and fear of punishment) to explain their compliance with adult requests, but tend to explain their compliance with peer requests by making reference to the their friendship with the other child (1987: 27), and that children who are told that their moral behavior resulted from external causes are less reliably moral than children who are

because they contain all the immediacy, complexity, and ambiguity of real life" that children's solutions to the problem of what counts as fair sharing, though highly variable, are also highly effective at resolving or at least minimizing interpersonal conflict (Ibid.: 43). His suggestion, in other words, is that to the extent that children do articulate and show a willingness to adhere to familiar principles of justice, this is something that grows out of their underlying commitment to sharing (rather than the other way around).

The picture of moral development I have just been presenting differs importantly from the picture defended by Rawls (1971: Part III). He contends that all human beings have a natural capacity for "fellow-feeling" which motivates moral activity. However, according to his "First Law" of moral psychology, this capacity will only be realized in a particular child when the "family institutions" the child is raised in are just and the parents "manifestly express their love for the child by caring for his good" so that, in "recognizing their evident love of him" the child comes to love them in return (1971: §70; §75). This suggests that in Rawls's view, a sense of justice is a precondition of the fellow-feeling that ultimately motivates agents to act as morality demands. Indeed, he himself notes that "the most striking feature of [all three of his psychological] laws (or tendencies) is that their formulation refers to an institutional setting as being just" (Ibid.: 491). But as Susan Moller Okin (1989) has pointed out, it is far from evident that Rawls's initial "assumption" that family institutions are just (admittedly made for convenience's sake) is a terribly plausible one. Since many human beings do have a fairly active sense

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told that they are "good friends" or "good family members" (Ibid.: 29). Similarly, Kochanska finds a direct correlation between the levels of mutuality between mothers and children, and the levels of power or coercion that mothers find necessary to control their children's behavior: children in parental relationships constituted by a high degree of mutuality exhibit a greater eagerness and readiness to internalize parental goals and values (1997: 103-5).

of fellow-feeling nonetheless, I suspect that, although a manifestly unjust or abusive familial setting might be sufficient to exterminate such natural sentiments, Damon is right to indicate that the desire for mutuality is the more fundamental notion. As Okin puts it, "the development of a sense of justice grows from sharing the experiences of others and becoming aware of the points of view of others who are different in some respects from ourselves, but with whom we clearly have some interests in common" (1989: ch 1).

4.6 The moral value of mutuality

Of course, the likelihood that a desire for mutuality/commitment to sharing has temporal priority in moral development does not yet show that mutuality/sharing has normative priority over all other ideals. Margaret Mahler (1975), for example, has suggested that something like what I have called the desire for mutuality is a developmental precursor to both altruism and self-sufficiency – capacities which develop only after a child is able to distinguish clearly between herself and others, but which then take on a significance of their own. And Damon's claim that recognition of familiar principles of justice grows out of children's underlying commitment to sharing might similarly be taken to show that mature moral agents are able to leave their desire for mutuality behind. In order to show that the Will to Share serves as the basis of moral agency, therefore, it must be possible to show that other forms of motivation have moral value only when (or because) they can be understood as expressions of an agent's desire for mutuality. In concluding this chapter, therefore, I want to provide some reasons for thinking that the desire for mutuality, and hence the ideal of sharing more generally, is intrinsically admirable in its own right. That will set the stage for me to demonstrate, in Chapter Five, that a theory based on the Will to Share

grounds plausible derivative claims about the other types of moral judgments that we make.

One reason to think the Will to Share is morally basic that "the human good is found very largely in activities whose point and value depend on the participation of other people in a common project" (Adams 1988: 300).[206] More importantly, such projects exist only because people care about them, and would lose their value for everyone if too few people exhibited the interest in mutual engagement that makes them possible. And it is important, in this context, to note that the Will to Share cannot be understood in a consequentialist fashion (i.e., as a desire to promote the human good), without distorting its moral significance. As R.M. Adams has pointed out, there is an important sense in which agents who engage in activities they themselves enjoy with other people give more to those people than they could if they engaged in activities simply for the other people's sakes. The agent's own, interested participation in the mutual endeavor is an essential part of the benefit being conferred, and without that interest, the value of "doing it together" would be lost.

In a similar vein, Nancy Sherman has pointed out that "we simply do value sharing, and value what makes it possible in ourselves and others" (1997: ch. 5). Some examples may help to fix this intuition. Consider the difference between a wealthy person who frequently stops for a drink in the local bar and picks up the tab out of a sense of overflowing self-sufficiency or awareness of having enough to spare for others, and a person in similar

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[206] Adams points out that almost all work nowadays takes the form of a "common project," and almost all human activities depend on skills and interests that are acquired only through participation in such projects. The acquisition of language, which is a shared conceptual scheme, is perhaps the most obvious example.

economic circumstances who is motivated by the fun of "hanging out" with the others and a desire to share the wealth.[207] Similarly, consider the difference between a devoted parent who spends every moment furthering the children's autonomously chosen pursuits, and a parent who also strives to find ways to share in the children's preferred activities. To the extent that we admire the latter persons somewhat more, I suspect that it stems from the fact that their overarching desire for mutuality shines through.

I do not take this to mean that genuinely sharing agents utterly lack the sorts of motivations that are found within "cool" and "warm" agent-based views (motives that exemplify the more general separateness/connectedness tension), and in §5.1, I shall say more about the role and status of such motives within the Will to Share. But the desire for mutuality has normative priority, in my view, because it enables the genuinely sharing agent to largely transcend the separateness/connectedness tension altogether. As we have seen, the distinctive feature of shared activity "is not respect for others, nor beneficence, nor even cooperation, though each may be important in doing things together" (Sherman 1997: 271). Rather, it is a "relaxing of one's own sense of boundaries and control … [and] acknowledging a sense of union or merger with another" (Ibid.). The truly sharing agent, it seems, does not perceive his own concerns as being set in essential competition with the concerns of others, yet neither does he perceive the needs of others as taking some kind of moral priority over his own. For within the Will to Share, concern for self and concern for others are "filtered through" one another such that the agent is motivated to act in ways that express and fulfill both types of concern at the very same time. The fact that this is something we

[207]This example is drawn from Slote (1993).

value intrinsically helps to explain the special value we attach to moral activity, as well as the special force of moral claims: to be motivated by a Will to Share is quite literally to be motivated by a sense of something bigger than oneself.

This brings out a final reason for suspecting that the Will to Share is a motivational ideal. For in addition to integrating both sides of the separateness/ connectedness tension, it also seems to transcend it. As we have seen, the distinctive feature of shared activity "is not respect for others, nor beneficence, nor even cooperation, though each may be important in doing things together" (Sherman 1997: 271). Rather, it is a "relaxing of one's own sense of boundaries and control … [and] acknowledging a sense of union or merger with another" (Ibid.). The truly sharing agent, it seems, does not perceive his own concerns as being set in essential competition with the concerns of others, yet neither does he perceive the needs of others as taking some kind of moral priority over his own. For within the Will to Share, concern for self and concern for others are "filtered through" one another such that the agent is motivated to act in ways that express and fulfill both types of concern at the very same time.

Chapter Five:
Morality as Sharing

In Chapter Four, we saw that the Will to Share is psychologically possible for us to cultivate and live up to, as well as intrinsically admirable in its own right. This chapter provides additional support for that latter claim, by developing and defending the main tenets of an agent-based ethic of sharing in the individual moral domain. In §5.1, I review the central features of a Will to Share, and discuss what this core concept implies about evaluations of individual character. In §5.2, I extend this inquiry to show what an ethic of sharing implies about the rightness and wrongness of specific (types of) acts. I then take up some concerns about the ability of such an ethic to provide us with practical guidance, by articulating the theory's most significant summary rules (§5.3). Finally, I highlight the ways in which such an ethic helps to resolve – and in some cases, dissolve – the two tensions that fuel the contemporary Autonomy/Caring Debate (§5.4).

