AGAINST SUPEREROGATIONISM

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Abstract

In this thesis, I argue that we have no reason to accept the existence of a category of supererogatory moral goods: that is, good acts that carry no pressure to bring them about. Despite the counterintuitive nature and suspicious provenance of the concept, Supererogationism is the orthodoxy in Ethics, and I examine promising but unsuccessful responses to it by Peter Singer and Kwame Gyekye. Responding in particular to David Heyd's Supererogationism – but also to J. O. Urmson, Susan Wolf, and Jonathan Dancy – I develop an account of the principle "Good implies Ought" that does not entail absurd over-obligation. I argue that this Anti-Supererogationist model stands up to the four strongest arguments against such a position, and that it embraces a more accurate account of the relation between values and oughts than Supererogationists are capable of supplying. Finally, I sketch a detailed *eudaimonist* account of the principle *umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu* – that our commitment to the good of others stems from our flourishing being caught up with theirs.

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Chapter 1
Supererogation and its Discontents

Introduction

Every so often, we hear actions described as "above and beyond the call of duty." This phrase is sufficiently familiar that we tend to assume we understand it; connotations are called forth of heroism or martyrdom, of sacrifice or substantial risk. Suffusing these associations is the idea that there is something *good* about such actions, something morally commendable. Charity, generosity, kindness, consideration, forgiveness, mercy, volunteering, and granting favours – though not as uncommon as heroism, these sorts of act are no less exemplary of going beyond duty. The term used to describe such acts is "Supererogation" (from the Latin *supererogare* "to pay out more than is due") [1]. Supererogation*ists* assert that any conception of ethics must recognise that such acts are simultaneously beyond duty (and thus, beyond moral requirement), *and* good. Indeed, Supererogationists such as David Heyd argue that being beyond duty makes such acts *particularly* good. As Jonathan Dancy notes however,

> Normally we would think that, as value rises, the change in degree of evaluative property is attended by a change in degree of deontic property; the more good one's action would do, the more one ought to choose it in preference to others. But if there are supererogatory actions, there can come a point where the value rises while it becomes less, rather than more true that one ought to do the action … This already seems peculiar …[2]

Here Supererogationists hold that "there is nothing paradoxical in a good and meritorious action being completely optional, even if it is morally better than alternative non-optional actions."[3] If this strikes you, as it does me, as clearly paradoxical, you may share the Anti-Supererogationist worry that it seems strange to describe a realisable moral good, without a concomitant pressure to pursue it. This is the response from the "Good-Ought tie-up," which holds that the term "Good" implies "ought to do." Such an assumption seems no more or less coherent to our everyday understanding than going beyond duty – yet it excludes the possibility of

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[1] David Heyd, entry on *Supererogation*, Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/supererogation/
[2] In his Moral Reasons, 1993, Blackwell, p127.
[3] David Heyd, Supererogation: Its Status in Ethical Theory, Cambridge University Press, 1982, p165.

exceeding our obligations, as it becomes intrinsic to calling an action (morally) good that we are obliged, *ceteris paribus,* to perform it. A second worry concerns the sort of behaviour engendered by a Supererogationist ethic. While Supererogationists allow *scope* for pursuing goods beyond explicit duties, the diluted normative pressure toward the Good suggested here seems to ring hollow. It seems that a society in which people acknowledge a normative pressure to be generous and forgiving *must* be better than a society in which these are taken as optional. What is at stake in the debate over Supererogation is the extent to which the general good or the good of others can impinge on the agent's life and lifestyle. The outcome of the debate will dictate whether moral responsibility is best captured by a system in which we have "a right to moral relaxation,"[4] or by "an altruistically-freighted morality."[5]

In this thesis I argue that we have no reason to be Supererogationists, and good reason to be Anti-Supererogationists - that is, to deny that Supererogation is a coherent category at all. In the second chapter, I respond to the four strongest arguments for supererogation, sketching an Anti-Supererogationist account. In the third chapter, I examine the relation between values and moral oughts,[6] and show that the Supererogationist account of this relation is unnecessary, problematic, and under-describes the source of normative force. In the fourth and final chapter, I provide a detailed account of how pursuing the good of others is necessary to our own good, such that the pressure toward the good of others is not at odds with our self-interest. Before doing so, I will sketch the grounds of contention in this introductory chapter.

In this chapter, after outlining what supererogationism is and what hangs on accepting or rejecting it, I will note two initial reasons to doubt the concept: that supererogation assumes all of ethics can be captured by Institutional Duties, and that the concept of supererogation originated as an *ad hoc* solution to a specific theological problem, which was abandoned by its original proponents centuries before being re-established in the secular context. Despite this, Supererogationists predominate in the philosophical literature. Before turning to my own response, I will briefly examine two ways *not* to defeat Supererogationism.

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[4] Heyd, in Supererogation, p174.
[5] Kwame Gyekye, in his Tradition and Modernity: Philosophical Reflections on the African Experience, Oxford University Press, 1997, p67.
[6] I will use the term "ought" rather than alternatives such as "duty" or "obligation" as these carry deontic connotations, and the question of whether all moral imperatives reduce to duties is precisely the issue.

What Supererogation Is

Though the concept originated in Christian theology (more on this later), the contemporary secular debate on supererogation began with J. O. Urmson's paper *Saints and Heroes.*[7] Urmson argued that the conventional tripartite division of actions – forbidden, permissible, obligatory – assumed a parallel continuum of values (something like negative value, neutral value, positive value). Since such an assumption could not describe "Saintly" actions, which achieve great value, yet cannot be obligatory, Urmson argued that deontic and evaluative statements can come apart. It is important to note that Urmson's paper is not an argument for supererogation. It *assumes* that supererogation is coherent, and takes the existence of supererogatory acts as a premise. An argument for supererogation has developed from the ensuing critical response, framed as a response to the "Paradox of Supererogation."[8] This paradox arises from the antithetic claims:

1. Moral goods imply an obligation to perform them.

and

2. If all moral goods imply obligation, then we are obliged to perform every possible good, which is absurdly strong.

The Supererogationist response to this paradox is to deny that all moral goods imply an obligation to perform them. Rather, they argue that ethical theories must recognise two categories of good act: the obligatory, and the supererogatory. Where the former is good, and as such required, the latter is good and optional. Some Supererogationists see special, additional merit in performing good acts when we are not strictly obliged to do so and argue that any moral theory must allow scope for such merit to be recognised.

The Anti-Supererogationist response to the paradox accepts that Good implies Ought, and denies that this over-extends the moral agent. As such, they argue that any good act carries some obligation to perform it, and that ethical supererogation is incoherent. It follows from this that there can be a compelling moral pressure to be generous, forgiving, merciful, or self-sacrificing (to the point of heroism or martyrdom) iff this is best. On such a model, failing to be heroic, forgiving etc., while

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[7] In Essays in Moral Philosophy, I. A. Melden (ed), University of Washington Press, 1958.

[8] http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/supererogation/ The version I provide is not Heyd's, but captures the basic form of the paradox. The very useful categorisation of responses to the paradox is also Heyd's.

aware that it is in fact best to be so, is a *moral* failing and seems to invite moral sanction.

A third position, Qualified Supererogationism, accepts that Good implies Ought, but argues that it is qualified by other considerations, such that whole categories of act can be exempt from obligation.

David Heyd provides both the most comprehensive history of the concept and what I take to be the most rigorous formulation of Supererogationism in his Supererogation: Its Status in Ethical Theory. He defines an act as supererogatory iff[9]

1. It is neither obligatory nor forbidden.
2. Its omission is not wrong, and does not deserve sanction or criticism – either formal or informal.
3. It is morally good, both by virtue of its (intended) consequences and by virtue of its intrinsic value (being beyond duty).
4. It is done voluntarily for the sake of someone else's good, and is thus meritorious.

Heyd will be my chief antagonist, and I hope that a brief look at his paradigm cases will demonstrate more clearly what I take to be disturbing in asserting that a category like the one outlined above is coherent. Heyd argues that the omission of any of the following acts cannot, by definition, be wrong: Saintly or Heroic self-sacrifice; beneficence (including charity, generosity, and gift-giving); granting favours; volunteering; forbearance: "when a person does not do something which he is morally entitled to do, like demanding less than his due, or not insisting on his rights"[10]; and acts of pardon, forgiveness, and mercy.[11]

Confronted with this list, it seems to me that, while we would agree that it would be absurd to consider all such acts obligatory, we can also imagine instances of each sort in which omission would clearly be wrong. This suggests that something more complex than ruling something to be always/never obligatory is going on when we are confronted with moral imperatives and that exempting acts categorically from obligation is an indelicate approach to a nuanced situation.

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[9] Supererogation, p115.
[10] Supererogation,, p152.
[11] Heyd's detailed arguments for each of these paradigm cases is developed in Supererogation, pp142-154. I will not be going into more detailed analysis of Heyd's or any other list, as I am concerned with the concept of supererogation *simpliciter* rather than any specific formulation. I cite Heyd's merely as an example of the category Supererogationists are asserting exists.

Of course, supererogation is not an inescapable assumption when confronted with such acts. In addition to our common-sense suspicion, whole philosophical stances explicitly deny the coherence of supererogation. This is important to remember, as much contemporary Western discussion tends to work from the assumption that Anti-Supererogationism is a hypothetical position that one is forced to adopt if one is insufficiently rigorous, rather than a position seriously advocated by anyone. At the same time, discussions in African Philosophy of concepts such as communitarianism and *ubuntu* advocate a strongly Anti-Supererogationist perspective. Here recent history provides a poignant example of such Anti-Supererogation – as Richard Bell notes,

> There should be little doubt that part of the success of South Africa is the consistency with which the opposition leaders – Mandela, Tutu, Mbeki, Kader Asmal, Joe Slovo [...] and others – believed that morality required supererogatory acts. A peaceful transition to majority democracy required a way of acting that implied self-sacrifice and regard for the well-being of others. [12]

What is particularly pertinent about the South African case is that it is not simply that of a set of politically-dedicated fanatics chose to accept some heroic sacrifice; rather, the self-sacrifice Bell refers to was the forgiveness shown by the oppressed to the oppressors. The leaders' belief, that is, was not that their own sacrifice was necessary, but that that the oppressed in general would acknowledge the moral pressure to forgive past injustices. That this in fact occurred, that the value of forgiveness trumped the ostensible right to remain embittered, should be in the back of our minds when Supererogationists claim that forgiveness is a paradigm example of the purely optional action whose omission is never wrong.

Initial reasons to doubt Supererogationism

Thus far I have emphasised the strangeness of Supererogationist assumptions, and I have done so with good reason. Supererogationists constantly punt their view as the only way to avoid absurdity in the Paradox of Supererogation, as a perfectly natural, rational assumption. Before addressing their arguments, I want to highlight that

[12]In his Understanding African Philosophy: A Cross-Cultural approach to Classical and Contemporary Issues, Routledge, 2002, p88.

assuming certain acts to be categorically exempt from being required is more problematic than they seem to credit.

Within the context of any institutional role, it is possible to distinguish acts we are obliged to perform from those beyond the scope of obligation: while I am obliged, for example, to work a certain number of hours at my job, I am not obliged to bake snacks for my co-workers, or to be attentive to their personal difficulties. Where acts are both good and beyond the scope of this obligation, they are clearly recognisable as "above and beyond" duty. But it is less clear that the same distinction exists in ethics, when the context is not our institutionally-defined obligations, but our responsibilities as moral agents. That is, while I can easily claim that it is not a requirement of my job that I show concern for my co-worker, it seems that I would feel less certain claiming that I have no compelling reason to show concern *qua* human being. It seems to me that much of the ostensible strength of Supererogationism derives from the assumption that such institutional duties scale up and capture all of ethics, but it is nothing like obvious that this is the case. And this is not the only reason to doubt the category....

The Origins and History of Supererogation – A Critique from Political Economy

Both the term "supererogation" and much of the theory surrounding it originate in a Christian theological debate, and it is valuable to examine this context before continuing. Heyd notes that

> Although supererogation is not discussed as such in the New Testament, the term supererogation dates back to the Latin version of the Bible ... in the parable of the Good Samaritan. After paying ... for the care and expenses of the robbed and wounded man, the Samaritan adds: 'and whatsoever thou shalt spend over and above (*quodcumque supererogaveris*), I at my return, will repay thee (Luke x, 35).[13]

Here, while "saving the victim's life, taking care of him, etc. was his duty, *his promise to pay for further expenses* was clearly beyond his duty."[14] Given that this parable does not draw a particularly stark distinction, it is not the primary justification for religious Supererogation. This is derived from various Biblical references to a two-tier set of requirements, typified by the story of the rich man, in which

[13] Supererogation, pp16-17.
[14] Supererogation, p17. My italics.

> Jesus is asked 'what good shall I do that I may have life everlasting?', to which he replies 'if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments', but adds: 'if thou wilt be perfect, go sell what thou hast and give it to the poor and thou shalt have treasure in Heaven. And come follow me. (Matthew xix, 16-24).[15]

From a number of such references including the recommendations of chastity and poverty, though drawing primarily on the Old Testament,[16] early Christian thinkers developed a more systematic two-tier model. These Church fathers distinguished between Precepts (strictly obligatory norms) and the (merely recommended) Counsels.[17] The former were aimed at those who wanted to do *enough* to get into Heaven, and explained the absolute minimum requirements necessary. The Counsels were sets of advice, suggestive rather than imperative, aimed at those who wanted to be morally perfect, either to please God, or to ensure entry into Heaven. Heyd notes that "originally, the list of counsels (or Evangelical Counsels) included just three recommendations: perpetual poverty, perfect chastity, and perfect obedience," and concedes the political economy of the concept, in that its promulgation "was stimulated by the need to provide a theoretical justification of the monastic ideals."[18]

Systematising the two-tier model even further, the emergent proto-capitalism of the Catholic Church then sanctified the model of the "Spiritual Treasury"[19], in which "the superabundant merit of Jesus and the Saints, whose good works excelled what was necessary for their own salvation"[20] was banked on behalf of the Church. This credit could then be withdrawn as needed, underwriting the system of "Indulgences," whereby Supererogatory merit was converted into actual capital by Pardoners, or all Crusaders were granted entry into Heaven.

The blatantly "commercialised"[21] nature of this analysis is particularly alarming in that it is not an analogy, but a factual description of the system. Such a model assumed that the "merit" attached to a good act (which would necessarily appear to be meaningful *only* with reference to that act) was a bankable, exchangeable good by virtue of its being hypothetically quantifiable (by God). One would assume that this

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[15] Supererogation, p17.
[16] See Supererogation, pp17-18.
[17] Supererogation, p18. See also pp20-21 on Aquinas' arguments in favour of such a system.
[18] Supererogation, p18.
[19] Supererogation, p19.
[20] Supererogation, p19.
[21] Supererogation, p19.

would be sufficient basis for rejecting such a system (sports scores, after all, are quantifiable without entailing transferability to another team). Surprisingly, however, the concept of merit as a bankable commodity did not provide the force of the Protestant response....

When Luther, Calvin and other Protestant thinkers responded to both the institutional corruption and theoretical difficulties of contemporary Catholicism, they did not dispute the coherence of claiming that the merit entailed by good acts could, in principle, be horded or re-allocated. Rather, they claimed that:

> Human 'works' are never sufficient for attaining salvation. Without God's grace no amount of human works has any meaning, and it is only through God's will that we can do any good acts at all. Man is justified by faith alone.[22]

Here Luther held that "no saint has adequately fulfilled God's commandments in his life. Consequently the saints have done nothing that is superabundant. Therefore they have nothing left to be allocated through the indulgences"[23] and Calvin stated, "All the righteousness of men collected into one heap would be inadequate to compensate for a single sin."[24] This rigid deontology moved from the perspective that since one's obligation to the Creator of the Universe must be infinite, speaking of a surplus is both impious and impossible. This point undermined the model developed by Tertullian, who argued that "God has ordained a special field of liberty (*licentia*) in order to give us an opportunity to act supererogatorily, and this 'licence' is the only way to test whose acts are really meritorious by a 'trial of discipline'."[25] The Protestant response holds that to assert such a field is to "presuppose options which do not exist"[26] and argues for an infinite obligation to the good, commensurate with the infinite gratitude due to God. As such, the Protestants account for the Biblical distinction between Counsels and Precepts by interpreting the former as "a sort of subjective duty, a precept *for some people*,"[27] where the counsel to chastity is read as "commanding chastity for anyone who is in that special 'state' that enables him to remain chaste."[28] Moderately *ad hoc* as this last move may appear, post-Reformation

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[22] Supererogation,, p27.
[23] Supererogation, p27.
[24] Supererogation,, p28.
[25] Supererogation, p18.
[26] Supererogation, p28.
[27] Supererogation, p28. Italics in original.
[28] Supererogation, p29.

Christianity is now firmly Anti-Supererogationist, premising salvation on the grace of God (which, Heyd notes,[29] *is* seen as Supererogatory).

Heyd finds the parallels between the religious and secular models illuminating, noting "in both cases the act in question is only expected of a few people, that is, not universally demanded. It is only necessary for the achievement of an ideal which is 'higher' than the end of those acts which are obligatory."[30] It is clear from this description (as well as the forgoing) that the original justification for demarcating two categories of good act was that the two were seen as aiming at different goals. That is, the impetus for the distinction was *teleological*, assuming that certain, saintly, individuals pursued an entirely different end-goal to others. This is coherent in the case of religious supererogation, which cites scriptural references to two distinct goals, both sufficient for infinite reward.[31] In the secular case, however, it is not clear why such a model should be assumed.

While it is trivially true that some people *want* to help others to the greatest possible extent, while others *want* merely to perform their duties, this entails nothing about the ethical legitimacy of such wants. In the realm of secular ethics, it seems that both the saintly and the dutiful orient toward the same end (*telos*): they want to be morally good. Though they differ as to how they perceive this end to be achieved, they are both aiming to reach it. In much the same way, I may disagree with a fellow-traveller over *how* to reach our destination, but we cannot be described as having *different goals* (this was *not* true in the religious case, in which both parties acknowledged two possible goals before setting out). If we are motivated to be good people (that is, we are not talking about the apathetic or the positively vicious), then it seems simply weird to describe us as having two different goals.

My point here is that the original reason for assuming the very idea of an obligatory-supererogatory distinction grew from a set of assumptions absent from secular ethics. The concept of supererogation originated as an *ad hoc* solution to a specific theological problem, and despite being abandoned as unworkable in this original context, gained sufficient historical momentum for Urmson to *assume* it was a coherent category whose absence demanded to be addressed.

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[29] Supererogation, p29.
[30] Supererogation, p31.
[31] Though religious supererogation is not my focus, this distinction does raise an interesting question; On a Game Theoretical model, would the Saintly strategy have any advantage over the Merely Dutiful? Would it remove itself from the pool over time?

This is the political economy contemporary Supererogationists gloss over when they cast Supererogationism as merely a response to the Paradox of Supererogation. Seen in this context, assuming that some types of action are always obligatory while others are always optional seems less like a perfectly natural assumption anyone would come to, and more like the end result of a set of historical contingencies specific to the Western canon. Of course, this is not sufficient, by itself to scupper Supererogationism, as Supererogationists can still note that, in any particular context, *some* good act may exceed what can be required of us. This fact demands explanation, and we need not assume separate *teloi* to coherently describe such acts as supererogatory. That said, it seems to me that an awareness of the concept's pedigree should at least leave us wary of Supererogationism.

An additional worry arising from identifying other-directed goodness with saintliness is precisely that saints are rarely seen as agents just like ourselves whose motives are transparent and commonplace. Here it does seem that Supererogationists promote what Kwame Gyekye casts as a typically Western understanding of extraordinarily other-directed behaviour, as the reserve of the eccentric and saintly. Such a worldview, he argues, seems to suppose, "that only a few human beings have the capacity to practice such basic virtues as love, charity, benevolence, and sensitivity to the needs of others."[32] Lest we assume Gyekye is overstating the case, remember that Heyd's position explicitly defines charity, forgiveness, and mercy as "only expected of a few people, that is, not universally."[33] Though Supererogationists point out that supererogatory acts are praiseworthy and valuable, this disassociation of good acts from everyday motives seems to shoot their hermeneutic point in the foot somewhat.

How not to Refute Supererogationism

Despite the oddness of their contention, Supererogationists are predominant in the literature of Ethics – the definitive works in the field are written from a Supererogationist perspective, Dictionaries of Philosophy list the term with nary a qualification, and the coherence of supererogation is tacitly assumed in most discussions. Before attempting to redress this situation in the following chapters, I will examine two interesting, yet insufficient Anti-Supererogationist arguments.

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[32] Tradition and Modernity, p74.
[33] Supererogation, p31.

Singer **V** Wolf

Susan Wolf begins her prominent paper *Moral Saints,* "I don't know whether there are any moral saints. But if there are, I am glad that neither I, nor those about whom I care most are among them."[34] She goes on to elaborate the ways in which we would find the maximally moral life (as understood from a Deontological or Utilitarian perspective) unsatisfying as a personal goal. Wolf finds much to be avoided in the "saintly" life, from the danger that being "very, very nice" would require that we be "dull-witted or humourless or bland,"[35] to the idea that there is something absurd about only being able to enjoy self-indulgent pleasures if they are part of some greater good:

> It may be that a good golf game is just what is needed to secure that big donation to Oxfam. Perhaps the cultivation of one's exceptional artistic talent will turn out to be the way one can make one's greatest contribution to society, [but these interests] cannot be encouraged for their own sakes as distinct, independent aspects of the realisation of human good.[36]

She concludes that if "we have reason to want people to live lives that are not morally perfect, then any plausible theory must make use of some conception of supererogation."[37] This particularly extreme instance of the Western disassociation from the motive for other-directed goods is one example of an all-too familiar pattern in Supererogationist argumentation – a *reductio ad absurdum* against the idea of other-directed good. Peter Singer takes a particularly strong stance against this move, simply accepting the consequences. Here he responds,

> Wolf argues that [in pursuing the greatest good] we would have to do without a great deal that makes life interesting: opera, gourmet cooking, elegant clothes, and professional sport, for a start. The kind of life we come to see as ethically required of us would be a single-minded pursuit of the overall good, lacking that broad diversity of interests and activities that, on a less demanding view, can be part of our ideal of a good life for a human being. To this, however, one can

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[34] In The Journal of Philosophy, Volume LXXIX, no. 8, August 1982, p 419.
[35] *Moral Saints*, p422.
[36] *Moral Saints*, p425.
[37] *Moral Saints*, p438.

