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RIGHTLY ORDERED APPETITES: HOW TO LIVE MORALLY AND LIVE WELL

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THERE is a familiar distinction between two sorts of morally good people. The first always does his duty, or more, without regret, and without even being tempted to do anything else. The second is highly self-controlled. He too always does what is right, whether this is required or perhaps even beyond duty; but he must constantly exert himself in deliberation and in choice to subjugate unruly, contrary inclinations. Following Aristotle, the first of these two may be called *temperate*, and the second *continent*.

Notoriously, Aristotle claimed not only that the temperate person was morally superior, but also that he lived better than the continent person. Indeed Aristotle held that the temperate person lived as well as anyone possibly could. He could not be more virtuous; and he could not be happier. It is equally notorious, however, that his arguments for the claim about virtue are at best sketchy; and that those for the claim about happiness rest on a controversial teleological conception of the good for man.

In this paper I will defend both of Aristotle's claims, but in a markedly un-Aristotelian fashion. It is my hope that a modern-day discussion of the temperate life will enrich our understanding both of what it is to live morally, and of the relation between living morally and living well.

The first section describes the temperate and continent persons under discussion in greater detail. The second develops the essentials of a theory of the good life, in order to defend the claim that the temperate person lives as well as or better than any of his competitors. The last section shows that on both dialectical and philosophical grounds temperance is a greater virtue than continence.

I

How is the contrast between temperance and continence to be drawn? In Book VII of the *Nichomachean Ethics* Aristotle says:

> For the continent and the temperate person are both the sort to do nothing in conflict with (the rule) because of bodily pleasures; but the continent person has base appetites, and the temperate person lacks them. The temperate person is the sort to find nothing pleasant that conflicts with (the rule); the continent is the sort to find such things pleasant but not to be led by them. (*NE* 1151b35-1152a5)

If we restrict our attention to those more refined pleasures that don't "come naturally" to human beings,[1] we can give an illuminating account of the psychology of temperance and continence.

Both the temperate person and the continent person, as Aristotle presents them, are idealizations. Each does only what is right, knowingly, and unfailingly; whether this happens to be required by morality, or whether it is only recommended. The difference is that the temperate person's pleasures follow the boundaries laid down by the right and the good, while the continent person's do not. The latter frequently experiences bad desires and feelings, although of course he never gives in and acts on them. He may want to make money by cheating on his taxes, for example, although he knows this to be wrong. He may feel the impulse to make a clever but cutting remark in order to impress his supervisor, although he stops himself from doing so. He may take a secret satisfaction in the accidental discomfiture of those he hates—or in the embarrassment of those he envies in which he has no part—although he would never act on these feelings, or even allow himself to express them. He may feel a certain private and personal admiration for the ruthlessness of a J. P. Morgan, though he himself is in action a model of the cooperative virtues. These bad impulses and attitudes, as well as the conative ambivalence and affective turmoil they bring in their wake, are not merely fleeting and impotent. The disposition to feel their real

influence both in deliberation and on the retrospective view is as much a part of the character of the continent person as his overriding commitment to the right. The exercise of self-control, and that recurrent temptation which is its occasion, are the defining characteristics of the continent life.

In short, the continent person must have desires and attitudes which are plainly bad. His desires are bad because they would if unchecked lead to wrongful acts. They aim at what is bad, so to speak. His attitudes are bad because they involve approval or enjoyment of wrongful acts and bad outcomes, either *per se* or as means to other ends of his. Whether *he* is bad in virtue of having these is of course another issue; but that they themselves are bad hardly seems contestable.

The ideally temperate person, in contrast, has no morally bad appetites or feelings. Perhaps his desires and feelings are *responsive* to the right. Thus, for example, he may have a real interest in making money *per se*, and so at first glance be tempted by the money offered him. But he loses interest when he concentrates on the fact that making money in this case would involve taking a bribe (cf. *NE* 1173b25-27). Or perhaps his desires and attitudes are actually *conditioned* by the right, so that (for example) he just has no standing interest in money at all, except where it may be gotten by moral means.

In either case, whether to do what is right is not a real issue for him. There are no competing, non-moral considerations which move him, which command his attention in deliberation. "He saw his duty and he done it," with nary a hesitation between the seeing and the doing. The deliberation of the ideally temperate person is thus free from a certain kind of motivational conflict, as that of the ideally continent person cannot be.

This is not to say that the temperate person might not wish that the situation had been otherwise, or even entertain solely in imagination the prospect of having done otherwise. He may wish that he could somehow have come by that money honestly; or he may wish he were home watching his favorite T.V. show instead of sitting up with an ailing friend. But *wish* and *desire* are very different things. Perhaps the temperate person may entertain wishes for what his moral commitments prevent him from choosing. But he does not entertain full-fledged desires, engaged in his deliberations and capable of influencing his choices, for what he conscientiously avoids. His desires are ordered according to the right rule. The ideally continent person, in contrast, has full-fledged desires contrary to the rule. Acting contrary to the rule is a live option for him, in James' original sense of the phrase. Hence his need for the continued exercise of self-control in deliberation and in choice.[2]

Nor is it that the temperate person never feels negative emotions like resentment, anger, disappointment, or the urge for vengeance. For one thing, as Aristotle characterizes him, he must be free only of a certain kind of inner conflict, namely, the conflict between his moral concerns and feelings on the one hand, and his non-moral ones on the other. Like the rest of us, he may still feel disappointed that he cannot live both in the city and in the country; or resentful that his plans must be postponed on account of the weather, or because of guerilla activity in South Africa. Moreover, he may also feel and express negative moral attitudes when they are appropriate. His resentment will in this case be moral resentment; his anger righteous anger.[3]

This completes our sketch of the psychology of temperance and continence. There are several further simplifying assumptions which will serve to keep the discussion focused.