5.1 Sharing and individual character

At the core of an ethic of sharing lies the concept of a Will to Share. Hence, the first step in understanding what such an ethic implies is to get clear about the features that constitute such a Will. It is important to remember, however, that the Will to Share is not being presented as a unitary form of motivation, but as an ideal of moral character that is likely to be realized in a wide variety of ways, and that serves as a touchstone against which other, more limited (complexes) of motivations are to be assessed (cf.§2.6, p. 93ff.).

Elements of the Will to Share

The constituent elements of the Will to Share can be divided into four main groups. The first includes those baseline capacities that make it possible to share in others' experiences: most importantly, the capacity for empathy that not only makes agents aware of the interests and concerns of other people, but gives them at least some motivation to act on others' behalf, as well as the capacity for perspective-taking that enables moral agents to distinguish their more authentic or first-person interests and concerns from those they have vicariously "caught" from others. The latter capacity is what distinguishes (more) mature forms of moral agency from earlier stages of moral development, for without it, an agent would be unable to effectively filter his own concerns through his concern for others.

The second group of elements includes most, if not all, of the traits that are typically classified as "other-regarding" virtues, though there is no reason to think that every sharing agent[208] must (or even could) possess all of these virtues to the same degree. The possession of such traits follows straightforwardly from the capacities just mentioned, since an agent who is moved by empathic awareness of others will be disposed, for example, toward benevolence and generosity in appropriate circumstances. But the sharing agent will also possess a wide variety of "self-regarding" virtues as well, and this constitutes a third group of elements within the Will to Share. Traits like prudence and temperance, for example, are a result of the sharing agent's healthy – and according to this view, entirely appropriate – sense of self-reliance and desire to pursue her more autonomously chosen interests and goals.

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[208]Here and elsewhere, I use the term "sharing agent" to mean an agent whose activity manifests a genuine Will to Share.

Although the Will to Share includes both other-regarding and self-regarding virtues, however, an ethic of sharing insists that it is a mistake to think of any of these traits as being intrinsically admirable in their own right. Put another way, it denies that such traits are ethically fundamental and can serve as the basis from which the goodness of other traits (and/or actions) can be derived. The problem is not that either self-regarding or other-regarding attitudes are wholly inappropriate. Rather, the problem is that (more) self-regarding attitudes must be tempered by (more) other-regarding attitudes in order for their expression to count as morally virtuous. An ethic of sharing insists, for example, that benevolence is not a virtue where it leads to the kinds of self-abnegation and/or self-absorption that plague "warmer" agent-based views.[209] And similarly, that moderation and/or generosity are not virtues where they stem solely from a sense of "superabundant" self-sufficiency or awareness that one has enough to spare that are typical of "cool" theories of virtue. To be truly generous, according to an ethic of sharing, is to act from a more overarching desire to "share the wealth," and to be benevolent is not merely to want to alleviate others' suffering, but to feel a sense of one's shared humanity with them and hence to act from that desire. But given what we have seen about the one-sidedness of theories that give primacy to either "separateness" or "connectedness," this claim does not seem inappropriate.

Meanwhile, an ethic of sharing also endorses what we might call the virtues of interdependence, including the capacity for friendship, trust in other people, and other manifestations of the overarching practical desire for

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[209]Recall the distinction between altruism and mutuality discussed at the end of §4.2.

mutuality. This is a fourth group of elements, and in many ways the most crucial, since it is the presence of such traits that most clearly distinguishes agents who are disposed to genuine or full-blown sharing from those who are disposed to act in more egoistic or altruistic ways.

The importance of interactive traits does not diminish the need for agents to cultivate the other elements of a Will to Share, since without those other elements, the desire for mutuality would often be ineffective. Unless one is disposed to respond to both one's own and other people's interests and concerns, one can never really appreciate the special value of bringing those two sorts of interests "in tune." And unless one is capable of perspective-taking as well as empathy, one could not recognize that satisfying one's desire for mutuality often requires responding to the interests of another, separate being.[210]

An ethic of sharing contends that all other moral values are derivative from the overarching desire for mutuality, because it is that desire that integrates all the elements of an agent's character into a more unified Will. And in light of the overall argument of this dissertation, it is probably worth mentioning that it does so without falling into the difficulties associated with Nel Noddings's "relational" view. As we saw in §2.7, Noddings maintains that the quality of an agent's motivation depends, not exclusively but also not insignificantly, on whether her caring is "apprehended by" the person who is being cared-for, and she argues that moral agents are under a general obligation to continue their attempts at caring until some kind of "completion" occurs. And as many critics have objected, this makes her ethic unduly demanding, insofar as its assessment of agents' motives (and actions) is

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[210]For more on this point, recall the discussion at the end of §4.3.

dependent on the actual consequences that occur long after the agent determines how best to respond.[211] But an ethic of sharing neatly avoids this problem, due to its agent-based structure. To see this, consider a relationship between Marty and Chris. If Chris is motivated by friendship, but Marty never responds, there is no reason for our ethical assessment of Chris to be diminished. Nor must we say that Chris's action was wrong because Marty failed to apprehend or complete it. Yet we can still recognize that their "relationship" (however brief) is far less good than it could be, and so we can still admire Chris for making continued efforts to engage Marty in mutual activity, without blaming or criticizing Chris if those attempts are unsuccessful.

The diversity of moral character

An agent-based ethic of sharing contends that agents who do not possess any one of the four elements mentioned in the preceding section are properly considered to be morally lacking, at least in that respect. Moral pluralists may still suspect that this approach will be unable to account for the diversity of character-types that most people find to be genuinely moral.[212] But there are at least two reasons to suspect that this fear is unwarranted. First, it is important to recall that individual virtues are not mere impulses or feelings but motivational states (cf. §2.3(i)). As such, they dispose the agent who possesses them to act in specific ways when the relevant circumstances arise, and since the Will to Share doubles back on the world in a way that takes both objective and subjective[213] features into account, it is quite likely

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[211]Both of these criticisms have also been made of consequentialist views, the latter against "actualist" as opposed to "expectabilist" versions.

[212]Thanks to Judy Lichtenberg for pressing me to take this concern seriously.

[213]By which I mean, "features of subjects."

that agents in objectively similar situations will manifest a genuine Will to Share even while acting in markedly different ways. After all, the needs and interests of one sharing agent may be considerably different from the needs and interests of another. Hence, each agent's attempt to bring his own concerns "in tune" with the concerns of a third party may have a substantially different result. Indeed, since not just any two people can see eye-to-eye in the way that is necessary to share a point of view, one agent might legitimately fail to interact with a third party, without betraying a deplorable lack of the Will to Share, simply because the two of them have little or nothing in common.[214] But a second sharing agent who does possess the relevant interests would, of course, be motivated to interact and experience the sense of mutuality that the situation is able to provide. Since in a different set of circumstances, the first agent might be the one with the relevant interests while the second agent might lack them, there is no reason why an ethic of sharing is forced to say that either agent's character is morally superior. So long as both agents manifest a genuine Will to Share whenever the relevant circumstances arise, we can recognize both of their characters as genuinely moral.