> respond that while the rich and varied life that Wolf upholds as an ideal may be the most desirable form of life for a human being in a world of plenty, it is wrong to assume that it remains a good life in a world in which buying luxuries for oneself means accepting the continued avoidable suffering of others. A doctor faced with hundreds of injured victims of a train crash can scarcely think it defensible to treat fifty of them and then go to the opera, on the grounds that going to the opera is part of a well-rounded human life. The life-or-death needs of others must take priority. Perhaps we are like the doctor, in that we live in a time when we all have an opportunity to help to mitigate a disaster.[38]

This example, it seems to me, captures the absurdity of excusing ourselves from the responsibility to help others where we can. Something simply seems wrong if the doctor sees helping others as optional. And it does no good to say that doctors take on a duty to help others that the rest of us are not subject to. Simply replace the doctor with an opera-aficionado who must decide between helping the wounded from the wreck and arriving in time for the opening of the season. That we see no real difference seems to support the contention that ought-ness derives not from duties, but from our capacity to realise goods (more on this in later chapters). But Wolf's bugbear, the idea that we cannot pursue any activity unless it contributes to the greater moral good, seems no less absurd. Stacking absurdities against one another cannot settle the debate between Supererogationists and Anti-Supererogationists, as what is needed is a more thorough account of why we pursue certain goods and not others. And this is where Singer falls down. A Utilitarian, Singer sees ethics as "the general project of bringing about maximally desirable outcomes [globally]."[39] But Utilitarians must explain why we would find this best-state-of-affairs-for-the-world a more compelling goal than our own happiness. Bernard Williams' Integrity Objection suggests that it is not simply selfishness that may hold us back, but the need to make sense of pursuing the good at all. We all pursue personal projects, of direct value to ourselves, which Williams refers to variously as "lower-order,"[40] "first-order,"[41] or

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[38] Practical Ethics -Second Edition, Cambridge University Press, 1993 (Repr.1999), p244.
[39] Bernard Williams, *A Critique of Utilitarianism,* in Utilitarianism: For and Against, J.C.C. Smart and Bernard Williams, Cambridge University Press, 1973, p110.
[40] *A Critique of Utilitarianism*, p110.
[41] *A Critique of Utilitarianism*, p110.

"ground projects."[42] But these projects do not simply stand in opposition to the greater good; they *constitute* it. That is, "unless there were first-order projects, the general utilitarian project would have nothing to work on, and would be vacuous."[43] Since the general project of pursuing the greater good (incorporating the good of others) gains its value precisely from including my own good, it cannot therefore function by always negating those projects we find essentially valuable. Neither Utilitarianism nor any other ethical system can function by treating first-order goods as always dispensable, that is, by treating all situations as carrying the same trumping-power as Singer's train-wreck. But our commitment to train-wreck survivors over opera is not diminished because it does not apply in every case, and Singer's point is that it is no different to a very large number of situations in contemporary life.[44] What is needed is some account with enough nuance to distinguish between those situations like the train-wreck, in which it would be absurd not to assist, and those like the Oxfam golf game, in which it would be absurd to see our own happiness as nothing but a bonus. Singer's response does not meet this need, and thus cannot scale up to describe situations beyond the train-wreck.

But Supererogationism, as punted by Heyd and Wolf, cannot explain why the train-wreck carries the force it does. If mercy, volunteering, charity and self-sacrifice are *categorically* the sorts of act that *cannot* be obligations, then how do we understand the powerful wrongness of choosing to go the opera? It seems to me that Supererogationists do no better than Singer's Anti-Supererogationism in providing a distinguishing criterion. I suspect that much of Supererogationism's plausibility stems from downplaying the sheer strangeness of seeing alleviating suffering as an omission that should not incur sanction. A thoroughgoing response to the problem of Supererogation, then, must provide some mechanism for explaining our commitment to greater goods than Heyd and Wolf endorse, without falling to the absurdities Williams and Wolf seek to avoid.

We should not, however, take Wolf's argument to be stronger than it is. Though *Moral Saints* is one of the best known articles of the 1980's, and constantly associated with supererogation, it is not as compelling as this reputation suggests. Wolf's

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[42] *Persons, Character, and Morality*, in his Moral Luck, Cambridge University Press, 1981, p12.
[43] *A Critique of Utilitarianism*, p110.
[44] Singer is addressing responses the global wealth discrepancy, in his chapter on *Rich and Poor*, Practical Ethics -Second Edition, pp218-246.

argument is that there is a tension between moral demands and the demands of "the point of view of individual perfection," from which "we consider what kind of lives are good lives, and what kinds of persons it would be good for ourselves and other to be."[45] Here Dancy, himself a Supererogationist, takes issue with Wolf's account:

> The idea is that a moral theory which recognises its own limitations will see that it should allow that the actions which we are morally required to do are actions which a perfectly admirable person may choose not to do .... This is, however, not supererogation as we originally intended it to be. It is not that there can be actions which have the highest moral value but which we are morally permitted not to perform. Wolf is not a strong supererogationist. There is nothing here like the struggle between the evaluative and the deontic; there are only evaluations from two distinct perspectives. For her, the supererogatory action is one we are morally required to perform, but this requirement is not visible from the point of view of individual perfection. That point of view, notice, does not generate reasons which *outweigh* the moral ones.... There is nothing here which is both seen as a requirement and as something an admirable person might choose not to do.... The problem, then, is that for Wolf there is no single point of view which both accepts that a perfect person would choose the saintly action and allows that an admirable person might hold back. I take this to be a crucial weakness in her account. It means that she cannot tell us why we don't think of the less than saintly person as to that extent morally defective. On her account, such a person is failing by the standards of the morally ideal, and within the moral perspective is therefore open to criticism ... But this is not how we think of the supererogatory. We take there to be a *moral* permission to hold back.[46]

But if "a single point of view" is appealing, then why not follow the Ancient Greek line, subsuming the "moral" question of how we ought to be toward others within the "perfectionist" question of what sort of lives we ought to lead? That is, why not assume a *Eudaimonist* stance, taking the balanced life Wolf herself uses as a yardstick

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[45] *Moral Saints*, p437.
[46] Moral Reasons, pp135-136. Italics in original.

to be an ethical aim. Wolf concedes that this alternative "naturally suggests itself," but finds it "unlikely to succeed."[47] Her reasons for excluding *eudaimonism*, however, are not particularly persuasive. She begins by claiming that,

> It is doubtful that any single, or even any reasonably small number of substantial personal ideals could capture the full range of possible ways of realising human potential or achieving human good which deserve encouragement and praise.[48] _

But what is at issue here is not whether the list of personal ideals is concise, but whether we should take up the stance of orienting toward such ideals. The multiple realisability of the virtuous life is not news to Virtue theorists, but neither is it seen as a damning flaw. Rather, such flexibility is embraced as a strength, suggesting that substantial pictures of the Good Life can be constructed without importing culture-specific biases. In programming terms, it is seen as a feature, not a bug.

Here Wolf buttresses her position by arguing that there are "strong reasons not to want to incorporate [a character-based view of the person] into the framework of morality itself."[49] Her next two arguments aim to provide such reasons. The second is that:

> There seems to be a recognition that among the immensely valuable traits and activities that a human life might positively embrace are some of which we hope that, if a person does embrace them, he does so *not* for moral reasons.[50]

But this is to confuse morality's direction of fit on a virtue model. Here we do not try to justify living a good life according to Wolf's narrow definition of the "the moral point of view,"[51] rather, we define the moral in relation to the Good Life. This seems to be Wolf's *own* yardstick, and one she has no difficulty accepting as a reason to embrace certain actions or omissions. As such, Wolf already endorses *eudaimonism.*

Wolf's third attack on virtue argues that the pertinent difference between "the aspects of a person's life which are currently considered appropriate objects of moral evaluation"[52] and a *eudaimonist* view is that,

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[47] *Moral Saints,* p433.
[48] *Moral Saints,* pp433-434.
[49] *Moral Saints*, p434.
[50] *Moral Saints*, p434.
[51] *Moral Saints*, p436..
[52] *Moral Saints*, p434.

> Moral evaluation now is focused primarily on features of a person's life over which that person has control; it is largely restricted to aspects of his life which are likely to have considerable effect on other people. These restrictions seem as if they should be.[53]

This rejection of a more virtue-oriented perspective suffers by relying on modishness. The growing interest in virtue-descriptions, even among Deontologists and Consequentialists, seems to suggest precisely the opposite: restricting moral evaluation to "those aspects of the agent which are likely to have a considerable effect on other people" looks less and less like a complete picture, and virtue theories are proliferating precisely to shore up this explanatory gap. As to restricting moral focus to "features of a person's life over which that person has control," Wolf confuses these with features over which that person has *immediate* or *easy* control. Again, it is not news that shaping the character is difficult, but is not impossible, and is not seen as a damning refutation of Virtue.

I take Dancy's response to Wolf as compelling: Wolf does not provide what Supererogationists themselves are looking for. What she does do, however, is point toward a promising candidate for a response to Supererogationism – a *eudaimonist* perspective, which defuses the conflict between "individual perfection" and ethical considerations by taking them to be aspects of the same pursuit. Such a perspective

calls "Moderate Communitarianism."[56] Gyekye engages with Urmson, John Rawls, and Heyd. His response to Heyd is directed toward the claim that,

> supererogation is justified by showing that some supererogatory acts must exist because society cannot require of the individual every act that would promote the general good, and because the individual has the right to satisfy his wants and to achieve his ends and ideals regardless of their social utility (with some obvious limitations of course).[57]

Here Gyekye notes with suspicion that,

> What Heyd is saying is that the existence and exercise of the individual's autonomy and rights justify supererogationism, for they set limits to what the individual, concerned with the fulfilment of his own needs and welfare, can be expected to do in meeting the needs of others. The implication here is thus that the denial of supererogationism will lead to the inappropriate extension of the individual's moral responsibility and the consequent sacrifice or subversion of his autonomy and personal needs.[58]

Gyekye then responds to the supererogationist claim that "some form of self-sacrifice cannot be required of any and every moral agent,"[59] arguing that:

> The question is, which form of self-sacrifice can or should be required of the moral agent, and how do we determine that? For some people, providing the slightest assistance of any kind to someone in distress will be self-sacrifice; others however, will not consider such acts as sending huge amounts of money to famine-stricken areas within their nation or outside it, or helping to get someone out of real danger, as self-sacrificial or heroic or saintly. What all this means surely is that the field of our moral responsibilities should not be circumscribed. The moral life, which essentially involves paying regard to the needs, interests, and well-being of *others*, already implies self-sacrifice and loss, that is loss of something – one's time, money, strength and so on.

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[56] Tradition and Modernity, p35.
[57] Supererogation, p166.
[58] Tradition and Modernity, p73.
[59] Tradition and Modernity, p73.

> There is, in my view, no need, therefore, to place limits on the form of the self-sacrifice and, hence, the extent of our moral responsibilities.[60]

I am inclined to agree with Gyekye's conclusion, that the proper response to the problem of supererogation cannot be to circumscribe certain acts as categorically included or excluded from the field of moral responsibility. I find much to agree with in Gyekye's approach, and in Chapter 2 I follow on from his positive account of our relation to the good. However, I do not think his response here is quite sufficient to meet Heyd, and see three difficulties with his argument. The first is that differences in what people *consider* to be saintly or heroic cannot be a sufficient basis from which to challenge Supererogationism. Heyd, in his discussion of "moral modesty,"[61] establishes that the agent's feeling of obligation or its absence is irrelevant to the normative nature of the act. That is, my thinking of some act as necessary has no real bearing on whether it is in fact required of me.

The second difficulty is that Gyekye's argument is too quick, and too scant, to deal with Heyd's account, which rests not on the claim Gyekye quotes, but on a number of rather more complex arguments. As I have said, Heyd's arguments are probably the most rigorous defence of Supererogationism, and demand a more complete response if they are to be refuted (this is the task I take up in Chapter 2).

Finally, as with Singer, though an appeal to an Anti-Supererogatory model is apparent in Gyekye, it remains too much of a sketch. The proper response to the problem of supererogation requires an account of why we pursue certain goods and not others, for while Gyekye is right that simply cordoning off whole categories of act is insufficient, we must some mechanism for avoiding the absurdities Supererogationists fear.

It seems that the suspicious historical provenance of the idea of supererogation, and its generally awkward fit while addressing the problem it sets out to solve, should bolster our initial suspicion of the idea, and move us toward Anti-Supererogationism. But our response must be more nuanced than Singer or Gyekye's. It must evade objections from Integrity or moral modesty, respond to Supererogationists' positive arguments, and provide a detailed picture of why we pursue certain goods and not others.

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[60] Tradition and Modernity, p73. Italics in original.
[61] Supererogation, pp138-139.

Conclusion

In this introductory chapter, I have outlined the problem of supererogation, and emphasised the problematic nature of assuming a Supererogationist stance. I have noted that such a stance relies overmuch on our everyday notion of institutionally-defined duties, and that the concept of supererogation is not simply a naturally logical assumption, but a defunct and rather counterintuitive *ad hoc* response to a parochial theological problem. To borrow Dancy's description, "I think it one of the positions of which Aristotle would say that nobody would hold it except as the result of a theory."[62] Finally, I have noted, in my discussion of Singer, Wolf, and Gyekye, how not to defeat Supererogationism, and what an Anti-Supererogationist theory must do. In the following chapters, I attempt such a rigorous Anti-Supererogationist response.

[62] Moral Reasons, p131. I am taking some rhetorical license here - Dancy is talking about Anti-Supererogationism. I feel that his description better captures his own position though.

Chapter 2

Against Supererogationism

Introduction

In this chapter, I present what I take to be the four strongest arguments for believing in a category of supererogatory acts. Responding to each of these arguments, I find them insufficient reason to doubt the plausibility and coherence of Anti-Supererogationism. In the process, I sketch a more nuanced account of Good–> Ought than Supererogationists seem to recognise, suggesting the plausibility of accepting an altruistically freighted morality. Finally, I note that martyrdom may be the only example of a supererogatory act, though there is reason to doubt even this much.

The Justifications for Supererogationism

Support for Supererogationism rests on four arguments. The first, and most generally cited, concludes that if Good implies Ought, then the moral agent must be absurdly over-obligated. The next three arguments, drawn from Heyd, conclude that there is no reason to assert that Good implies Ought, that ethical requirements cannot always override personal autonomy, and that compelling all good acts removes the scope for freely chosen acts.

In addition, Heyd offers two positive "axiological" reasons to want to perform Supererogatory acts. It seems to me that these axiological conditions only support a Supererogationist position if the first three arguments hold. If, as I will argue, the former arguments are inconclusive, then the axiological conditions support Anti-supererogationism more readily than supererogationism.

The *Reductio*: Absurd Over-Obligation

When Heyd argues that "society cannot require of the individual every act that would promote the general good,"[63] he invokes a *reductio* in which believing Good–>Ought entails that we paralyse ourselves trying to do every possible good. The suggestion here is that an agent trying to be responsive to every good act would be in a situation like that of Winnie the Pooh trying to decide which friend to visit;

> He thought he would go and see Eeyore, because he hadn't seen him since yesterday. And as he walked through the heather, singing to

[63] Supererogation, p166.

> himself, he suddenly realised he hadn't seen Owl since the day before yesterday .... Well, he went on singing, until he came to the part of the stream where the stepping-stones were, and when he was in the middle of the third stone he began to wonder how Kanga and Roo and Tigger were getting on, because they all lived together in a different part of the Forest. And he thought, "I haven't seen Roo for a long time, and if I don't see him today, it will be a still longer time." So he sat down on the stone in the middle of the stream, and sang another verse of his song, while he wondered what to do.[64]

The worry here is not simply that we will join Pooh in his absurd existential paralysis on the stone, but that any action we do take will be arbitrary, since any action will ignore more potential goods than it realises. As Jonathan Dancy puts it, "if we deny [that an action can have value while lacking compulsive force], our only account of supererogation seems to be one under which *less than perfect* actions are wrong but not reprehensible."[65] Not only is this sort of global penitence unfashionable in secular ethics, but it seems that a model of the Good that effectively rules out the possibility of doing good cannot be right.

This is the default argument against Good–>Ought, and Supererogationist positions are rarely more sophisticated than some variation of it. Though Heyd doesn't rely on this argument alone, it is apparent that he assumes, as do most Supererogationists, that anti-supererogationism requires far too much of the moral agent.

Against Good–>Ought

Next, Heyd argues that the Good-Ought tie-up is premised on a mistake. He holds that assuming that any given "Good" necessarily entails an "Ought" for any agent "seems to take advantage of the wide range of incompatible uses of 'ought'."[66]

Heyd sketches a rough taxonomy of the incompatible uses of 'ought' as follows;

> In its *commendatory* use it may very well be logically tied in with 'good'; it may also be so – according to some theories – if it is understood as constituting *a* reason for action (as it is indeed rational to do the good, to promote whatever is valuable). 'Ought' is also

[64] A.A. Milne, The House at Pooh Corner, Methuen Children's Books, 1928 (Repr 1972), pp53-54.
[65] In his Moral Reasons, 1993, Blackwell, p131.My italics.
[66] Supererogation, p166.

> entailed by 'good' if it is interpreted *impersonally* as 'ought to be' (i.e. if X is a good state of affairs, let X exist). But all these uses fail to support the moral position of the critics of unqualified supererogationism, because what is relevant to their critique is whether 'good' entails 'ought' in the *prescriptive*, *personal* sense.[67]

This amounts to the premise that not all uses of "good" entail "ought." Heyd then argues for a "gap between judgements of what is good to do and what one ought to do" in that " 'good may be used impersonally, while 'ought' involves human agency."[68] Arguing that this reflects "a general difference between value concepts and deontic concepts,"[69] he supports this substantive premise as follows;

> 'Good' characterises states of affairs, motives, personality traits, as well as actions, independently of the existence of agents who can bring them about or hope to. 'Ought', however, at least in its prescriptive sense, applies only in situations in which there is an agent of whom a certain action is required. Even the apparently impersonal phrase 'X ought to be done' has prescriptive force only if it applies conjunctively (or disjunctively) to members of a certain group.[70]

Having discredited the merely valuable as a source of prescriptive force, Heyd must naturally furnish some alternative. Here he holds that:

> Moral reasons for action prescribing what one ought to do arise then, not from the desirability of states of affairs, but from a certain relationship between the agent and the beneficiary of the action. In this I follow Prichard's argument, 'that in order to think of some change as one which we ought to cause, we must think of the change as in some special way related to ourselves ....' This special relationship may originate from family relations, jobs, previous undertakings, opportunities to help someone in need, justice etc.[71]

Given that this relationship is not necessarily entailed by 'good states' *simpliciter*, Heyd finds that "it cannot be the case ... that any valuable state of affairs in itself

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[67] Supererogation, p171. Italics in original.
[68] Supererogation,p171.
[69] Supererogation, p171.
[70] Supererogation, p172.
[71] Supererogation, p172. The reference to Prichard is his Moral Obligation, Clarendon Press, 1949, p153.

constitutes a reason for action (in the sense of 'ought') for an individual person."[72] Note that this move does not collapse into an argument against duties, presumably because duties describe those situations in which there is *always* a special relationship between an act and ourselves. Heyd does, however, find this argument sufficient to conclude, in a Prichardian mode, that "Good–>Ought" is founded on an error.

The Autonomy of the Individual

Heyd finds that considerations of personal autonomy "loosen"[73] the Good-Ought tie-up further, invoking Bernard Williams' critique of Utilitarianism, that the pursuit of the greater good is only coherent if lower-order projects exist, "For if everyone worked for the promotion of the *general* good, *whose* good would be promoted? … it is the first-order life plans and projects that should be taken as a starting point, and … morality … 'works on' these plans."[74]

On this model;

> Although within a moral system of duty or justice every individual counts the same, impartiality cannot be expected of a person when he compares the weight of his own desires with that of others. For the integrity of the individual consists exactly in the special weight he gives to his own ends … [thus] considerations of justice make it unacceptable to require any individual to work ceaselessly for the welfare of others (or to the point at which the marginal utility of his effort becomes zero).[75]

This point, that any moral claim must start from our agency and thus cannot undermine it, is the crux of Heyd's argument, as it justifies paring the demands of ethical responsibility down to a "minimalist" model.

Since "such a minimalist concept of duty cannot [however] exhaust the realm of moral value," Heyd finds "room for acts beyond duty that are nevertheless morally good."[76] To prove that such acts are not merely beyond duty, but *also* morally good, Heyd fields arguments for his positive, axiological case.

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[72] Supererogation, p172.
[73] Supererogation, p172.
[74] Supererogation p174.
[75] Supererogation, p174.
[76] Supererogation, p174.

The Value of Freedom

Heyd argues that "supererogation is necessary as providing an opportunity to exercise certain virtues,"[77] by which he means that virtuosity found in reaching the good without coercion. The claim here is that there is a positive moral value in doing a good thing willingly, and that this value is not accorded any space for expression on an anti-supererogationist model. Heyd cites J.M. Ratcliffe on Good Samaritan Laws, arguing that these are analogous to anti-supererogationism:

> Good Samaritan Laws make certain morally wrong actions punishable by law (e.g. the refusal to lend help to people in peril). Those who wish to restrict such laws believe that not all moral duties should be legally binding. Similarly, supererogationists believe that not all morally valuable acts should be considered as (morally) obligatory. Both parties hold that compulsion (legal and moral respectively) is in itself bad, and cannot be justified simply by proving the desirability of the enforced action. Those who oppose the attempt to legislate on moral affairs argue that it is not only self-defeating (in the sense that coercing people to comply with the moral duty of gratitude, honesty, or respect changes the very nature of the act), but that it also amounts to an illegitimate violation of individual freedom.[78]

Axiology 1: Social Cohesion

Heyd is at pains to point out that Supererogationists *recognise* the value of other-directed, non-dutiful acts, since such action;

> may contribute to the strengthening of social bonds and augment the feelings of a close-knit community. For by doing more than is required, a member of a group shows that he has an interest in his fellow members which is deeper than his contractual commitments, or than the personal benefit he can draw from the group. Consequently, the relations between the members of the group become more friendly, personal, and based on good will. Benevolence and gratitude enhance

[77] Supererogation, p175.
[78] Supererogation, pp176-177. The reference to Ratcliffe is his The Good Samaritan and the Law, Doubleday, 1966.