First, the ideally temperate and ideally continent individuals under discussion are equally conscientious in their commitment to the right. There is a temptation to think of the temperate person as displaying an almost preternatural innocence. We tend to conceive of him as one who has had no experience of evil, either in the world or in himself. The continent person, on the other hand, is often thought of as confronting evil every day, not only in others, but in his own heart. Saint Paul might be a good example of the latter; and of course the virgin Mary is represented in traditional Catholic theology as an example of the former, "conceived without sin."

The ideally temperate person to be discussed here, however, is not preternaturally pure-hearted. He is someone who has experienced the pleasures of sin and has transcended them, and his appetite for them. He does what is right knowingly, remem-

bering full well what it is like to be tempted by the opposite. (Cf. Confucious' famous description of himself, *Analects* 2.4: At fifteen I set my heart upon learning. At thirty, I had planted my feet upon the ground. At forty, I no longer suffered from perplexities. At fifty, I knew what were the biddings of Heaven. At sixty, I heard them with docile ear. At seventy, I could follow the dictates of my own heart; for I no longer overstepped the boundaries of right.")

Second, the characters of the ideally temperate and continent persons under examination are equally the products of a meritorious inward struggle rather than an infusion of divine grace, or a sudden loss of interest in vice. Neither of them, we may suppose, has won his virtue lightly. Nor need we assume that either keeps it easily, proceeding blithely through life without being concerned not to become bitter or resentful (in the first case), or self-indulgent and uncontrolled (in the second).

Finally, continence need not be conceived essentially as a stage in the struggle on the way to temperance. The paths to each of these may overlap, as Aristotle himself thought, but they may also be largely divergent. An analogy may be helpful. There are two distinct possible strategies for coping with alcoholism. On the one hand, one might rely on aversion therapy, together with efforts to develop alternative interests and pleasures. If such therapy is successful, then ultimately one's desire for alcohol will extinguish entirely. On the other hand, one might rely on the supportiveness and morally uplifting effects of membership in a group like Alcoholics Anonymous, to develop the self-control or strength of will necessary to combat unruly passions. Here one accepts the undesirable appetite as given and attempts to control only its expression in action. On the former path, in contrast, one tries to reshape the contours of one's appetites so that a battle of will is not required to avoid the bad object. One aims to replace its attractions with others.

These two paths or something like them seem to be paths one may take to conquering almost any appetite. Nor need such paths cross, unless one takes the Platonic mythology of appetites too literally, and supposes that appetites, like wild beats, grow stronger whenever they are fed.[4] (Perhaps it is true nonetheless that once one becomes continent one will then strive to become temperate; but this is a different point, to be considered in section III below.)

In brief, the subsequent claims about temperance and continence are conditional ones. The ideally temperate life is superior to the ideally continent life, and to other lives, both morally and from the personal point of view, only given the above characterizations of the two, and only given the preceding three assumptions.

II

There are a number of considerations that tell in favor of temperance over continence from the point of view of the good life. The temperate person experiences less disappointment and is less liable to resentment, for example; and his conative and affective life is more harmoniously ordered. There is however one fundamental reason why temperance is preferable to continence: the temperate person can have all of what he most values, while the latter cannot.

To begin with, the temperate person takes pleasure only in what is right or permitted. This shows that his own conception of the good life is structured by his commitment to living rightly. The continent person, in contrast, seems to have a conception of the good life which is to some extent at odds with his overriding commitment to right action; for what he enjoys is in conflict with what he takes to be right.

It might seem strange to regard what one takes pleasure in as revealing one's conception of the good life; but here we may take a leaf from Aristotle's remarks on the varieties of pleasure. That one takes pleasure in eating or sex *per se* certainly may not indicate much. But the refined pleasures—the pleasures relevant to my characterizations of temperance and continence—are those which people are not inclined just by their nature to enjoy. In the case of the refined pleasures, to enjoy something is not essentially to have a certain feeling when one is experiencing it. Rather it is to prefer it, to think continuing it worthwhile, for its own sake, and even though one is not (as with the basic pleasures) required so to prefer by one's own human nature.

More precisely, a refined pleasure is a particular sort of intrinsic desire for some activity or state. It is typically engaged with certain conative and affective modes. To take pleasure in something is typically not only to prefer that it continue, for its own sake, but also to seek it out for its own sake; to wish for it when it is absent; to invoke rememberings and imaginings of it for their own sakes; to tend to become absorbed in the actual experiencing of it; to focus one's attention on it to the exclusion of other stimuli; and so on.