Secondly, it should be acknowledged that the desire for mutuality can be expressed in (roughly) two dimensions that are somewhat incompatible. The "depth" dimension requires an especially rich kind of empathic engagement with a particular other person, and one that probably develops most fully during fairly exclusive and/or extended human relationships. Such relationships do not necessarily have to be intimate, but since not just any two

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[214]For a closely related point, see also my comments on the moral difference between lying to others and simply ignoring them, beginning on p. 231.

people can see "eye to eye" in the way that is necessary to share a point of view, there will inevitably be limits on the expression of this form of mutuality. The "breadth" dimension, on the other hand, seems to depend more on the kind of imaginative awareness that would enable an agent to "get into" a wide variety of activities with people who possess very disparate (and even foreign) character traits, interests, needs and goals, or simply to experience a "sense of shared humanity"[215] with them. And in fact, it is not entirely clear that even casual contact is necessary to experience this very broad form of mutuality. For nearly everyone laughs when tickled, cries out when struck, is frustrated when their projects and goals are thwarted, and longs for assistance or guidance, not to mention simply companionship, at least at some points during the course of their lives. To be aware of these facts is to recognize that (at least some) other people must surely be aware of them as well, and hence to share a kind of experience with them, albeit one that differs from that of sharing a particular point of view. Since activity stemming from both dimensions of experiential sharing will reflect an agent's overarching desire for and sense of mutuality with his fellows, I cannot see any basis to think that either is superior or should be given overall priority in the moral or ethical life (though in §5.2, I shall argue that it is wrong to "specialize" solely in one dimension and disregard the other). And there is no reason to suppose that the two dimensions will always conflict. Nonetheless, it appears to be psychologically impossible, at least for most of us, to share in a very deep way with a broad range of people, and hence there will have to be at least some kinds of trade-offs between them.

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[215]This term is borrowed from Kristen Monroe (1997), who offers empirical evidence connecting the sense of shared humanity with what has traditionally been called "altruistic" behavior (1997).

Given these considerations, an ethic of sharing can and should acknowledge that actual persons may exhibit very different "patterns" with respect to how these two dimensions are integrated within their unique moral personalities, without its reflecting negatively on the quality of their overall characters. Extremely empathic individuals will presumably be more easily motivated by the depth dimension, focusing their attention primarily on the particular other persons with whom they are presently engaged.[216] And because of this focus, they are likely to have somewhat less time and energy to engage in broader shared pursuits. More imaginative individuals, by contrast, may be keenly aware of their shared humanity with all human beings, and so less able to empathize deeply with the plight of any particular other.

The loner and pure altruist problems

There are at least two personality types that an ethic of sharing does seem to condemn, however; namely, the "loner" who prefers, for some reason, to engage in more solitary pursuits,[217] and the "pure altruist" who desires to help other people but not to interact with them. Indeed, given my claim that the Will to Share is rooted in our natural sociability, such an ethic suggests that loners and pure altruists are in some sense "inhuman" or "unnatural" character types. Yet many people may find such a negative assessment unwarranted. After all, there is a long tradition of moral thinking in the West that explicitly admires people who exhibit a high degree of independence and self-sufficiency, and an equally long tradition that admires

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[216]Note that although the depth dimension is characteristic of close personal relationships, it need not occur solely in contexts of intimacy, and so an agent who relies heavily on it will not necessarily be objectionably partial towards friends and family members. In contexts where total strangers are "thrown together," some people are nonetheless able to "resonate" or "click" with others despite the lack of a shared history.

[217]Christine Swanton was the first to call this objection to my attention.

benevolent or caring individuals. Alternatively, loners may also be viewed as shy or timid people who are not harming anybody, and so certainly shouldn't be criticized for their lack of gregariousness, and altruists may be viewed as moral paragons who do not, like the rest of us, have any difficulty in sacrificing their more authentic concerns. As a result, the loner and pure altruist problems may seem to pose a serious stumbling block to this approach.

If we consider the issue carefully, however, I believe that an ethic of sharing grounds assessments about loners and altruists that are far less counterintuitive than they may at first seem. For one thing, it does not criticize the loner for his possession of traits like independence and self-sufficiency, and neither does it criticize the pure altruist for his ability to empathize with others and his desire to satisfy their interests and needs. The problem with both the loner's and the pure altruist's motivational states stems from their lack of the other elements that constitute a Will to Share – namely, those forms of interdependence that flow from an overarching desire for mutuality. But it is simply unclear that this sort of criticism is inappropriate. Indeed, if the arguments of Chapter Three are correct, then an exclusive focus on either the virtues of individual separateness or the virtues of interpersonal connectedness results in an objectionably one-sided account of the moral life, and one that overlooks very real and recognizable harms. Because there are a number of important human goods that can arise only in and through relationships, a person who never interacts with others is cutting both himself and other people off from important sources of moral value. Because this is as true of the altruist as the self-sufficient moral agent, it gives us a reason to

question whether either tradition should continue to exercise so much power over our moral thinking.

It is also important to note that to find a person's overall motivational state to be morally lacking is not to insist that there is nothing at all to be admired about the person's character. Consider Bernard Williams's now famous example of the painter Gauguin. Williams himself suggests that our admiration of Gauguin's integrity and artistic genius is a function of "moral luck:" since it turns out that Gauguin really did have tremendous artistic talent, we are prepared to overlook his otherwise deplorable willingness to desert his family in order to pursue his art. Still, it is far from clear that we do in fact judge Gauguin to be a morally admirable person all things considered. Rather, it seems that we admire his artistic genius and the integrity that led him to pursue his inner calling, in spite of the fact that we morally deplore his willingness to desert his family in order to pursue his art.[218] Since the Will to Share is presented only as an ideal of moral character, however, an ethic of sharing can easily acknowledge that although it is morally lacking, the loner's or altruist's overall character is nonetheless admirable in other ways.

Of course, there may well be some people with extremely limited empathic and/or imaginative capacities – that is, people for whom it is simply impossible to share experiences with others (and who are loners for that reason). Insofar as such agents fall short of a Will to Share, an ethic of sharing is committed to the view that their overall motivational state is far less good than it could be. Yet it can still largely accommodate the view that many loners are shy or timid people, and perhaps more properly pitied than

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[218]Indeed, if Michael Slote is correct (1989: ch. 4), the admirability of traits like artistic genius and extreme integrity may even be linked with a tendency to prompt immoral acts.

morally criticized. As we have seen, the judgment that an agent lacks morally valuable motivations does not entail the further judgment that he is to be blamed or punished for this fact (recall §2.3(iii)). And as we have also seen, a person who is unable to share experiences will be cut off from an important source of moral value. Once we recognize this, an ethic of sharing implies that, rather than shunning such loners, the rest of us ought to strive to find some way of engaging them in more interactive pursuits.[219]

Similarly, there may be some people whose authentic, first person desires just are to help others (consider, for example, the stereotype of the 1950's wife and mother). It is difficult to know for sure what an ethic of sharing should say in this sort of case. If we are prepared to treat such persons' altruistic desires as authentic expressions of self, then it seems possible for an ethic of sharing to accommodate the intuition that they are indeed moral paragons: because their "own" interests are always and only "in tune" with the interests of others, they appear to be exemplars of the Will to Share And perhaps there are some people whose authentic interests take this form. My suspicion, however, is that most such persons are in fact lacking a sense of self, and hence that it is impossible for them to genuinely share their own lives and experiences with others. In this case, their motivational state is obviously less than fully admirable.[220] But here again, there is no reason to say that such persons ought to be blamed or criticized for their characters.[221]

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[219]Those who find this claim objectionably paternalistic should consider to the argument on p. 224ff., where I point out that the ideal of sharing sets powerful limits on what we can do to achieve it.

[220]Galston (1993) gives further reasons to think that pure altruism is not morally admirable.

[221]It may very well be, as feminists have insisted, that women who exhibit pure altruism of this sort do so because they are subject to objectionably limiting social roles.

And since their inability to experience mutuality cuts them off from some of the most coveted human values, an ethic of sharing implies that the rest of us ought to strive to find ways of interacting with them.