> mutual trust and confidence .... Supererogatory morality adds love of one's fellow-beings to the duty of respect for persons. [79]

Heyd holds that such a concession, even to the extent that "some measure of supererogatory behaviour is *necessary* for the existence of society" [80] is fully compatible with unqualified supererogationism. This is so because:

> Although, except for obligatory standards (which must apply universally), not every (or any particular) member of the group ought to do more than is strictly required, the survival of the group requires that some people surpass the minimal standards. [81]

In addition, "even if a society (or an institution) could survive if its members no more than adhered to the requirements and rules of behaviour, it would be morally deficient." [82] Here he cites Richard Titmuss on voluntary blood-donation, arguing that "social institutions must provide the opportunity to practice altruism," as it seems "highly probable that a decline in the spirit of altruism (or volunteering) will be accompanied by deep changes in other spheres of human relationship." [83]

Supererogation, then, is punted as the rational resolution to the conflict between society's need for other-directed, extra-dutiful, behaviour, and the negative implications of making all good acts obligatory. Supererogation*ism* therefore seems justified as long as we continue to take both of these pressures seriously.

Axiology 2: Supererogation and Ideals

> Heyd's final argument, from "Ideals" [84] is closely tied to the generally good value to society of supererogatory acts: because these are exemplary, they're useful hermeneutically. That is, because it is good to perform supererogatory acts, it is good to praise them, and value them highly as examples, to instil precisely that cascade of fellow-feeling Heyd notes in his argument from social benefits. This provides an additional value, an instrumental social value,

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[79] Supererogation, p178.
[80] Supererogation, p178. My italics.
[81] Supererogation, p178.
[82] Supererogation, p179.
[83] Supererogation, p180. The reference to Titmuss is to his The Gift Relationship, Penguin, 1973.
[84] Supererogation, pp181-182.

motivating us to praise such acts, even if we are constrained not to denounce their omission.

Anti-Supererogationist Responses

The foregoing arguments represent the justification for invoking Supererogationism. While most Supererogationists are satisfied to use some permutation of the initial *reductio*, Heyd has formulated the latter arguments to remove any reason to doubt that Supererogatory goods are both a coherent and a necessary category. Having given these arguments a fair showing, noting their *prima facie* persuasiveness, I now return to each in sequence, providing an Anti-Supererogationist response to each and, in the process, sketching the outline of a comprehensive Anti-Supererogationist ethic.

Against the *Reductio*

I will begin with a response to the *reductio* against anti-supererogationism. As noted above, this holds that believing that Good–>Ought entails that we paralyse ourselves trying to do every possible good. Given the self-evident undesirability of such a model, we may ask whether it need be asserted by Anti-Supererogationists. The answer, it seems to me, is that it need not. Even if we assume that Good–>Ought, there appear be three constraints on this implication. The first of these is the old chestnut that ought–>can – that is, since ought implies can, any situation in which a good is something which I *cannot* achieve, is one in which no obligation exists. Thus, while I am capable of recognising that unilateral nuclear disarmament is a good state of affairs, it is both unlikely and improper that I be judged harshly for failing to bring this state about.

Pace Heyd, if it were within my power to bring such a state about (were I, for example, a strange visitor from another world, imbued with special powers by Earth's yellow sun) an anti-supererogationist model would argue that I have an obligation[85] to do so (and it seems self-evident that we *would* think less of a superhero who failed to perform extraordinarily good acts).

[85] As I noted in Chapter 1, the word "obligation" connotes a contractual, legalistic context in which I am obligated to perform an action or fulfil a role by virtue of some implicit or explicit agreement. This is at odds with the picture of axiological motivation I am driving towards in Chapter Three, and as such I try to use the term as little as possible. This isn't always possible however, given its prevalence and utility. As such, "obligation" should be understood as a synonym for "ought" where it appears.

If the ought-can implication doesn't appear to lighten our loads much (or Superman's at all), we may examine the second constraint: the pursuit of the greatest good. That is, we are not obliged to perform a good act if performing it excludes a better one. This seems uncontroversial to me, and entails two sorts of nuance overlooked by Heyd's *sketch* of Anti-Supererogationism: teleology and fine-grained description. Here we must ensure that our descriptions of an act are correct: my refusing to give blood out of selfishness is not the same act as refusing to give blood because I am training for a marathon to raise funds for charity. (I will return to teleology in more detail later.)

Of course, such a model still seems to demand of me that I must either be unable to do anything for others, or be too busy doing something else for others. If I am simply pursuing my own interests, I am still indictable. But here we come to the third constraint: that the greatest good need not be interpreted as divorced from our own interests. The supererogationist *reductio* assumes that anti-supererogationists deny the value of personal goods (Wolf is particularly guilty of this in *Moral Saints*). This move is mysterious, and I see no reason why it is intrinsic to Anti-Supererogationism - my own good must always be factored. Excluding my interest might have made sense if we persisted in thinking that Good–>Ought committed us to pursuing all goods, in which case our own good would always be less important than the Global Good. But the constraints I have noted so far drastically pare-down those goods that impinge immediately on us: The set "goods it is within my power to realise" is a far smaller set than "all possible goods." The set of goods I can achieve without negating greater goods is smaller still. Even smaller is the set "actions I can be reasonably sure will result in realisable goods without negating greater realisable goods," particularly in the context of the long-term teleology that is the human situation. So the idea that my good doesn't stand a chance when pitted against other goods is nowhere near as secure as it seems. The competition, in any particular instance, is not as tough as supererogationists seem to imagine.

In addition, my ongoing good differs from other goods in that, at the level of my general well-being at least, it *constitutes* my ongoing capacity to do *any good at all.*[86] As such, even a Saint has a pragmatic reason to be somewhat self-

[86] Incidentally, when Pooh does eventually leave the stone it is, like most of his almost-sphexish tropisms, to find food.

interested. My point here is not to argue that our *raison d'etre* is or ought to be maintaining ourselves merely in order to continue to serve the greater good. I agree with Wolf that such a "Saintly" life is a perversion of the Good Life (though I strongly disagree that Anti-Supererogationism entails such that we ought to live such a limited existence). Rather, my point is that enough of our own goods are over-subscribed - by our self-interest and the project of pursuing the good generally - that our good need not be overwhelmed entirely, even before we see it as intrinsically worthy.

Since my own good (which is, after all, most immediately accessible to me) is to some extent required to achieve any good, and is a valid pursuit in itself that need not be trumped by other goods, my own good must always be factored.

It seems to me that such a model, starting from the assumption that Good does indeed imply Ought, seems to provide sufficient space within which to live a life that is not significantly diminished. There are many things I recognise as goods, but I am not under an obligation to pursue them, because the particulars of my situation make them impossible for me to bring about, or impossible without negating other goods I am pursuing. These constraints alone provide a powerful vocabulary with which to describe ethical obligation and its exemptions (the nuance of which is entirely ignored by Supererogationists). In addition, the good that I protect by eschewing actions that may negate it, *can* be my own good, for there are no grounds for excluding it categorically. This seems very different from the absurd over-extension suggested by supererogationists. In fact, it seems very much like our conventional understanding of obligation.

Despite functioning through exemptions to Good–>Ought, I don't regard this model as Qualified Supererogationism. This is because, unlike other qualified models, it doesn't cordon off whole categories of act – exemptions vary from one situation to the next - and it is possible, on this account, that I may be obliged to sacrifice my life for some good. Thus, while this model may allow exemption from the obligation to respond to *all* needs around me, it does not exempt me from any number of specific obligations entailed by goods within my reach. And, *pace* Rawls, it does not class my self-interested projects as categorically exempt. It seems, therefore, that this model is legitimately called Anti-Supererogatory, though anti-supererogationism clearly has recourse to more absurdity-avoiding resources than Supererogationists credit the position with.

Good–>Ought

The supererogationist may wonder why I assert Good–>Ought as a default position, given Heyd's argument that general goods need not entail specific oughts. The answer is partly apparent in the forgoing discussion of the constraints on Anti-Supererogationism: since Ought–>Can limits the scope of my obligation to those goods within my effective reach, *the only* good states that can entail oughts for me are those which have some "special relationship" relative to me and my projects.

It is important to note that this move conforms to Heyd's own argument.[87] His initial premise mapped *a possible way* that Good–>Ought could go wrong, in assuming that personally prescriptive oughts were entailed by impersonal, general descriptions of The Good. His substantive premise then asserted that this was the case, that it was "a general difference between value concepts and deontic concepts"[88] that the former can be applied in a broader set of circumstances than the latter. But while it is true that "Good" *can* be used in a general sense, it can also have a personal context. Given that Ought–>Can constrains Good–>Ought to precisely these cases, we thus avoid the error Heyd points out, and do not seem to me to be *ad hoc* in doing so.

Here a critic may claim that I am playing on the ambiguity of the "special relationship." We may note that Heyd himself seems to shift the use of this term somewhat. Where Prichard describes a relation to an *act* "in order to think of some change as one which we ought to cause, we must think of the change as in some special way related to ourselves,"[89] Heyd talks about "a certain relationship between the *agent and the beneficiary* of the action."[90]

It seems to me that Prichard's use is the more pertinent and there is nothing devious about claiming that good states specific to the agent's scope of action seem to meet the requirement of being related in some special way to the agent. Here I am in agreement with Dancy, who finds that:

> the special relation need not be anything very extraordinary. It could simply be that of opportunity. If it were, we would have the plausible

[87] Supererogation, pp171-172.
[88] Supererogation, p171.
[89] Moral Obligation, p153. Supererogation, p172.
[90] Supererogation, p172. My italics.

> result that if a change would have high value, anyone with the opportunity should bring it about. But if this is the sort of picture we end up with, we have not established anything like the radical independence of the deontic from the evaluative that Urmson thought he was moving towards .... On this restricted picture we have not moved very far from Urmson's position, but already we find ourselves denying the possibility of supererogation .... Though the evaluative properties are distinct from the deontic ones, there is still a general structural relation between them. The deontic ones result from the combination of value and special relation.[91]

It seems then, that my Anti-Supererogationist model asserts Good–>Ought while standing up to both Heyd's attempted logical refutation, and the *reductio* of ethical paralysis. Having thus defeated the two strongest arguments against Good –>Ought, I move on to other objections.

The "I" in Autonomy of the Individual

Most of Heyd's argument from the autonomy of the individual constituted an assault on the *reductio* that I have just circumvented. However, implicit in defending the autonomy of the individual, as I noted, is the idea that any moral claim must start from our agency and thus cannot undermine it. Here we find the suggestion that the "special relationship" we have toward a good state cannot be such that it *requires* substantial risk to our lives or lifestyles, as these constitute the very things grabbed by normative force. Between Prichard and Williams, Heyd has significant support for the claim that the normative force of any moral claim must derive from our agency.

I have no interest in disagreeing with this point. Where I do disagree, however, is with the assumption that this excludes the possibility of an obligation to risk ourselves. This disagreement arises from the teleology entailed by my second constraint. While it is true that "I" must be involved in a relevant relationship to any ethical situation to feel its pull, the "I" involved here is not "me" in the immediate sense, but the richer construct of my *telos*. While this statement is blatantly Aristotelian, I find nothing in it that is incommensurable with other models. If we are going to situate the agent as the locus of ethical force, then it

[91] Moral Reasons, p130.

seems proper to distinguish between my immediate sense of myself and the more enduring teleological "I." To say that we feel a normative pressure to favour our teleological selves over our immediate selves seems both true and corroborated by experience. As such, teleology explains how there is no necessary contradiction in feeling an obligation (necessarily realised through our agency) to act against our own (immediate) best interests (when this is best for our *long term* interests).

Though I will not argue the point extensively here, it seems to me that the indefinite extension of our *teloi* into a context that must be treated as shared by virtue of its uncertainty constitutes our moral investment in the greater good. That is to say, where our projects and interests extend beyond our immediate context (into the future, or on a large scale), they diffuse and become caught up with those of others. As such, the general good is not an abstract concept, distinct from our attainable goods, but a coherent (and complex) state, with an uncertain, *but real* relationship to any and every agent.

Invoking teleology, then, provides a framework against which we may override our immediate good in favour of our teleological good, which may easily coincide with the general good. So much, then for the sacrosanct autonomy of the individual.

Against Compulsion: The Lesbian Rule

Thus far I have argued for a robust Anti-Supererogationism that does not fall to Heyd's negative arguments. What remains is his positive argument that an ethical model which provides no scope for freely chosen goods (what Tertullian called "*licentia*"), denies whole classes of virtuous action. Surely here we must concede some form of supererogation? I do not think that the Anti-Supererogationist need concede any such thing. It is trivially true that freely chosen good actions are superior, *by that token,* to compelled good actions, but it is not apparent to me that Anti-Supererogationism eliminates the possibility of freely choosing a good act. I don't mean that we have the potential for effectively meaningless oversubscription: "I *freely* choose the only option that doesn't involve sanction." Rather, I'm suggesting a somewhat more nuanced understanding of the praise or sanction appropriate to such situations. It is apparent that Heyd's perceived antagonist when arguing for a field of supererogatory virtue is the legislator of Good Samaritan laws, who would articulate all goods as rules or duties. But this is

not the only way to frame our moral responsibilities. Given the significantly particularist nature of responsibilities toward others (depending on one's idiosyncratic position relative to others), it is apparent that many or most situations in which we are able to bring about a good will not have an explicitly articulated rule attached to them.[92]As such, it seems that any Anti-Supererogationism must take the concept of the Lesbian Rule seriously. Here Aristotle says:

> About some things it is impossible to legislate, so that a special decree is required. For when the object is indeterminate, so also is the rule, like the leaden rule of Lesbian architecture. Just as this rule adapts to fit the shape of the stone and does not remain rigid, so the special decree adapts to fit the circumstances.[93]

That is, the impossibility of forming general rules does not remove the ought, which arises from the need to bring about positive values. What is thus required of an individual agent is the capacity to recognise properly the precise nature of our obligation and to act on it. In such situations it is quite possible to do less than is required of us without receiving sanction. So it does not follow that making good acts obligatory excludes the field in which our autonomous virtue is exercised. While there is an obligation to perform certain acts, the difficulty in identifying and executing them properly is a significant source of merit.

Conversely, general social sanction may well be impossible (as the facts of the matter are not apparent at the time). However, since we are invoking a teleological model here, *en situ* or legal judgements do not exhaust the resources of sanction - confessing to a friend that one was aware of being best suited, but refused to act - can and ought to garner condemnation. The same is true of a historical judgement: we would hate to be remembered, or even generally thought of while alive, as unlikely to do what is right.

This is, of course, the basis of a virtue ethic and may thus be disputed by dyed-in-the-wool deontologists (and *broadly* deontic models such as rights-based and contract-based approaches). Again, I doubt that Anti-Supererogationists need

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[92] Although strongly associated with Dancy's work (which is certainly its most thoroughgoing articulation), "particularistic strands can be found in various contemporary developments; it is common to hear that moral rules, or moral theory if we take the business of theory to be the provision of rules, cannot cope with the rich multiplicity of lived situations." (Jonathan Dancy, Moral Reasons, *x*).

[93] Nicomachean Ethics, Book V:10:II37 b20-31. Translation by Roger Crisp, (Cambridge Texts in the History of Philosophy), Cambridge, 2000, p100.

concede this point, since asserting the efficacy and applicability of Deontology doesn't require that we exclude any role for axiology [direct response to value]. That is, we can be deontologists instrumentally, without claiming that deontology exhausts the realm of moral obligation.

Gyekye presents such a model quite effectively in Tradition and Modernity.[94] His model accommodates both rights and "free-floating positive moral imperatives"[95] generated by the particulars of our situations relative to the needs of others. Gyekye does this by starting from an axiological position, in which axiology provides the normative pressure toward good states (whether generally or specifically applicable), while rights-based deontology is *instrumentally* useful in promoting these goods, *where* they can be formulated generally.

Gyekye's inclusive attitude toward deontology here is interesting, since Particularist accounts driven by axiological response are generally distinguished by their dismissal of generalist rule-invoking models. This is apparent from statements like "there are no defensible moral principles … moral thought does not consist in the application of moral principles to cases, and [the] morally perfect person should not be conceived as a person of principle,"[96] or "in all … cases … the rule or algorithm represents a falling off from full practical rationality, not its flourishing or completion."[97] Though it starts from the same assumption (that Oughts are generated by realisable Goods), Gyekye's account finds space for generally articulable duties where these are generated by rights. His argument strikes me as both interesting and correct, and I will outline it briefly to establish the grounds for some commingling of deontology and axiology.

Noting that ethical models that foreground the greater or communal good (he is discussing African and Western Communitarianism, and African Socialism) tend to give short-shrift to individual rights, Gyekye argues that "denial of rights or reduction of rights to a secondary status does not adequately reflect the claims of individuality mandated in the notion of the moral worth of the individual."[98]

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[94] Tradition and Modernity, pp35-76.
[95] Tradition and Modernity, p69.
[96] Dancy, in his entry on *Moral Particularism* for the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/moral-particularism/
[97] Martha Nussbaum, Love's Knowledge: Essays on Philosophy and Literature, Oxford University Press, 1990, p73.
[98] Tradition and Modernity, p62.

The *practical implementation* of any axiological ethical system, concerned with values such as dignity[99], must therefore involve rights. And rights-discourse, generalist as it is, generates a corresponding body of duty-discourse, through "negative moral imperatives,"[100] that is "one's right not to be harmed imposes a responsibility on others not to harm one."[101] This is the "correlativity thesis,"[102] that duties are reducible to the responsibilities generated by rights. In accepting that rights are necessary to ethical praxis, Gyekye concedes that the set of duties entailed by them will also be necessary or useful. We should not, however, "make a fetish of rights,"[103] slipping into the assumption that negatively-generated moral imperatives exhaust the category of moral responsibilities, the majority of which are still "free-floating positive moral imperatives" [104] generated by responses to value. Gyekye's Anti-Supererogationism therefore appears capable of supporting a robust ethical system whose normative force derives from axiology, but which incorporates some of the general rules of deontology.

This does not seem like a forced marriage to me, rather, it seems like a more complete description than *mere* deontology can furnish, since it seems simply weird to hold that deontological reasons have normative force independent of the values they aim at. But if we concede this *and* Aristotle's point - that we encounter ethical challenges whose proper response cannot be cashed-out in a general rule - then the absence of a relevant rule isn't identical to the absence of a conclusive reason to pursue value. Situations, therefore, may dictate that we cut out the deontological middleman and respond to the values of a situation directly.

Minimal Supererogationism

The argument for Supererogationism, as I have shown, rests primarily on the idea that an Anti-Supererogationist model, assuming that Good–>Ought, leads to one or another kind of absurd claim on the moral agent. I have responded to each

[99] The irreducible value of dignity is one of three arguments Gyekye deploys in Tradition and Modernity, pp62-64, though all three can be glossed as arguing for necessary minimal conditions for an individual to achieve *eudaimonia* in a community.
[100] Tradition and Modernity, p68.
[101] Tradition and Modernity, pp68-69.
[102] Gyekye attributes this thesis to Joseph Raz in Tradition and Modernity, p69, though Raz directly opposes the reduction of duties to rights as proposed by Dworkin and Mackie in his own The Morality of Freedom, Clarendon Press, 1986, p193.
[103] In his earlier version of the same argument, *Person and Community in African Thought*, in The African Philosophy Reader, P.H Coetzee and A.P.J. Roux (eds), Routledge 1998, p330.
[104] Tradition and Modernity, p69.

of these arguments and demonstrated that Anti-Supererogationism - realised with more nuance than the straw-men Supererogationists set up - need not fall to any of them. As such, there does not appear to be any reason to assume the existence of a counter-intuitive category of supererogatory goods shared by all instances of charity, generosity, mercy, martyrdom, heroism and kindness.

There does, however, still appear to be room for at least a limited form of Supererogationism. Martyrdom, it seems, will *always* violate our integrity. While we may well have reason to perform many actions for the sake our teleological investment in a context larger than the immediate, acts of martyrdom, by definition, nullify our capacity to participate in a greater context. Such acts, therefore, will *always* be subject to the integrity exemption. Despite being the only supererogatory act, martyrdom seems, *prima facie*, to be genuinely supererogatory in the sense asserted by Supererogationists – an act that brings about an actual, realisable good is certainly praiseworthy – yet, by virtue of the integrity exemption, can never be seen as a requirement. While the individual may have reason to pursue the good brought about by an act of martyrdom, that good, since it negates the possibility of any other good, cannot be a greater good *for the agent* than continuing to live. Despite this, martyrs may bring about an otherwise unrealisable good for others and thus be unqualifiedly deserving of our praise.

This is a form of Qualified-Supererogationism (operating through exemptions to the default assumption that Good–>Ought) amounting to the claim that there is *one* supererogatory act, and that the category of Supererogation, such as it is, is identical to the category "acts of martyrdom." I will call this claim Minimal-Supererogationism. I think this is the position Dancy arrives at, arguing that:

> The main argument that we need [supererogation] consists in appeal to examples like that of the recruit who throws himself on the grenade. We do want to say that though the action is supremely good, he had no duty to do it and would not have been wrong to have held back, even though all would have died."[105]

[105] Moral Reasons, p130.

This is not just Dancy's "main argument," ultimately, it seems to be his major concern,[106] since he is comfortable conceding, where Unqualified Supererogationists like Rawls and Heyd are not, that this:

> does not show that any amount of agent-relative disvalue, no matter how small, is sufficient to overthrow large amounts of neutral value … . Sometimes then, the situation will be one which calls for the sacrifice.[107]

Rejecting the generalist idea that acts are *categorically* (that is, generally) supererogatory, he continues:

> This need not be the highest sacrifice (virtue, honour, life, whatever). It could be just taking advantage of the opportunity to add one dollar to one's gas bill as a contribution towards the fuel costs of the less well-off. Perhaps, even, on occasion the neutral value silences the reasons against, which derive from the agent-relative disvalue. Sometimes, however, what would otherwise be a requirement is not one because of the presence of agent-relative disvalue. [108]

If the "sometimes" that agent-relative disvalue has trumping power amounts, in the case of martyrdom, to "always," then Dancy's generally flexible position still supports his initial concern over the recruit and the grenade.

Surely, we may say, this is a reasonable position to come to? If a Minimal-Supererogationism concedes Good–>Ought in every case other than martyrdom, then it seems that we have established the "altruistically freighted morality"[109] sought by Anti-Supererogationists. And if we concede the singular example of martyrdom, having proven that there is no reason to place acts like forgiveness or generosity in the same category, then we seem to have delineated the Supererogationist over-exaggeration, while recognising the one legitimate example of absurdity that drove them to theoretical hyperbole. Shall the argument rest here then?