So characterized, one's refined pleasure do not so much reveal some antecedent conception of the good life as they are constitutive of such a conception. One's view of the good life is not a purely cognitive affair. It is largely affective, just like one's personal views of morality.[5] Whatever one may say or even do, it is one's refined pleasures as I have defined them which reveal what one in fact values most highly for oneself. For example, suppose that one takes pleasure in appearing superior to others, for its own sake and not merely because one regards being able to do so as (e.g.) a sign of success; and that one does so even when this superiority is purchased at the expense of their comfort or self-esteem. This shows that one views such self-aggrandizement as a legitimate constitutive element of the good life. Similarly, that one enjoys sharing one's feelings with those one cares about, for its own sake and not merely in order to fulfill their expectations, reveals—indeed partly constitutes—one's working view of what makes life worthwhile.[6]

This connection between pleasure and one's view of the good reveals the way in which pleasure must inform the good life.[7] It is not that such a life must focus on seeking pleasure. Still less must it involve a surfeit of pleasurable sensations. Rather, part of what it is for a life to be good is for it to be viewed as good by its possessor in the very living of it. To live *well* requires that one regard one's life as enjoyable, or worth having for its own sake. To live *as well as possible*—to live the good life—requires that one regard one's life as just as enjoyable, just as much worth having, as any comparable alternative. As Aristotle puts it, "pleasure completes (excellent) activity as an end which supervenes (on it), as the bloom of youth does on those in the flower of their age" (*NE* 1174b30-35).

Here then is the most fundamental reason that the temperate person lives better than the continent person. The latter's conception of the good life, as expressed by what refined pleasures he enjoys, is in conflict with his own overriding, conscientious commitment. Given this commitment, therefore, he cannot live the good life. For he cannot live a life in which he has all of the things he intrinsically prefers.

The temperate person's conception of the good life, in contrast, operates within the restrictions laid down by the (morally) good and the right. He takes pleasure only "in accordance with the rule." The temperate person is therefore able to live well—and so presumably some temperate people do live well—despite his conscientious commitment.

Of course Aristotle held not only that the temperate person lived better than the continent person, but that his life was the best of all. If it is filled out a bit, however, the above account of pleasure and the good life also supports a claim only slightly more modest than Aristotle's, namely, that the temperate life will always be *at least as good* as any comparable life one might lead.

What makes a life good? That friendship, more richness and variety in experience, better health (both physical and mental), the development and exercise of one's talents, the recognition and admiration of one's peers, the completion of one's chosen projects, and the satisfaction of one's desires all tend, *ceteris paribus*, to make a life more worthwhile seems indisputable. Their value seems to be *objective*: it does not depend on whether particular people take them to be valuable; and it is such that any reasonable person should recognize it. Of the person whose life displays all of these features but who does not prize them, we might say, "he doesn't know how lucky he is." Such a person's life is sad, ironic, or sometimes pathetic.

Such a one does not live well because he does not enjoy what he has, or think it worthwhile. His life may contain all of the essential objective ingredients, yet it lacks the *subjective* element essential to living well. If only he appreciated these things, his enjoyment would complete his life as the bloom of youth does the lives of those in the flower of their age.

Here as above the suggestion is that one's personal views about what makes a life worthwhile are also an essential element of the good life. To live as well as circumstances allow requires living out such a subjective view. What must be added now is that such a view about what is most enjoyable or worthwhile is in fact doubly subjective.

First, to live out such a view generally involves having certain experiences and preferences about the elements of one's life. In particular, it is usually to experience and to prefer a certain mix of objectively valuable features. Second, and even more importantly, there seems in general to be no legitimate objective standard for ranking different possible lives, conceived as different mixes of these features. Is the greater approbation of one's peers, or perhaps the fuller development of one's talents, worth having if it comes at a substantial cost to one's emotional health? Is the latter worth protecting if doing so severely limits the fulfillment of one's cherished projects? Which mix is best, in the circumstances? The answers to these questions seem to be subjective. That is to say, they are determined by what each of us believes the answers to be; and reasonable people may reasonably disagree about them.

This view is thus a variant of the standard preference-maximization views: For a given agent, a mix of objectively valuable features is best in the circumstances if it is the one which is the most pleasurable to him, that is, in whose constituents he takes the greatest pleasure. The best life, in short, is one which maximizes satisfaction of certain of the agent's intrinsic preferences about objectively valuable goods. And a given "life-mix," if you will, is as good as any comparable alternative if there are no others in which the agent would take greater pleasure.[8]

Both this view and the more standard preference-maximization theories of the good life are subjective, though in different ways. My view is subjective in roughly the same way that what Urmson and Rawls call "intuitionism" is subjective. Because lives are regarded as mixes of objectively valuable features, the standards of value for these features—like the intuitionist principles of the right—taken one by one, are standards to which any reasonable person should agree when they take the personal point of view. On the other hand, just as there is for the intuitionist no principled lexical ordering of the rules of right, so for my subjectivist view there is no analogously objective standard for ranking different mixes of goods. My claim is in this respect the typically subjectivist one, that the actual value of a person's life is determined by his or her own views about its value; but on the proposed account ones's choice of views is antecedently limited.