To be sure, acknowledging that the loner's or pure altruist's motivations may in some cases be understandable or at least not wholly deplorable is far from acknowledging that such persons are properly admired, so those who are influenced by "cooler" and "warmer" theories of virtue are still likely to find an ethic of sharing lacking on this point. But those who are bothered by the "one-sidedness" of such accounts are unlikely to be disturbed, and in the end, we may have to acknowledge a clash of baseline intuitions. Meanwhile, the problems do not seem severe enough to warrant giving up on an ethic of sharing altogether, since to find these character types morally deplorable is not yet to say that such characters will always or inevitably act wrongly. As we have seen, even persons who lack all the elements of a Will to Share might still (choose to) perform acts that are at least minimally morally permissible, insofar as those acts fail to exhibit the persons' deplorable motivations (recall §2.3(ii)).[222] Before concluding that an ethic of sharing is implausible, therefore, we need to think about its implications regarding the rightness and wrongness of individual acts.

5.2 Sharing and right action

It is easy to see what an ethic of sharing implies about actions in an abstract and general sense: right acts are those which exhibit or manifest an agent's Will to Share, while wrong acts are those which exhibit or manifest the agent's lack of such a Will. But many acts are not easily or immediately

[222]See §5.2 for further discussion of how an ethic of sharing evaluates the loner's and pure altruist's acts.

classifiable into one of these categories, and when that occurs, everything hinges on the particulars of the case. This feature is not unique to an ethic of sharing: all moral theories require a fairly nuanced interpretation of their basic ideas and formal structure before we can truly understand their gist.[223] And as with other theories, there is room for proponents of an ethic of sharing to disagree about its implications in at least some cases. In this section, I shall not be particularly concerned to resolve such intratheoretic disputes, though I will try to indicate when and why they are likely to arise. arise. My main aim is to show how an ethic of sharing proceeds in hard cases, and hence to illuminate the claims about action that are central to any ethic that treats sharing as our most overarching ethical ideal.

Can't people share in immoral acts?

A good place to begin is with examples in which two or more agents are sharing with one another, and yet seem to be engaged in manifestly immoral acts. Such examples range from the mildly disturbing, such as when a pair of children share a strange fascination in the activity of pulling the legs off of a grasshopper,[224] to the truly alarming, such as when gangsters work together to defend their territory and obliterate their competition. In both of these cases, the agents involved may engage in a great deal of sharing with one another, and indeed, the thrill of "doing it together" may even enhance their motivation to perform the immoral acts. And if an ethic of sharing was forced to endorse these kinds of activity, its appropriateness would certainly be questionable. When we examine the details more closely, however, I

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[223]For more on this point, recall my Chapter Two discussion of how the formal structure of agent-based ethics compares with deontological and consequentialist views (p. 94ff., above).

[224]Thanks to Sam Kerstein for this example.

believe we can plausibly say that agents involved in such activity are not in fact exhibiting a genuine Will to Share.

In the grasshopper case, it is important to distinguish between (1) each child's interaction with the grasshopper (and the motivations that prompt this interaction), and (2) each child's interaction with the other child (and again, the motivations that prompt this). The most disturbing thing about the children's activity obviously stems from (1), and what makes it so disturbing, I think, is each child's ability to distance himself from the inner life his "victim" (the grasshopper). This kind of distancing clearly betrays a lack of mutuality, since a child who shared the grasshopper's distress would clearly have a motivation to stop the torture.

It might be argued that the children must be "sharing the grasshopper's experience" in some sense, since part of their fascination may very well lie in the awareness that they are causing the grasshopper's suffering.[225] And perhaps they do have some vague awareness of this sort. Still, it is not really appropriate to say that either child genuinely shares the grasshopper's experience. At best, each child is treating the grasshopper's distress as what Adrian Piper calls a "surface object" of consciousness while treating his own fascination with the activity as a "depth object" (Piper 1991; cf. Nagel 1979). To say that the grasshopper's distress is a "surface object" is to say that the child is unable to empathize with that distress or even imagine what it is like to be the grasshopper at the time. This makes each child's activity (with respect to the grasshopper) objectionably "self-absorbed:" any

[225]Note that if we were convinced that the children were completely oblivious to the possibility that their "victim" was in distress – if, for example, they were motivated by a kind of purely scientific fascination ("look what it does when you take its legs off"), any failing on their part would seem more cognitive than moral.

awareness that he may have of the grasshopper's distress is clearly not being filtered through his consciousness in the way that it would be if the child had any desire to bring his own interests "in tune" with the interests of his victim. This kind of self-absorption may stem from a lack of the imaginative capacities necessary to identify the grasshopper's suffering as the experience of an independent being (and hence to recognize that they must stop pulling its legs off to make the suffering go away), or it may also stem from a lack of the perspective-taking capacities that make it possible to distinguish the experiences of other beings from the experiences of the self. But no matter the cause, the children are certainly not exhibiting any desire for mutuality with the grasshopper, and hence this aspect of their activity can be morally criticized.

Of course, some people may not be convinced that it is morally wrong to torture insects. And an interesting feature of the ethic of sharing is the way it can be used to explain the scalar character of our judgments about the wrongness of causing suffering to creatures of various sorts. In the case of insects, or other creatures that experience little or no mental life, any sense of mutuality that is possible to achieve with them will be minimal, at best. Indeed, if child psychologists are correct that the psychological basis of empathy is "facial mimicry," then it may be almost impossible for humans to share experiences with insects and other creatures who lack facial expressions of the sort that we can pick up. This does not necessarily mean that it is ever acceptable to cause gratuitous suffering; as we have just seen, the willingness to do so betrays a lack of the Will to Share toward one's victim. But it does at least suggest that where trade-offs are necessary, it is probably worse to cause the suffering of creatures with a richer mental life. Since it is probably much

less difficult to share the experiences of higher animals that exhibit more human-like characteristics, it is not so surprising that cruelty towards them is typically believed to be even worse. Meanwhile, those who do view the torture of insects as clearly immoral can be understood as endorsing an even broader sense of sharing – perhaps a sense of "shared creaturehood" than the sense of shared humanity I articulated above.

It might also be objected that the fact that the children's activity is shared with one another makes it all the worse. After all, people will do things together that they would not do alone, and the children's shared willingness to treat the grasshopper's distress as a "surface object" may even be the basis of a mutual bond between them. And isn't an ethic of sharing forced to say that the children's sharing with one another makes their activity morally good in at least some respect? The answer to this question, I think, is yes: insofar as their shared activity exhibits a high degree of mutuality with respect to one another (claim (2), above), an ethic of sharing does imply that each child's treatment of the other child is perfectly acceptable. But it is not clear to me that this is an implausible thing to say. After all, it certainly does not mean that what either child does to the grasshopper is morally acceptable. And that is most clearly where the problem lies.

The activity of gangsters can, of course, be dealt with in much the same way. For no matter how much experiential sharing goes on among the members of a particular gang, they clearly betray an unwillingness to share territory with their victims, and their preparedness (or worse, more active desire) to harm or kill their rivals betrays a complete lack of any desire for mutuality or sense of shared humanity with them. Indeed, the gangster's activity seems far worse because they are utterly unwilling to share either

things or experiences with those who are not members of their group. No matter how much they enjoy mutuality with their fellow gangsters, they display a truly deplorable kind of self-absorption with respect to their victims, allowing us to say that their activity is wrong for that reason. Put another way, their overall motivational state betrays a deplorable lack of the (complete) Will to Share.

Once again, it may still seem that the kind of criticism that an ethic of sharing is able to generate in this case is not severe enough. For though it enables us to condemn the gangster's activity as morally wrong due to its "specialized" character, it still acknowledges that the gangsters display a variety of admirable traits – such as loyalty, respect, and trust – with regard to one another. But it seems to me that this is a virtue rather than a criticism of the theory. After all, the evidence that the Will to Share is rooted in natural sociability (recall §4.3) helps to explain why "gangster life" can be appealing. And unless we clearly recognize this fact, it will be even more difficult to keep the potentially dark side of sharing – the fact that we are sometimes willing to do things with other people that we would not do ourselves – from taking too much control over our own or other people's characters.

