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The Ethics of Living Well

Moore, Joseph Carter

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THE ETHICS OF LIVING WELL

Joseph Carter Moore

A DISSERTATION

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OF PRINCETON UNIVERSITY

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Abstract

In this dissertation, I propose a novel form of eudaimonist normative ethical theory. Eudaimonism holds that living well, or human flourishing, is the ultimate end of ethical action and institutions. I argue that to live well is to successfully engage in valuable activities that one values. And I outline a theory of ethically good actions and institutions that enable living well.

In Chapter 1, I argue that traditional virtue-ethical conceptions of living well are at odds with eudaimonism. Character virtues are not plausible ultimate ends because they are instrumentally, rather than finally, beneficial. Intellectual virtues are not reasonable ultimate ends because not everyone can simultaneously develop and exercise these virtues. In Chapter 2, I clarify the concept of living well, distinguishing it from nearby concepts like living morally, living rationally, being subjectively happy, and having well-being.

In Chapters 3-6, I explicate and defend the four necessary conditions of the hybrid value conception of living well: activity, valuing, value, and success. I argue that valuing consists in stably identifying with favoring mental states, and I canvass several compatible metaethical and first-order theories of value. In Chapters 7-10, I respond to objections and argue that other potential conditions like positive subjective experience and virtue are not necessary for living well.

Finally, in Chapter 11, I outline a eudaimonist normative ethical theory that includes the domains of prudence, morality, and politics. I argue that we should act so as to create robust conditions of security and discretion in order to enable, but not necessarily cause, flourishing. We do so by socially and politically coordinating general compliance with prosocial norms and laws that include familiar duties of aid and non-interference. I compare and contrast this teleological ethical theory with various forms of consequentialism.

To my family,

for living well with me.

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Preface

Since the first time I read the *Nicomachean Ethics*, I thought Aristotle had the exact right idea about how to do practical philosophy: first, figure out the kind of life we should aim to have, then figure out what we have to do in order to live that way. What could be a more compelling basis for an ethical theory than living the good life? Certainly not doing what one has most reason to do or acting on principles that no one could reasonably reject or maximizing value "from the point of view of the universe." These modern ways of thinking about morality do not have the same grip. I do not care about the perspective of an uncaring universe. I care that I use my limited time on Earth to live life to the fullest, and I care that other people have the opportunity to do the same. I want an ethical theory that will help us get what we want out of life. That is the only kind of ethical theory worth following.

"Well begun is half done," but unfortunately Aristotle did not work out the second half of his theory quite so well. He was right to treat the good life as the fundamental aim of ethics, but wrong about what makes a good life. His primary candidate is philosophy, and while we can certainly respect his enthusiasm, we should all be able to admit that philosophy is not *the* good life to which everyone should aspire. There are so many other goods things in life worth pursuing. And his second candidate for the good life is prudently taking care of oneself and morally taking care of others. Again, these are great things to do. But they do not really answer to what we should do with our lives. Once you finish all the self-care you could possibly need for the time being, you will need to figure out what to do with the rest of your free time. And if you spend the rest of your time taking care of other people, they will need to figure out what to do with all of their now-free time. So, neither of Aristotle's proposals about the good life really answers the fundamental question of how people in general should aim to live, what they should be working towards. The

even greater misfortune, however, is that Aristotle's mistaken views about the good life have become, in modern philosophers' minds, part and parcel of his eudaimonist method of ethics. Virtue ethicists are almost the only normative ethicists nowadays who still explicitly frame ethics (or morality) in terms of living a good life.

By my lights, it is time to buck this trend. My aim here is to put forward a new conception of the ancient concept of living a good life for the ultimate purpose of constructing a new kind of eudaimonist ethical theory. But instead of attempting to derive a conception of the good human life from a grand theory of human nature or distinctive human capacities, I propose to start our inquiry simply by thinking about the kinds of things we actually want out of life—things like falling in love, raising children, studying interesting topics, developing useful skills, pursuing impactful careers, enjoying natural and artistic beauty, playing games or sports, setting records, leaving something behind, and so on. Hopefully, we can identify some common features that these things share and that will explain why they contribute to living a good life. Then, once we have a working conception of the good life, we can engage in our ethical theorizing in earnest, determining how we should act in order to help ourselves and others to live good lives. We cannot hope to settle every ethical question in the space of this work, but we can at least correct Aristotle's mistake and set eudaimonist ethical theory on a promising new course.