More standard preference-maximization theories, of course, seek to maximize the satisfaction of preferences indiscriminately, without regard to the nature of their objects. On the view under discussion, in contrast, it is rather that the best life is one in which certain particular preferences are maximized, namely, certain of one's intrinsic preferences about the objectively valuable goods. Like Aristotle's, this theory of the good life requires the distinction between true and false pleasures. The value of one's life, on this theory, is determined by one's level of enjoyment only of what is truly a good. Other pleasures are false, and do not of themselves set a standard for the value of a life.[9]

Of course, refined pleasure *per se* probably has an objective value; and so that one's life is in general pleasant implies that it contains at least one objectively good feature among many. But one may prefer the goods of a healthier life, for example, or those of a life in which one's talents are more fully developed, or even the good of a life of struggle and aspiration, to the goods of a life in which one's intrinsic preferences are maximally satisfied regardless of whether they constitute true or false pleasures. (Moreover, that one prefers the goods of one of the former lives to those of the last does not entail that one prefers these same goods to, say, a certain particular momentary but intense pleasure. That one's intrinsic preferences are in general maximally satisfied thus does not entail that one's intrinsic preferences about objective goods are maximally satisfied, nor conversely.)

It is important to see that on the view at hand judgments about better and best lives are in general *radically* subjective. The life of a liberated businesswoman, for example, is a good life—given the valuable elements it contains—if she takes the greatest pleasure *in the very living of it*. In general,

the superiority of a life will be determined by how well it measures up by whatever standard the agent would embrace in the living of it. What makes the life of the liberated businesswoman a better one, if it is, is not simply that it contains certain valuable elements. So does the alternative life of the contented housewife. Nor is it that the former necessarily contains a greater overall quantity of objective value, if one may so speak. Presumably the businesswoman's life is more valuable along some dimensions (autonomy, for example) and less valuable along others (strength of family bonds, perhaps). The businesswoman's is a superior life for a given agent to lead only in the sense that she would find it the most worthwhile were she to live it. A judgment of the superiority of a life is thus almost always a judgment made from a standpoint *internal* to the life judged superior.[10]

Now plainly two alternatives may both equally be judged superior to each other, each by its own lights. Nonetheless, in general on this view there will be no single, univocal standpoint which the agent can take up and from which some judgment of "overall" superiority can be synthesized out of these competing perspectival judgments. That a contented slave regards the alternative of freedom with fear and aversion suggests that, judged by its own lights and given the objective goods it contains, his present life may well be superior to that of a freedman. But abolitionists may with equal truth point out that had he been raised a freedman, this latter life would equally be judged the superior one, by the lights he would then have had. On what grounds could either of these perspectival judgments be elevated to the status of a judgment of overall superiority?[11]

If it is granted that there is no objective standard for ranking life-mixes, then the only alternative to this radical subjectivism is to identify some single, univocal, subjective standpoint as the privileged one. More standard preference-maximization theories take it that the current perspective of the agent—suitably refined, perhaps—gives the privileged standpoint for ranking lives. This seems reasonable enough if the question at hand is the immediate, strategic question of where to go from here given the costs of changing to various available alternatives. The present question is not this one, however, but rather the more removed, more purely evaluative question of which life would be best were one to find oneself living it. Here it seems arbitrary so to elevate whatever standards of value the agent happens to have now. After all, however refined and idealized one makes it, this standard very likely will remain only one among a great many such standards the agent would have were he or she to live out the various alternatives under consideration.

Alternative life-mixes are more like roles in a play than like suits of clothes. Each comes complete with its own set of characteristic feelings, desires, developed talents, habits, and projects. Each comes also with its own refined pleasures, or working views about the comparative attractiveness of its goods and other goods to the agent. In this way, each comes with its own internal standard of value. Why hold that a removed judgment of that life's relative merits can be validated only by reference to the agent's current standards, especially if he himself would reject these standards were he to live out the very life in question?[12]

This radically subjective view does allow for certain sorts of "overall" comparative and superlative judgments about the value of lives. For one thing, a life need not always be best when judged by its own internal standard. A housewife discontented with her own performance in that role may, in the very living of such a discontented life, prefer that she have the life of a contented, more proficient housewife instead. In such a case her current life and the contemplated alternative share the same internal standard; and the alternative fares better by that standard than her actual life does. A life that is better than another, by their own shared standard, is "overall" better. A life not as good as another by their shared standard is overall not as good.

There is also a way in which one life may legitimately be judged overall better than another, even if their internal standards are different. The first may perform better—and so bring more true pleasure to the agent—by its own standard for objective values, than the second does by its own standard.[13]

This account of the good life requires further elaboration and defense. But enough has been said

to show how, if it is plausible, it affirms the superiority of temperance. The temperate life is superior to the continent life, for example, (however different their standards may be) because given their common moral commitment the temperate person is always able to do better by his own lights than the continent person can do by his. The temperate life is superior to most other alternatives for the very same reason. It is of course true that other, intemperate lives will offer more variety or more fun, say; and the temperate person will probably know this just as he probably knows that other lives may offer more wealth, power, or fame. But *given that he is temperate*, it is precisely in the good to be found in the living of some particular temperate life that he takes the greatest pleasure. There are no other competing goods he prefers more. He is to this extent at peace, at least with his moral self. He is not constantly tempted to seek more fun, more power, more prestige than a conscientiously committed person can have.