There may also be reasons to doubt whether the gangsters' treatment of one another is as admirable as it may at first seem. For one thing, when the self-absorption of each individual gangster (with respect to outsiders) is shared by all the others, the suffering of their victims may get pushed farther and farther toward the "surface" of each gangster's consciousness. To the extent that they focus more and more on bringing their interests "in tune" with those of their fellow gangsters, therefore, even the deeper sense of mutuality they experience with respect to one another is tainted by

immorality. And it is also possible that they may in fact be exhibiting what Piper calls "vicarious possession" rather than genuine mutuality with their fellows. That is, they may treat the interests and concerns of their fellow gangsters as depth objects of their own consciousness while treating their own concerns – including any minimal sense of shared humanity with the members of rival gangs that might otherwise prevent them from participating in the gang activity – as mere surface objects. If this is what is going on, they are not really exhibiting sharing even within their group, and hence there is reason to criticize the gangsters' activity with respect to one another as well as toward members of rival groups.

The loner and pure altruist problems, revisited

But now it may seem that we once again have a problem dealing with loners and altruists. Earlier, I suggested that an ethic of sharing is not required to evaluate those motivational states as utterly deplorable, insofar as the loner or altruist possesses at least some of the elements that constitute a Will to Share. And I also pointed out that an ethic of sharing can at least acknowledge that much of their activity will be morally permissible in the most minimal sense, since not every action a loner or altruist (chooses to) perform(s) will exhibit the lack of mutuality. Nonetheless, an ethic of sharing implies that it will be impossible for loners and altruists to fulfill any more positive duties without first changing their characters. And it may seem to many people that at least some loners manage to do better than that. If this is true, then it poses a real problem for an ethic of sharing. For insofar as some loners and altruists do manage to act rightly, it seems that something other than the Will to Share must ground the rightness of at least some types of acts.

There are two kinds of cases in which this might seem to be true.[226] In the first, although an agent tends to be a loner and hence to prefer more solitary pursuits, he also cares about others and in addition to not harming them, at least sometimes tries to actively help. Because, ex hypothesi, this agent lacks a desire for either deep or broad sharing, an ethic of sharing is forced to insist that his actions are not particularly good. But again, given what we have seen about the one-sidedness of both separateness- and connection-based moral views, it is not clear that this judgment is entirely inappropriate. Meanwhile, there is no reason to think that such an agent will actively thwart the desire for mutuality when he acts from more purely altruistic desires, so I do not think an ethic of sharing must condemn his activity as morally wrong. It can allow that his acts are morally permissible, even though they are not particularly good.

In the second kind of case, the "loner" prefers to engage in solitary activity, but nonetheless tries to overcome (and at least sometimes succeeds in overcoming) his lack of natural sociability in order to reach out to other people. But here it is not entirely clear that the person is accurately described as a loner after all. As noted in §2.5 (p. 79ff.), an ethic of sharing can acknowledge the value of acting from "a sense of duty" – that is, the value of recognizing that one morally ought to do something other than what one is most naturally or directly motivated to do. Insofar as the "loner" in this example is motivated by the recognition that sharing is our most overarching ethical ideal, his actions will at least indirectly manifest the desire for mutuality that, according to such an ethic, is sufficient to make his actions

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[226]Both examples were suggested to me by Judy Lichtenberg. Thanks are also due to Sam Kerstein for helping me to formulate this objection more clearly.

right. Of course, to see whether or not this is the case we will have to see if it conforms to an ethic of sharing's most significant "summary rules" (developed in 5.3). And an ethic of sharing does imply that it would be better if the loner were motivated more directly by a desire for mutuality. Still, it is at least not clear that an ethic of sharing will generate conclusions that are totally counter-intuitive.[227]

The general point of these examples is that it is important to be clear about the grounds of any particular agent's motivation in order to make an accurate assessment of his or her acts. Suppose, for example, that the person in question suffers from the sort of "egoistic confusion" that makes it impossible to distinguish his own needs and interests from the needs and interests of others (cf. §4.4, above). Such a person might well find it intolerable to interact with other people, but his failure may nonetheless stem less from a lack of the desire for mutuality (he may sincerely want to find some way of satisfying all the needs and interests he experiences, including those he has vicariously "caught" from others), than from an inability to recognize that he must actively reach out to other people in order to achieve the desired result. In this case, the person's failing is probably more cognitive than moral (though his overall motivational state still won't be evaluated as highly as one which exemplifies more mature forms of empathy).[228] Or suppose that a person sincerely wants to interact with others, but is unable to find anyone who is able to share his idiosyncratic interests and concerns, and is led by

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[227]Similarly, a pure altruist might try to engage in more interactive pursuits. Like the loner just discussed, such a person can also be said to act rightly if his activity accords with the summary rules of sharing.

[228]For a fascinating discussion of how mature empathy is linked to moral activity, see Deigh (1995).

frustration to pursue a more solitary life.[229] To the extent that this frustration stems from the loner's unwillingness to take seriously any other individual's point of view, it does not manifest a Will to Share and the agent's actions will be criticized as morally wrong. But to the extent that the agent finds himself surrounded by others who are completely unwilling to take his interests seriously, his frustration might be a direct manifestation of his sincere desire for mutuality, in which case his actions will certainly fall above the threshold of moral permissibility.

5.3 Practical Guidance

Still, it is perhaps not particularly interesting to show that an ethic can, when suitably interpreted, be made to say plausible things about the rightness or wrongness of acts in particular cases. To really be satisfactory, an ethical theory must also be able to provide us with at least some guidance in situations where we are unsure what to think or where our intuitions conflict, and to give us some insight into why we make the moral judgments that we (typically) do.

Motivational conflicts

Virtue-ethical theories are sometimes criticized for overestimating the degree of psychic harmony that most moral agents are able to achieve – for implying that the good or virtuous person is straightforwardly disposed to do the right thing in a particular set of circumstances.[230] But an agent-based ethic seems to be particularly immune to this charge. After all, we have seen that

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[229]For evidence that some of the most solitary personality types are those who in fact experience a very powerful sense of shared humanity with their fellows, see Monroe (1996: 200ff).

[230]Thanks to Nancy Sherman for reminding me of this criticism.

the Will to Share is constituted by four types of elements, and that even its most distinguishing feature – the desire for mutuality – has two dimensions that at least sometimes conflict. Given these factors, it seems that even the best moral agents – those who possess a complete Will to Share – will often be genuinely perplexed about what to do.

The basic idea of an ethic of sharing is that each agent should filter her own, first person interests and concerns through the other person's interests and concerns (which she can empathically pick up), in order to find some way to express and fulfill her both sorts of motivation at the very same time. But there may be situations in which the filtering process is inconclusive, and there is no obvious way for the agent's more overarching desire for mutuality to be achieved. What should an agent do then?

The first step, I think, is to check the accuracy of the motivations that one is having the most difficulty bringing "in tune" with all the rest. By "checking the accuracy," I mean reflecting on whether the motives are based on a realistic assessment of the situation (rather than wishful thinking or mistaken information, for example), and this means taking pains to ensure that she really does understand what the other person is thinking and feeling, as well as considering more objective facts about the world. If she finds that any of her first person motivations were inappropriate (based on a mistaken understanding of the situation) she can work to revise them. And if she finds that the motives she has picked up from the other person are based on that other's mistaken beliefs, she can at least attempt to get the other to revise them. Still, the agent's ability to achieve mutuality will depend, in no small measure, on whether the other person is willing to make the necessary adjustment. And if the other is not, it may be simply impossible to satisfy both

her own and the other's interests at the very same time. Can an ethic of sharing help us determine what an agent should do in this situation?

