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Procreation is intrinsically valuable because it is person producing

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The article argues that procreation is intrinsically valuable because it produces persons. The essential thought of the argument is that among the valuable things in the world are not only products, but the actions by which they are produced. The first premise is that persons have great value, for which a common consent argument is offered. The second premise is that, as an action type, procreation has persons as a product. Procreation is always a part of the action that produces a person. This is because procreators take as their goal the creation of an organism that itself has development into a person as a goal. Such a claim also helps explain the moral obligations of procreators, the affective lives of procreators and the common preference for procreation. The third premise is that if an action type has a product of value, then all its tokens have intrinsic value. I argue that even when such actions fail to produce anything outside the agent, they are intrinsically valuable because of how they actualise the powers and virtues of the agent, in part achieving the agent's goal. I then apply that argument to the case of procreation and person producing.

Introduction

The contemporary ethical literature on procreation contains many arguments against procreation, while arguments for procreation are thin on the ground (Overall 2012; Rulli 2016). This article argues that procreation is intrinsically valuable because it is person producing. The essential thought of the argument is that among the valuable things in the world are not only products (creations, artefacts), but the actions by which they are produced (created, crafted, actualised). If Salvador Dali had never painted *The Madonna of Port Lilgat* (1950) the world would be worse than it is. The world be worse because it would be without that valuable product. The world would also be worse because it would be without that token action of painting, without that token actualisation of Dali. It is valuable that a token action of painting ordered colours and shapes and images in a certain way, but that it ordered the body and mind of Dali in a certain way is also valuable. Procreative action is valuable because of the way in which it actualises the agent who engages in it, even aside from the value of what it actualises outside that agent. The structure of the argument is this:

(1) Persons have great value;
(2) As an action type, procreation has persons as a product;
(3) If an action type has a product of great value, then all its tokens have great intrinsic value; therefore
(4) All token procreative actions have great intrinsic value.

The claim of (1) is deliberately vague. It is the claim that persons are among the most valuable things in the world. Many would wish to say that persons have an infinite value, an unconditional value, or value of a type that is qualitatively higher than the value that non-persons can have (Hill 2014). These claims are more specific and stronger than my argument requires, though anyone who holds them holds (1). I briefly offer a common consent argument for (1), which I take to be a very plausible claim. I anchor the argument in the value of persons because it is uncontroversial to

claim that persons have great value. The value of members of the species *homo sapiens* who lack personhood, putative cases being embryos or those in permanent vegetative states (Jaworska and Tannenbaum 2021), is a matter of lively debate, but the great value of persons is not.

The claim of (2) is that procreating is a part of person producing. From the fact that procreators take as their goal the creation of an organism that itself has development into a person as a goal, from the moral obligations of procreators, from the emotions of procreators, and from the common preference for procreating, I argue that procreation is a part of the action that produces a person, and so has a person as a product. With (2) in place, the way is open for understanding procreation as participating in the great value of the action of which it is a part, person producing, rather than as a merely zoological phenomenon.

Concerning (3), the claim that a token action has intrinsic value is the claim that it has value aside from the value of its product and the value of its other causal traces. This is a claim about the locus of value, where value resides. An action's intrinsic value is in the actualisation of the agent, in what, as we will see, is called the immanent aspect of action. That an action has intrinsic value means that all tokens of the action have value. Such value does not depend upon various contingencies, such as whether the token action successfully achieves its product, or whether it accidentally brings about something bad (which is not to say that these other values are irrelevant to an evaluation of each token action). I note that (3) explains some intuitive judgments and is implied by a comparison with the value of actions that have no product. The main reason for accepting (3) is that we can identify what is intrinsically valuable about the immanent aspect of action. It is valuable that our powers (imagination, memory, will, etc.) and our virtues (patience, compassion, etc.) are actualised by the pursuit of valuable goals, and through these actualisations we in part achieve the goals we pursue. I then show how this account applies in the case of procreation and person producing.

Before beginning, I locate the argument in relation to the contemporary ethical literature on procreation and outline the salient philosophical distinctions about action.

The literature and this argument's place in it

My argument is for the conclusion that all procreative actions have great intrinsic value. One way in which an action can have value is through the value of what it produces outside of the agent. Not all tokens of procreative action in fact achieve their product, so this could not be how all procreative actions were greatly valuable. Again, some in the field of population ethics take the view that, under certain conditions, having an additional person in the world is not valuable (Greaves 2017). Another way in which an action can have value or disvalue is through the other causal traces it leaves. Some take the view that some or all instances of procreation bear disvalue because of the poor well-being of those procreated (Benatar 2007), or because of the environmental costs of procreation (Young 2001), or because of the opportunity costs that procreating presents to the achievement of other valuable goals (Friedrich 2013; Rachels 2014). The empirical literature on the well-being of parents also suggests that procreation usually imposes many costs on the procreators themselves (Nomaguchi and Milkie 2020).