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[106] That is, his major generally applicable concern. Dancy begins his discussion of Supererogation by noting (in Moral Reasons, pp127-128) that Anti-Supererogationism puts pressure on his "shape" metaphor. Suffice it to say that this is a problem internal to his theory, and not a reason that need concern anyone else. Dancy has his own theory of Supererogation, which I do not address here, as I take the model I develop in the next chapter to pre-empt it.

[107] Moral Reasons, p141.

[108] Moral Reasons, p142.

[109] Tradition and Modernity, p67.

I think not. I see two reasons not to accept even Minimal-Supererogationism just yet. The first is a development of Gyekye's worry that Supererogationists assert "that only a few human beings have the capacity to practice such basic virtues as love, charity, benevolence, and sensitivity to the needs of others."[110] While the Minimal-Supererogationist is talking about the most exceptional human virtue rather than the most basic, I see a strand of the same worry here. That is, if the martyr is exempt from obligation because self-sacrifice can meaningfully be said *not* to be the greatest good, then it is hard to see why she is right or rational in doing so. We may well be grateful to the martyr who brings about a good for us, but if we treat this action as supererogatory we are at the same time claiming that their reasons for doing so are opaque to us. This seems unsatisfactory. In the moral hermeneutics we use to impart the concept of heroic self-sacrifice – our stories, movies, comic books and various other morality plays – we do not portray acts of martyrdom as the unfathomable actions of characters with opaque intentions. Rather, when the muscle-bound hero strains his last to hold the burning beam, telling the teacher to save herself and the orphans, we are intended to see such actions as a natural and reasonable response to such extraordinary circumstances. To cordon-off even this one extraordinary type of act as supererogatory is to make the same mistake Wolf does, treating any act of extraordinary goodness as external to rationality.

Of course, many or most acts of martyrdom may not be rational – a casual skim of a Dictionary of Hagiography will likely net a fair number of delusional or insane individuals and history is littered with the tragedies of jihadis and crusaders whom we judge to have failed to properly consider the justification for their actions - but what is at stake here is the question of whether it *can ever* be fully rational to sacrifice oneself. When the recruit throws himself on a grenade, the man on a sinking ship forgoes the lifeboat so that others might escape, or the student stands in front of an advancing tank, we want to be able to say that their actions were rationally explicable pursuits of the good and not just an ultimately beneficial miscalculation. As such, something chafes about simply accepting even a Minimal-Supererogationism, and if it can ever be the case that self-sacrifice is, in fact, the best and most rational thing for the agent to do, then acts of martyrdom are not supererogatory.

[110] Tradition and Modernity, p74.

The second reason not to rest with Minimal-Supererogationism is that it assumes something that has yet to be proven: that there can be no greater good for the individual, in any situation, than her own continued existence. While it certainly seems reasonable to assume, *prima facie*, that the evaporation of the context for experiencing any value negates the motive for value-oriented behaviour, the question of whether anything can be worth dying for will depend on the nature of our substantive account of axiology and cannot be settled prior to developing such an account.

An account of the role and nature of Axiology and how it can drive us toward other-directed goods is the work of the next two chapters, and I will return to the question of Minimal-Supererogation after developing it. For the present, I take my concerns about Minimal-Supererogationism to be sufficient reason to question whether even martyrdom counts as an instance of supererogation.

Conclusion

I have argued for an Anti-Supererogationist position that circumvents the negative arguments presented by Supererogationists, while incorporating the benefits they propose to hold on to through supererogation. Since these negative arguments constituted the only reason for rejecting Good–>Ought, there no longer seems to be any reason to limit the definition of Good categorically, allowing for a far greater pressure toward altruism than Heyd's "relaxed" approach, without sacrificing virtuous praxis. While a possible exception to this account may be a Minimal-Supererogationism, which exempts all acts of martyrdom, this has yet to be conclusively proven.

Chapter 3

Axiology, Kantian Virtue, and Eudaimonism

Introduction

In the previous chapter I argued, *pace* the Supererogationists, that a robust ethical system can be developed without contradiction from the assumption that Good implies Ought. This is problematic for Supererogationists, as the argument for their position amounts to little more than denying that such a model can be coherent. I begin this chapter by examining the relation Supererogationists must assert between values and oughts and showing that their account of this relation is unnecessary, problematic and under-describes the source of normative force. If any comprehensive ethical model must incorporate an account of axiology, as my Anti-Supererogationist outline explicitly does, then so much the worse for Supererogationism.

I then examine the possibility that a Kantian Virtue Theory may be sufficiently sensitive to axiology to accommodate the Lesbian Rule, without reducing moral oughts to axiology alone. Although such a model would not necessarily favour Supererogationism over Anti-Supererogationism, it may allow scope for Supererogationists to rally a defence within the redoubt of Deontology. In response, I argue that even a sufficiently nuanced account of Deontology still cannot answer the Immoralist, who seeks prudential justification for oughts. *Eudaimonism* can answer the Immoralist, by casting oughts as responses to values (through the *eudaimon telos*). As such, the most comprehensive account of axiology will be shown to support Anti-Supererogationism unambiguously.

Supererogationists and Axiology

Supererogationists cannot concede that Axiology is a sufficient basis for moral imperatives, as this is equivalent to "Good–>Ought." As such they are committed to a distinction between oughts and axiology (the values present in a situation), that is, if anything is to be a good without an imperative to bring it about, then imperatives must come from some source other than the Good. The most popular alternative source is Kantian Deontology, which claims that moral imperatives can only legitimately be motivated by the pursuit of duty for its own sake, but Supererogationists do not explicitly limit their claims to the Deontological context. Heyd argues that Supererogation is broadly plausible *in some form* across all ethical traditions. *All*

traditions must therefore be read as "quasi-deontological" [111] to accommodate Supererogation. But it is not apparent that we must read them this way to be *coherent*. While the claim that contradicting Supererogationism collapses into incoherence *did* provide the force of Heyd's argument, Supererogationists do not have recourse to this move after my Chapter 2. Unless there is some other reason to exclude Axiology as sufficient, Supererogationists are thus forced to open the playing field and pit their Deontology ("quasi-" or otherwise) against models in which "Good–>Ought" is a perfectly natural premise.

Heyd's case for excluding Axiology as sufficient is not promising. He defines the exemplar of Axiology, Classical Virtue Ethics, as "external[ly]"[112] incompatible with supererogation, since it fails to meet the condition of "correlativity," [113] which requires that supererogatory actions must transcend specific duties and therefore cannot be coherent in a context that does not partake of the language of duties. Astoundingly, this is used to support his claim that:

> Such a theory .... can hardly be called anti-supererogationist, for although it does not recognise the theoretical or moral importance of supererogation, it does not *deny* it either.[114]

While Aristotle would certainly have been pre-emptive to deny a category formalised seventeen centuries after his own, contemporary Axiologists are far better placed to do so and, as I have argued, have no reason to recognise supererogation as being of any theoretical or moral importance at all. Heyd's exclusion of purely axiological accounts on the basis of their failure to meet the correlativity condition is telling, however. In doing so, he excludes Axiological models *on the grounds that* they do not support Supererogationism. In fairness to Heyd, this is not circular in the context of his argument, as he is not using the various conceptions of Supererogation to prove its plausibility. He takes that to have already been done by his arguments for Supererogation *simpliciter*. Rather, his stated aim in examining various theories is "to investigate what type of theory can best accommodate the phenomenon of supererogatory acts."[115]

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[111] Supererogation, p5.
[112] Supererogation, p49.
[113] Supererogation, p5.
[114] Supererogation, p36. Italics in original.
[115] Supererogation, p10.

This does not absolve Heyd entirely however. The first part of his work consists of his survey of the major ethical theories, developing his account of Supererogation *simpliciter* and (finally) its justification in the latter part. This seems somewhat odd, as one would expect a definitive work on a concept to begin by justifying and defining it, before moving on to apply it in different contexts. Despite his stated aim of merely searching for the best fit for Supererogation, it therefore seems that Heyd aims, at least partly, to demonstrate the broad plausibility of the idea, removing the suspicion that anyone need be Anti-Supererogationist simply in order to defend a specific model. But Heyd's examination of the major ethical theories cannot be used, by anyone, to make the concept of Supererogation more plausible, precisely because it avoids purely axiological models – even to the extent of reading Virtue as "quasi-deontological" [116] - since "in classical ethics the idea of supererogation has to be built into the theory by way of reconstruction."[117] Without recourse to the arguments despatched in my second chapter, it seems then that Supererogationists who follow Heyd in excluding purely Axiological accounts would be acting too quickly.

There is another sense in which Heyd acted too quickly, even by his own lights, and it suggests how pervasive axiology may be. As noted above, Heyd considers Axiology "external" [118] to Supererogationism because it fails to provide a discrete set of duties to transcend, but this need not be the case. As Gyekye's model shows, rights and duties can be derived from an axiological basis without claiming that this instrumental deontology exhausts the realm of the moral. Such an account would be "internally" [119] incompatible with Supererogationism inasmuch as it could furnish a set of duties hypothetically available to be transcended, without needing to define non-dutiful actions as extra-dutiful (as these could simply be cast as direct responses to the values of a situation). This is problematic for Supererogationists, as they can no longer assume that the corpus of rules, duties, or law-like imperatives that identify a moral system as "quasi-deontological" [120] imply that it is not basically Axiological.

Moreover, Gyekye's example is suggestive because it raises the question of whether it can be coherent to talk about moral imperatives at all without making reference to axiology. This is to move from the claim "we can use rules in a system

[116] Supererogation, p5.
[117] Supererogation, p49.
[118] Supererogation, p49
[119] Supererogation, p49
[120] Supererogation, p5.

based on responding to value" to the question "Can we have rules outside of a system based on responding to value?"

The Irreducibility of Axiology

In denying the sufficiency of Axiology as a source of oughts, Supererogationists require the support of a particularly strong form of Deontology: duty must be necessary and sufficient to explain why we ought to do something, with the good an additional, practically non-moral, bonus consideration. Of course, duty as necessary and sufficient for moral normativity is precisely the conventional depiction of Kantian Deontology, so this may not appear problematic. However, it is important to note that even Kant's own argument for duty does not exclude a place for the Good, and a closer inspection will show that *some* role for values is presupposed by any coherent deontology.

Kant's formulation does not appear to leave much room for interpretation – as Barbara Herman notes of his argument in the *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals* - he is "careful enough about the cases and quite clear about his conclusion: an act has moral worth if and only if it is done from the motive of duty."[121] But the reason for this strict limitation is interesting. On Herman's account, what makes "performing a dutiful act *for the sake of duty*"[122] superior to any other motive for performing such an act is the reliability of such a motive. While selfish cooperation or sympathy can both motivate acting according to duty, neither is sufficient to focus the agent's interest on "the moral rightness of his actions."[123] This is so, Kant and Herman maintain, because selfish cooperation "when it leads to dutiful actions … does so only for circumstantial reasons,"[124] and "while sympathy can give an interest in an action that is (as it happens) right, it cannot give an interest *in its being right*."[125]

What is pertinent here is that duty reaches its place of prominence in the prototype Deontological model by virtue of its instrumental value in getting us reliably to the right act. While other motives can bring about situations with the same outcomes (put another way, the same values), only by pursuing duty *for it's own sake* are we motivated to pay sufficient attention to the requirements of the right action to be sure

[121] *On the Value of Acting from the Motive of Duty*, in her The Practice of Moral Judgement, Harvard University Press, 1996, p1.
[122] *On the Value of Acting from the Motive of Duty*, p3. Italics in original.
[123] *On the Value of Acting from the Motive of Duty*, p6.
[124] *On the Value of Acting from the Motive of Duty*, p3.
[125] *On the Value of Acting from the Motive of Duty*, p5. My Italics.

of achieving it with significant regularity. This does not exclude the possibility that the right action is an under-described kind of Good value, in fact, it leaves the motive for pursuing the right action effectively untouched. Kant's reason for placing duty in such a central position was procedural (it grounds the introduction of the Categorical Imperative) and does not in itself exclude a role for the pursuit of value as the initial driver in ethics. So at this meta-level at least, the possibility is left open that the Right reduces to the Good, and Kant was simply transfixed by the elegantly compulsive power of acting for duty and was aided by later generations of Deontologists in fetishizing it out of proportion to its actual role, allowing Supererogationists to comfortably assume that Duty amounted to *all* of normativity.

How significant a lacuna is this? Granting that we must have some urge to pursue the right in the first place and that *that* is best explained in terms of responding to values, does any of this change that pursuing the good is basically Deontological? More to the Supererogationist's point, if wanting to pursue the right is a prerequisite of *any* ethical model and everything else comes down to Deontology, then what does he need to concede to Axiology?

Here the answer is that values are not merely present and pertinent at the level of our initial motivations to pursue ethical behaviour [more on this later], but in each situation we are faced with as agents and in those non-actual situations we evaluate as alternatives.

The naively Deontic perspective favoured by Supererogationists casts the positive or negative values present in moral situations merely as the transparent medium through which the dutiful agent moves in pursuit of her duty. Neat as this is when our aim is understanding duties, it is worth looking at the axiological system that lends the Kantian her buoyancy. To this end, it is illustrative to parallel the Kantian agent pursuing duty with Kwame Appiah's account of the Hobbesian pursuing glory. Discussing the reach of cultural conceptions of identity, Appiah notes that;

> Some of the most individualist of individuals value such things. Hobbes spoke of the desire for glory as one of the dominating impulses of human beings, one that was bound to make trouble for social life. But glory can consist in fitting and being seen to fit into a collective

> history, and so, in the name of glory, one can end up doing the most social things of all.[126]

The Hobbesian is motivated by glory, but glory cannot be understood independently of the cultural construction of "what is glorious." Similarly, the Kantian is motivated by duty, understood as "that maxim that I could will to have applied universally." But "what I could will" cannot be understood independently of values presented by situations, because the reasons for willing things are only going to be coherent relative to whether they turn out to be good or bad, that is, relative to axiological criteria. While the Hobbesian may be motivated by the pursuit of glory, that statement by itself is far too spare to amount to anything. A proper description of the sorts of actions he will actually accept or reject on the basis of seeking glory will be tied up with the particular expressions he understands glory to have. Analogously, the Kantian would be under-described simply as pursuing her duty, as the sorts of things she could will to be universally applied are not derived from her duty, but from the values they present.[127] As such, axiological evaluation seems essential to understanding any given deontological motivation and attempts to describe an action in purely deontic terms seem insufficient.

Here the strict Deontologist may respond that while the Hobbesian glory seeker (let's call him Rudyard) may not be *properly describable* to *another* person without making reference to the particular formulations of glory available to him, *he* knows what formulation he is using and how it is applied. It isn't the description of the *situation* that matters here. What we're looking for is the proper description of the agent's own moral motivation. So it is more than sufficient, for Rudyard, that he be motivated by glory and the particulars of what constitutes that glory are going to be incidental to the issue of his motivation. Analogously, though we may need to make reference to the values in the situation to properly describe the duty/maxim that the Kantian is responding to, that agent *herself* only needs to understand how they relate to the Categorical Imperative to act properly.

The counter-response must be that this is not a thorough enough picture of what the moral agent does. The Kantian agent has to have a clear understanding of the situation in order to understand whether she is going wrong. Rudyard cannot just

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[126] *Identity, Authenticity, Survival* in Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition, Charles Taylor/Amy Gutmann (eds), Princeton University Press, 1994, p160.

[127] I am *not* arguing that values in the Kantian case are purely culturally constructed, merely that "duty" is analogous to "glory" in being context-dependent.

know that he ought to seek glory, and apply that via his culturally-constructed conceptions of what is glorious – he needs to be interrogating those constructions too, lest he be fooled into doing something in the name of glory that is, in fact, contrary to the nature of glory. In the same way, the Kantian cannot simply be following the Categorical Imperative and applying that through those values that happen to pertain in a given situation – in every instance she has to examine the values presented by the situation, in order to properly understand what the implications are, and whether what may superficially seem to entail a world she could will turns out, on proper appraisal, to invoke some complication she would not will to be universal. Put another way, following the Categorical Imperative may allow a number of actions that, *prima facie*, seem to amount to worlds she could will, but not all of these possible worlds are equivalent. Some may entail worlds she would not wish to see universalised, but, in order to determine the difference, she will have to evaluate the values themselves, not just apply the categorical imperative through them.

This does not assume that the Kantian is trying to generate rules she can follow in future. Kantians are not looking for a way to generate a personal body of law. Rather, maxims are law-*like* in that the criterion for evaluating them is the hypothetical "if this *were* to be a universal law," but that is just a standard against which to evaluate individual actions. There may be nothing wrong with acting on an under-specified maxim. Technically, if she stops to think about it, she will realise that universalising the maxim *as formulated* would not be the sort of thing she could will to be the case, but, as it happens, in *this* case, no negative side-effects spring up and in future she will make sure to formulate more carefully. If Kant *would* insist that we check the formulation of our maxims thoroughly enough to avoid this, then we clearly need to evaluate the values of any given situation in order to avoid making such a mistake and axiology needs to be a part of the picture. On the other hand, if he would not expect so much work, then it seems that the relevance of invoking the Categorical Imperative hinges not on its rigour at maxim-generating, but on its capacity to provide the right values, in which case, axiology clearly belongs in the picture. Either way, an account of Deontology that pretends it can be independent of axiology is going to be under-describing both moral evaluation and moral motivation.

Axiology, then, is not merely allowed for, but seems to be a necessary part of any ethical description. But axiology is not just *necessarily present* in ethical descriptions (that could have been true even if values were merely a detail needed to enact duties)

It is necessarily present *without* reducing to Deontology. That is, precisely because any potential application of the Categorical Imperative must be evaluated with reference to values, axiological assessments are prior to Deontological ones and thus cannot reduce to being merely a function of Deontology. This leaves no support for the naively Deontic model on which Supererogationism rests – if Axiology is a necessary and irreducible part of any moral evaluation, then Deontology cannot be a sufficient source of moral imperatives. This, then, is the sense in which the Supererogationist conception of the source of moral normativity is problematic – by ignoring the role of axiological evaluation entirely Supererogationists are not simply under-describing moral imperatives, but positing a model that cannot stand on its own.

If we take this as a reason not to adopt the model that Supererogationists must, it is also a reason to be happy we have alternatives. What are the alternatives available then, if we are to have an account of moral imperatives that properly incorporates Axiology? Since any coherent account of moral imperatives must recognise the irreducibility of Axiology, it seems that we are left with two options: either Deontology and Axiology are both irreducible constituents, or Deontology reduces to Axiology. It may seem that a model such as Gyekye's would prefer the latter conception: if all duties derive from axiological evaluations, but not all responses to value are realised through acting from duties, then it seems that Deontology is best cast as a function of Axiology, which has priority[128]. However, there is at least one sense in which Deontology seems irreducibly necessary for moral actions.

While Gyekye's model allows both for conventionally articulated duties and Lesbian direct responses to value, there is a minimal sense in which Deontology is present even in the latter case. Here it is important to note that even Particularists hold that ethical actions must be law*like*, in the sense that an action cannot meaningfully be described as "the right thing to do" without being right for *any* agent in the same situation. The Particularist contention is that the particulars of any two situations may differ so radically that it may not be coherent to treat the right response as transferring from one to the other, but this does not negate the hypothetical lawlike-ness of any particular right action. So it is necessary, if "morally right" is to have any non-subjective meaning, that the right action be expressible as something true for any situation presenting the same values, even if no such configuration of values is ever

[128] In the sense of being prior.

repeated. As this requirement is entailed by the need to make moral normativity more than merely subjective, it does not reduce to a mere function of pursuing Axiology. As noted above, testing for lawlike-ness is a function of Deontology (it seems difficult to imagine a more concise formula for testing lawlike-ness than the Categorical Imperative, but others may be coherent. It seems that any test for lawlike-ness would properly be called Deontological, in this minimal sense). At the very least then, this minimal Deontology (call it *d*eontology) is both a necessary and an irreducible constituent of any moral system. But it need not follow from this deontology that we cast the formulation of maxims as a key (or perhaps even necessary) aspect of the process, or that moral actions need be (or are best) articulated through duties. That is, this minimal deontology need not entail the procedural trappings of Deontology proper.

Having established that the Supererogationist overemphasis on Deontology is misplaced, we may ask whether Deontology proper has much to offer at all.

Kantian Virtue Theory

While the irreducible requirement of deontology does not *require* that we employ the full trappings of a Kantian Deontology, it is not necessarily excluded as an option either. Naturally, any useful formulation of Deontology would have to provide a better account of Axiology than the Supererogationist inherently assumes, but it seems that even a strictly Kantian reading may allow a proper place for Axiology. Onora O'Neill argues for a Virtue Theory[129] drawn directly from Kant, which seems to place a good deal of emphasis on Axiology, expressed through "imperfect duties."[130] While perfect duties map those instances in which the precise action required is clearly entailed and externally enforceable, imperfect duties are less specific, though no less imperative. Identifying such duties with virtue, O'Neill explains that:

> A principle of action that cannot be tied down to specific acts must, of course, still have some content, but this content may be given by constraining the end of action, rather than by more specific prohibitions or prescriptions. Principles of virtue will be maxims of

[129] *Kant's Virtues,* in How Should One Live?: Essays on the Virtues, Roger Crisp (ed), Oxford University Press, 1996, pp77-99.
[130] *Kant's Virtues*, p83.

> ends, rather than of action; their enactment will be revealed in action in highly varied ways.[131]

In such situations, mapping the appropriate enactment of the correct end clearly requires analysis beyond merely what can be provided by the Categorical Imperative, as O'Neill notes:

> In each case these ends greatly underdetermine action: evidently we cannot do all that is needed to achieve [the end], what we can do will vary with circumstance, and in nearly all circumstances there will be many ways of meeting the demands of imperfect duty.[132]

It is clear that the appropriate sort of deeper analysis should be axiological, as the ends of imperfect duties are "happiness and perfection"[133] (our own and others' respectively), which, it seems, must be diagnosed with reference to axiological evaluation (in the case of happiness at least, this is almost certainly the only coherent way in which it can be described). Conceding the necessity of axiological evaluation to imperfect duty need not eliminate the role of duty, or analysis in terms of duty. Kantian Virtue Theorists like O'Neill may concede that axiological evaluations are necessary to ethical evaluation and action, but this is not the same as conceding that Axiology is the *important* part of the process. Here they may say "Of course value-analysis and the desirability of outcomes factor, but values will vary from one case to the next. What is constant from one case to another is maxim-based Deontology. This is the algorithm for doing it right and the bit about what we could will to be the case is the black box that houses whatever value-analyses are relevant in one case or another." That is, such a Virtue Theorist would allow for an account of the sorts of values we would wish to pursue (and thus, could will to have universally applied), while maintaining that the ethical focus belongs on the maxim-generating algorithm, since it is only by applying this algorithm that we can *reliably* reach valuable situations.