At this point, it is difficult to provide a determinate answer. But it is certainly not the case that the agent is forced to alter all of her own concerns to bring them in line with the other. After all, if one agent simply adopts the other's point of view without endorsing it as her own, or if one simply convinces the other to adopt her point of view without the other being independently convinced of its appropriateness, they cannot truly share it. Recognizing this, the agent who is truly motivated by mutuality will have a moral reason to get out of a relationship where genuine sharing is impossible. This does not of course mean that sharing agents cannot try to influence one another's beliefs and attitudes, and sharing agents may also need to make adjustments to their own interests. Still, it does mean that there will be natural limits on how "demanding" such an ethic can be.

Yet now it may seem that an ethic of sharing is a bit too lax, and gives agents too much latitude in deliberating about what to do. After all, agents are not only involved in face-to-face relationships; every day we are forced to confront a plurality of different points of view, and the task of bringing all of those points of view into harmony will certainly be enormously difficult. When it proves impossible, is there a non-arbitrary way for the agent to decide which persons to share with? Fortunately, the answer is yes: an ethic of sharing implies that we should be open to all points of view, but it does not imply that they are all equally good. For while although an ethic of sharing treats openness to other people as the starting point of moral deliberation, it does not treat openness as an evaluative commitment. Rather, it instructs us to reflect on whether the points of view of other people are in keeping with the

ideal of mutuality. And in a fascinating way, the Will to Share sets its own, internally imposed limits on what can be done to achieve its deepest desires and fulfill its most heartfelt aims. This is because an agent who is genuinely motivated by the desire for mutuality will be simply unable to fulfill that desire while interacting with someone whose motives and actions thwart it. Put another way, the sharing agent will be utterly unwilling to do things that the other person, due to his lack of a desire for mutuality, is perfectly willing to do. This makes it impossible to bring that other person's interests in tune with one's own, but the sharing agent need not apologize for this. Because mutuality grounds the goodness of all shared activity, the sharing agent has a moral reason not to continue interacting with another person who does not exhibit a commitment to mutuality as well. She has a moral reason not to share the other's interests and aims.

It is also fairly easy to see how a genuinely sharing agent might experience a sense of duty. For even if the filtering process yields a fairly determinate answer with respect to how the agent's desire for mutuality can be achieved, the agent's more autonomous, first-person desires might nonetheless be very strong and lead her to feel as if pulled in two ways at once. Alternatively, the agent might (like the "loner" mentioned above) recognize that he is lacking in empathic awareness or natural sociability, but also recognize that these are important moral capacities and sincerely wish to overcome that fact. In these kinds of cases, an ethic of sharing implies that an agent morally ought to act in ways that fulfill the theory's most important summary rules. But before we can understand the basis for such rules, we need to be clearer about how to resolve the conflicts that will inevitably arise between the depth and breadth dimensions of shared activity. We need to

know, for example, what we should say about agents whose activity manifests one dimension but not the other, since without some way of resolving this question, it will be impossible to say anything very concrete about the moral value of the actions such agents perform.

The wrongness of specialization

Although I have allowed that agents may exhibit very different patterns with respect to the way deep and broad forms of mutuality are integrated within their overall character, I submit that it is always morally wrong for an agent to act in ways that exhibit only one form of mutuality at the total expense of the other. My reasons for saying this stem partly from the intuition that a "complete" Will to Share is always more admirable than an "incomplete" one, and partly from more theory-driven considerations about the types of actions that it seems necessary for any plausible moral theory to be able to condemn.[231]

The Will of an agent who specializes entirely in either deep or broad sharing is less complete than the Will of an agent who integrates both dimensions into her distinctive moral personality. But since both dimensions are legitimate forms of mutuality, why should we suppose that a more complete Will is morally more admirable? The intuitive idea is that being closer to the moral ideal is always better in some sense. And this intuition can be substantiated in part by the recognition that both forms of sharing are closely connected to many other core moral notions. Even those who may believe that goods like love and friendship are largely overrated must at least

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[231]Recall from Chapter Two (p.93) that agent-based ethics may rely on the process of "reflective equilibrium" in order to bring their judgments about the intrinsic admirability of various motivational states in line with their considered judgments about the rightness or wrongness of various types of acts.

acknowledge that we all depend crucially on such interactive values for our early survival and personality development. And as R.M. Adams has emphasized, almost all work and a great deal of play in contemporary society takes the form of a shared project (1988). Unless we cultivate and exhibit the deeper kinds of sharing, therefore, it will be impossible for those kinds of goods to ever be achieved – either for ourselves or other people. And given the importance of such goods in human life and human society, it seems arbitrary to exclude them from the moral domain.

At the same time, the sense of shared humanity that lies at the core of broad sharing seems to be intimately related to notions like equality and the basic value or intrinsic worth of all human beings. Rosalind Hursthouse (1993) has suggested that to have such a sense[232] is not necessarily to like or love or even respect every other person, but it is "to want to" do so, and hence to be "passionately inclined to trying to make out a case for their meriting such attitudes" (1993: 65). It is also to be disposed to give others the benefit of the doubt, and when they still look flawed or wrong, to remember that one might "look equally flawed or wrong to them," and perhaps to come "to see some point in their view" of oneself (Ibid.). And even if that proves impossible, it is still to acknowledge that "we have [at least some] shared experiences, a common life," and hence that "there must be some way in which they are not entirely despicable and worthless, however frightful they are" (Ibid.). Why does a sense of shared humanity lead an agent to think in this way? Because such an agent recognizes that other people are, after all, "human beings, like me" (Ibid.).

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[232]Hursthouse uses the terms "family-feeling" and "brotherhood of man" to capture this notion, but I think she would find the "sense of shared humanity" to be equally apt.

Those who are influenced by "separateness-based" moral views may be inclined to think that the breadth dimension should always have total priority, insofar as it captures the notion that all persons are possessed of basic moral dignity. This may in fact be true in public or institutional moral contexts. But to say that the breadth dimension always takes priority in even the individual moral domain seems to me to be a bit too strong. For one thing, we have seen a great deal of evidence, in earlier chapters, suggesting that reasonable people can reasonably disagree about the importance of deep, interpersonal relationships in human life. For another, it seems that one of the reasons that all human beings have moral value is that each of us is unique – and it is the depth dimension that focuses on individuals as the particular persons they are.

Even if we acknowledge that it is morally better to exhibit a (more) complete Will to Share through one's actions, however, we might still wonder why exhibiting only one of the dimensions of sharing is not good enough. After all, an agent who does so may fail to act in some morally valuable ways, but she will nonetheless be exhibiting some kind of desire for mutuality. And indeed, we have seen that an agent-based ethic has at least three options when it comes to the assessment of individual acts (recall p. 95ff.). It can say that such acts are wrong unless they totally approximate the most overarching motivational ideal. But it can also allow agents to fall somewhat short of the ideal, defining some threshold point above which their actions remain morally permissible (though perhaps not particularly impressive, noble or "fine"), and it can even do away with notions of rightness and wrongness altogether and simply assess actions as better or worse. So what is the basis for saying that "specialized" moral activity is wrong?

With respect to the three options just mentioned, I want to endorse the "threshold" version. Since I have already argued that manifestations of the Will to Share will be highly variable and depend on the unique character of individual agents, it is doubtful that the idea of "totally approximating" the Will to Share will be entirely coherent. And I do not quite want to say that an action is wrong simply if it fails to manifest one dimension of sharing, since I have acknowledged that there will sometimes be trade-offs between the two. However, I do think it is appropriate to say that activity is wrong when it actively thwarts either dimension of sharing – to do that is to manifest a deplorably incomplete Will.