My argument does not contradict these views about the ways in which procreation can lack value or bear disvalue, though it does highlight their limitations, because it does not concern the value of the product of procreation, or the value of the other causal traces of procreation, but the intrinsic value of procreation; how it actualises the agents who engage in it. For example, even if it were the case that your sculpture shattered as you were sculpting it, or that the world had "enough" sculptures, your sculpting activity would still be valuable. It would reflect a complete misunderstanding of why people are sculptors to tell someone not to bother sculpting given that there are already enough excellent sculptures in the world. Again, gardening, for example, is an action with intrinsic value even though it can damage the environment, or harm plants and animals, or impose costs on the gardener.

I do not intend the present argument as a complete account of the ethics of procreation. Ethical reasoning, as I think of it, involves identifying the full range of relevant considerations and using practical wisdom to come to judgments about whether an action is permissible, impermissible, or required, in a particular context. The present argument only purports to show that procreation has

great intrinsic value; a very important piece of the ethical puzzle but not the only piece.[1] This being said, the conclusion that an action has great intrinsic value is a very strong reason to presume its permissibility, a presumption that could only be overturned by identifying disvalue of an extrinsic and contingent nature. The present argument focuses on axiology (value, good, excellent) rather than normativity (right, moral, prescriptive). So, its conclusion can be utilised by normative theories that construe the relationship between these two domains differently, all in ways broadly favourable to procreation, for example:

- If an action has intrinsic value, then there is some moral reason to do it (consequentialist);
- If an action has intrinsic value, then doing it helps fulfil the duty of self-improvement and/or the duty to promote the good (Rossian deontological); and
- If an action has intrinsic value, then being inclined to do it, in the right circumstances, and for the right reasons, is virtuous (virtue ethical).

Action

I now recount the philosophy of action relevant for the argument. Actions are teleological (Sehon 2010; Wilson and Shpall 2012). The action of pruning has a goal (end, telos). As an action type, the goal of pruning is something like removing the dead or diseased parts of plants, and my pruning a particular plant is a token of this action type. We differentiate actions primarily by their goals. Chasing a dog and running in an 800-metre race are different actions because they have different goals, even though they can look very alike. Actions can involve other actions as parts – qua part of an action we call these sub-actions, and their goals sub-goals. A car mechanic engages in the action of fixing a car by first engaging in the sub-action of unclogging the car's radiator and then by engaging in the sub-action of filling the radiator with coolant. These sub-actions have their own goals, but for the car mechanic, they are pursued for the sake of that goal of which these sub-goals are part: fixing the car.

We can distinguish between the motivation (desire, inclination, incentive) that leads an agent to engage in an action and the action itself. The motivation that a car mechanic has for fixing a car might be to make money, but this is not the goal of fixing a car. If the mechanic fixes the car and the customer then drives off without paying, the mechanic still achieved the goal of his action, though the motive that led him to perform the action is frustrated.

What sets the goal of an action may differ in different cases. The intentions of the agent, biological kinds, artefactual kinds and social kinds, may all play a role in different cases. As some putative examples: the action of murder requires an agent's murderous intention; the fern leaf's action of unfurling has a goal set by its physiology; the action and goal of the trebuchet follow from the type of artefact that it is; and that someone has the goals and does the actions of a traffic warden depends on a complicated set of social facts. In some cases, the goal of an action type can be furnished in more than one of these ways. Some tokens of breathing and vomiting are engaged in intentionally by the agent, but they can also be actions of the bodily organism in which an intending agent plays no role.

Let us turn to the distinction between the immanent and the transient aspects of action. Aristotle says that

> in some cases the exercise is the ultimate thing (e.g. in sight, the ultimate thing is seeing, and no other product besides this results from sight), but from some things a product follows (e.g. from the art of building, there results a house as well as the act of building)…Where, then, the result is something apart from the exercise, the actuality is in the thing that is being made, e.g. the act of building is in the thing that is being built…but when there is no product apart from the actuality, the actuality is in the agent, e.g. the act of seeing is in the seeing subject (Aristotle 1991a, 1050 30a).