Incorporating Axiology in this way underwrites importing useful Virtue terminology. Axiologically-derived values are pursued through cultivating the character, specifically by encouraging particular complex dispositions of character (virtues) and discouraging others (vices). The focus of traditional Kantian

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[131] *Kant's Virtues*, p87.
[132] *Kant's Virtues*, p88.
[133] *Kant's Virtues*, p87.

consideration can thus be extended to the idea of becoming the sort of person who is reliably just (the *phronemos*) by applying rational deliberation (*prohairesis*).

These virtue terms are justified Deontologically: *prohairesis* is understood in terms of universalisable maxims and the *phronemos* as the most dutiful sort of person to be. Vicious predispositions would include acting from sympathy or selfish-cooperation, as well as dispositions explicitly against dutiful actions, while virtuous predispositions would be defined in terms of the proper relation to duty. Working from a Deontological focus, such a Virtue Theory could be sufficiently flexible to respond to values (properly understood in terms of their teleological implications), and allow a re-heirarchising of maxims unique to those situations (a Kantian application of the Lesbian Rule). This seems sufficiently nuanced to meet the requirements of a robust Anti-Supererogationist system outlined in the previous chapter and to include a *ceteris paribus* pressure toward the Good, understood through imperfect duties. It seems then that a Virtue Theory account of Kantian Deontology not only bypasses the simplistic Deontological-monism assumed by Supererogationists, it positively promotes Anti-Supererogationism.

Kantian Virtue Theory may not necessarily lead to Anti-Supererogationism. While it seems that a properly rigorous account of Axiology is going to make naïve Supererogationism untenable, the Kantian emphasis on duty may leave recourse to Qualified-Supererogationism, that is, a practically Supererogationist system derived from an Anti-Supererogationist axiology. What I have in mind here is not a specific move captured by a specific model, but a general loophole left open by the Kantian approach. Though it may be realisable through various arguments, the broad-strokes outline is as follows: A Kantian model casts duty as the predominant of the two irreducible ethical constituents and in so doing makes duty the predominant Good. So the Good-motivated-by-duty (the Right) could be prioritised over the *merely*-Good, perhaps to the extent that the *merely*-Good is insufficient to make an action *required.*

Although any specific argument for a Qualified-Supererogationist reading of Kantian Virtue Theory may have a specific response, it seems that *some* formulation of this argument will seem plausible as long as adherence to duty is seen as the primary constituent of ethical action. Were such a model to hold, it would seem to suggest that Supererogationism, in its qualified form at least, is in fact coherent and is a necessary part of any complete ethical system.

Without pretending that this conclusion is evidence of a *reductio ad absurdum*, the suspicious provenance of the concept of Supererogationism noted in Chapter 1 may yet lead us to ask whether we need concede this much. There may be some other reason to reject a model which seems to lead us to Supererogationism. Such a reason seems to present itself ....

Duty, the Immoralist, and Eudaimonism

However flexible she may be, the Kantian Virtue Theorist is committed to Deontology (rather than mere *d*eontology) by committing to the claim Barbara Herman found so clear in Kant, that "an act has moral worth if and only if it is done from the motive of duty."[134] Interpreted axiologically, duty is seen by the Deontologist as an indispensable mechanism for reaching the Good, but if the value of duty is that it connects us to the Good, then surely it is dispensable in those situations in which we are already aware of the Good (via our axiological evaluations)? The Kantian is committed to denying this, arguing that, for the good to be reliably reached, we must be motivated by a love of acting consistently from duty, even where it overrides our own interests. Here we come to the crux question: "*Why* should we be motivated by a love of acting consistently when it overrides our own interest?"

This is the question of why we ought to be moral at all, the question asked by the Immoralist, the first interlocutor of ethics. Thus far I have glossed over it, qualifying it earlier with the rhetorical concessions "*Granting that we must have some urge to pursue the right in the first place*" and "*if wanting to pursue the right is a prerequisite of any ethical model,*" but such assumptions cannot, and must not be taken for granted in ethics. While we *may* need to assume a desire for the moral in order to make any progress toward a coherent moral system, this assumption can only be provisional. The Immoralist's question is a coherent one, and does not go away. Where the Kantian answer to "What ought I do?" will, in every case, be that we ought to perform the dutiful act "*for the sake of duty,*"[135] the Immoralist will ask *why* this is a good answer. While it is obvious that I should perform the act suggested by duty *when it benefits me to do so*, why should I *always* be dutiful, even when it does not benefit me, or is positively against my interests? Why should I be dutiful, rather than conniving, self-interested, or pragmatic? The Kantian response is to suggest that such

[134] *On the Value of Acting from the Motive of Duty*, p1.
[135] *On the Value of Acting from the Motive of Duty*, p3. Italics in original.

behaviour is irrational, but this seems too easily dismissive. The concerns of the agent in a Prisoners' Dilemma seem perfectly rational (and suggesting otherwise seems like adding insult to injury). Moreover, calling the Immoralist irrational does not serve to end the conversation as effectively as Kantians may think, since the Immoralist still has recourse to ask "If consistent rationality is against my interests, why should I apply my rationality in the particularly consistent manner required by duty?" This is persistence bordering on belligerence and at this point in the conversation hands are thrown in the air and accusations of circularity are made. Surely the Immoralist sees that asking for a rational reason to be rational *presupposes* the value of rationality? The spade must turn here or the conversation ends, since denying rationality leaves no common ground.

This fails to credit the full force of the position. The Immoralist is not suggesting that all rationality be abandoned, but asking *how it can be* rational to act against our own interests. This is a valid and coherent question, within the scope of rationality. It is not an unanswerable question, but it is not a question addressed by the Kantian response, and cannot be properly addressed if it is fobbed off as irrational whenever raised. "Why be moral?" is rather a large question to leave unanswered though, and there is something blithely Damoclean about the Kantian response that should bother us.

Since the Immoralist *is* the first interlocutor of ethics, the question has been tackled in other ways. Roger Crisp provides an account of the question as posed in Classical Virtue Ethics:

> Near the beginning of Book Two of Plato's *Republic*, Glaucon tells Socrates the story of Gyges, the Lydian shepherd said to have found a ring which made him invisible when he turned the stone: with the help of the ring, Gyges seduced the king's wife and took over the kingdom. Glaucon suggests that any sensible person would do the same. Socrates is challenged to show that a life of justice – broadly speaking, a life of virtue – is preferable to one of injustice … *the Republic can be read as a response to Glaucon's challenge*.[136]

Not just the *Republic,* but Classical Virtue Ethics, in general, can be read as a response to Glaucon's challenge, that is, as a response to the Immoralist. In taking the Immoralist as providing a serious challenge demanding response, Virtue thus differs

[136] How Should One Live?: Essays on the Virtues, Oxford University Press, 1996, p9. My italics.

from Kantianism and if Kant dismisses the Immoralist too quickly, this must recommend a Virtue Ethical approach. And the approach taken by Classical Virtue Ethics is interesting in that it answers the Immoralist on his own terms, while justifying the commitment to actions beyond the merely self-serving.

Crisp continues to describe Socrates' response in *The Republic*:

> It would not suffice for him to argue that justice pays in the sense that it increases the likelihood of one's obtaining the sort of goods pursued by Gyges. So Socrates argues instead that Gyges had a quite mistaken view of what his own happiness consisted in. Happiness is not sex, wealth and power, but, partly at least, justice itself. [137]

There is, of course, a name for a position that argues at the level of Axiology, justifying one value or set of values over others with reference to what happiness ultimately amounts to – *Eudaimonism*. Aristotle is the exemplar of *eudaimonism*, and Terry Eagleton casts his axiologically-framed approach as follows:

> For Aristotle ... acting well was a reward in itself. You no more expected a reward for it than you did for enjoying a delectable meal or taking an early morning swim. It is not as though the reward for virtue is happiness; being virtuous *is* to be happy .... Aristotle also thought that if you did not act well, you were punished not by hell fire or a sudden bolt from heaven, but by having to live a damaged, crippled life.[138]

This is addressing the Immoralist in terms he can accept: what justifies a course of action is that it is valuable in itself, rewarding in precisely that sense alluded to by Immoralists. This sometimes involves sacrificing certain forms of pleasure or comfort, but this is coherent precisely because we are pursuing complex dispositional states that are valuable in themselves, *and more so than alternatives*. The paradigmatic metaphor for *eudaimonia* is health, and it is easy to see why. If the Immoralist were to ask why we spend agonising hours at the gym every day when we could spend the same time relaxing and eating junk food, the Kantian may be seen as responding by rolling her eyes and exhaling that "If you don't see why going to the gym matters then there's no point in talking to you."

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[137] How Should One Live?, p9.
[138] Terry Eagleton, After Theory, Penguin Books, 2004 (2003), pp116-117.

By contrast, the *Eudaimonist* notes that being healthy is a good in itself and a deeper, more rewarding sort of good than the pleasure of junk food. While we could say that we have some sort of duty to keep ourselves fit, this is already one thought too many. That health and fitness are the sorts of things they are is a sufficient answer for anyone to understand why they ought to be pursued.[139] This is not to dismiss the questioner with accusations of irrationality; if the Immoralist (or the couch-potato) wish to forgo the greater Good they are free to do so, but the question of how some sacrifice of self-interest can be rational has been met. This response therefore answers the question in a way that will satisfy the questioner, even if he is not himself convinced to join us at the gym (though if he concedes the self-evident value of health, he is most likely hesitant due an *akratic* love of junk food). Of course, the Immoralist may not be convinced by the argument that *some specific* virtuous behaviour conduces toward his *eudaimonia*, but *eudaimonism* is speaking a language he *can be convinced in*, arguing that Oughts are simply prudential.

One line open to the Deontologist is to say that she can justify duty along the same lines and that is obviously what is intended by asserting the primacy of logical consistency, it is best *for us* to be consistent. This after all, was Herman's justification for the priority of duty. But this does not quite get off the ground. It seems that where Kant appeals to axiology to back his Deontology up, it is done in the general sense. The claim defending duty would be something like "Living and acting consistently lead to a good life." But this is a tricky empirical claim. It is not apparent *a prori* that consistent rationality as deployed through universalisable maxims aims at a good life, or the best life, in every case.

By contrast, the standard *eudaimonism* sets for accepting or discarding any – and every individual – course of action *is precisely* whether it conduces to the Good Life, that is, whether it does in fact lead to values we would want to pursue. So, if there is a sense in which Kantianism offers an axiological grounding for Deontology, it is far weaker than the *eudaimonist* model and is unlikely to convince the Immoralist.

We may take the Immoralist to be a fundamentalist Axiologist, asking the most fundamentally axiological question at every stage. *Eudaimonism* is capable of and committed to answering this question at every stage, while Kantian Deontology (even a Kantian Deontology deployed through Virtue Theory) is not. Since the Immoralist's

[139] Eagleton says the same of explaining why we want to live on his p116, noting that "It is as superfluous to explain why you want to live as it is to explain why you don't enjoy being nuzzled all over by buzzards."

question is neither insignificant to nor easily dismissed by any ethical model, *Eudaimonism's* more rigorous Axiology seems clearly to provide us with reason to prefer it. While accommodating and surpassing the axiological flexibility of Kantian Virtue Theory, a *Eudaimonist* Virtue Ethic does not leave the same scope for Qualified-Supererogationism.

The Appeal of Eudaimonism

In allowing us to meet the Immoralist on his own terms, *Eudaimonism* presents itself as a more attractive Axiological system than the most familiar directly-axiological model, Utilitarianism. I have left Utilitarianism undiscussed since noting, in the previous chapters, that I find Williams' objection from integrity to be convincing – and for precisely that reason. If Utilitarianism cannot explain why I ought to favour the Global Good over my integrity in general, it certainly cannot face up to the stronger line held by the Immoralist. This is not to say that we do not have a conclusive prudential investment in the common (perhaps even Global) Good, but any arguments for such an investment will, it seems to me, be *Eudaimonist*, rather than distinctively Utilitarian.

An additional reason to recommend *Eudaimonism* as the model on which we construct our axiological response is that the narrative of my *eudaimon telos* provides a constant against which to order seemingly incommensurable values. The question of incommensurability arises, to borrow Dancy's evocative example,[140] when we ask whether, in pursuing Martin Luther's desiderata - wine, women, and song – a surplus of one can be a compensation *in kind* for the absence of another. Without presupposing the contentious claim that "different values are in fact covert forms of the same value,"[141] *Eudaimonism* provides a rationale for ranking them, relative to their contribution to the essential value, *eudaimonia*. (Note that *eudaimonia* does *not* explain *how* we ought to hierarchise any specific set of values, it merely notes that there is always a compelling reason to do so and points us toward the yardstick necessary to make such a decision. Although not overwhelmingly instructive, this is no different to the situation we are confronted with in any other Particularist scenario.)

[140] Moral Reasons, p122.
[141] Moral Reasons, p122.

Another advantage, from the perspective of constructing a comprehensive Anti-Supererogationist model, is that understanding all Goods as ultimately prudential pre-empts the move Dancy makes in justifying Supererogation. Here he says "that where we are required to make a sacrifice, the status of this requirement is constructed on the triad of neutral value, agent-relative value and special relationship (opportunity etc.)."[142] On a *Eudaimonist* axiology, "neutral" and "agent-relative" value amount to the same thing at different scales (and anything which is not both is a disvalue), so this *prima facie* evaluative mechanism will generate a pressure toward the general good. This further emphasises the point that the only form of Supererogationism Dancy can support is the Minimal-Supererogationism, which exempts martyrdom (assuming *that* is correct).

Finally, it is useful to examine the conception of what "Ought" means on an Axiological account. On a superficial reading, much of what I have argued so far may seem to run afoul of Hume's Law,[143] that is, that we cannot derive an Ought from a factual description. It may seem that *Eudaimonism* is making Is–>Ought claims like "X is a life of a certain sort, which entails that you should value it," but this would be a superficial reading indeed. A better description of what is happening here is to say that a factual claim is being made about how certain states imply other states, that is, those things we find valuable are, or depend on, factually describable states of the world. Such states stand in relation to others – they depend on, entail, exclude and are constituted by certain other states. As it happens, we attach value to some of these states and disvalue to others. Without any sleight-of-hand, we are thus able to generate true conditional statements of the form "If you value X, then you will value Y." There is a pressure toward the valuable here, but it is not being slipped in mysteriously – it was there from the beginning. Finding something valuable just means that you think it is pursuit-worthy, that you recognise and respond to a tropism toward it. It is rational to pursue what is valuable and irrational to pursue disvalue – and this is apparent at the most basic, prudential level of our rational functioning.

"Ought," then, is just a convenient shorthand for "it is rational to pursue this in light of some other thing you pursue." Obviously, ought-claims only have any force if you already value some other thing, but, as Eagleton's talk of delightful swims and buzzards indicates, it happens to be the case that we do value certain things and shun

[142] Moral Reasons, p142.
[143] See The Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy, Simon Blackburn, Oxford University Press, 1994, p180.

others and share a good many of these evaluations with others, which is useful (given that our capacity to communicate probably stems from this common context), if unsurprising (given our similarities at a basic level). It may well be interesting to ponder *why* we find things valuable at all (this is the realm of functionalist evolutionary thinking), but it is meaningless to look for reasons why we *ought* to value anything outside of the context of other things we value. Values are an irreducible feature of our existence, and Oughts rest on no deeper bedrock (nor can they).

Of course, it is a distinctive feature of moral ought-claims that they are universally applicable. That is, their authority derives from being true for everyone. This need not be a problem. The *Eudaimonist* contention is simply that *we cannot but* value the best possible life for ourselves. For those somehow unmoved by their own flourishing, any conditional of the form "If you value the good life, then you should avoid X" will be insufficient. It is very hard to imagine people who would fail to be moved by a true conditional of this type and if they exist, there is probably good prudential reason for the rest of us not to have too much to do with them.

So "Ought" amounts to a factual claim about valuable states and its normative pressure comes from our pre-existing tropism toward the good life. This is a form of moral realism, since both our situations and the evaluations we attach to them are facts about the world, as are the relations between these and other states. This is as much as I will concern myself with the issue of moral realism, as further debate on the merits of this position would extend beyond the current project.

Conclusion

I have argued that Supererogationists must assert a naively simplistic account of Axiology for their position to be coherent, and that any sufficiently detailed account of the role of Axiological evaluation in ethics leaves the category of Supererogation looking incoherent and unnecessary. Since Axiology is an irreducible constituent of any ethical system, this leaves no room for Supererogationists at all. Examining the possibility that a Kantian Virtue Theory accommodating Axiology could still give sufficient scope to duty to justify Qualified-Supererogationism, I have argued that such a model cannot answer the Immoralist's question. Since this question must be answered and is best answered by *Eudaimonism* (which is essentially Axiological), a properly rigorous account of Axiology should lead us to adopt a fully Anti-Supererogationist *Eudaimonist* Virtue Ethic.

Chapter 4

Eudaimonism and Ubuntu

Introduction

In my second chapter, I argued that Good–>Ought need not threaten our integrity in as many cases as Supererogationists claim, since our teleological interests diffuse and become caught up with the greater good. In Chapter 3, I argued that *eudaimonism* is the most convincing account of the good, that is, that the best response to the Immoralist sees *all* goods as our own good in this diffuse way. In this chapter, I will provide a more detailed account of how our pursuit of *eudaimoni*a generates a powerful pressure toward the good of others and the general good. I will develop an account of the positive axiological pressure toward the general good, extending Heyd's minimal account of this pressure in terms of the good to the agent. Noting that such picture is not quite sufficient to convince the Immoralist to take the good of others as her own project, I will turn to the concept *umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu* – that being a person requires being a person among others – to provide a sense in which the good of others is inherently tied to our own. Seeking the best formulation of this concept, I will turn to Pedro Tabensky's account of others as necessary to our rationality, and to the value of our relationships with certain others to provide an argument capable of convincing the Immoralist that our good requires a commitment to the good of others generally. Finally, I will return to the question of Minimal-Supererogationism and argue that not even martyrdom can be called supererogatory.

Positive Axiological Pressure

To understand the pressure toward other-directed goods posited by Anti-Supererogationism, it will help to return to Heyd's positive axiological reasons. As I noted earlier, without the constraint of arguments for supererogation, these are unqualified reasons to pursue other-directed good actions. This is not to say that they are always sufficient reason to act. Other goods could still be greater, or more realisable, and thus take precedent, but *ceteris paribus,* they can be sufficient reason for action by virtue of being valuable. To recap then, the first reason to value such actions was that society requires some self-sacrifice. That is, other-directed good actions

> may contribute to the strengthening of social bonds and augment the feelings of a close-knit community. For by doing more than is required, a member of a group shows that he has an interest in his fellow members which is deeper than his contractual commitments, or than the personal benefit he can draw from the group. Consequently, the relations between the members of the group become more friendly, personal, and based on good will. Benevolence and gratitude enhance mutual trust and confidence .... So although theoretically the morality of duty is sufficient for securing basic cooperation in society, both social cohesion and dignity are conditioned by the willingness of some people to transcend ... the relations of claims and counter-claims. [144]

And "even if a society (or an institution) could survive if its members no more than adhered to the requirements and rules of behaviour, it would be morally deficient," [145] since it seems "highly probable that a decline in the spirit of altruism (or volunteering) will be accompanied by deep changes in other spheres of human relationship." [146]

The second reason to value such acts was their indirect, hermeneutic value,[147] that is, since such exemplary acts may inspire others to be similarly altruistic, their value in "raising the bar" counts in addition to their direct good value. Heyd, committed to emphasising the supererogatory nature of such acts, is perhaps less enthusiastic on this point than my description suggests, glossing it: "Although we may not put pressure on people ... we may expose them by various means to some standards of moral excellence which would make them try to emulate those who live up to such standards."[148] Suffice it to say that I think a more detailed picture of the social context will justify more emphasis than this lacklustre "inspiration-is-permissible" model suggests, but I will come to this in a moment.

It is not simply the case that other-directed good actions are valuable. What is noteworthy about them is that the weighting assigned to their value can *increase* as we examine them in the broader contexts of teleology and community. Here I am referring to the sort of value-shift that occurs between Prisoner's Dilemma and

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[144] Supererogation, p179.
[145] Supererogation, p179.
[146] Supererogation, p180. The latter quote is from Titmuss' The Gift Relationship, p223.
[147] Supererogation, pp181-182.
[148] Supererogation, p182.

Iterated Prisoner's Dilemma,[149] where the introduction of agents with a memory of past actions increases the value of co-operation. Note that I am not, here, committing myself to the claim that ethics reduces to Prisoner's Dilemma situations.[150] My point is simply that an expanded context increases the number of ways in which other-directed goods can count as good.

I noted in my second chapter that we have at least two reasons to take a teleological standpoint when evaluating actions: that the longer-term consequences or goals of an act change its proper description and that, as narrative beings whose *teloi* extend into the future, we favour our teleological identities over our immediate identities. In addition, since we are concerned with other-directedness, there is significant reason to examine the value of our actions in the context of our shared social environment.

So how does the extension into a shared, teleological context increase the value of other-directed goods? Take, for example, my interest in a troubled co-worker's personal life. This person (call him Dilbert), clearly in need of attention and reassurance, is not a friend, that is, not someone to whom I "owe" care to in a crudely contractarian way. In addition, the time and effort I must expend on such a project count as a disvalue to me, distracting me from other goods I could pursue (my own, for instance, since I have more information about the requirements for my own good, I am best placed to pursue these). Having dispensed with the supererogationist claim that there is no reason to say I ought to help, even if I can, the question now is how the good of my co-worker can impinge on me sufficiently to overpower commitment to other goods, including my own immediate good. If we examine the positive axiological reasons Heyd allows, we see the direct value of the good act to society, and the hermeneutic value of promulgating such acts.

Direct Value: Teleological Investment

In the case of direct value, seeing ourselves teleologically, as invested in the long-term, increases the relevance of the general good to ourselves: becoming

[149] Richard Dawkins' account of Prisoner's Dilemma scenarios (in The Selfish Gene, OUP, 1989, pp202-233) remains one of the clearest introductions to Game Theory.