Part I: Eudaimonism and Living Well

Chapter 1: Against Eudaimonist Virtue Ethics

1.1 Introduction

Virtue ethics is considered one of three main schools of ethical thought, alongside consequentialism and deontology, and the most influential way of developing and vindicating virtue ethics has been to appeal to the role of virtue in realizing *eudaimonia*—the good life, happiness, or human flourishing. This eudaimonism is Aristotle's method of ethics, as well as that of the Stoics and Epicureans (see, e.g., Annas 1993), and it is the method of contemporary, Neo-Aristotelian virtue ethicists such as Hursthouse (1999), Foot (2001), and Annas (2011). According to Aristotle, human flourishing consists in the rational exercise of human virtues, specifically intellectual virtues like wisdom and practical character virtues[1] like justice, courage, and moderation. In other words, we flourish by acting virtuously in our personal and social lives and by engaging in philosophical contemplation. Today's Neo-Aristotelians continue to hold a virtue conception of flourishing, though they tend to focus on character virtues to the exclusion of the comprehensive intellectual virtue of theoretical, or philosophical, wisdom.

This conception of flourishing is typically undermotivated. These modern authors, as well as their critics, often write as if virtue ethics is a foregone conclusion once we have embarked on the eudaimonist project of basing an ethical theory around the concept of the good life. I argue that this is a mistake, on two grounds: first, because there are forms of eudaimonism which are not virtue-ethical and, second, because virtue-ethical versions are actually comparatively *bad* versions of eudaimonism. The primary concern of this paper is to establish this second point by objecting

[1] "Ethical virtues" would be a more literal translation (or transliteration) of the Greek, *ēthikai aretai*. I do not intend to weigh in on debates about the various merits and demerits of different translations. Here I call them "character virtues" simply for the sake of clarity, since I will already be using "ethical" in a broad sense that need not be connected to virtue.

to virtue-ethical eudaimonism ("virtue eudaimonism" for short). More specifically, I object to the conjunction of two views, (1) a virtue conception of flourishing and (2) eudaimonism, which holds that human flourishing is the ultimate ethically justifying end of action. I am not objecting to any and all appeals to virtues within an ethical theory, either as a reliable way of achieving flourishing (on another, non-virtue conception) or as part of a deontic theory of right action (as in Hursthouse 1999).[2] My conclusion will simply be that virtuous activity is a bad candidate to constitute flourishing and thus to be the starting point for eudaimonist ethics.

The most familiar form of virtue eudaimonism is character virtue eudaimonism, which tells us to cultivate and exercise character virtues in order to flourish, because this virtuous activity just constitutes human flourishing and flourishing is the ultimate goal of worthwhile action. As I will explain below, the main problem for this kind of ethical theory is that the moral and prudential activities which paradigmatically exhibit these virtues are not ultimate ends in themselves but serve further ends, which runs counter to the eudaimonist view of flourishing as the ultimate end of action.

Most modern virtue eudaimonists run afoul of this problem but, notably, Aristotle does not, since he considers flourishing most of all to consist in the exercise of intellectual virtue in philosophical contemplation and not the exercise of character virtue. The objection, in brief, to this intellectualist view is a dilemma: while intellectual activity is a better candidate than character-virtuous activity to be the ultimate end of action, the ethical theory which results will necessarily be either repugnantly elitist and hierarchical, treating most people as the rightful servants of the intellectual few, or woefully incomplete, failing to give prescriptions or advice to most people.

[2] Thus, I am not relying upon existing objections to virtue ethics, such as situationist challenges to the existence of stable character traits (cf. Doris 2002) or the charge of egoism (cf. Hurka 2001, 219-255).