1 For example, David Benatar's asymmetry argument purports to provide only some moral reason for not procreating, which can be outweighed (Benatar 2007 49, 98–99). Benatar advocates a gradual extinction, due to the harms that a sudden halt in all procreation would likely cause to those already alive. As Benatar conditions his basic anti-natalism on these sorts of empirical considerations, so I condition my basic pro-natalism on them.

Imagine that Aoede's action is to sing and that Apollo's action is to record himself singing. For Aeode, engaging in the action and achieving the goal of the action are one and the same. Aoede's action is for nothing other than actualising Aoede in a certain way, that she sing. Aoede's action is a purely immanent action. By contrast, although Apollo does actualise himself in a certain way, his action also has the goal of actualising a product, a recording. Apollo's action is not a purely immanent action, it has a transient aspect that "goes across" from Apollo and into something else.

Both purely immanent actions and actions with transient aspects can leave causal traces outside the agent and in the agent themselves. Only insofar as actualising some product is a goal of the action does the action have a transient aspect. Aoede's singing may upset her neighbours or contribute to the formation of a hurricane. Even if these are Aoede's motives for singing, these are not the goal of her singing and so they are not products of her singing. Her singing has no product. By contrast, Apollo's recording himself singing does have as its goal a product, the recording. We can distinguish the products of an action from an action's other causal traces by reflecting on an action's achievement conditions. If Apollo does not end up with a recording of his singing, then his action has not entirely achieved its goal. By contrast, although Aoede can sing well or sing badly, there are no products for Aoede's purely immanent action to achieve and so just by actualising herself as singing, she achieves the goal of her action.

Other plausible examples of purely immanent actions include aesthetic appreciation, dancing, playing games, or socialising with friends. Here, the goal of an action is just self-actualisation, the actualisation of the agent. Hence, it is confused to ask for what further goal does one smell the flowers or play the piano, and yet more confused to say that these actions have no goal. As Aristotle says, "a certain difference is found among ends; some are activities, others are products apart from the activities that produce them" (Aristotle 2011, 1094a). The idea of purely immanent action is expressed beautifully by Cicero: "its End, being the actual exercise of the art, is contained within the art itself, and is not something extraneous to it" (Cicero 2014, Bk. 3, Sec. 23).

Note that although there are some purely immanent actions, no action is purely transient. Every action has an immanent aspect. This is because every action originates in some agent, actualising the agent in a certain way and has as part of its goal such an actualising of the agent. In acting, the agent's goal is not just that some state of affairs obtain, but that the agent make it obtain. If I go into my garden to prune my crab apple tree only to find that my goodly spouse has already pruned it, then I have not pruned nor have I achieved the goal of pruning (whether I am happy about this or not).

Persons have great value

All persons have great value. A person has great value even if there are already "enough" persons in their world, even if their existence makes their world less valuable because they create environmental damage, or do many morally evil things, or suffer terribly, and so forth.

One reason for accepting that all persons have great value is from common consent. Common consent over the claim that all persons have great value is what we would expect to observe if in fact all persons have great value, and so that we observe this provides some reason for thinking that all persons have great value. (1) is a claim made by most religious traditions and secular worldviews. According to the Vedic religions, being incarnated as a person (human or divine) is better than being incarnated as a non-person plant or animal (McClelland 2010). According to the Abrahamic religions, human persons are images of God, which is to say that among creatures they can most fully participate in and most fully image the life and activity of God (Bradshaw 2004). The perfect being theology shared by these religions ascribes personhood to God on the judgment that being a person is better than being a non-person (Webb 2010). According to Neo-Platonic defences of polytheism, there are many gods and the gods are persons because "the Gods, in their very particularity…are prior to the universality of Forms" (Butler 2014, 49), and in this we too are like the gods, not being entirely encompassed by our generic humanity. The idea that all persons have great value is embraced by secular modernity at large, most obviously in the preamble of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which proclaims "the dignity and worth of the human person" (United Nations 2015).

I also note that many religious traditions assign father or mother as one of God's pre-eminent titles. I take this as evidence that persons have great value. Emphasising God as a parent suggests that creating persons is among God's most valuable creative actions, that of the things that God has created, we rank among the most valuable, and that the action of the divinity is closely imaged by the action of a parent:

- "I will be a father to you, and you shall be sons and daughters to me, says the Lord Almighty" (2 Corinthians 6:18);
- "The One God is our father; we are the children of the One God" (Guru Granth Sahib, Ang 611);
- "I am the father of the universe, the mother, the establisher, the grandfather" (Bhagavad Gita, 9:17);
- "The other name of God is Father, again because He is that-which-maketh all. The part of father is to make. Wherefore child-making is a very great and a most pious thing in life for them who think aright, and to leave life on earth without a child a very great misfortune and impiety" (Corpus Hermeticum, 2.17).