All this would be true of anyone who was to live the temperate life. Hence the temperate life is always validated as that life than which there can be none better, by its own standards. It follows on the theory at hand that no other life can be more worthwhile than it is.[14, 15]

I have already implied that this is not an argument for choosing here and now to go for the temperate life rather than some intemperate alternative. Where it is best to go now is an immediate, strategic question. We have been discussing only a more removed, evaluative question. Even leaving this aside, however, it may be that most of us will have a number of alternatives, each of which is as fully internally validated as the temperate life is. (Of course the continent life will never be one of these!) On the account at hand, each of these fully validated lives will equally be a life than which there is none better; and there will be no life which is it is overall and uniquely best for the agent to lead.

What I have given instead is an argument for thinking that the temperate life is as good as any other, on the assumption that one has already chosen to live it. This conclusion is important, although it is weaker than what philosophers in the tradition from Plato to Gauthier have tried to establish. What follows from it is that if there are strong reasons (e.g.) from the moral point of view for living the temperate life rather than any intemperate alternative, then there can be no objections to such a choice from the perspective of the good life.

III

Anyone who has an overriding, conscientious commitment to acting rightly is faced with a choice between two putative idealizations of the conscientious life: the life of the temperate person and the life of the continent person. I have argued that from the point of view of the good life the former is preferable to the latter. In this section I will argue that the life of the temperate person is also the morally superior one.

To have an overriding conscientious commitment is simply to be willing always to take moral reasons as decisive in one's own deliberation and choice. The conscientious person does not regard this willingness as a merely personal taste, however. He regards it as an appropriate response to the facts and the choice-situations in which he finds himself. This much is a fact about our moral experience. As a matter of psychological fact, therefore, his concern for the right and the good is quite likely to extend beyond his regard for his own behavior. He is likely also to be dismayed by the evil he finds in the world and in others. Even if he is satisfied with his own personal contributions to the battle, surely he will still find himself wishing that other people would think and act as he does; or that the misfortunes and disasters of nature could somehow be averted.

If this is so, in turn, then isn't it equally likely that the conscientiously committed individual will be dismayed by the evil he finds in himself? If the right and the good are his overriding concerns, won't he prefer that he not even wish evil for others, or take secret delight in their accidental misfortunes, or enjoy that suffering which he cannot avoid causing "in the line of duty?" Won't he wish that he lacked impulses, however controlled, which were vengeful, bigoted, petty, envious, or just plain injurious to others? Surely his own unjustified feelings of hostility, resentment, envy, and malevolence, however carefully kept in check, will as a matter of psychological fact be as distressing to a

lover of the good as the evil he finds in the world or in others.

It follows that the conscientiously committed but *continent* person will (to use the language of the Moral Sense theorists) be incapable of "bearing his own survey." For innocent of wrongdoing though he may be, the continent person is not pure of heart. His desires and attitudes ensure that he will be to some extent mean-spirited, or at least morally insensitive, not in his actions but in his character. Many of his occurrent impulses and appetites are for things *essentially* bad (bigoted or vengeful impulses, for example). Others of his impulses and appetites are for things which are often harmless but which are bad *in the circumstances in question* (desires for fame, money, and power, for example). Those impulses and desires which are essentially bad show him to be to some extent mean-spirited in character. His circumstantially bad desires show him to be to some extent morally insensitive in character. He cannot be pure of heart, in a word, precisely because as a continent individual he does feel pleasure contrary to the rule, even though he is not led by it.

As I have argued, however, simply in virtue of the psychology of conscientious commitment the continent person will want to be pure-hearted. He will want to expel from his inner life what he has expelled from his outward conduct. He will wish to rid himself of his conative and affective support for what is bad or wrong, just as he will wish that there was less evil both in nature and in other people.

In contrast, the committed but temperate person will not find within himself the same sort of urge to reject essential elements of his own character. He may think—and rightly for all I have said so far—that he would be a more virtuous person if he exercised self-control, or if he experienced the challenge of triumphing over his own bad appetites. But he will not find in his own feelings and desires deeply rooted impulses which embrace the very things he most abhors in virtue of his overriding commitment to the good and the right. If he wishes to be continent, or thinks this more virtuous, it will not be *just because* he is conscientious.

The traditional disputes about whether the continent sort of person or the temperate sort is morally superior turn on such questions as whether self-control is a greater virtue (or more to one's credit) than purity of heart. Very often these disputes seem to conflate this issue with what has already been suggested is the distinct issue of whether a preternatural innocence is better or more creditable than hard-won virtue. Here these vexed questions may be avoided. The present point in favor of the temperate life is of a different sort.

The present suggestion is that the moral view of himself which the conscientious but continent person has is *dialectically unstable*. Simply in virtue of the psychology of his foundational commitment, he wishes to be what he is not. He wishes to be temperate. The temperate person's view of himself, in contrast, suffers no such instability. His defining moral commitment does not inspire him to be other than what he is. To maintain that continence is morally superior to temperance when any possessor of the former will wish to possess the latter instead—and this merely because of his conscientious commitment—seems a difficult road to follow (cf. *NE* 1170a5).

It might be objected that the conscientious person could take a much more pragmatic view of things. He might for example disapprove only of desires and attitudes in himself which actually give rise to objectionable acts. For the rest, he might think, their presence or absence makes no practical difference; and so it should not be a source of moral concern.