To begin, I review in §1.2 what Aristotle and his modern successors have said about virtue and flourishing in order to establish a standard picture of virtue eudaimonism and its two main forms, character-based and intellectual. Then, in order to prepare for my objections to follow, I explain in §1.3 what ethical eudaimonism is in abstraction from its familiar virtue-ethical gloss. This will include explaining the functional role of flourishing in a eudaimonist ethical theory as the ultimate justificatory end of action. In §1.4, I present the non-ultimacy objection to character virtue eudaimonism, as described briefly above. I consider and reject responses on behalf of the character virtue eudaimonist in §1.5. I then repeat this procedure for intellectual virtue eudaimonism, presenting the elitism objection in §1.6 and considering responses in §1.7. §1.8 concludes the chapter by considering whether and how we can save virtue eudaimonism, including the full Aristotelian picture.

1.2 Eudaimonist Virtue Ethics, Ancient and Modern

The *locus classicus* for both eudaimonism and virtue ethics is Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* (*NE*). Aristotle declares in the first book that flourishing (*eudaimonia*) is the end of actions (I.7 1097b20-21), by which he means the best or highest good, that "for the sake of which the rest [i.e., all other actions and crafts] are done" (1097a18-19).[3] Thus Aristotle is a eudaimonist. After the famous Function Argument, he concludes that "the human good [i.e., flourishing] is activity of soul on the basis of virtue, and, if the virtues are many, on the basis of the best and most final" (1098a16-18). So, Aristotle is also a virtue ethicist subscribing to a virtue conception of flourishing. And he goes on to tell us precisely what the relevant virtues are. At the end of the *NE*, Aristotle argues that the most flourishing human life is "the life based on the intellect [*nous*]" (X.7

[3] All references to Greek texts are to the Oxford Classical Texts editions (Aristotle 1894; 1957a; 1957b; 1991; Plato 1901; 1903; 2003). All translations and paraphrases are my own.

1178a6-8), which is characterized by the exercise of wisdom (*sophia*) in the activity of philosophical contemplation (*theōria*).[4] "And secondly [most flourishing] is the life based on the other virtue" (X.8 1178a9), meaning character virtues like justice, courage, and moderation, which are the subject of the largest part of the *NE*. So already in Aristotle we see two distinct strains of virtue eudaimonism, one based upon the exercise of intellectual virtue, the other based upon the exercise of character virtues.

Many modern virtue ethicists also follow Aristotle in being eudaimonists.[5] When Anscombe (1958) sparked the modern revival of virtue ethics, she called to abandon the modern ethics of obligation in favor of a classically inspired investigation into both virtue and human flourishing. A number of virtue ethicists have taken up Anscombe's call. Hursthouse, for example, defines virtues as character traits that "a human being needs for *eudaimonia*, to flourish or live well" (1999, 167). Foot invokes "an understanding of the word 'happiness' that is close to Aristotle's *eudaimonia* in that operation in conformity with the virtues belongs to its meaning" (2001, 97). Annas claims that "[h]appiness is (at least in part) constituted by virtuous activity" (2011, 165). All of these authors assert that virtue is necessary, if not sufficient, for happiness in the sense of flourishing.[6] And in all cases the claim seems to be not simply that virtuous activity is instrumentally necessary for flourishing, but that it actually (partly) constitutes flourishing.

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[4] Throughout *NE* X.7, Aristotle switches terminology, without comment, between *nous* (1177a13, 20, 21; 1177b19; 1178a8), *sophia*/*sophos* (1177a24; 1177a29, 32), *philosophia* (1177a25), and words based on the *theōr-* root, like *theōrētikē* (1177a18, 28; 1177b19), *theōrein* (1177a21), and *theōrēsai* (1177b2). This is good evidence that he took all of these to be tightly connected: wisdom (*sophia*) is the complete virtue of the theoretical intellect (*nous*), and the exercise of this virtue is philosophy or *theōria*.

[5] Many, but not all. Examples of non-eudaimonist virtue ethicists include Slote (2001) and Zagzebski (1996). Since I am only objecting to virtue eudaimonism, I am not objecting to any non-eudaimonist form of virtue ethics.

[6] Foot, for one, doubts the sufficiency claim. Annas does not intend to argue for the claim that virtue is either necessary or sufficient for happiness (2011, 147). But it is hard to view it as unnecessary if it does indeed (partly) constitute happiness. As well, though she does not argue for it, Annas expresses sympathy for the even stronger claim that virtuous activity is sufficient for happiness (168, fn. 19), so I doubt I am mischaracterizing her position.