As an action type, procreation has persons as a product

Procreation as human-being producing

By procreation, I understand the action type that has a human being, a biological organism, as its product. Procreators have the goal of creating a new human animal.[2] Fertilisation, implantation, individuation, cell-differentiation and organ development, and the beginning of foetal motility, all seem like plausible points at which this goal is achieved, but my argument requires no particular view.

If one is asked to imagine a token procreative action, one likely imagines penile-vaginal sex without contraception. From one point of view, this will be because one understands that the goal of procreative action is furnished by the body. The goal of a part of one's bodily organism, one's reproductive system, is to procreate, and this goal is inherited by one's bodily organism as a whole. The prototypical case of procreation involves two procreative agents intentionally pursuing this goal, or at least not deliberately preventing its achievement. Such a view uses this prototypical case, which appropriately unites the personal to the biological and animal (Scruton 1986; Hsiao 2017), for evaluative purposes. Alternatively, one may take the view that procreative action only receives its goal from the intentions of agents. On such a view, one might say that for the most part procreative action is tokened through penile-vaginal sex without contraception, but that it is equally tokened in other ways, such as through in vitro fertilisation, or by some far-future self-cloning or molecule-stitching technology. The means that the body provides to the procreative goal is just one channel for the intent of the procreative agent. On such a view, one would allow that some instances of penile-vaginal sex without contraception are not procreative actions because the agents do not have the right intentions, e.g. that elderly sexual partners who are aware of their infertility do not really engage in procreative action because they could not sensibly intend to procreate ("What are you up to tonight grandma? Procreating?" could only be a joke). Such a view also makes sense of the idea of "a man's right to choose" to not to pay child support or be involved in the child's life, to have a "paper abortion" (Hales 1996; Brake 2005).

I take no position between these two views of how an action can receive the goal that makes it a procreative action. Both views agree that procreative action has the production of a human being as its goal. They disagree about exactly how and when such an action is tokened.

2 One possible departure from this characterisation of the procreator is Anca Gheaus' identification of *gestators* as procreators (Gheaus 2018). In the ordinary case, by providing the right environment for fertilisation and the initial stages of embryological development, a gestator helps create the new organism, not just perfect its development. In other cases, we would not call someone a procreator just because they perfected the development of an already existing human being. An antenatal surgeon is not a procreator, a *lactator* is not a procreator, an adoptive parent is not a procreator, an infancy carer is not a procreator. Plausibly, a gestator who gestated only the second half of the pregnancy would not count as a procreator.

The relation of human-being producing to person producing

It seems that the action that produces a person is what we call parenting. Parents have the goal of producing a person. This is a claim that matches with some common-sense claims about parenting: that a good parent aims to rear their pre-personal infant into personhood; that they are motivated to pursue this goal for its own sake; that they aspire above all for their child to be a good person; and that the normative demands of parenthood are responsive to the child's gradual achievement and perfection of their personhood. This being said, the present argument does not essentially depend on the identification of person producing as parenting.

The action that has a person as its product may, conceptually, be tokened in many ways, including in ways that do not involve the production of a human being as a part. Maybe God produces non-human angelic persons. Maybe a computer programmer will one day produce an artificial intelligence that is a person. Maybe "Martians" produce persons by undergoing a kind of mitosis. So, the claim of (2) is not that every token of the action that produces a person must involve as a part the action that produces a human being as a part. Procreation is not a conceptually necessary part of person producing. Rather, the claim of (2) is that every token of the action that produces a human being is a part of the action that produces a person, that procreation is person producing.

The production of a person is dependent, at present, on someone or other having produced a human being. If there is no procreating, there is no person producing. It seems that in virtue of this relationship of dependence procreation has value. Yet this is value of an extrinsic kind, to do with the value that the product of procreation has as the raw material for some entirely different action: the eating of certain delicious mushrooms depends at present on certain animals defecating and so that those animals defecate is valuable, the production of persons depends at present on the rutting of certain hominids and so that those hominids rut is valuable. Since this value is extrinsic, it is value that procreative action might one day lose – if one day we have the technologies of science fiction and are able to produce persons without producing human beings, or if human beings grew from the seeds of wild plants and were not the products of any agent's intentional action.