[150] I am sympathetic to Peter Danielson's claim that Prisoner's Dilemma "turns out to be especially favourable to a moral solution by means of communication, commitment, and an opportunistic minimal morality" and may not reflect all of the complexity of real moral situations (in his Artificial Morality: Virtuous Robots for Virtual Games, Routledge, 1992, p163). While I do think there is good reason to suspect that many moral situations *are* responsive to communication, commitment, and "moral" responses in precisely the manner mapped by Iterated Prisoner's Dilemma, it does not follow that all moral situations reduce to this particular game.

homeowners, for example, increases our investment in the general good of our community and becoming shareholders increases our investment in the enterprise. In the same way, becoming *aware* of ourselves as teleological agents increases our *awareness* of an investment in the common good. In Dilbert's case, the cost of attending to his problems seems high in the short term, but, seen in the long-term, turns into a miniscule investment to secure a long-term good (a more relaxed work environment, for example). So while I may feel very little drive to attend to the problems of a co-worker in a job I intend to leave within six weeks, my investment shifts significantly if I intend to work in the same office for the next decade.

Before going on, it is worth noting two potential objections to this move. The first is that Dilbert's situation was the same regardless of my long-term plans: he was in need of assistance and it was within my capacity to help, in both cases. A Utilitarian would see no relevant distinction between the two: in either case there is a disvalue it is within our power to rectify. Surely this is sufficient reason to act? The second objection simply notes that the idea that we have an investment in long-term goods is neither new nor profound.

Regarding the first objection, we have seen that Utilitarians cannot answer the Immoralist's question and I suspect that part of the reason Supererogationists have so easily brushed axiological pressure aside in the past is that this Utilitarian objection was the only Axiological argument presented. Though Dilbert's situation does indeed cry out for help in either case, the Immoralist's question puts pressure on us to explain good actions as rational *for the agent* to expend resources on, in each case. It seems to me that addressing this challenge is both necessary to quell any remaining sympathies for Supererogationism and, moreover, the correct approach to the Good.

As to the second objection, such as it is, while *the existence* of a broader context than our own lives is certainly acknowledged by all systems, it seems to me that few enough actually recognise the impact of *orienting toward* the value in such a context. Still shaking off the vestiges of Hobbes' Leviathan, few theorists seem to pay sufficient attention to the key discovery of Game Theory, that complex other-regarding behaviour arises naturally in a context of iterated interactions. What drives such a shift, as we have seen, is that the extended context of iteration increases the value of contributions toward the general good, while the disvalues remain fixed. Seen *from the perspective of* the long-term investment, the disvalue reduces relative to the value generated. Another, suggestive, example of this value-shift is seen in

projects such as the Creative Commons[151] and Open Source Software[152] movements. In these cases ubiquitous and all-but free communication emphasises the value of cooperation and collaboration, while the value of maintaining copyright remains fixed (that is, becomes a disvalue relative to the increased realisable value of collaboration). Of course, any model can *acknowledge* that cooperating towards shared goals at the expense of immediate personal benefit is more valuable (for society in general and, on average, for each of its members). It is a truism that a system in which people share their work freely and cooperate to improve the work of others *would* generate greater value than one in which people pursued their own projects to the detriment of the general good. What too many Neo-Hobbesians fail to credit, however, is that such systems can develop spontaneously. What Game Theory shares with the Creative Commons and Open Source Software movements is that the context of evaluation shifted away from isolated instances of loss or gain, toward a greater context (either the long-term or the large-scale). Once the good is understood in this greater context, the rationality (and concomitant ought) of orienting toward it becomes apparent.

This shift may seem familiar to *eudaimonists*. The idea that cooperation can be beneficial, like the notion that each of us can want nothing more than to live the best life appears, at first, neither new nor profound. But for all the apparent obviousness of the claim, merely *acknowledging* this fact fails to capture the impact of *orienting towards* this complex, long-term value (*eudaimonia*). This is not, of course, an analogy. The argument here is that the general good is a significant part of my *eudaimonia*, and as such that I have reason to pursue it, which may not have been obvious had I been focused on more immediate goods. Recall the analogy of health: taking vitamin supplements represents a notable disvalue to me because they absorb resources (time and money) which could be spent on other things, and offer no commensurate value in the short term. Seen at the level of my general health, however, the picture changes. While the disvalue remains fixed as we zoom out, the long term value of my continued robust health increases. At the greater scale of my life, the disvalue of taking vitamins is so miniscule that it is effectively negated, while the value of my general well-being tips the scale. This analogy describes not only my *eudaimonia* generally, but the shift in value of my encounter with Dilbert. By shifting to the long-term perspective of my *telos*, the value to me of a stable work-

[151] www.creativecommons.org
[152] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Open_source

environment, though almost negligible in the immediate context, counts significantly, while the notable immediate disvalue drops off as the scale increases.

I am not, naturally, claiming that zooming out to the long-term increases the good of *all* acts, or that all cases are like Dilbert's. There are many instances in which immediate value drops off markedly as we broaden the scope of examination. The pleasure of smoking a cigarette is a paradigm example. There is no reason to exclude many sorts of other-directed acts from this category; my attending to Dilbert may dissuade him from seeking more professional attention, accidentally validate his unfounded aggression toward his wife, or instil a dependence on me that interferes significantly with my own good. This is precisely why careful attention to the particulars of the situation is necessary, to work out the proper description of the act (since being attentive can be an under-described component of both "being-helpful" and "validating Dilbert's aggression"). For the purposes of the thought-experiment, however, the attention I pay to Dilbert's worries is precisely the action most likely to help him. My intention here is to sketch the outlines of *how* the good of others can impinge on us, before arguing for the ubiquity of such situations.

My point in invoking the long term view of our *telos* has been to demonstrate that such a shift can change the evaluation of certain actions whose immediately realisable good was negligible. By recognising our own long-term investment in a larger context, otherwise negligible goods – like the benefits of forgoing copyrights – are brought to the fore. But, while this shift does increase the value to me of incremental improvements to the world in general, this is not the only sense in which other-directed good acts are a benefit to me.

Indirect Value: Others' Assessment

The second way in which other-directed goods carry additional value is in the positive assessment others accord to such acts. Note that we have not yet moved onto Heyd's hermeneutic point – that the general good of society is served by the promulgation of exemplary moral acts. Before we reach this claim, it is worth pausing for a moment on the more localised impact of others' positive assessment. Heyd noted, in a somewhat detached way, that other-directed good acts can engender "the strengthening of social bonds [and that] relations between the members of the group become more friendly, personal, and based on good will. Benevolence and gratitude

enhance mutual trust and confidence."[153] But this is a slight under-description of what occurs here. It is not just the case that other-directed goods lead to an omni-directional *bonhomie*. Significantly, the relations that are strengthened – becoming more friendly, personal, trusting, and benevolent – include relations of others in the community toward the agent. As a result of my attending to Dilbert in his personal crisis, others around me assess my character positively, that is, they evaluate me as being disposed to respond to the suffering of others. Though there is room for fairly complex evaluations, not all of them positive – others could think me a sentimental idiot, a meddlesome busybody, or too naïve to recognise Dilbert's hangover for what it really is – if we assume for a moment a relatively accurate and positive appraisal of my action, then others come away with reason to think that I would treat them in a similar manner. Again, as with any act of communication, there is the potential for misinterpretation. Others may see me as disposed to help people near my own age, or people related to the boss, or people with Dilbert's "reputation" around the office, but not to help all people, or people like them. Of course, accurate character assessment requires more than a single datum and lasting positive evaluation requires that I demonstrate a lasting disposition to act appropriately. This is, of course, conspicuously problematic for a Particularist. Since not everyone is capable of understanding the precise details of the situation that I am faced with, I may well be blamed for acting (or forgoing action) by others who characterise the situation differently. But this is not a problem *of the theory* – it is a constant of human life that we are subject to such assessments, and theoretical stances do nothing to mitigate or aggravate this. The point of this *descriptive* focus is merely to note that, when our circumstances are clearly evident and others note it with sufficient attention, other-directed goods generate the additional good, for us, of positive character evaluation.

The resurgence of interest in virtues of character evinced by developments in Virtue Ethics and Virtue Theory suggests that there is something to be said for a focus on dispositions of character. A particularly suggestive corroboration of the utility and pervasiveness of character-evaluation is the growth of reputation-economies in online communities. Stripped of the conventional binding-forces of coincident geographic or economic identity, such communities are constituted solely by interaction with others, and place a high premium on members' history of interaction. The term "whuffie,"[154]

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[153] Supererogation, p179.
[154] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/whuffie

first coined in Cory Doctorow's novel Down and Out in the Magic Kingdom,[155] is used to model the value of reputation as analogous to currency and track it economically. Here "a person's whuffie is a general measurement of his or her overall reputation and whuffie is lost and gained according to a person's favourable or unfavourable actions [for others]."[156] Though the economic analogy has its limits, it seems that the idea of whuffie can be used productively, as "many community-oriented websites are experimenting with whuffie-like concepts of reputation management (Slashdot's karma system, for example, or eBay's feedback ratings)."[157] This trend suggests that a significant and pervasive part of our interaction with others relies on character evaluation. As such, it seems reasonable to factor the chance of accruing positive whuffie as an additional good attached to other-directed goods.

A possible objection here is that, since the practical functioning of a whuffie system relies on a community capable of continuous comparative evaluation of an individual's character, it cannot provide a motive to do good for strangers, or when others are unlikely to notice the action. At this stage in the argument I am prepared to concede as much – my argument for the benefits of other-directed good actions does not rest of whuffie alone, and all I need suggest at this stage is that there are *some* cases in which the potential of accruing positive whuffie serves as an additional value.

Indirect Value: Hermeneutic Value

Now we come to the hermeneutic value of other-directed goods. Here Heyd noted "we may expose [others] by various means to some standards of moral excellence which would make them try to emulate those who live up to such standards."[158] While I agree with this point, there is more to be said. Heyd casts the value of "Ideals" [159] as a useful, perhaps even necessary way to augment "the morality of duty, obligation, and justice, which is essentially social and formulated in universal principles." [160] While models of moral excellence such as heroism do indeed serve as ideals, it seems to me that the hermeneutic value of other-directed goods is more mundane, and thus more pervasive, than this description suggests. This positive value derives not just

[155] Full text available on a Creative Commons license at http://www.craphound.com/down In the novel, Doctorow posits reputation as the only viable currency in a post-scarcity economy.
[156] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/whuffie
[157] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/whuffie
[158] Supererogation, p182.
[159] Supererogation, p182. Heyd is careful to note that "ideal" -oriented acts are valuable in themselves, and not merely to encourage an overshoot that will realise more good acts. I do not take this to be the major issue at stake.
[160] Supererogation, p182. Naturally I find this kind of strong Generalism untenable.

from showy exemplary acts like heroism and martyrdom, but from everyday instances of generosity, consideration, and forgiveness. In encountering instances of such acts, not only do we come to think better of the agent – in many cases – we also re-assess the world as the sort of place in which other-directed goodness is a viable tactic.

Note that with the use of the word "tactic" I have slipped into Game Theory-speak. I do so intentionally, to highlight the point that when we find other-directed goods to be extraordinary, we are not necessarily doing so in relation to some innate understanding of transcended duties, as Supererogationists seem to assume. Rather, we can recognise such acts as willingly placing ourselves at risk of exploitation by unscrupulous agents (or "Straightforward Maximisers"[161]). When we encounter such behaviour (assuming that we have sufficient reason to think the agent is not merely hopelessly naïve), we appraise not just the agent, but the sort of environment that allows an agent who behaves this way to survive. The message construed by witnessing enough instances of such action is not merely "I am altruistic," but "the world is such that altruism can be a viable approach." Again, though Heyd *acknowledges* this hermeneutic value, his account seems to under-describe its pervasiveness.

Thus far I have argued that some other-directed goods have an interesting capacity to increase in value when viewed in a broader context than the immediate, even to the extent of reversing a short-term disvalue. In addition, the specific context of other evaluators attaches the potential for additional value to such acts – the value of accruing positive whuffie, and the hermeneutic value of encouraging others to behave altruistically. While theorists generally acknowledge these features, I have argued that the extent of their impact is significantly greater than is generally credited. As such, there appears to be some significant pressure to perform other-directed good acts, where they are good in one or more of the senses noted above. Despite focusing largely on the benefit to the agent of performing such acts, nothing I have said so far is uniquely *Eudaimonist*. The foregoing picture seems to me to be coherent on most conceptions of the Good.

But it is also something less than utterly compelling. The Immoralist may concede all of the above, without being personally moved by the positive pressure of axiology. While a world in which people orient toward the context of the greater good by virtue of their stake in it is a better world *to live in*, that is a reason to inhabit a world where

[161] See Danielson's Artificial Morality, pp11-12. He borrows the term from David Gauthier.

people do so, not to contribute toward it oneself. While positive whuffie is a good worth having, that is not a reason to seek it exclusively through legitimate means. Any system based on approximations can be exploited. To meet this canny parasite, the *eudaimonist* response must argue that other-directed goods are good *for the agent* in a far more essential sense.

Umuntu Ngumuntu Ngabantu

Seeking to re-examine our relation to others, I turn to the conceptions developed in recent African Philosophy that inform Gyekye's Anti-Supererogationism. It is a fairly recurrent theme in African Philosophy that our interdependence on one another is a vital part of human life, a fact seen as consistently overlooked by the atomistic models developed by Western Philosophy. Here Kwasi Wiredu states, in his characteristically proverbial style, that Akan culture "think[s] of life (*obra)* as one continuous drama of mutual aid (*nnoboa*). *Obra ye nnoboa*: 'Life is mutual aid,' according to the Akan saying,"[162] while Desmond Tutu holds that "we are created to live in a delicate network of interdependence."[163] Naturally enough, models that foreground interdependence to this extent cast failure to respond to the needs of others as negative action, rather than a permissible imperfection – Wiredu finds that "the ultimate moral inadequacy consists in that lack of feeling which is the root of all selfishness,"[164] and Tutu says,

> Harmony, friendliness, community are great goods. Social harmony is for us the *summum bonum* – the greatest good. Anything that subverts, that undermines this sought-after good, is to be avoided like the plague. Anger, resentment, lust for revenge, even success through aggressive competitiveness, are corrosive of this good.[165]

This is not simply the parochial claim that, in the small communities in which these accounts are rooted, people pay careful attention to one another's character and watch carefully for free-riders. Nor is it simply the anthropological claim that many traditional African societies tend to foreground community interaction. Rather, it is an expression of a deeper ontological claim about our nature as social beings. Here

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[162] *The Moral Foundations of an African Culture*, in The African Philosophy Reader, P.H Coetzee and A.P.J. Roux (eds), Routledge, 1998, p313.
[163] No Future Without Forgiveness, Doubleday, 1999, p265.
[164] *The Moral Foundations of an African Culture*, p310.
[165] No Future Without Forgiveness, p31.

Gyekye's Anti-Supererogationism pivots on his conception of our inescapable interdependence on others:

> The relational character of the individual by virtue of her natural sociality immediately makes her naturally oriented towards other persons with whom she must live. Living in relation to others directly involves an individual in social and moral roles, obligations, commitments, and responsibilities, which the individual must fulfil. The natural relationality of the person thus immediately plunges her into a moral universe. Social life itself, thus, prescribes or mandates a morality that should orient the individual toward an appreciation of shared, and not only individual ends.[166]

Suggestive as this conception is, it leaves itself open to two problematic interpretations we should dispense with before moving on. In the first place, we must avoid the temptation to see such an argument as arguing for debt or duty – this is not Contractarianism by stealth. Though the language of *obligations* entailed by living in relation to others is redolent of an implicit social contract embedded in legalistic ethical models, neither Gyekye's axiology nor the axiological account I have developed thus far are properly expressed in Deontic or Contractarian terms. As we have seen, the answer to "Why ought I help her?" is not "Because you owe it to her" but, "Because you are invested in the good such an action would bring about." So we must overlook Gyekye's deontic language and read him as pointing toward an inescapably shared investment in others.

The second problematic interpretation is that the statement "Social life itself … prescribes or mandates a morality …"[167] seems to conjure an Ought from an Is. As I argued in Chapter 3, claims that seem, *prima facie* to be asserting Is–>Ought can be understood more favourably as arguing that, given the true factual claim that we value X, we are rationally bound to value and pursue what is entailed by X. Is such a reading possible in this case? I think it is, but the formulation that lends itself to such a rational-axiological explication is not Gyekye's. Instead I turn to the South African concept of *ubuntu,* which seems to be contiguous with Gyekye's account of community-orientation (here I agree with Richard Bell[168]). Tutu has done much to

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[166] Tradition and Modernity, p67.
[167] Tradition and Modernity, p67.
[168] Bell's account of the continuity between these views is in his Understanding African Philosophy, pp85-90.

promulgate the use of the term and his definition of what it is to "have" *ubuntu* (casting it as a virtue of character) is canonical. On this account, when you have *ubuntu*

> Then you are generous, you are hospitable, you are friendly and caring and compassionate. You share what you have. It is to say, "My humanity is caught up, is inextricably bound up, in yours." We belong in a bundle of life. We say, a person is a person through other persons.[169]

The claim that "a person is a person through other persons" is a translation of the Nguni phrase *umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu*[170]. Most translations into English amount to roughly the same claim, frequently glossed blandly as "we are who we are through others," but Mogobe Ramose makes a strong claim, in his exhaustive syntactic analysis of the phrase,[171] for foregrounding the notion of *being* (or "be-ing"[172] as a process best expressed in gerundive language). As such, a closer approximation may be "Being a person is being a person being people."[173] Corroborating Tutu's claim that "Ubuntu is very difficult to render into a Western language," [174] an additional nuance is that the prefix "*nga-*" is an imperative – so that the fuller translation of *umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu* is "Being a person *must be* being a person being people." To avoid any ambiguity, one final amendment is that I do not think this imperative should be read as a normative imperative, but rather as a descriptive one. The English translation thus comes to look more like "Being a person *cannot but be* being a person being people." Little wonder that the term "*ubuntu*" is generally used as a shorthand substitute for this more extended form.

Two things are noteworthy about *ubuntu* as discussed so far. The first is that, in the extended form – *umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu* – it seems like a promising response to the Immoralist – that we ought to pursue the good of others because the project of our own being is (somehow) tied to the project of theirs. Such a model would seem

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[169] No Future Without Forgiveness, p31.
[170] Pronunciation differs slightly between the Nguni languages, isiXhosa and isiZulu. The precise equivalent in Sesotho languages is "*motho ke motho ka batho*."
[171] *The Philosophy of Ubuntu and Ubuntu as Philosophy*, in Philosophy from Africa, P.H Coetzee and A.P.J. Roux (eds), Oxford University Press, 2002, pp230-239.
[172] *The Philosophy of Ubuntu and Ubuntu as Philosophy*, p231. Ramose argues that the phrase is one of many that are not properly translatable into a natural or logical language constructed on the subject-verb-object distinction, and that a "rheomodic" logical language incorporating gerunds is necessary.
[173] Any clumsiness in this translation is entirely my fault. It is my own inexpert literal translation of the isiXhosa. I find it useful, however, in making the emphasis on the project of "being" explicit.
[174] No Future Without Forgiveness, p31.

sufficient to escape the difficulty with the Is-Ought implication; it is not a claim that our nature entails a set of norms, but rather the factual statement that our being entails or is constituted by some relation with others. In terms of rational axiological responses, this entails the conditional that, *if* we value our being, *then* it is rational to value and pursue the interaction with others intrinsic to it. Like *eudaimonia*, it just happens to be the case that we *cannot but* value our being. Of course, this is just a statement of how *umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu* could be valid if true. Proving that it *is* the proper description of the human condition requires a more substantive argument.

Before moving on to a more substantive understanding of *ubuntu*, the second point to note is that discussions of the concept are necessarily problematic. As noted, the difficulty in translating *umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu* has led to the use of *ubuntu* (which, literally translated, is simply the abstract form of something like "personhood") as shorthand. Unfortunately, this tendency toward shorthand has bred significant ambiguity and, in colloquial use, the term functions as a general signifier for shifting bundles of vaguely defined community-oriented sentiments. In this context, its status as buzzword has led to any number of wildly divergent viewpoints being folded into the concept and presented as natural to it. As a result of its frequent deployment in rhetorical and Human Resources contexts, "for many, *ubuntu* is just a noble sentiment without any real meaning, nothing but a sales gimmick."[175] In addition to these connotations in the broad public context, a number of more philosophical difficulties crop up when the term is discussed. Martha Minnow notes that "the notion of ubuntu may be as much a current invention as a recovery of past practices,"[176] and Richard Bell[177] observes that *ubuntu* can be cast as a form of the fallacy of unanimism, which Paulin Hountondji defined as "the illusion that all men and women in [African] societies speak with one voice or share the same opinion about all fundamental issues."[178] The issue is further confused when *ubuntu* is associated with the diverse projects yoked to it, including Augustine Shutte's modified Thomist metaphysic of a "universal field of force"[179] and Mogobe Ramose's

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[175] Dirk J. Louw, quoted in Charlene Rolls' *Ubuntu: For Sale or for Soul?*, Fair Lady, October 2005, p52.
[176] Between Vengeance and Forgiveness: Facing History after Genocide and Mass Violence, Beacon Press, 1998, p174.
[177] Understanding African Philosophy, p89.
[178] In his African Philosophy: Myth and Reality, Indiana University Press, 1996, pxviii.
[179] Philosophy for Africa, UCT Press, 1993, p52.

claim that *ubuntu* is the necessary and sufficient condition for *all* African Philosophy.[180]

In light of such difficulties, why do I invoke the concept at all? In the first place, discussing a term whose meaning is contentious or unclear is hardly new territory for philosophy and public opinion has little enough impact of the validity and applicability of terms such as *akrasia*, *angst*, or *schadenfreude,* which remain contentful descriptions of the human experience regardless of their modishness at any given time. More to the point, I am *not* concerned with the myriad ambiguous connotations of the signifier *"ubuntu,"* I am specifically concerned to examine the interesting ontological statement *umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu*.