The standard list of paradigmatic character virtues shared by Aristotle and most contemporary virtue ethicists includes justice, courage, moderation, honesty, and generosity.[7] Aristotle also recognizes many character virtues that contemporary virtue ethicists do not much discuss, and which they may or may not accept as virtues, e.g., greatness of soul (magnanimity), proper anger, proper shame, wittiness, and friendliness (pleasantness).[8] And contemporary virtue ethicists often recognize virtues which Aristotle does not, such as hope, beneficence or charity, compassion or empathy, patience, humility, and industriousness (Foot 1978; Adams 2006). The character virtue eudaimonism endorsed by Aristotle and modern Neo-Aristotelians takes some number of such candidate virtues to constitute flourishing.

Interestingly, while Aristotle considers flourishing to consist most of all in the exercise of intellectual virtue, modern authors tend to ignore intellectual virtue eudaimonism and defend only character virtue eudaimonism. Hursthouse (1999) and Annas (2011), for example, only discuss character virtues and practical wisdom, never intellectual virtue or theoretical wisdom. To be sure, some virtue epistemologists are interested in character-like intellectual virtues such as epistemic justice, intellectual courage, and intellectual humility (e.g., Roberts and Wood 2007; Fricker 2007). But none of these amount to the comprehensive theoretical wisdom which Aristotle prizes above all else. Modern Neo-Aristotelians, then, tend to spurn the central Aristotelian doctrine that flourishing consists most of all in philosophy. This could stem from an intuitive aversion to Aristotle's intellectual elitism, a felt objection along the lines of the one I offer below in §1.6. But this is speculation on my part. All we find from modern virtue eudaimonists is silence on the topic. I intend to fill this gap by explicitly objecting to intellectual virtue eudaimonism.

[7] Hursthouse, for example, names these as part of the "standard list" (1999, 28).
[8] Aristotle describes his particular virtues and corresponding vices in *NE* II.7 (cf. a somewhat different list in *Eudemian Ethics* II.3 1220b38-1221b3).

1.3 Eudaimonism

Given the pedigree and prevalence of specifically virtue-ethical forms of eudaimonism, it is easy to see how a strong association between eudaimonism and virtue ethics has arisen. Though he was not the first to investigate either *eudaimonia* or virtue, Aristotle's admirably systematic treatment of each in the *NE* has made this the canonical founding text for both ethical eudaimonism and virtue ethics in the Western tradition. Much of contemporary virtue ethics has been explicitly formulated in terms of human flourishing. The result, in the words of Baril, is that "[e]udaimonia and virtue ethics are interwoven, many extant virtue-ethical theories being eudaimonist, and many (perhaps most) extant eudaimonist theories being virtue-ethical" (2014, 17). Baril herself is careful to distinguish the two, but it is easy to see why someone might consider them equivalent, given the present state of the field.[9]

Nevertheless, I urge to distinguish eudaimonism from its specifically virtue-ethical forms, first because there are other forms of eudaimonism which are not virtue-ethical.[10] We can substantiate this claim before carefully defining eudaimonism, and this will help to motivate the definition to follow. At first glance, the feature of an ethical theory that most marks it as eudaimonist appears to be its organization around the concept of *eudaimonia*. But the virtue conception of *eudaimonia*, which identifies flourishing with having or exercising virtue, has never

[9] Parry and Thorsrud (2014), for example, identify eudaimonism with virtue ethics in their *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* entry on "Ancient Ethical Theory."