Four reasons for procreating as a part of person producing

The action of procreation is always a part of the action that produces a person. One cannot perform the action of procreation without this being a part of the action that produces persons. I offer four reasons for accepting this claim. This claim follows from the fact that procreators take as their goal the creation of an organism that itself has development into a person as a goal. This claim also explains some of the moral obligations of would-be procreators, explains the affective lives of procreators, and explains the common preference for procreation over adoption.

(1) Procreators produce a new human organism. The salient fact is not that procreators serve as an efficient cause of a new human being (we can do this in all sorts of ways as political and economic agents). The salient fact is that by adopting the goal of producing a human being, procreators adopt the goals of that human being, qua human being. Procreators seek to initiate a human organism's process of development – a new sequence of biological activity, a new organism's striving. By having this goal, procreators have the goals of that process of development. It would be incoherent to say that although one had the goal of producing a human being, initiating its process of development, one did not have the goals that that process aims at. By analogy, it would be incoherent to say that although one had started to write a book, one had not started to pursue the goals at which that process aims.

The prototypical, healthy and natural development of the human organism involves it becoming a person. Personhood, as much as having a well-functioning kidney or hand, is a goal of the human organism. So, the goal of the procreator contains the goal of a human being's development into personhood virtually, as part of what it means to have the goal of producing a human being. The achievement of the latter is a perfection of the procreator's action. As another analogy, to plant the seed is to start growing the tree, including the various parts that the tree will prototypically develop. If someone were to say that in planting the seed, they had not started to grow a tree, or said that they had started to grow the leaves but not the roots, we would rightly wonder about what they had imagined themselves to be planting. In cases like these, the things created have goals of their own.

To create such beings is to begin your pursuit of their goals, it is a point at which their goals begin to determine your actions. To bring new goals into existence by creating the being that has them is a step in achieving those goals.

Here, the more biological view of how procreation receives its goal can point to how, not just the new organism's mere existence, but also its continued development, is an aim of the procreator's own body – e.g. mammary glands, that both sexes experience a "cascade of hormonal and neurobiological responses to early experience with offspring" (Kenrick et al. 2011, 20). Both views can point to the procreative agent's knowledge that in procreating they initiate a new organism's process of development into a person.

(2) Procreators have some moral obligations that are explained by the claim that procreating is a part of person producing. For one thing, it is wrong to procreate human beings without the intention of ensuring that they develop into persons. If a procreator intends to expose, or to neglect, or to otherwise not ensure the development of, the pre-personal human beings that they procreate, they are doing something wrong. I emphasise that I do not say that a human being's procreators are always morally obliged to be the ones who complete the action of person producing that they have begun. Plausibly, gamete donors meet this obligation when they have justified confidence that the receiving family will be a good-enough one. Empirically, we find that gamete donors are concerned to have this confidence (Blyth et al. 2011; Provoost et al. 2018). As procreators, our ordinary moral norms tell us that "it could not be consistent that nature should at once intend offspring to be born and make no provision for that offspring when born to be loved and cherished" (Cicero 2014, Bk. 3, Sec. 62).

For another thing, if would-be procreators know that any human being that they might procreate does not stand a reasonable chance of developing into a person – whether due to procreating in very adverse circumstances, or whether due to a catastrophic birth defect or genetic disease, etc. – then it is wrong for them to procreate.

Again, if someone's primary motivation for procreating is something other than raising that new human being to be a person (and their perfection as a person), such as producing another soldier for the fatherland or creating a helper for their old age, this is both wrong and profoundly foolish, a motivation inappropriate to the value of the thing being created.

That procreation is governed by the moral norms appropriate to person producing indicates that it is a part of that action. Because procreative action is always person producing, it is governed by the norms appropriate to that action, whether one believes that actual personhood emerges at fertilisation or in late-infancy, or somewhere in between. If procreation is not a part of the action that produces a person, then some other account must be given of why it is not permissible to procreate non-personal human beings haphazardly, or hopelessly, or from various low motives.

(3) That procreation is a part of producing a person is evidenced in the emotional lives of procreators. Miscarriage, or the death of a pre-personal infant, is often accompanied by feelings of grief, an emotion that typically relates to the loss of a person (Porter 2015). Again, having to give your newborn up for adoption is a misfortune, something that bad circumstances may impose on a procreator, rather than something that people chose in ordinary circumstances. It is also often accompanied by feelings of grief (March 2014). Again, surrogate gestators often retain a special relationship with the child that they bore and their parents (Jadva et al. 2003; Jadva et al. 2015), and are typically regarded with profound gratitude (Carone et al. 2017), as are gamete donors (Jadva et al. 2010). More prosaically, to find out that you are pregnant or have got someone pregnant is an important event in one's personal life, whatever one plans to do next.