Now it is certainly logically possible for a conscientious person to take this view. But such a narrowly pragmatic outlook is merely an analogue in the theory of virtue to more familiar art-consequentialist theories of the right. Here as there, the results are highly counterintuitive; and what is absent in both forums is any serious argument which would convince a conscientious person that a direct, effective, causal relation is the only possible bearer of the type of moral value in question. A brief discussion of the connection between conscientiousness and the *deontic* virtues will reinforce the point at issue.[16]

The conscientious person is concerned first with the right and the good. For this reason, he is concerned next with people's conative and affective conceptions of these. This makes it useful to

identify the traits and dispositions for which he shows concern with the set of deontic virtues and vices: If a trait is a deontic virtue, then a person will regard it positively from the conscientious point of view. If it is a deontic vice, then a person will regard it negatively from the same point of view. Conscientious commitment can thus be conceived as the foundation of the deontic virtues. In this way our intuitions about the deontic virtues and vices and our views about the concerns of the conscientious person may be mutually illuminating.

Consider again the pragmatic objection under discussion, for example. Surely a conscientious person will be inclined to think that there is a variety of ways in which desires, attitudes, and feelings can be objectionable from his point of view. Our common-sense conceptions of the deontic vices bear this out. We would be inclined to call many of the continent person's less noble desires malevolent, spiteful, or just plain morally insensitive, and hence bad, because they are such that they *would* naturally give rise to wrongful actions if unchecked. They borrow their badness, it seems, not from the wrongness of what they do produce, but from the wrongness of what they naturally tend to produce in the absence of certain restraints or impediments. More generally, we as ordinary people who are to some extent conscientiously committed see a number of attitudes and feelings—as well as conative states—as borrowing their moral status from the character of their relations to their *intentional* objects. This is why, to take one familiar example, we who are persons of good will are horrified by those who delight in the suffering of others, even if this delight has or can have no part in bringing that suffering about, or in prolonging it. In the same way, we find it odious that someone merely wishes evil on innocent people, even if these wishes are not engaged in deliberation and choice. It is because we conceive these attitudes and desires as highly inappropriate responses to what is good or right that we react from the conscientious point of view with horror and opprobrium not only to what is wished, felt, or desired, but to the very fact that it is wished, felt or desired. Our common-sense theory of virtue, in short, is no more a simple consequentialist one than is our common-sense theory of the right.

The idea of *purity of heart* is simply the idea of a motivational and affective structure which is responsive to the right and the good, not just in broad outline, but in every relevant detail. To care about some value is in general to care not just about how people act with respect to it, but also about how they view it, how they feel about it, and about what they wish with respect to it. It usually involves preferring that they be responsive to it in a variety of ways: causally, counterfactually, intentionally, and perhaps even in imagination. The case of conscientious concern about what is right and good is no different in this respect. Hence the purity of heart which the temperate person displays gives good grounds for anyone's conscientiously preferring to have his character rather than that of the temperate person. This is the first reason why temperance is morally superior to continence.[17]

There is also a second reason. If we think of conscientious commitment as the foundation of the deontic virtues, then temperance may rightly be regarded as their crown. It is a *master virtue*.

Temperance is not a master virtue in the sense that its exercise involves mastering or control. Indeed, to be temperate is just to have one's affections and desires ordered by principles of the right and the good. In a sense temperance is not exercised at all, if one thinks of exercising as something one does with one's will. Its actualization, one might say, is a state, not an activity.

Temperance is instead a master virtue in the sense that it orders the more familiar deontic virtues. It arranges and integrates them so that one may possess them without sacrificing one's concern to live well. It is a master virtue in the way that happiness is a master end: It is an inclusive state into which other states are incorporated and by which they are ordered. Nor, as Section II should suggest, is this isomorphism between happiness and temperance entirely coincidental.

It might be asked why temperance so characterized is a *moral* virtue. Conscientious commitment is, to be sure, as are all the deontic virtues which flow from it. But what makes this inclusive, higher-order state itself a moral virtue? The question may be thought all the more pressing just because (unlike happiness) temperance is actualized in an ordering-relation rather than in an activity.

To begin with, temperance is plainly an excellence of character. To have it, as I have argued, is to be able to live well, provided only that fortune and circumstance cooperate. The question at hand is not what makes temperance such an excellence. Nor is it why, on the assumption that they are indeed both moral virtues, it is a greater moral virtue than continence. The question, to put it provocatively, is whether temperance is a peculiarly moral excellence.

Now as contemporary moral philosophers have emphasized, one of the many functions of that complex phenomenon which we call moral activity is to facilitate the harmonious satisfaction of our largely mundane, pre-moral interests. A substantive moral theory on which morality operates systematically to hamper the satisfaction of these interests is to that extent self-defeating. In contrast, a normative theory on which moral activity and moral character function to facilitate the satisfaction of pre-moral interests is to that extent to be preferred.

To regard continence as the master deontic virtue, however, is precisely to say that in its fullest flowering the moral life must include as an essential component the frustration of pre-moral desires and the inhibition of the associated affects. To regard temperance as the crown of the virtues, in contrast, is to say that living morally—insofar as this involves living in accordance with principles of the right and the good—does not require this. Indeed, if temperance is the master virtue, deontic morality in its perfection will involve the opposite.