[10] What exactly virtue ethics is, what distinguishes it from other kinds of ethical theories like deontology and consequentialism, is up for debate. (For some discussion, see Crisp 1996, 5-8; Hursthouse 1999). For present purposes, it is enough to characterize virtue-ethical theories as those the recommendations of which centrally invoke virtue terms: for instance, "Be honest" or "Act courageously." This in contrast to deontological recommendations invoking the rightness or wrongness of particular types of actions (e.g., "Lying is wrong") and consequentialist recommendations invoking the goodness or badness of resulting states of affairs (e.g., "Act so as to maximize expected value").

been the only available substantive conception of the concept of *eudaimonia*.[11] If it were, ancient authors from Plato and Aristotle to the Stoics would not have felt so compelled to argue for its correctness. These authors considered lives of pleasure, honor, power, or wealth to be serious enough contenders for the title of the best human life to warrant philosophical refutation.[12] Such refutation was indeed necessary, for philosophers like the Epicureans were hedonist eudaimonists who held that flourishing consisted in pleasure and the absence of pain. To be sure, the Epicureans were also virtue ethicists, but they considered virtue to be merely instrumental to hedonistic flourishing, rather than constitutive of it (Annas 1993).

Some philosophers today still hold that flourishing consists in experiencing pleasure or in satisfying some relevant class of one's desires or in having some of a special set of objective goods like friendship, knowledge, and achievement.[13] And nothing prevents an ethical theory from being organized around any such virtue-less conception of *eudaimonia*. Nor need such an ethical theory invoke virtues in the deontic, action-guiding part of the theory. That could focus instead on rules conducive to flourishing or on the consequences of individual actions on flourishing.

So then, if eudaimonism and virtue ethics are not equivalent, what is ethical eudaimonism? To answer this question, we may look to Aristotle's model. As we have seen, he sets down

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[11] The general distinction between concepts and conceptions is hopefully familiar from other philosophical applications of it, e.g., in Rawls (1971, 9). A concept (e.g., JUSTICE, FLOURISHING) picks out or occupies a certain functional role in our thought or in a philosophical theory, while a conception is an interpretation or a specification of what plays that role (e.g., justice as fairness, flourishing as virtuous activity). Those in disagreement about a concept are taken to share the same concept but have different substantive conceptions of it. The functional role of the concept generates formal criteria with which to arbitrate between these different conceptions. For the use of the distinction for the concept of flourishing, see Baril (2014), especially endnote 3; Wolbert, de Ruyter, and Schinkel (2015).

[12] Plato has Socrates defend the life of virtue and wisdom as preferable to the lives of conventional goods like pleasure in *Euthydemus* and *Philebus* (see, e.g., Annas 1998 for discussion) and, to some extent, in *Republic*. Aristotle argues against these other lives in *NE* I and X. See Annas (1993; 1998) for discussion of the Stoics.

[13] These are, at any rate, popular conceptions of well-being or welfare (Parfit 1986, 492-502; Crisp 2001), and well-being is sometimes identified with flourishing (e.g., Darwall 2002; Haybron 2008).

eudaimonia as the highest human good and the ultimate end or aim of human action (*NE* I.7 1097b20-21; I.13 1102a14-15). The version of this claim that matters for the purposes of ethical theory is not the psychological claim that everyone in fact always, implicitly or explicitly, aims at flourishing no matter what they are doing (though Aristotle might have accepted this). It is instead a normative claim about the ethical justification of action. What it means for flourishing to be the ultimate end of action is that it is the final reason or purpose for which actions are ethically recommended, required, or justified, if they are.[14]

An ultimate end, in the normative sense, is the last good answer to a sequence of justificatory "why?" questions. Why should someone work a job, even one they do not enjoy? Perhaps, to earn money. Why should they earn money? Among other things, to purchase necessities. Why should they want necessities? To stay alive and fit. Fit to do what? We think such justifications must stop somewhere, and that the justificatory force of any one answer in the sequence depends upon the justificatory force of the answers which follow it, if any. That is, if earning money justifies working a job one hates, it is either because earning money is justified in turn by some other end or because earning money is an ultimate end (i.e., an end in itself).