The problem with specialization, when understood in this way, is that it shows the moral agent to be utterly insensitive to at least some kinds of moral considerations. The purely deep sharer, for example, will be very attuned to the interests and needs of those with whom she shares a particular point of view, but will not even recognize the interests and needs of human beings more generally, and hence will be prepared to run roughshod over even the most basic moral concerns of those people with whom she is not deeply engaged. The purely broad sharer, on the other hand, will be highly attuned to the interests and needs that she shares with human beings generally, and indeed, will treat every human being as simply one among many. But this will make her oblivious to those moral interests that can only be fulfilled through deeper forms of interaction – through expressions of love and friendship, for example.[233] Of course, it may frequently be possible to act out of friendship without actively thwarting the needs and interests of

[233] I have in mind the kinds of cases that moral partialists, such as Blum (1980) and Stocker (1987), as well as care-ethicist like Noddings (1984) and Baier (1994) frequently emphasize.

strangers in many cases, and similarly, it may often be possible to manifest one's sense of shared humanity without slighting the duties of friendship. But there will also be cases in which the expression of one dimension actively thwarts the expression of the other, and it is at that point that one crosses the threshold and acts in ways that are morally wrong.[234] Perhaps the best way to see why is to set out an ethic of sharing's most significant summary rules.

The summary rules of sharing

The summary rules that are endorsed by any agent-based ethic do not have independent moral validity. But they do provide us with a way of understanding the appropriateness of adherence to familiar moral commands, such as "be charitable" and "don't steal," by summarizing the types of acts that a genuinely virtuous agent (an agent who lived up to the theory's ideal of moral character) will typically be motivated to perform. Hence, to the extent that sharing can be shown to lie at the core of such day-to-day rules, we will have even more reason to think that it really does serve as our most overarching ethical ideal.

The basis for claiming that a particular command is a summary rule of sharing is the ability to demonstrate that a failure to abide by it would betray a deplorable lack of the Will to Share – that it would either exhibit the complete absence of any desire for mutuality, or that it would actively thwart one of the two dimensions of experiential sharing. This will almost certainly

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[234] I do not believe that this view conflicts with my earlier comments about the variability of the Will to Share, since the requirement of "non-specialization" is not a requirement to exhibit the two dimensions in perfectly equal amounts. Michael Slote has defended this kind of point by noting that the bipartite command to "plant corn and plant cotton" could not be fulfilled simply by planting "an unusually large amount of corn." Yet neither does it seem necessary to plant equal numbers of corn and cotton seeds; it would be enough to "plant both corn and cotton in non-negligible amounts" (1992: 109). Similarly, the requirement that one exhibit both deep and broad sharing is meant to allow for some leeway.

be true in the case of the rules against killing, torture, and other forms of violence, since no one would desire to share the pain and suffering of another. Indeed, the restrictions on violence will be particularly stringent, since even in contexts where an agent might find some justification in killing, it is extremely unlikely that the process of filtering the other person's interests through this justification would result in a motivation to kill.

A possible exception here is killing in self-defense. This is because any agent with a healthy self-concept and normal sense of self-preservation will find it impossible to bring his or her own interests "in tune" with those of an attacker, no matter how strong the practical desire for mutuality may be. This does not, of course, imply that moral agents may strike with deadly force whenever threatened; presumably the desire for mutuality would lead them to use no more force than is necessary to rebuff the attacker. And ideally, the sharing agent would hope to achieve a full blown sense of mutuality with the attacker, since this would make the attacker less likely to continue as a threat. Nonetheless, since the attacker must surely be a manifestly unsharing individual (and be violating the summary rule against violence), this is a situation in which it is strictly impossible for the self-defender to share his attacker's point of view. If he resorts to violence in order to defend himself, this seems justified by his commitment to the ideal of mutuality.

More generally, an ethic of sharing implies that acts of aggression are typically wrong. Thomas Nagel once made the interesting suggestion that nearly all acts of aggression stem from a desire for mutuality: having suffered at the hands of another, we naturally want the other to experience our suffering for him or herself, and by lashing out at the other (1979: 46). But while closely related to mutuality in a way that may help to explain the

prevalence of retributive urges among human beings, I believe that retaliatory aggression is in fact a distortion of the Will to Share. Suffering may be easier to take when one knows that one is not alone, but causing another person to suffer does not in fact make one's own suffering go away. And an agent who desires to share another's experience will want to cause as little suffering as possible.

The ideal of sharing can also be used to ground rules against lying and other forms of manipulation as morally wrong. For one thing, it is impossible to share a point of view with another person unless we are responsive to attitudes that are authentically theirs, and this means that anyone motivated by a Will to Share will want to be sure that other people have full information. For another, lying to another person is a way of asserting one's own power over them – manipulating their beliefs in order to get them to serve one's own interests – and this is clearly a "one-sided" act of the sort that the ideal of sharing is meant to condemn.

Perhaps the best way to see this is by considering the difference between lying to a person and simply ignoring them.[235] Intuitively, we tend to think that ignoring a person does not make it impossible to share with them in the future. But lying to a person does make it extremely unlikely that future sharing with them will occur. I believe this is because ignoring a person need not necessarily manifest a deplorable Will to Share. After all, it may not be possible to share experiences with them in any deep way, given one's own and the other's particular interests. And so long as they do not have any pressing needs or interests, the empathic awareness of which would move a sharing agent to respond, ignoring them will not betray a deplorable lack of a

[235]Thanks to Michael Slote for reminding me about this point.

sense of shared humanity. Ignoring someone, in other words, does not actively thwart the ideal of sharing, even if it also does not actively exhibit either dimensions of the desire for mutuality. To lie to a person, however, is to treat one's own interests and concerns as clearly having much more significance than the other's, and this does betray a deplorable lack of mutuality in both experiential dimensions. The depth dimension is thwarted because the liar seeks to manipulate (rather than share) the other person's particular point of view, and the breadth dimension is thwarted by the agent's obliviousness to – or failure to be moved by – the other person's natural desire to formulate and express authentic interests and goals.[236]

Similar comments apply in the case of a summary rule against stealing. For here again, to take something away from another is clearly to treat the other interests as having little or no moral weight, and one's own interests as having priority. And here again, it seems extremely unlikely that, having stolen from another, it will be possible to engage them in sharing at some future point.

In saying this, I do not mean to suggest that it is impossible, or unwarranted, for agents to forgive and forget. And indeed, an ethic of sharing can even be seen to ground a summary rule of forgiveness. Because it incorporates certain values of interpersonal connectedness, such an ethic acknowledges our ordinary human frailties, including our dependency and neediness. And it also encourages interaction as a form of moral learning. Hence, insofar as a previously unsharing agent shows him or herself to have cultivated a desire for mutuality, there is no reason to bear a grudge against her or refuse to interact in the future. Notice, however, that this does not make

[236] I take this to be a feature of basic humanity.

a previous act of lying or stealing less wrong (that action still manifested a deplorable lack of the Will to Share). It only acknowledges that it is possible for individuals to change their character.

The ideal of sharing also seems to ground a number of more positive rules. In Chapter Four, we saw that the empathic awareness which enables us to share in others' experiences provides us with a powerful incentive to promote their good, at least insofar as this is possible without disregarding our own good as well. Hence, while such an ethic does not imply that we must maximize human welfare, it does, for example, clearly ground a duty of easy rescue. Similarly, the desire for mutuality would seem to prompt a display of gratitude in response to assistance from others, and of loyalty toward those with whom one is involved in shared projects of various sorts. That is because a failure to exhibit these qualities betrays a kind of parasitism or willingness to receive help from others, without any corresponding willingness to share the burdens of social living.