As to *why* it seems a good idea to do even this much, it seems to me that there is a baby bobbing in this bathwater. A colloquial use of the term is interesting here. When an individual, given the opportunity to help others, evinces self-interested behaviour, she is said to "have no *ubuntu,*" while Tutu describes the contrary praise as " '*Yu, u nobuntu*': 'Hey, so-and-so has *ubuntu*.' "[181] Casting other-directedness as a factual understanding that can either be properly *grasped* or *missed*, this usage demonstrates confidence that other-regarding virtue is simply the same as rational behaviour. This is the confidence so markedly missing from neo-Hobbesian Western models. Moreover, from a *eudaimonist* perspective, *umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu* looks to be precisely the claim necessary to express our inescapable investment in the good of others, by pegging it to our being.

But what sort of being are we talking about? What is it about "being a person" that is dependent on our interaction with others? The claim surely amounts to something more than that we are physically dependent on one another, since this by itself is not a reason to be concerned with the good of others beyond the minimal requirements of reciprocity accepted by even the most libertarian of Contractualists. As Eagleton notes

> It is a material fact that we are dependent on others for our physical survival, given the helpless state in which we are born. Yet this dependency cannot really be divorced from such moral capacities as care, selflessness, vigilance and protectiveness, since what we are dependent on is exactly such capacities in those who look after us ....

[180] I do not feel that I am exaggerating his emphasis. I am thinking here of the claim "*Ubuntu* is the root of all African philosophy" which opens *The Philosophy of Ubuntu and Ubuntu as Philosophy.* This article is also the third chapter of his book, African Philosophy Through *Ubuntu*, 2001.
[181] No Future Without Forgiveness, p31.

> We shall literally not become persons, as opposed to being human animals, unless those whom we bank on share something of their affective and communicative life with us."[182]

Of course, this is a reason to want others to be generous toward us, and to be so toward those we already happen to care about – but many of the most atomistic people in the world – of whom we would definitely say that they had no *ubuntu* – would concede this much. What the Immoralist would demand to be shown is how we have reason to care about others in general, beyond our socially-contractual obligations and the feelings we have for those we *already* care about.

And the answer, Eagleton seems to agree with African philosophers, must involve something essential to us that is at risk of being unrealised, "becom[ing] persons, as opposed to being human animals."[183] Here Gyekye states that "When an individual's conduct consistently appears cruel, wicked, selfish, or ungenerous, the Akan would say of that individual that 'he is not a person' (*onye onipa*)."[184] Wiredu (also an Akan philosopher articulating from within that tradition) corroborates, noting that such "habitual default in duties [sic] and responsibilities could lead to a diminution in one's status as person in the eyes of the community."[185] Both authors are at pains to point out that this is not equivalent to the loss of status as a bearer of human rights. Gyekye dedicates a significant amount of time to refuting arguments by Ifeanyi Menkiti[186] which allow such exclusion. "Nevertheless," Wiredu continues, "any Akan steeped in culture, or even just sensitive to surrounding norms, constantly watches and prays lest he/she be overtaken by the spectre of loss of personhood." [187] This discussion seems to suggest that the impetus for being a person is community approval, a consequence, I suspect, of addressing the issue of being "not a person" in the terms established by Menkiti and, earlier, John Mbiti.[188] Their models, in which personhood was conditional upon the *approval* of the community, had been broadly accepted prior to Gyekye's refutation,[189] engendering far too strong a focus in the discourse on the

[182] After Theory, pp168-169.
[183] After Theory, pp168-169
[184] Tradition and Modernity, p49.
[185] *The Moral Foundations of an African Culture*, p311.
[186] *Persons and Community in African Traditional Thought,* in African Philosophy: An Introduction, Richard A. Wright (ed), University Press of America, 1984.
[187] *The Moral Foundations of an African Culture*, p311.
[188] In his African Religions and Philosophy, Heineman, 1969. This is the source of Mbiti's much-quoted, but almost certainly ill-advised attempt to cast African thought as a reworking of the *cogito* "I am because we are: and since we are, therefore I am."
[189] In Tradition and Modernity, and, in more detail, in the earlier *Person and Community in African Thought.*

punitive response of the community. But personhood is also cast as *constituted by the community* without being simply a matter of community approbation or approval. Here Tutu notes, in his description of *ubuntu* as a virtue (thus, as a goal worthy of pursuing for the agent's own sake) that "the completely self-sufficient person would be sub-human."[190] He also notes that *ubuntu* involves the realisation that "what dehumanizes you inexorably dehumanizes me."[191]

What is the sense in which we are *less* a person? What aspect of our personhood depends on others, and how? In the next sections I will examine two possible answers: being a person minimally and the value of such actions.

Being a Person (Minimally)

On a minimal model of *umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu*, other-directed goods, or an orientation toward realising them, are essential to some basic aspect of our functioning. The most basic such aspect that seems to depend on others is our awareness of ourselves as individuals, as Eagleton notes.

> Individuation is one of the activities proper to our species being. It is a practice, not a given condition. It is something that we do, as we come to negotiate a unique identity for ourselves in the very media that we share in common. Being an individual human being is not like being an individual peach. It is a project we have to accomplish. It is an autonomy we forge for ourselves on the basis of our shared existence, and thus a function of our dependency rather than an alternative to it. Our species life is such that it enables us to establish a unique relationship to the species known as personal identity.[192]

Pedro Tabensky offers an account of our individuation depending on others, arguing that our rational functioning depends, at a very basic level, on a sensitivity to the situation of others. Extending Donald Davidson's account of rationality as dependent on the existence of at least one other agent, Tabensky argues that, in order to be "most properly instantiated," rationality requires that "the subjects in dialogue be substantially different from one another."[193] I am not concerned here to dissect his argument on this point. For the purposes of this discussion, I accept his claim, that

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[190] No Future without Forgiveness, p265.
[191] No Future without Forgiveness, p31.
[192] After Theory, p163.
[193] Happiness: Personhood, Community, Purpose, Ashgate, 2003.

having an awareness of perspective (which is presupposed by rationality) requires recognition of multiple possible perspectives[194]. What is interesting, however, is Tabensky's understanding of "properly instantiated" or "full" rationality. He argues, quite persuasively, that the world of Orwell's 1984, in which the monolithic perspective of Big Brother intrudes on the perspective of each agent to the point of eclipsing it, would be a world in which

> the triangle constituted by our grasp of the subjective/intersubjective/objective modes of knowing is only minimally instantiated. [While it is true that] the people inhabiting this hell are minimally rational insofar as they are minimally able to grasp the concepts determined by Davidson, it seems equally clear that much more is required for us to count as fully rational."[195]

Likening real-world Totalitarian societies to Orwell's (where Orwell's world and the condition of Winston Smith represent an extreme), Tabensky argues that rationality can be realised to an ever greater extent along a continuum and that our *eudaimonia* drives us toward the fullest realisation of rationality. Since this realisation requires maximal exposure to very different perspectives on the world, "pluralism is a condition for *eudaimonia*." [196] Since a truly pluralist society must be sensitive to the perspectives of many others, this seems to give me a reason both to pursue exposure to others (thus entailing sensitivity to their conditions) and to engage in making the world the sort of place that allows the promulgation of difference.

There is a problem with this model, however. We may imagine an Athenian citizen who, convinced by this argument, seeks maximal exposure to other perspectives. To this end, he cultivates the company of male citizens from many different backgrounds – peasants from beyond the *polis*, Spartans and Carthaginians – but not women or other natural slaves – that thought would not occur to him. Tabensky has a response; such a view would be inconsistent. Aristotle himself was inconsistent in holding this view, as "there are good reasons for believing that Aristotle's account of slavery is inconsistent with his overall account – his teleological account – of what it is to be a person."[197]

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[194] His argument to this effect (Happiness, pp125-140) is significantly persuasive, though Davidson's claims are not uncontroversial.
[195] Happiness, p140.
[196] Happiness, p141.
[197] Happiness, p152. His defence of this claim is pp152-154.

I agree entirely, but it is not a sufficient response to note that such a life is inconsistent with *eudaimonia.* What is troubling here is that it is hard to understand how the agent can *detect* this sort of inconsistency. Let's update the example: now we have the resident of a cosmopolitan first-world city with a thriving cultural precinct (call her Barbie). She is exposed to restaurants, travelling exhibitions, and quaintly packaged craft knick-knacks from many cultures and benefits from all manner of trendy Far-Eastern meditation and exercise techniques. If asked, she would describe herself as thoroughly cosmopolitan and open to many cultures and we may assume that this is true; she is honestly open to having her presuppositions challenged and boundaries expanded by people from cultures very different from her own. All of this is possible while she fails to see any need to be generous or caring to those around her of a different economic class, or to sympathise with those whose political views differ markedly from her own. By her own lights, she is well exposed to various other influences, thus meeting Tabensky's requirements; she is exposing herself to the potential for radical redefinition of her perspective and is thus robustly rational. This rationality fails, however, to issue in a recognition of the situation of certain others, amounting to a "blind-spot" in the repertoire of human situations that she is capable of understanding.

Clearly Tabensky would want to say that this is just another case of the Athenian citizen, she is inconsistent to limit the extent of her consideration, since flourishing requires that we admit an effectively infinite number of alternative perspectives. What is relevant here is not *that* she is inconsistent, but that it is difficult for her to detect her inconsistency. Barbie's inconsistency is the same mistake made by the Athenian citizen, or a philanthropic housewife under *apartheid.* It is an easy one to make, because maximal rationality, although a rational goal to pursue, is not coherently pursuable in quite the same way as *eudaimonia simpliciter*. I can understand what the best life would be, in outline, since I have an experience of what it feels like for a part of my life to be meaningful – that is, more meaningful than some other part of it – and can clearly conceive of a life in which what is most meaningful is best arrayed, but rationality is not quite the same thing. Although I have some memory of being less rational as a child than I am now, it is hard for me to conceive of what it would mean to work toward "fuller" rationality. It certainly sounds desirable and worthy of pursuit, in much the same way as being able to see a four-dimensional shape does, but being "fully rational" is not a specific skill, like learning to speed-read or improve my

memory. Though it may well be a real and contentful state, it is not the sort of state we are capable of judging our progress toward from the perspective of our own lives. It seems that Barbie, or the Athenian, or the *apartheid* socialite, can always feel satisfied, from their own perspective, that they are already fully rational, since from any rational standpoint (that is, any standpoint *less* existentially oppressive than a Big Brother totalitarianism) as fully rational as I am now is roughly as fully rational as I can imagine being. And it is hard to see why the Immoralist (even accepting the pragmatic reasons for *eudaimonism* generated thus far), would feel a need for any more profound accommodation of the good of others than Barbie has. Barbie can live a satisfied life and if it is a life less satisfying than some other possible life, it isn't recognisable as such from her perspective (unlike a more conventional account of *eudaimonia*, like a life in which she overcomes her *akrasia*). For the Immoralist to be convinced by Tabensky's argument, the value of being fully rational needs to be the sort of value that can be grasped in sufficient detail to compare it to those other goods surrendered to pursue it.

Tabensky may reply that we should pursue a consistent openness to the perspectives and situations of all others and to rigorously checking that our implementation of this approach is consistent. To the extent that such an openness is manifested in our everyday actions, we still need some way to measure the value or disvalue of eschewing other pleasures. If we commit to an absolute openness to others in practical terms, we seem to embody Wolf's caricature of the Saint, but if we simply rest on what seems reasonable, we could have no greater success than Barbie.

It seems, therefore, that even though Tabensky's model may provide a plausible sense in which *umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu*, such an approach is not enough to provide much direction when we seek to apply the principle practically. As such, an Immoralist (or any other agent) convinced by the argument may have reason to want to live in a *non-totalitarian* society, without feeling sufficient pressure to pursue furthering pluralism when dealing with others generally. If we are to understand the sense in which we are invested in the good of others, we must seek elsewhere.

Value and *Ubuntu*

If what we must be simply to exist as rational beings is not quite enough to bring us to care for others, there is another sense in which something can be essential to our being. It may be that there are things so valuable that no life could be sufficient

without them. The experience of caring for others, of participating with them in mitigating their disvalues, is *itself* valuable. The suggestion here is that this value may contribute to some more complex value that can be seen as essential to the complete human life. Although the value attached to such actions may seem trivial *prima facie*, it seems to me that there are good reasons to see the value we experience in practicing other-directed goodness as the crucial reason to pursue it.

In much the same way that Robert Nozick's "Experience Machine" thought experiment suggested that a simulated life of pleasure would lack some essential value, I want to suggest that a world in which we gained the benefits of other-directed social good without valuing them for their own sake would be badly lacking. Two fictional examples seem to corroborate this suspicion. In the first, David Brin's short story *The Giving Plague*,[198] a virologist discovers a virus, spread through the blood donation service, which generates an addiction to giving blood. In something like the inverse of Heyd and Titmuss' worry, those infected with "Acquired Lavish Altruism Syndrome" become increasingly philanthropic in other spheres of their lives, and the infection's spread slowly transforms the world into a more altruistic place. The narrator, a bitter, selfish would-be murderer, is driven to care for others as a demonstration of his autonomy, and ends the story ranting at the disease that:

> it doesn't matter to me that I'm behaving no different than anyone else today. They are all marionettes. They are your puppets, ALAS. But I am a *man*, do you hear me? I make my own decisions. Fever wracks my body now, as I drag myself from bed to bed, holding their hands, doing what I can to ease their suffering, to save a few. You'll not have me, ALAS. This is what *I* choose to do.[199]

Here we can sympathise with the narrator – even a near-utopian world of solidarity and other-concern would seem less valuable if it were a mere side-effect, rather than an actual recognition of the act's value. Of course, spite is not a particularly valuable motive for action either and the protagonist could simply be read as wanting autonomy. Lest dramatic irony obscure the point, the second example, from John Brunner's novel, *Stand on Zanzibar:* in an overcrowded dystopia, consultants for a giant corporation have discovered a pheremonal quirk that nullifies human

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[198] Otherness, Orbit Books, 1994, pp3-27. Full text available at http://www.davidbrin.com/givingplague1.html

[199] *The Giving Plague*, Otherness, Orbit, 1994, p27.

aggression, engendering peaceful co-existence. A plan to synthesise it builds (once again) to a climactic tirade,

> 'What does it matter if we have to take brotherly love out of an aerosol can? It's contagious stuff no matter where you get it from.'
> Norman nodded. His mouth was very dry.
> 'But it's not right!' Chad whispered. 'It's not something to be made in a factory, packaged and wrapped and sold! It's not something meant to be – to be dropped in bombs from UN aircraft! That's what they'll do with it, you know. And it isn't right – it isn't a product, a medicine, a drug. It's thought and feeling your own heart's blood. It isn't right!'[200]

These examples suggest that the value of the end-states is not enough, however large, to account for all of the value we seek in other-directed goods. We find other-directed good actions to be good themselves. Or, to cast the observation in terms of virtues rather than acts, we value the sorts of character such practices allow us to develop and the sorts of relations they allow. The Immoralist may well be sceptical. Sure, helping others feels good, as does thinking oneself to be the kind of person who is good to others, but can this be a strong enough reason to counteract our own immediate self-interest?

Here Tabensky offers a second argument, which seems to provide a reason to believe exactly this. Echoing the structure of *umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu*, Tabensky notes that "there is a sense in which my *telos* is implicated in the *telos* of each member of our community," where our community is characterised by "outwardly expanding webs of love."[201] That is, our teleological connection to the good of others expands "outwards" from, or is entailed by, our relationships to loved ones. This is not simply the claim that the prudential protection of those we care about requires that we invest in the common good, as Tabensky points out:

> I do not want to suggest that one ought to care for the wider community for instrumental reasons – that is, simply because the wider community provides for the possibility of the existence on my immediate circle of friends (although my circle of friends is certainly just that circle only insofar as that circle is embedded in a wider network of relationships). Rather, I believe our concerns for the

[200] Stand on Zanzibar, Victor Gollancz, 1968 (Repr. 1999), p646.
[201] Happiness, p175.

> community at large ought to be based on a genuine *appreciation* of how our lives depend on the overall pattern of relationships which constitutes society at large.[202]

How is it, then, that enough can hang on our *appreciation* of others to provide a powerful obligation toward the general good? Certainly it seems that appreciating others is a virtue and thus contributory to the agent's character (and thus, toward *eudaimonia*), but can appreciating the situation of others be so valuable, to the agent, as to outweigh self-interested actions? Here I must note that Tabensky's own argument in this direction rests on the metaphor "webs of love."[203] He argues that the set of those we care about is so imbricated with other such sets that

> concern for one's own *eudaimonia* and the *eudaimonia* of those we love ideally implicates our concern for the eudaimonia of our community at large.[204]

While I agree and find the metaphor of ever-expanding webs of love evocative, I am not convinced that this is sufficient to sway the Immoralist (or some other sceptic). Granting that our circle of loved ones is embedded within a larger community and that this interpenetrates with other such circles, this by itself is no more than I have already argued, which is sufficient to convince the Immoralist to want to live in a world where people are good to one another, but not to take up such behaviour herself.

Having said as much, I do think Tabensky furnishes a sufficient solution, arguing for "a relationship of mutual constitution"[205] between the greater social good and the good of those we care about. Resting the argument for our commitment to the good on the force of the "webs of love" metaphor, Tabensky devotes most of his effort to arguing that being virtuous citizens requires that we must be virtuous friends. I will argue for the same co-constitutive relation from the opposite direction, using Tabensky's arguments to shore up the converse, that properly caring for our loved ones entails caring for others generally.

Tabensky's account is interesting in that it is amenable to reformulation along the *umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu* structure, as follows: we cannot but want *philia* (love), and the capacity to love those close to us depends on our capacity to care for others in

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[202] Happiness, p164. Italics in original.
[203] Happiness, p175.
[204] Happiness, p175.
[205] Happiness, p175.

general. This formulation yields the conditional "If I value loving relationships with certain others, then I ought to care about others generally." As neat a conditional as this is, how do we get there?

Tabensky spends some time arguing that loved ones (*philoi*) are necessary to the good life[206] and I agree with him entirely. It seems, though, that most people would not need much convincing that love is a sufficiently important part of our lives to justify sacrificing our immediate self-interest and reshaping our character, in fact, such actions are a practically the litmus test for love, but the sort of love described here is significant. *Philia* designates more than mere affection (even passionate, overwhelming affection). Although applicable in a secondary sense to instrumental relationships, the primary use of *philia* describes what Tabensky, succinctly glossing Aristotle, calls "virtue friendships."[207] These are friendships in which we are concerned with promoting the other's "noble character."[208] Again, while much can be said in *eudaimonist* terms, I suspect that it is a perfectly familiar idea that loving someone involves a desire to bring about the best for them, which they reciprocate. Or, as Eagleton puts it,

> Love means creating for another the kind of space in which he can flourish, at the same time as he does this for you. It is to find one's happiness in being the reason for the happiness of another. It is not that you find your fulfilment in the same goal, like hitting the open road clasped together on a motor-cycle, but ... that you each find your fulfilment in the other's.[209]

Beyond being the sort of relationship that seems uncontroversially to be overwhelmingly valuable, *philia* carries with it an inherent drive toward maximisation. We want not merely to *meet* the conditions for the other's happiness, but to do *as much as we can* for them. As with our own flourishing (of which *philia* seems a necessary part), there is a drive toward the best state, rather than a merely satisfactory one.

Here the Immoralist may feel a need to interject. It may very well be the case that *some* people are essential to my *eudaimonia*, but that is a reason to consider *their* interests above my own, not the interests of everyone. In small communities like the

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[206] Happiness, pp161-171.
[207] Happiness, pp159-160.
[208] Happiness, p159.
[209] After Theory, p169.

polis or traditional African communities, it may well have been the case that my immediate "web of love" intersected with a network of other such webs in a way that demanded my concern for just about everyone, but this is patently not true of the modern world. I cannot be expected to love *everyone*.

Tabensky can concede this point, noting that there are "psychological limits"[210] to the number of people we can love:

> So when I say that one must be concerned for one's community, I am not making the radically unreasonable claim that one must love every member of one's community (if someone claimed that they love everyone then they would either be lying, or they would simply have no idea of what they were talking about). Rather, I merely think … that one must *care* for one's community at large.[211]

Here *care* "involves ethical directedness toward others, but [not] necessarily intimacy of the sort we have in our primary relationships (although, of course, our primary relationships are to a greater or lesser degree relationships of care)."[212] It is worth noting that this ethical directedness cannot properly be called "care" if it does not issue in the urge to respond to the situations of others, that is, caring implies that we pursue the good of those we are moved to care for, where possible, but what is it about loving certain specific others that depends on our moral directedness toward others generally?

Tabensky argues, in the best traditions of the Virtue Ethical focus on pedagogy, that much of the understanding we need to achieve *eudaimonia* can only be obtained through exposure to virtue friendships, since:

> In sharing with intimates we also ideally learn about human joy and suffering, and we learn to understand how circumstances (internal and external) impinge upon the quality of our lives. Moreover, in sharing with virtue friends, one most perfectly learns about virtue, and hence one is in the best possible position to act towards others as demanded by our ever-changing circumstances.[213]

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[210] Happiness, p177.
[211] Happiness, p177. Italics in original. It is significant that "community at large" means the global community here.
[212] Happiness, p209.
[213] Happiness, p165.

While this is certainly true and a powerful reason to pursue virtue friendships, such a traditionally pedagogical approach misses two interlinked aspects of our *philia* relations: that they require a base level of virtue to function and that they can go quite badly wrong. This point rests on the fairly developed understanding of human joy and suffering and of character, needed in order to identify those *phronemoi* capable of guiding us in virtue friendships. Here Aristotle notes that:

> The friendship of bad people … turns out to be an evil. For, because of their lack of stability, they share in bad pursuits, and turn evil through becoming like one another.[214]

We cannot take for granted that we will necessarily be able to distinguish good influences from bad, and certainly not without an already reasonably developed understanding of the good and of human character. Given the myriad ways our lives could go wrong, it seems reasonable to assume at least as many ways the company we keep could turn out to be vicious, encouraging bad habits, bringing out the worst in us, or simply lowering the standards by which we judge the proper treatment of others (to say nothing of our vulnerability to "straightforward maximisers," confidence-tricksters and abusive partners). This is even more problematic for those who have not had the opportunity to develop deep friendships, as Tabensky notes:

> An individual who spent his or her life wandering from short-term friendship to short-term friendship would only develop a correspondingly superficial understanding of how people are. For this reason, he or she would not have any significant point of comparison between the ongoing journey of his or her character and the character of others.[215]

This is reminiscent of Barbie's position earlier, so let's bring her back: while it is true that Barbie wants meaningful relationships with *philoi* concerned with her flourishing, she lacks the context to recognise that this is not what her vapid friends and subtly abusive partner (call him Ken) offer. If sufficient insight to avoid Barbie's dilemma is available only to those who have already avoided it, then a great many people unlucky enough not to land in paradigmatically virtuous friendships are doomed. Luckily, intimate relations with *philia* are not the only place that Barbie can look to build an understanding of the human good. "Ethical directedness toward

[214] Nicomachean Ethics, Book IX:12:1172 a8-14. Translation by Roger Crisp, (Cambridge Texts in the History of Philosophy), Cambridge, 2000, p182.
[215] Happiness, p168.

others"[216] (care) in a more general sense can provide Barbie with a picture of how it is with people, over a far broader range than her immediate *philoi* can furnish. Though she cannot understand the situations of these others in the same depth as those of her *philoi*, it seems that the breadth of examples may go some way toward compensating. Although caring for others in general is no substitute for the moral education provided by *philia*, it is useful in framing basic parameters of what is valuable. These parameters, basic ethical responses, can provide a framework for distinguishing virtuous characters in others. Here the suggestion is that noticing that Ken never tips waitresses, is cold to the plight of refugees, ignores beggars and kicks sand into the faces of others on the beach could provide Barbie with insight into other aspects of his character, if she is attentive to the situation of these others, and capable of putting herself in their places. This attention to the broader picture of human values should allow her a context against which to analyse the actions of Ken and her vapid friends, and to better discern the good life and what is conducive to it.