A eudaimonist ethical theory places human flourishing in the theoretical role of the sole ultimate end of human action in this ethically justificatory or commendatory sense. All actions that are ethically recommended are so ultimately because of their contribution to realizing human

[14] Under the heading of "ethically recommended," I mean to include, at least, the recommendations of prudence, morality, and political theory—a stipulated use of the term "ethical," but one in keeping with Aristotle's own. I qualify the recommendation as specifically ethical because I wish to leave open that there are other normative domains (e.g., aesthetic) which make different recommendations on different grounds, and I do not wish to commit to the view that ethical recommendations trump all other normative recommendations in the determination of an "all-things-considered" normative recommendation (if there is such a thing).

flourishing, whether by constituting it, causing it, or making it possible or probable.[15] That is, an action's contributing to human flourishing in some way is always the last good answer to justificatory "why?" questions for the purposes of ethical recommendation.[16] Equivalently, we could say that an ethical theory is eudaimonist if and only if, and because, it fundamentally recommends actions which contribute to realizing flourishing. This recommendation is meant to be fundamental in the sense that all other, more particular recommendations are derivable from, or conditional on, this one.[17] The virtue eudaimonist recommends virtuous actions because these supposedly constitute flourishing; another kind of eudaimonist, who considers flourishing to be realized in some other way, might make different lower-level recommendations altogether but offers the same kind of justification for them.

We should pause to consider one feature which is *not* essential to eudaimonism but which is sometimes treated as such. I mean what Hirji calls a "a strong form of eudaimonism, the view that an agent ought to choose all actions for the sake of *her own eudaimonia*" (2019, 682—my emphasis). It is common enough for authors to think that an agent's ultimate justificatory end,

[15] It need not be that all actions which are not ethically justified or recommended are thereby bad or impermissible. I might let out a shout of joy because the feeling overtakes me. This action might serve no further purpose, least of all the purpose of realizing human flourishing. This does not mean that the shout would be ethically bad, wrong, or impermissible; it is simply not ethically recommended. Many actions might be ethically neutral in just the same way. I take it that ethical proscription can be defined in terms of ethical recommendation: an action is ethically bad or wrong when refraining from the action is ethically justified or recommended (and doing the action is not).

[16] Angier (2019) argues that, for Aristotle, it is not flourishing that ultimately settles series of justificatory "why?" questions but rather imitating the divine, which also justifies human flourishing. If he is right, then Aristotle will not count as a eudaimonist in my sense. I do not think this a flaw in my proposed definition of eudaimonism, for Angier's proposal is a radical rejection of the received, eudaimonist reading of Aristotle. Moreover, I am not convinced that Angier's interpretation *is* correct, but I shall not go into the details here.

[17] Compare Baril: "Recommendations to φ are made *on the condition* that φ-ing is (alternatively) conducive to, or at least compatible with, the realization of eudaimonia" (2014, 25—original emphasis). Another (perhaps) equivalent formulation of the same point: all the non-derivative normative reasons relevant to specifically ethical deliberation are eudaimonistic reasons, i.e., reasons ultimately having to do with flourishing.

according to eudaimonism, must be that agent's own flourishing. This has formed the basis for a familiar charge of egoism on the part of eudaimonism, and specifically virtue eudaimonism: the eudaimonist agent is fundamentally concerned with her own flourishing and not with others' well-being.[18] However, nothing about eudaimonism on its own restricts us to the view that only the agent's *own* flourishing is her ultimate justificatory end of action. The ultimate end could instead be people's flourishing in general. To saddle eudaimonism with egoism would be akin to asserting that hedonism was essentially egoistic, when in fact universalistic hedonism is a live option, as Sidgwick and other utilitarians attest. So, I will not treat egoism as essential to eudaimonism, and thus we can sidestep debates about whether or not such egoism is objectionable.[19]

So then, we define eudaimonism as the view that the ultimate justificatory end of action is flourishing (and not necessarily the agent's own). This definition provides at least one way of evaluating eudaimonist ethical theories: whatever is taken to constitute flourishing must plausibly be an ultimate end, not requiring further justification. This is not to say that the constituents of flourishing cannot also be instrumental to other things. After all, almost anything can be instrumental to something.[20] But constituents of flourishing should not rely on their further effects

[18] Hurka (2001, 219-255) poses this objection; Annas (2007) replies to it. A parallel debate occurs in Aristotle scholarship over whether or not Aristotle's ethics in particular is egoistic. See, e.g., Angier (2018).