All of these facts about the affective lives of procreators are accounted for by the idea that procreation is a part of producing a person. To lose a foetus or to have to give an infant up for adoption are different ways in which one's participation in the person-producing action is broken off, and so justify grief – an emotion concerned with the domain of the personal. It is the surrogate gestator's and the gamete donor's participation in the person-producing action that explains the warm and personal emotions with which they are regarded. By contrast, if procreation is a self-contained action, something unconnected to person producing, these facts about procreators' affective lives are hard to account for.

(4) That procreation is a part of producing a person is a claim that helps explain the common preference for procreation over adoption. The United States is a country where adoption is relatively common at around 31 adoptions per 1 000 births. The equivalent figure in Kazakhstan is 15, in the United Kingdom 9, in Italy 6, in Japan 1.5 (United Nations Secretariat 2009). Undoubtedly, there is a huge array of economic, cultural and legal factors explaining these figures. Yet, the sociological literature shows us that one significant piece of the puzzle is that overwhelmingly people prefer procreating over adopting. In a study of women who had considered adoption but did not ultimately adopt, the most common reason given for not adopting was that they were able to have biological children, or "had not tested their fertility and mentioned their desire to do so before attempting to adopt" (Slauson-Blevins and Park 2016, 248–249). Excluding those who adopt from within an existing kin network (grandparents, aunts and uncles, step-parents), the great majority of those who adopt are infertile (Malm and Welti 2010) and explain their preference for adopting in terms of their infertility: "adoption was seen as a 'backup plan' if infertility treatments were not successful…research on infertility and adoption provides evidence that adoptive parenting is viewed as a last alternative to having biological children" (Van Laningham 2012, 6). Overwhelmingly, cross-culturally, people prefer to procreate rather than adopt. More obviously, people prefer not to put up for adoption the human beings that they have procreated.

It is possible to view these preferences as nasty biases that the more enlightened transcend, to hope that one day the adoption rate may become much higher as we correctly come to detach procreating from person producing. A more charitable understanding is offered by the claim that procreating is a part of person producing, and so shares in the high value of the personal domain and is generally preferred. If it were possible to forgo procreating and instead have the proverbial stork bring you a 6-month-old infant that sleeps through the night (one with the genetics that one's own genetic progeny would have, no less), it seems that many would still prefer to procreate. Procreating is preferable because it means getting to do that initial part of the person-producing action, alongside the other parts.

If an action type has a product of great value, then all its tokens have great intrinsic value

The claim of this premise is that the value of actions that have a transient aspect, and so a product, is not exhausted in the value of that transient aspect – tokens of such actions have intrinsic value. I give two reasons for thinking that there is value in the immanent aspect of such actions and then give an account of what that value is. I then apply that account to the case of procreation and person producing.

A first reason for (3) is that it straightforwardly explains the following set of intuitions about value:

> (i) There are some actions that have a transient aspect that it seems valuable to engage in, even when the product is not produced. Imagine that Dali is imprisoned. He is offered the opportunity to spend his days painting, on two conditions: that each painting will be destroyed immediately and that a drug will be given to him to ensure that engaging in painting did not improve his skill as a painter. It seems that there would be some value in Dali painting under these conditions, rather than not painting. Examples like this show that even when an action does not actualise its product, or have other valuable causal traces, it can still have value, which must be located in its immanent aspect. As another example, suppose that a cast and crew undertook to film a movie in one day. It is then discovered that there was no film in the cameras and so no movie was ever produced. It seems that there would be some value in having spent that day filming.
>
> (ii) A life in which one always had all the products of value one could wish for, but in which one did not and could not engage in the actions that produce these things would be a worse life than a life in which one could and did engage in such actions. Further, at some margins, it is better to have a life in which the products of value are sometimes absent but where one

can engage in the actions that produce them. It is better to not have the doll's house that you covet and then to build it, than to always have the doll's house.

(iii) The world is worse due to the fact that some action types are now engaged in less frequently than in the past, or not at all, even if their products would have little or no value in present circumstances. To some small degree, it is a shame that very few people grow their food or mend their clothes. It is a shame that action types like haruspication, thatching, being a wainwright, electrical telegraphing, or teletext broadcasting, are lost or almost lost (The Heritage Crafts Association Red List of Endangered Crafts 2021), even though their products would have little or no value in present circumstances. Though Luddism is to be rejected, Luddites are right when they say that there is something bad about the fact that some action types are less commonly engaged in or lost.