So we have reason to cultivate an interest in the situation of others, reason to care for their situation, because doing so orients us toward a picture of human values and thus allows us to properly distinguish between those relationships capable of further developing this awareness and issuing in our *eudaimonia* and those which detract from it.

Here the Immoralist may wonder whether this is the whole trick. Though it seems useful to be sure about *philia*, this may not seem *essential* to our *being people*. But the value of care does not stop at allowing us to refine our *philoi*-selection criteria. *Philia* and *care* for others continue to inform one another, our ever increasing understanding of the myriad complications of the human situation better allowing us to respond to those we love by recognising the minute particulars of their situations. We are not merely able to respond to a broader, subtler range of problems vexing our *philoi.* Our deeper understanding of their situations and the nearby possible situations, allows us to contribute more positively toward their flourishing. Since "one does not learn the virtues once and for all such that, once they are learned, there is nothing more left to do but to act virtuously,"[217] and love is a maximising urge, driving us toward the best for our *philoi*, our investment in carrying the lessons of care to the context of *philia* never diminishes.

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[216] Happiness, p209.
[217] Happiness, 169.

To demonstrate why this constitutes a clear reason to cultivate ethical directedness toward others, let us examine one more example. Imagine a man (call him Adolf), not particularly concerned with the plight of others generally, that is, he does not care very much about others, and spends very little time attending to the particulars of other people's lives. Though he has friends,[218] these friends share his perspective on others in general and do little to drive him to consider the lives and plights of those beyond their immediate circle. He would not be convinced by Tabensky's claim that his circle entails a connection to webs of love. In his experience, the world is a place with limited horizons within which caring is practicable. As a result, he has a "superficial understanding of how people are"[219] and is frequently vexed by other people's behaviour and motivations. Given his limited conception of what goods are possible, he is not tortured by this myopia, though his life is limited or distorted, it is only so relative to alternatives he does not grasp and thus insufficient to motivate any higher realisation of his *eudaimonia*.

This is not the end of the story and not the only sense in which Adolf's life is tragic, because he is in love. An obtuse man, unaware of and thus unable to develop his *eudaimon telos*, is abstractly tragic, but the same man in love, but unable to properly express himself or read the nuanced needs of his inamorata, is aware of his own shortcomings. Adolf loves Winnie,[220] and she him. They each find their happiness in the happiness of the other, but Winnie shares Adolf's lack of care for the rest of the world, and the concomitant superficial understanding of the good. This changes the nature of their tragedy significantly. Adolf does not simply want Winnie to be happy, he wants her to be fulfilled, to be satisfied, and to have surfeit of all that is valuable. This maximising drive is basic to his love for her; it is a brute fact about his response to her, axiologically. He *cannot but* want this for her, but he also cannot provide it for her, or even begin to. Adolf's shallow understanding of the human good is no longer simply insufficient relative to some hypothetical model of *eudaimonia,* it is insufficient in a manner he finds frustratingly immediate: he tells stories which drive her idiot brother to tears, but is too disconnected to recognise it until after the

[218] I think it likely that such relationships would be instrumental or pleasure-based, rather than demonstrations of *philia*. To keep the example simple, I will not engage with whether such friends love him.

[219] Happiness, p168.

[220] Named for the Verlocs in Joseph Conrad's The Secret Agent, Penguin, 1907 (Rpt 2000). For the sake of this thought experiment, the two are genuinely in love with one another, in the sense outlined by Eagleton. Conrad gives no indication that anything like this is true of his Adolf and Winnie.

fact; he ignores her when she needs attention and dismisses her suggestions hurtfully; he propositions her sexually at awkward moments, including after clumsily announcing her brother's death. He is aware of having hurt her and tortured by it, but unable to avoid doing so. She reciprocates the relation. This is the sense in which, as Martha Nussbaum has stated "obtuseness is a moral failing."[221] For both, their failure to grasp the human good in any detail is not a hypothetical imperfection, but a tangible incapacity to bring about the good they most value in the world.

Note that we need not be quite as insensitive as Adolf and Winnie to find ourselves in their position. The drive to bring about the best for our *philoi* is intrinsic to loving them at all, which seems a necessary part of any good (human) life, but if orienting toward such a good is intrinsic to being human, success in realising it is not. Properly realising *philia* is an achievement and one that depends on our capacity to care for others. Like individuation, love is an activity Eagleton would call "proper to our species being." No good life could be complete without *philia* and we orient toward it as naturally as we do toward our own good (precisely because it is partly constitutive of our good).[222]

To summarize, *philia* is indispensable to realising the good life and in that sense essential to being human, but, the full realisation of loving relationships with certain others entails that I care about others generally (where care entails directedness toward their situations, and an awareness of others as living the human situation). Unlike the case of Barbie's rationality, the inherent drive to maximise the good for my *philoi* provides a reason *for me* to pursue the best realisation of the good, rather than accept the level I achieve. If we take these as our premises, the conclusion is that living the successfully good human life *cannot but* be living a life involving care for others. This axiological account thus yields a form of *umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu* that should be sufficient to convince even the Immoralist that the good of others is in her own interest, *if* she values any *philoi*.

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[221] Love's Knowledge, OUP, 1990, p156.

[222] If this claim seems controversial, it is still a conditional – those who do not find *philia* sufficient to motivate pursuing it will not be moved by this argument. I think that psychopaths, as described by Singer in Practical Ethics, pp328-330, would probably be unmoved. Singer sees this as a *reductio* against *eudaimonist* or virtue-oriented models, but the psychopaths' distance from care and the needs of others is a problem for *any* ethical model. It seems to me that being sufficient to convince non-psychopaths to care for others is a reasonable yardstick for any model and my account looks capable of that.

The Value of Solidarity

An account like the one I have just presented is possible for any virtue; as with the example of health, it is possible to explain the rationality of our commitment to a robust virtue by noting how many valuable things depend on it, but this does not tell the whole story. What distinguishes Axiological accounts from Game Theory is the emphasis on what we find valuable and *eudaimonism* notes that robust values are valuable not merely because they enable or point toward the valuable, but because they *are themselves valuable*. It is rational to pursue my own health, but it is also something I find valuable in itself. In much the same way, while my *philia* relations are supremely valuable, there is also value in directly experiencing what Joseph Conrad called

> the subtle, but invincible conviction of solidarity that knits together the loneliness of innumerable hearts: [the] solidarity in dreams, in joy, in sorrow, in aspirations, in illusions, in hope, in fear, which binds men to each other, which binds together all humanity - the dead to the living and the living to the unborn ...[223]

Like being healthy, or being virtuous generally, acting from and contributing toward this Conradian sense of solidarity is robustly rewarding in itself. It is unlikely that this is a coincidence, since we have already noted the myriad ways in which it is most rational, for the individual and society, to be other-regarding, there are probably sound functionalist evolutionary reasons that we find such activities valuable. But, again, this is one thought too many. As Eagleton notes,

> You do not need to find an answer to why human beings live together and enjoy each other's company – some of the time, at least. It is in their nature to do so. It is a fact about them as animals. But when it becomes 'fully' a fact – when it exists as an activity in itself, not simply as a means to an end beyond it – it also becomes a source of value.[224]

No *eudaimonist* account could be complete without noting this inherent value in solidarity with others, so strongly emphasised in African philosophical accounts, but resting on the value of solidarity alone admits straw-man attacks like Wolf's, and cannot convince the Immoralist. As such, I have built my account from the opposite

[223] Preface to The Nigger of the 'Narcissus', Penguin, 1897 (Rpt. 1988) .
[224] After Theory, p172.

direction, emphasising the necessity of other-directedness to our flourishing suggested by the claim *umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu*. The pressure toward other-directed goods arises from our shared investment in the general good, that capacity for positive appraisal by the community, the opportunity to shift social standards toward other-directed goods and to maximise our own rationality. In addition, the value of solidarity, both in itself and as a necessary condition for *philia*, compel us to pursue the good of others as a necessary part of our own flourishing. As such, the pressure toward the good of others generated by assuming Good–>Ought is not at odds with our own interests, but a necessary part of them. It thus becomes apparent why we should not be looking for "moral relaxation."[225] Such relaxation would amount to relenting in the pursuit of our own most meaningful lives, which hardly sounds as appealing.

Eudaimonia, Euthanasia, and Minimal Supererogation

Having established that positive axiological pressure is intrinsic to our interests, not opposed to them, I return to the Minimal-Supererogationism left standing at the end of Chapter 2. Then it seemed that martyrdom, by virtue of negating our capacity to experience any value, is sufficient to negate value-oriented behaviour - but I am not convinced that this holds up. It seems to me that our reticence about martyrdom may carry less weight than Minimal-Supererogationists think it does, for a number of reasons. The first is that a significant amount of our reticence boils down to a legitimate squeamishness about crude generalist impositions. We certainly do not want to demand of recruits generally that they throw themselves on grenades, always and everywhere, but just because *we* cannot have sufficient information tell any specific person that she ought to sacrifice herself, it does not follow that she cannot come to a true assessment of the values present in her situation, to the effect that it is rational to sacrifice herself. We are not looking for a precedent on which to ground a general imperative, but we are looking to establish whether there can be *some* situations in which martyrdom is the rational response. I think that much of the squeamishness rightly attached to the first sort of question evaporates when we seek to answer the second.

[225] Supererogation, p174.

Of course, we need not cast the situation in generalist terms to find the appeal of martyrdom counterintuitive. Thaddeus Metz provides the following Minimal-Supererogationist example:

> Suppose that by letting yourself get eaten alive by a lion in a particularly drawn-out and gruesome way, you would morally reform [an] initially sadistic crowd. That is, they would develop whatever virtues you find of importance (compassion, revulsion at what's repulsive, whatever). Here, your version of the principle that good implies ought entails that you are morally obligated to let the lion eat you alive for the sake of developing virtue in others, but, so the argument goes, that's absurd ...[226]

At first glance, this example seems convincingly absurd, but this basic description also holds true of many paradigmatic instances of "heroic" martyrdom: wasting hunger-strikes, self-immolation, and standing down a tank one knows will not stop. All of these gruesome deaths have been used to bring about some change in the collective assessment of unacceptable situations, which was taken as sufficient reason by the martyrs concerned. Since it would be begging the question to assert that none of these agents were rational, the question of whether any such act can be rational for the *agent* cannot simply rest on the idea that the good of others can entail an unpleasant end. Rather, it rests on a far more detailed description of the situation, what is at stake and the agent's own unique situation. While actions based on underdescribed situations naturally sound absurd, this does not exclude the possibility that a fuller description could make the rationality of the action perfectly apparent.

As the above examples highlight, martyrs tend to be the sorts of people who are committed to causes, the sorts of radicals whose political or religious convictions drive them to take some issue as their own. Here the Minimal-Supererogationist may note the importance of the choice to sacrifice oneself, exemplified in the declaration "no slave's unlife shall murder me/ for i will freely die,"[227] but not all martyrs are dedicated political or religious radicals. Take, for example, the man who surrenders his place on a sinking ship's lifeboat so that others may survive, or the ubiquitous grenade-stopping recruit. What these people have in common with self-immolating

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[226]In correspondence, responding to an earlier version of my second chapter delivered at the Philosophy Spring Colloquium, September 11 2005, Rhodes University.

[227] From e.e. cummings' poem *Thanksgiving (1956)*, in Selected Poems 1923-1958, Penguin, 1960 (Repr. 1967), p86. The poem refers to the Hungarian Uprising of 1956.

monks, or students in Tiananmen Square is not commitment to a cause, but responsiveness to a situation. While a passionate political or religious belief is likely to focus our attention on the particulars of certain situations in a way uncommon to those without it, it is a frequent, not a necessary characteristic of such attention.[228]

However much these responses may address our initial reasons for finding the rationality of martyrdom counterintuitive, there is still the central claim of Minimal-Supererogationism, that Prichard and Williams' integrity claim will always exempt martyrdom from being a requirement. That is, that my ongoing capacity to experience value *at all* will always be more valuable *to me* than any alternative.

I think there is a significant problem with this claim, in that it treats the agent's ongoing existence as a constant value. *Eudaimonism*, uncontroversially the position most pre-occupied with the value of life to the agent, does not make this assumption. On a *eudaimonist* model, we value the overall structure of our lives, but this does not entail that our relation to that structure will be the same at every stage, in every situation. Our *eudaimon telos* is a narrative, its development constrained by our personal history and the shifting and contingent opportunities for realising certain goals, but not others. We may, for example, have more valuable experiences behind us than are likely ahead. Alternatively, our lives so far may have been such that only a particularly significant eleventh-hour action could allow us to consider them worthwhile (this description probably applies to Sydney Carton in Dickens' A Tale of Two Cities[229]).

Here it is important that the narrative structure forces us to weigh realisable *consequences*, not simply realisable goods: I may well survive, but living in the knowledge that I allowed women and children to drown, or an innocent man to go to *la guillotine*, may not be the sort of life in which I could find much value. Evaluating our lives from within the shifting narrative of our *eudaimon telos*, we are constantly re-evaluating the sort of *eudaimonia* achievable from our current position and no values remain fixed. Since we are articulating toward the greater shape of our lives, there does not seem to be anything inherently irrational about the idea that willingly ending the narrative at a certain point can yield the life of greatest value (since we can

[228]The recruit, of course, is not really in a position to evaluate very much at all. As such, it is probably best at this point to leave him behind, his rhetorical mission accomplished.
[229] Charles Dickens, A Tale of Two Cities, Penguin, 1970.

err either in the excess or the deficiency). That is, there is nothing about articulating toward *eudaimonia* that excludes *euthanasia*[230] as a constituent of it.

Here the Minimal-Supererogationist may interject. This response is slipping away from the force of the objection – while I may re-evaluate any particular project in my life, it does not follow that I can do the same for *living simpliciter*. The force of the integrity claim is precisely that the only context within which anything *can be* valuable, on a *eudaimonist* model, is my own experience of it. While I may re-evaluate and abandon any given project *within* my experience, I cannot, by definition, find anything *more valuable* than the context in which finding *anything at all* valuable is possible. Martyrdom may well be coherent on a religious model, in which there is necessarily a greater context for value than my own life, but a secular ethic does not have access to any context greater than the individual's ongoing valuing of things.

As we have already seen, there is a sense in which what we value is not limited simply to our own lives. Human lives generally, and good lives necessarily, involve us in relations of *philia*, which, as Eagleton noted, "means creating for another the kind of space in which he can flourish … it is to find one's happiness in being the reason for the happiness of another."[231] If our flourishing is realised through the flourishing of others, then *their* continued flourishing can be a coherent goal for us, regardless of whether we experience the value generated. This is immediately apparent in cases of straightforward sacrifice for those we love: we allow our family onto the lifeboat, die for our band of brothers, or go to *la guillotine* so that our *inamorata* may live a good life.

Our *philoi* can be the source of value even in less obvious cases. It seems coherent that there may be some situations such that it is reason enough that sacrificing ourselves makes the world a better place for those we love. We may stand against the advancing tanks so that they live in a less oppressive society, or allow strangers to take the lifeboat so that our *philoi* live in a world that believes in exemplary other-directed goodness.

Here it is important to note that life is complicated, offering numerous options for realising various goods and it is reasonably rare to find ourselves in the sorts of bottleneck from which the greatest realisable good can only be reached by sacrificing

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[230] Here I use the term simply in it's literal sense "the good death" defined relative to the good life. This usage probably encompasses the more limited contemporary meaning of the term, but I am not addressing that issue directly.

[231] After Theory, p169.

ourselves. Legitimate instances may, in fact, be far rarer than the number of martyrs seem to suggest. Like any assessment, we can be *wrong* about the call to martyr ourselves, but there seems nothing incoherent about claiming that *some* legitimate instances occur: disasters, conflicts, and grenades happen, and bring with them moments which demand extraordinary evaluations.

So the situations in which it is rational to sacrifice our lives will be difficult to discern, depending on such minute particulars that no general rule could be derived or invoked from such instances, but since our *eudaimonia cannot but* involve the eudaimonia of our *philoi*, and the broader context within which they can flourish, there is nothing inherently irrational or incoherent in claiming that such instances occur. As such, not even martyrdom is always and everywhere exempt from Good–> Ought and not even Minimal-Supererogationism holds.

Conclusion

I have argued that our teleological engagement with the world commits us significantly to pursuing the general good and the good of others. Though the Immoralist may be tempted to exploit the benefits of other-directed behaviour without pursuing the good of others herself, a proper understanding of the relation between caring for others and realising the flourishing of our *philoi* casts *umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu* as a corollary to *Eudaimonism simpliciter*. We have reason to pursue the flourishing of others, that is, because our own flourishing depends upon it. As such, there need not always be a contradiction between self-interest and other-directed good, as these frequently coincide. Finally, I have argued that the narrative structure of *eudaimonia* and our commitment to the flourishing of our *philoi* can allow for instances of *euthanasia,* that is, a context in which martyrdom can be the greatest good for the agent. As such, we have no reason to be even Minimal-Supererogationists.

Conclusion

In this thesis, I have argued that we have no reason to be Supererogationists of any stripe. I began by noting how counterintuitive we find the Supererogationist claim that "there is nothing paradoxical in a good and meritorious action being completely optional, even if it is morally better than alternative non-optional actions."[232] I spent Chapter 1 arguing that this initial strangeness does not fade as we examine the concept more deeply. In fact, a closer examination of the deontic presuppositions and the *ad hoc* historical provenance of supererogation provides even more reason to doubt the coherence of the concept.

Although Susan Wolf's and, ultimately, David Heyd's Supererogationist accounts cannot provide strong enough reason to allay our discomfort at defining certain goods as supererogatory, extant Anti-Supererogationist arguments from Peter Singer and Kwame Gyekye were not sufficient to scupper Supererogationism. As such, I sought to provide an Anti-Supererogationism capable of responding to Heyd's arguments, with sufficient nuance to generate a detailed picture of why we pursue certain goods and not others. I began this project in Chapter 2, noting that almost all of the justification of Supererogationism derives from rejections of Good–>Ought. One of these, the *reductio* that Good–>Ought entails absurd over-obligation, is the basis of almost all Supererogationism, while three others were most developed in Heyd's work. I argued for an Anti-Supererogationist position that circumvents these negative arguments, while incorporating the benefits they proposed to hold on to through supererogation. I concluded Chapter 2 noting that what I call Minimal-Supererogationism, which argues that only acts of martyrdom are supererogatory, may stand against my account, since such acts seem always to be exempted by Bernard Williams' objection from Integrity.

Settling the question of Minimal-Supererogationism, however, depended on the proper account of the relation between Axiology and ethical imperatives, and this relation was the focus of Chapter 3. Here I argued that Supererogationists must assert a naively simplistic account of Axiology for their position to be coherent, and that any sufficiently detailed account of the role of Axiological evaluation in ethics leaves the category of Supererogation looking incoherent and unnecessary. Examining the possibility that a Kantian Virtue Theory accommodating Axiology could still give sufficient scope to duty to justify Qualified-Supererogationism, I argued that such a

[232] Supererogation, p165.

model cannot answer the Immoralist's question. Since this question must be answered and is best answered by *Eudaimonism* (which is essentially Axiological), a properly rigorous account of Axiology should lead us to adopt a fully Anti-Supererogationist *Eudaimonist* Virtue Ethic (thus providing independent reason to pursue the *eudaimonist* line Wolf failed to rule out, discussed in Chapter 1).

In Chapter 4, I took up the challenge of sketching a detailed account of axiologically-derived ethical pressure capable of convincing even the Immoralist of the pressure toward other-directed goods. Here I argued that our teleological engagement with the world commits us significantly to pursuing the general good and the good of others. Though the Immoralist may be tempted to exploit the benefits of other-directed behaviour without pursuing the good of others herself, a proper understanding of the relation between caring for others and realising the flourishing of our *philoi* casts *umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu* as a corollary to *Eudaimonism simpliciter*. We have reason to pursue the flourishing of others, that is, because our own flourishing depends upon it. As such, there need not always be a contradiction between self-interest and other-directed good, as these coincide frequently enough to support a *eudaimonist* picture of the Good.

Having developed this detailed account of our relation to the valuable, I returned to the question of Minimal-Supererogationism. Here I argued that the narrative structure of *eudaimonia* and our commitment to the flourishing of our *philoi* can allow for instances of *euthanasia,* that is, a context in which martyrdom can be the greatest good for the agent. As such, we have no reason to find even acts of martyrdom to be categorically beyond the scope of our moral responsibility.

If, *pace* Dancy, Supererogationism, and not its refutation, is "one of the positions of which Aristotle would say that nobody would hold it except as the result of a theory," [233] then the failure of the theory which supports it should leave us with no reason at all to hold it. In addition, a proper recognition of the relation between value and oughts generates a strong reason to be positively Anti-Supererogationist. Such a move does not negate our autonomy by removing our "right to moral relaxation."[234] Rather, it denies strict distinction between our own good and that of others. It reminds us that *umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu*, that our good is caught up with the good of others. If this

[233] Moral Reasons, p131.
[234] Supererogation, p174.

"altruistically-freighted morality"[235] requires more of us than Supererogationism does, then that is all to the Good.

[235] Tradition and Modernity, p67.

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