[19] One reader has proposed that virtue eudaimonism specifically is necessarily egoistic, even if eudaimonism in general is not. They offered this as an additional objection to virtue eudaimonism which I do not consider. If this reader is right, the egoism objection can be added to the objections I do raise here for virtue eudaimonism. But I do not wish to take any stance on the egoism debate in this paper. I believe the present non-ultimacy and elitism objections stand well enough on their own and are worth developing separately.

[20] Here I weaken Aristotle's own requirement. He considers flourishing—and whatever constitutes it—necessarily to be good for its own sake and *never* for the sake of anything else (*NE* I.7 1097a28-1097b7). He uses this strong condition to argue that philosophical contemplation is the primary kind of flourishing (X.7 1178a6-8). Since this activity is utterly impractical and unproductive, it can never serve any other end—it is the most final (*teleion*) activity. I disagree with Aristotle here. Even contemplation could coincidentally serve other ends, e.g., if someone offered you money to contemplate. I doubt that my contemporary, virtue-eudaimonist interlocutors would wish to be saddled with Aristotle's strong commitment to the utter uselessness of *eudaimonia* and so I will not build it in as a requirement for a

for their justification. What, then, makes something plausible as an ultimate justificatory end of action? As a heuristic, at least, an ultimate end should be something it makes sense to pursue or aim at for its own sake. Pain, for example, would be a funny thing to seek out for its own sake and money is famously only worth pursuing for what you can do with it, so neither is a good candidate to be an ultimate end.

Furthermore, for an ultimate end plausibly to constitute flourishing, it should make sense not just to realize that end when given an easy opportunity, but also to aim for it, to seek and create opportunities to realize it. That is, it should make sense to organize one's life, including its more laborious activities like earning money and keeping healthy, around and towards that ultimate end. After all, an ethical theory is supposed to give us broad practical guidance about how to live and act, how to acquire and dispose of free time and resources, and all such commendatory guidance, by hypothesis, must bottom out in ultimate justificatory ends. To apply this heuristic, while it may be worthwhile, in some sense, to watch reality TV even when it serves no further end, I take it that this is not a plausible candidate to constitute flourishing, since (without saying more about the context or way in which a particular individual pursued this activity) it does not make sense to work, keep healthy, socialize, etc. simply for the sake of watching reality TV.

One more example of how to apply the criterion of plausibility as an ultimate end will be relevant to what follows. What is a more plausible ultimate end, simply having virtue or exercising it, i.e., acting virtuously? Aristotle argues in favor of the latter. Someone could have virtue while asleep or otherwise incapacitated, in which case they seem not to benefit from it (*NE* I.8 1098b30-1099a7). The benefit of a dispositional state like virtue seems to come from its exercise.[21]

conception of flourishing. The weaker requirement, that flourishing and its constituents not require further justification, is strong enough for my purposes.

[21] This is entailed by a more general Aristotelian principle "that actuality [activity] is both better and more valuable than the good potentiality [capacity]" (*Metaphysics* Θ(IX).9 1051a4-5).

Aristotle's answer here strikes me as quite right. What is the point of developing a certain kind of character trait if one never has a chance to act on it? Why should I develop courage if I will never face risk or danger? If we should develop virtues for the sake of exercising them, then virtuous activity is more plausibly an ultimate end than simply having virtue, and therefore virtuous activity is a better candidate constituent of flourishing. I will assume this in what follows. Thus, I will only object explicitly to the proposal that flourishing consists in virtuous *activity* and not simply in having virtue. I do not think a retreat from activity to a state of virtue will help the virtue eudaimonist overcome the objections to follow.

1.4 The Non-Ultimacy Objection to Character Virtue Eudaimonism

The main problem for the view that flourishing consists in the exercise of character virtues is that the activities which paradigmatically exercise these virtues are not plausible as ultimate justificatory ends of action. On the contrary, character-virtuous activities are characteristically justified by the further ends they serve, the benefits they produce.

Observe first that activities which exercise character virtues fall on a spectrum between those benefitting oneself (prudential) and those benefitting others (moral). Paradigmatically prudential activities, which exercise virtues like moderation, include dieting, getting physical exercise, saving money, and undergoing therapy. Paradigmatically moral activities, which exercise virtues like justice and generosity, include feeding the stranger, keeping one's promises, donating to charity, and generally refraining from harming others for personal benefit. The exercises of other virtues like courage can fall somewhere between being fully self- and other-regarding. Exhibiting courage during a counter-protest, for example, might lead you to avoid excessive risk to yourself but also to intervene when appropriate to help others avoid harm.