A second reason for (3) is based on a comparison with purely immanent actions. If purely immanent actions are to be valuable, they must be valuable in virtue of their immanent aspect, as they have no other locus in which their value could reside. Clearly, many purely immanent actions are valuable. It is valuable that Aoede sing or that Terpsichore dance or that Calliope recite poetry. These actions must be valuable in their immanent aspect, for they have no other aspect. As we said previously, there are no purely transient actions; every action has an immanent aspect because every action actualises the agent who does it. Many actions with a transient aspect involve the same or very similar immanent aspect as some purely immanent action that has value. Apollo recording himself singing involves Apollo singing, Clio writing a history book involves Clio learning lots of historical facts.

An account of the value of immanent aspect of action

Now I offer an account of the value involved in the immanent aspect of action, including of actions that have products. To the extent that the account is plausible, it provides a third reason for accepting (3). Pursuing a goal is valuable not just due to what it actualises outside the agent, but because what it actualises in the agent.

Actualisation of the agent's powers

It is good that an agent focuses their attention on painting, that they desire to paint, that they exercise their mnemonic, imaginative and cognitive powers in painting, that they apply their technical and physical skills to painting. It is good for the painter's powers to be mobilised toward that goal. It is good that someone concern themselves with painting (or philosophising, or exercising, or cooking). It is good that this goal figures in the agent's desires and moods and aspirations. In every token of painting, the agent is a potentiality who is actualised by the goal of painting. The appetite and will and imagination, etc., of the artist are as they are and not otherwise because the artist is striving for that goal. It is good that our powers are actualised by this goal.

It is better when our powers are actualised by more valuable goals. The more valuable the goal, the more valuable the self-actualisation that aims at it, ceteris paribus. In many cases, this is because more valuable goals actualise our powers more or actualise our powers in new combinations. Hence, we value the goals that took a long time, that took a lot of effort, that "stretched" us. More fundamentally, since our cognitive and conative powers aim at the true and the good, they more completely achieve their aim when they are actualised by more valuable goals. For our powers to be focused on trivial goals is for them to be further away from attaining the true and the good. If your goal is counting blades of grass, then, even if done in a way that allows for stupendous exercises of memory and will-power, the immanent aspect of your action is not so valuable as if you were pursuing a more valuable goal, like learning astronomy. To be sure, everyone will have their own judgments about the value of various goals.

Virtues

The immanent aspect of action can exhibit, call for and cultivate states of virtue. In the case of the

painter, we might mention ethical virtues like steadfastness or bravery, aesthetic virtues like being experimental or being authentic, epistemic virtues like being revelatory or honest. These are the sorts of virtues that tend to make people good at pursuing the goal of painting, virtues that the goal of painting calls for, virtues that the best tokens of the painting activity involve (which is not to say that these virtues are exclusive to painters). In turn, having a virtue is good for you and a virtue aims at what is good for you (Aristotle 2011). We can conclude that the painter gains well-being and aims at something good by engaging in painting, since they aim at the same thing as some virtues.

Goal actualisation

We said previously that every action involves an actualisation of the agent. Part of the goal of the action is that the agent be actualised in a certain way – part of the goal of recording the song is that you sing, part of the goal of pruning the crab apple tree is that you focus your attention on its well-being. So, this means that part of the goal of action is achieved just by the agent's engaging in the action. A part of the action both begins and ends in the agent. The goal of painting is actualised in you, in the imaginative efforts and perseverance that you expend in painting, whether or not the goal finds itself successfully actualised in a product external to you. Since it is valuable to achieve goals, and since the immanent aspect of action partly achieves a goal, the immanent aspect of action has value.

The account applied to procreation and parenthood

I now turn to applying this account to procreation and parenthood. I will not offer a complete account of the value that these actions have for those who do them. Several philosophers have offered accounts of things that are valuable about parenthood, with the value of the parent-child relationship featuring prominently (Page 1984; Reshef 2013; Brighouse and Swift 2014). I proceed by outlining how the three factors just described apply in the case of procreation and parenthood.