Of course temperance does not harmonize our pre-moral interests in the usual way. Justice is in this respect a more typical virtue: It tends to harmonize your interests and mine because to be just involves being inclined to *act* in new ways, ways which reduce the chance of conflicts of interest between us, and which resolve them once they have arisen. But temperance's peculiar sphere of operation is not action. After all, what one does will be the same in all relevant respects whether one is temperate or continent, provided only that one is conscientiously committed. Hence the impact of temperance on the harmonization of interests is not mediated by its causal impact on how one behaves.

Temperance operates to harmonize interests more in the way that (e.g.) fellow-feeling does. To oversimplify a bit, if one is antecedently conscientious, having fellow-feeling may not change what one does so much as how one regards what one does. The person who has fellow-feeling does not resent having to sacrifice some minor personal project for the sake of another's welfare; for the latter is of greater value to him in its own right. He may do just what the conscientious person without fellow-feeling does. But because of the spirit in which he does it, the occasion of choice between his own pre-moral concerns and the morally significant concerns of the other does not also become the occasion of a knock-down conflict of interests between the two parties involved. In doing what is right (and so in serving the interests of the other) he also does what he most wants to do. Fellow-feeling thus harmonizes the interests of different people, to some extent, by altering the agent's own priorities.

Temperance goes a step beyond fellow-feeling. To begin with, as I have implied, common-sense moral considerations are generally considerations which tell in favor of bringing benefit, redistributing benefit, or avoiding harm to others. To take them seriously in deliberation is thus as it were by proxy to give weight to the relevant pre-moral interests of others. (Thus Bishop Butler says of the principle of benevolence, for example, "It is [their] advocate within our own breasts.") The conflict between my own interests and my moral views thus characteristically represents a conflict between the former and some morally protected but mundane interests of others.

Temperance reconciles these conflicting interests, not just by altering my priorities, but by re-shaping my own pre-moral interests themselves. It reconciles my pre-moral interests and my moral concerns so that I can act on the former without sacrificing the latter. In effect, therefore, it operates to minimize the occasions on which different people's pre-moral interests come into conflict with one another. Here as in Section II, a careful study of virtue and the good life suggests that the traditional description of the conflict between morality and self-interests must be re-drawn.[18]

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NOTES

1. Aristotle's focus is on largely undifferentiated, bodily appetites. These are paradigmatic of the basic drives or urges characteristic of our species. My discussion is limited instead to the more refined appetites and pleasures. Hunger is a basic appetite; the desire for Russian caviar is a more refined one. It is more discriminating in its object, and it is not universal, or characteristic of our species as such. The desire to survive is basic; the desire to survive until the millenium is more refined. Throughout I refer only to refined pleasures.

2. Perhaps the ideally temperate person must be free of some wishes: the general wish that he were less committed to the right, for example; or more specific wishes for what is *essentially* and not merely *circumstantially* bad. (See below, Section III, for a discussion of this distinction.) Whether one requires that the temperate person avoid even wishing for certain evils or not does not affect what is at issue in this discussion.

3. Furthermore, the temperate person is not necessarily free—nor does he strive to be free—of all conflicting moral feelings about what he does. He may do what is right on the whole, and yet be unhappy because (say) his concern for fairness has been frustrated. Or he may know that his refusal to help is for the best, and yet be uncomfortable because his altruistic impulses have been blocked. Although considerations or fairness or altruism may sometimes be outweighed by competing moral considerations, it is in the nature of such deeply felt concerns that they do not simply disappear when they are overridden. The temperate person thus may feel moral *regret* when he does what must be done, or what is best. But he will, as a matter of fact, never have cause to feel *remorse*.

4. That aversion therapy works at all shows this Platonic view to be mistaken, since such therapy often involves the "feeding" of the appetite, accompanied by some aversive consequence.

5. On the latter see Bernard Williams, "Morality and the Emotions," in his *Problems of the Self* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973). Cf. Miles Burnyeat's interpretation of Aristotle in "Aristotle on Learning to be Good," in *Essays on Aristotle's Ethics* ed. by Amelie Rorty, (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1980), pp. 63, 66.

6. It is sometimes held that one's values are constituted not by one's actual desires or pleasures simpliciter but by one's higher-order desires, or perhaps by what one would desire if one were fully rational and fully informed. On either of these views, one's pleasures and one's values typically overlap; but they are not necessarily coextensive. But these views conflate one's *operative* conception of the good life either with one's ideally justified values, or with one's wished-for conception of one's own values. One's actual pleasures (reflective or unreflective) express what what one does *in fact* prize. One's higher-order pleasures, or one's idealized pleasures, reveal not necessarily what one actually cares about, but only what one *would* prize under ideal justificatory conditions (in the latter case), or what one *wishes* one prized (in the former case). (Of course, these can all overlap, e.g., if one is in fact reflective and informed; and in any case one's actual values, one's ego-ideal, and one's wished-for value all can influence deliberation and conduct.)