5.4 Dissolving the Autonomy/Caring Debate

Since this dissertation began with an analysis of the contemporary debate that grew out of Carol Gilligan's work, I want to conclude by showing how an agent-based ethic of sharing helps to resolve – and in some cases, even dissolve -- the tensions that lie at the core of the Autonomy/Caring debate. As we saw in Chapter One, autonomy-based views tend to portray the crucial moral task as finding some sort of reason to act, while the ethics of care see morality as lying in a kind of sensitivity to humanity. Because an ethic of sharing is not grounded in moral principles, it may seem that it sides primarily with the ethics of care on this score. And if I am correct that the Will to Share is grounded in natural human sociability, then the reasons for acting

morally are, in a certain sense, already there. But while truly sharing agents will naturally feel and be moved by the interests of other people, this does not mean they will immediately act solely on others' behalf. It simply implies that they will be forced to think about the grounds for acting in a particular way. Because concern for self and concern for others must be filtered through one another in order for the genuinely sharing agent to determine what she should do in any particular context, the search for moral reasons will also be an ever-present task. And it is here that the presence of an overarching desire for mutuality appears to be crucial. For such a desire divorces moral agents from a too heavy attachment to either their own or other people's interests, making it significantly more likely that the agents will find the best way of fulfilling both sorts of interests (insofar as possible) at the very same time.

The ideal of sharing also underscores the care-ethical idea that the emotions are a constitutive medium of moral reflection and form a crucial component of genuinely moral response, inasmuch as the capacity for empathy serves as a precondition for sharing experiences. But since the desire for mutuality serves as a kind of overarching desire that one's own interests and concerns be brought in tune with the interests and concerns of others, the ideal of sharing also acknowledges the importance of some kind of regulative-motive, of the sort that autonomy-based views typically endorse. Consider Marcia Baron's suggestion that the motive of duty be conceived as a filter through which all our other motives must pass (1984). Her idea seems to be that without some such filter, there would be no way to resolve the inevitable conflicts that arise between the interests of separate persons. And although I have suggested that genuinely sharing agents do not typically perceive their own and others' concerns as being set in fundamental competition, this does

not mean that their is no sort of regulative motive at work. In fact, it seems to be precisely because they possess a more overarching desire for mutuality that sharing agents are motivated to express and fulfill both sorts of concern at the very same time.[237]

Barbara Herman has objected to the idea that morality be conceived as the expression of an overarching desire, suggesting that this devalues the moral agent's capacity for autonomous rationality (1993: ch. 10). Part of her concern seems to be that the paradigmatic case of moral activity is one in which an agent is tempted to make a special exception for himself, and hence that a desire-based model will be unable to explain why we often think we ought not to do what we most strongly desire. But we have seen that the sense of duty can be captured in agent-based terms (§2.6), and since we have seen that an agent who is constantly reflecting on moral principles will at least sometimes display an objectionable kind of detachment from other people, it is not obvious that a more principle-based account is appropriate. Meanwhile, the desire for mutuality – conceived as an overarching practical attitude, does keep agents from making special exceptions designed to further their own concerns.

Herman also suggests that desires must be "normalized" into a deliberative field before we can treat their expression as recognizably moral.

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[237]Baron also insists that the duty motive serves "as a limiting condition and at the same time as an impetus to think about one's conduct, to appraise one's goals, to be conscious of oneself as a self-determining being, and sometimes to give one the strength one needs to do what one sees one really should do" (1984: 59). As far as I can see, the desire for mutuality can serve all of these functions, though it does tend to de-emphasize the importance of "self-determination." If we take seriously the idea that even our distinctive personalities are shaped, in no small measure, by our interactions with others, and then even the development and pursuit of our "own" conception of the good will be an activity we engage in with others.

Her concern seems to be that we are too obscure to one another to successfully understand, let alone pursue, each other's good, and hence that we need independent moral principles to guide us as we attempt to understand both our own motives and others'. But as Iris Murdoch has emphasized, when human beings become mutual objects of one another's attention or have common objects of attention to define their focus, they are forced to elaborate a common vocabulary that enables them to overcome the difficulty in understanding each others' points of view (1970:33). Meanwhile, since the desire for mutuality sets its own, internally imposed limits on what can be done to achieve its aims (recall p. 224, above), it seems to serve precisely the sort of regulative function that defenders of autonomy-based views attribute to moral principles.

Defenders of more autonomy based views are also likely to object that an ethic of sharing cannot place enough emphasis on individual separateness to explain the basic level of "respect" that is due to all persons simply in virtue of their basic humanity. But Robin Dillon has pointed to an "intriguing similarity" between the (kantian) notion of respect and more connection-based notions of care (1992), and an ethic of sharing seems able to capture the best elements of both. The trick is to notice that while the formal role of respect is "to keep in the forefront of moral consciousness the attitude of valuing persons for their own sake and so to remind us of the reasons why we should treat persons as morality obliges" (Ibid.: 114, note 14), the practical content of respect is determined by what those reasons are taken to be. And while Kantians tend to focus on certain modes of human separateness – in particular, our capacity for rational autonomy – "it is certainly possible to identify other features of human beings as the [most] morally significant"

(Ibid.: 133). Most obviously, it is possible to focus on our "fundamental particularity and interdependence," as well as our vulnerability to fortune, our need for assistance from others, and "the way our good is shaped by our relationships" (Ibid.: 115).

By focusing on these latter features, Dillon develops a concept of "care-respect" which is an attitude responsive to human connectedness. To exhibit care-respect toward another requires "not so much refraining from interference, as recognizing our power to make and unmake each other as persons, exercising this power wisely, and carefully participating in their realization of their selves and their ends" (Ibid.: 116). Care-respect also focuses on "the particular me a person is," rather than on the more abstract fact that she is a person with her own conception of the good, and for this reason, it includes a dimension of cherishing the other's unique qualities that many find lacking in the kantian view.[238] Although care-respect is affectively laden, however, it does not lose the sense of commonality and equal value of persons that kantians want to emphasize, for we are all interdependent in the ways care-respect focuses on. And like the kantian notion, it is not a kind of evaluation respect.[239] Precisely because it focuses on our interdependency and vulnerability, care-respect encourages agents to be slow to judge and generous in their evaluations of others.

There is a kind of tension between kantian respect, which regards each person as just as valuable as every other, and care-respect, which regards this particular individual as special. But this tension is a familiar element of

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[238] A similar point is made by Friedman (1995: 137).

[239] Recall Darwall's (1977) distinction between "recognition respect" and "evaluation respect."

ordinary moral experience. Hence, Dillon treats kantian respect and care-respect as the two end points on a spectrum of permissible attitudes we may legitimately take up toward one another in various circumstances. Given the two dimensions of experiential sharing, there seems to be room for both practical attitudes within the Will to Share, and hence room for a basic level of respect once that notion is understood broadly enough to include both the separateness and connectedness aspects of human living.

While an ethic of sharing incorporates elements of both autonomy- and caring-based ethics, however, it does not incorporate all of the aspects of either view. For example, it does not incorporate the care-ethical notion of "motivational displacement," and it does not incorporate the autonomy-based claim that moral deliberation ideally involves the impartial review of moral principles and rules. More generally, it insists that neither the values of individual separateness nor the values of interpersonal connectedness are morally basic. Their moral significance, according to an ethic of sharing, depends on their being incorporated within the Will to Share, and tempered by the overarching desire for mutuality that is the distinctive feature of such a Will. Because we have seen reasons for rejecting a baseline commitment to either set of values, however, the fact that an ethic of sharing is not quite able to synthesize Gilligan's two moral orientations does not seem to be a strike against it. More importantly, since the value of mutuality transcends the separateness/connectedness tension altogether, an ethic of sharing provides us with a new "way of thinking" about morality that at least merits careful consideration.

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