Actualisation of the agent's powers

Persons have great value. So, parenting has great value for the parent. To be a parent is to direct one's powers – imagination, forethought, concern, feeling – into the creation of something that has great value. As a parent, one's powers are actualised by the goal of the child's development into personhood and their being a good person. You are trying to bring forth speech and reasoning and peaceable moods and common sense. Such a valuable goal makes for valuable actualisations of your powers. While Maslow's classic hierarchy of needs featured "self-actualisation" (fulfilling one's creative potential) as the peak need, recent evolutionary psychology places "parenting" as the peak need (Kenrick et al. 2011). As a procreator, your powers are actualised by the same goal as the parent, the development of the human being procreated into personhood. As a procreator, you choose to make the actualisations characteristic of a parent possible for someone (usually yourself). As a procreator, you choose to begin an action that takes years, that calls upon imagination and forethought and attention, an action which significantly alters the day-to-day life of anyone who tries it.

Virtues

It seems that all of the virtues required for living well as a person are required for doing, in the very best way, the action that produces a person. We produce persons in a personal way. Parents pay care and attention to their infant, they coo and talk with her. One aspect of this productive process is that parents teach virtue in a personal way, they try to model the good life for their child, including in how they personally treat their child. This involves being reasonably virtuous (wherever exactly one puts that threshold): volunteering at a charity; avoiding road rage; not so much fast food; playing with her; sympathising with her perspective; being concerned for her well-being. As a parent, one has additional reason to live virtuously in that you serve as a model for your children. As a parent, one aims at a good that calls for practically all virtues at one time or another. This is not to make the empirical claim that parents are more virtuous than non-parents. Presumably, non-parents adopt other goals, cultivating similar virtues in different ways. As a procreator, one chooses to make a

new human being in need of someone with the virtues characteristic of a parent, which affords these ethically valuable opportunities to whoever will complete the parenting activity.

Goal actualisation

The immanent action of procreation is an important part of one's life as a human organism, since it actualises the power of reproduction. Aristotle identifies reproduction, alongside nutrition, as "the most primitive and widely distributed power of soul, being indeed that one in virtue of which all are said to have life" (Aristotle 1991b, 415a). So, procreative action is good for us qua human animal, qua living thing. Since a part of the goal of procreation is an actualisation of the agent, no attempt at procreating is entirely unsuccessful – that we actualise ourselves towards the production of new human life is part of the goal of procreation. It is part of the good life of the human animal to be actualised by the goal of procreation.

As we have seen, procreative action is also a part of the action that has a person as its product. So, the goal of procreative action is not just to create a new biological life, but a new personal life. We create new personal life by doing the actions of a parent. Rather than actualising one's powers and virtues in text or paint, one actualises them in the developing person. The product of one's action becomes the child's ability to speak, their ability to self-soothe, or to tie their shoelaces. The actualisations of the child are aimed at by actualisations of the parent – the child's speech is aimed at by the parent's chatting and cooing, the child's calmness is aimed at by the parent's rocking and swaying. So, to parent is to actualise oneself as a person who makes people, whose powers and virtues are focused on the production of powers and virtues. Since a part of the goal of parenting is an actualisation of the parenting agent, no attempt at parenting is entirely unsuccessful – that we actualise ourselves towards the existence and development of a person is part of the goal of parenthood. It is a part of the good life for us as persons to be actualised by the goal of person producing.

In procreation and parenthood, rational animal creates rational animal. In doing so, we affirm our own value as rational animals and we affirm the need to live as rational animals. Procreators and parents actualise themselves as rational animals by actualising themselves in rational animals – in exercising justice, compassion, imagination, wisdom, and so forth, toward and as a model for, their developing child. They make rational animals the object of their creative action and in doing so, they direct the powers and virtues of a rational animal to an object most worthy of them.

Conclusion

I have argued that procreation is valuable. In aiming at the creation of a human being, a procreator aims at the creation of a person. A person is the type of being that it is good to create, in part because creating persons is a way of actualising the powers, virtues and goals of our animal and personal life.[3]

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3 An anonymous reviewer raises the worry that my argument might treat children as a means to the intrinsic value that procreation has for the procreative agent. By analogy, an argument about the intrinsic value of being a philosophy lecturer could raise the worry of treating the students as a means to that intrinsic value. In both cases, for someone to achieve the intrinsic value, they must perform the action. The action, although it takes another human being as its object, does not treat them as a means, but rather adopts an aspect of their good as the agent's end. It would be self-defeating for someone to procreate, or to lecture, solely from the motive of realising intrinsic value for themselves, because in these cases the intrinsic value just consists in being actualised towards the good of another. Surely, the most valuable thing about procreation is its product, the new person, but this is no reason not to focus, on occasion, on the intrinsic value that procreation has for the procreator.

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