7. I am grateful to Larry Temkin for his helpful discussion of what follows.

8. Here as with the standard views, one may place further procedural or formal restrictions on the agent's set of preferences if these are required by the account, or if these are attractive for independent reasons. For example, one may require that these preferences be transitive, or that they be fully informed, or that they be appropriately responsive to data about probabilities, etc. Which of such restrictions one imposes should not affect what is at issue in the text. But see above, note 6.

9. Aristotle himself held that there was an objective procedural measure of what was truly more and less enjoyable, *viz.*, the preferences of the virtuous person (*NE* 1176a15-20; cf. 1113b25).

10. Notice that that life-mix is best in whose *elements* the agent would in fact take the greatest enjoyment. This is not necessarily that life-mix which the agent prefers more than any other, since she may mistakenly prefer a life-mix which gives her less of the goods she values rather than more. It is the agent's objective-value preferences *in* a life that count, and not her preferences *about* that life-mix. (Of course, it must be remembered that certain particular goods like harmony and unity are essentially relational.)

11. I use this example advisedly. I am not denying that there are good *moral* reasons for judging the one life superior to the other. Obviously there are. It is rather that we may have to abandon the attempt to defend such moral judgments by appeal to claims about the comparative goodness of lives for the agents involved. This point should be a congenial one to any liberal who, like Rawls and Scanlon, holds that principles of justice in a democratic society can and should be established without presupposing general agreement on a substantive conception of the good life.

12. One could ask which life was best for the agent to lead from some impartial view, in abstraction from any particular interests, attitudes, feelings, and commitments that the agent might have. But even if there is an answer to such a question, uprooted as it

is from the rich soil of character and experience in which our preferences grow and flourish, how would this answer tell us what life is the good life for the agent? Wouldn't it tell us only what life it was best that he lead, from (e.g.) the point of view of the overall good of the universe? But its being good that an agent lead a given life does not entail that in so doing he lives the good life. Cf. Thomas Nagel, "The Fragmentation of Value" in his *Mortal Questions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979).

13. It does not follow that one may always make one's life better by doing as the Stoics suggested and increasing the number of life-mixes among which one is indifferent. Because the components of any given mix are objectively valuable, certain comparative judgments about lives will be valid as well (barring some relevant view about the value of organic unities). For example, a life in which, say, five of the objective goods are present and in which everything else is the same is better than one in which only four of these goods are present. Someone who prefers the latter life to the former is thus making an unreasonable and mistaken choice. Of course, if one contemplates (e.g.) giving up all professional ambitions of any sort, and envisions that loss as being compensated for by the gain in contentment, then if contentment is one of the objective goods, the choice between these two rather different mixes will again be a subjective one.

14. Some temperate lives can of course be more worthwhile than others. One temperate person can have more friends or more success than another, for example. The temperate person may strive for these things, within the constraints established by his overriding commitment to the right. For this reason, strictly speaking "the temperate life" refers to a set of lives rather than to one particular mix of objective goods.

15. What if the continent person values the conflict or tension in his life for its own sake? It seems doubtful that such conflict could be objectively valuable. But even if it were, this would only strengthen the claim of temperance to superiority; for it would show that what the continent person values is fundamentally in conflict with itself. On this account, he would desire or take pleasure not only in forbidden things, but also in that very conflict between his moral commitment and these desired things, in which the latter are (by hypothesis) foregone. Of necessity, such a person cannot live a life in which he has *all* that he prizes: he cannot have *both* the forbidden things he desires and the conflict between the unsatisfied desires for them and his overriding moral commitments. (One might think that the desire for conflict more accurately reveals his values because it is a higher-order desire; but see note 6 above.)

16. The deontic virtues and vices are just those traits whose moral status as virtues and vices is grounded in the rightness or wrongness of the actions to which they are somehow connected. If the virtues are defined as the excellences of character, however, then an account of the deontic virtues is much too impoverished and limited in scope to constitute a complete theory of the virtues. For a fuller discussion of the notion of a deontic virtue or vice, and a defense of the broader conception of the virtues as excellences, see my "Virtue, Action, and the Good Life: A Theory of the Virtues," forthcoming in Pacific Philosophical Quarterly.

17. It might be suggested that a conscientiously committed person could well disapprove only of those desires which I have called essentially bad, and not of those which I call bad only in the circumstances, provided that the latter did not actually lead to action. (Bigoted desires are essentially bad, recall; while desires for fame or money are only circumstantially bad.) But in general, to be concerned about a value is to be concerned, first, that people not disregard it in their actions, either intentionally or as a foreseen but unintended consequence of pursuing their own interests; and second, that people in their view of things not just refrain from hostility to what one values, but that they not be *insensitive* to its demands and recommendations. To have circumstantially bad desires on which one acts is to be a cause for concern of the first sort. To have these desires but not to act on them is to be a cause for concern of the second sort. Someone who has deep-seated desires for fame or money which persist regardless of the permissibility of pursuing them, and who perhaps resents not being able to do so, is someone who is to a significant extent insensitive to moral values in his conative and affective view of things.

18. I would like to thank Richard B. Brandt, Stephen L. Darwall, Allan Gibbard, Thomas E. Hill, Jr., Adrian M. S. Piper, Gerald J. Postema, Jay F. Rosenberg, Geoffrey Sayre-McCord, and Michael Slote, among others, for their extremely helpful comments. An early version of this paper was presented to the Triangle Circle Ethics discussion group.