Now, none of the paradigms of prudential, self-benefitting activities is worth doing solely for its own sake. We do not save money because doing so is intrinsically valuable.[22] We save money so that we have money, which in turn is only as good as what we eventually spend the money on. Similarly, we exercise and consume moderately for the purpose of maintaining bodily health, and we go to therapy for the purpose of building or maintaining mental health. No one should organize their life around simply eating, drinking, exercising, or going to therapy.[23] And while a state of health might in some sense be good for its own sake, it is also importantly good for the valuable things it allows one to do. We would not envy the life of someone who acted only as necessary to maintain health and did no more with it than simply sit idle.

Neither are paradigmatic moral, other-benefitting activities intrinsically valuable. First consider negative moral actions (i.e., omissions) like refraining from theft or coercion. These omissions are valuable in the sense that not refraining from harming would be positively bad. But they are not activities worth aiming at, which could justify other actions—they are not really activities at all! Even the idler morally refrains from harming others, but this does not turn their inactive life into a flourishing one.

Positive moral actions are not intrinsically valuable either. If they were, then (per the eudaimonist desideratum for a conception of flourishing described in §1.3) it would make sense to

[22] Here and throughout I invoke "value" as a correlate of being a justificatory end, not as a separate normative property. That is, something is intrinsically valuable just in case it is an end in itself; something is instrumentally valuable just in case it is justified by a further end (in which case, it could also be called an "intermediate" or "non-ultimate" end). I opt to employ "intrinsic value" as the contrast to "instrumental value," despite the advice of Korsgaard (1983) and others to call it "final value." This is purely a stylistic preference: "intrinsic" is more typical and is less likely to be confused with ultimate justification. (As I suggest in §1.5, it is possible for something to have intrinsic value without being an ultimate justificatory end, if it also has instrumental value in need of further justification.) But the reader may feel free to substitute "final" as they like. Perhaps "derivative" and "non-derivative" value would be clearer still.

[23] Here I set aside how these activities can serve as constitutive parts of intrinsically valuable activities, e.g., exercise as part of pursuing athletic achievement, eating for aesthetic appreciation, or drinking together as a way of engaging in loving relationships. Even in these cases it is not eating, exercising, etc. *simpliciter* which are intrinsically valuable; they derive their value from the broader projects of which they are parts.

seek or create opportunities to engage in them, for example to make promises simply in order to keep them, to hope people will become sick or endangered in order to assist them, or to create injustice for the purpose of justly rectifying it. But we do not and should not look for such opportunities; we perform such moral actions for their further effects. Making a promise is only as valuable as the promised act is and keeping a promise only as valuable as the promised act plus the additional benefit of building or maintaining mutual trust. The value in assisting someone comes from the benefit received by the assisted party. And distributing justly or generously derives its value from the value of the relevant kind of distribution. Moreover, the goods typically distributed in just or generous transactions—money, dry goods, health, power, and so on—are themselves instrumentally valuable for what they allow people to do.

The main point here is that both prudential and moral actions are characteristically justified by the further activities which they help people to perform, whether the agent herself or other people. And these further activities, which the beneficiaries of prudential or moral actions are enabled to do, had better eventually include some intrinsically valuable activities and not just more prudential or moral action, or else the value of these prudential and moral actions would never get off the ground. There would be a valueless regress of agents being prudent for the sake of being prudent or moral, and of agents being moral for the sake of others' being prudent or moral. We need a more ultimate, non-character-virtuous end to stop this justificatory regress.

Interestingly, these points about paradigmatic character-virtuous activities have been noted by some scholars of Aristotle. Hirji argues that "[v]irtuous actions are characterized in terms of the good ends or results they aim to achieve" (2019, 684). Courageous actions aim at safety and security, moderate actions health, generous actions benefits to others, and just actions a fair distribution of benefits and harms (679). Whiting similarly acknowledges that "virtuous actions

typically aim at ends beyond themselves" (2002, 273). Moreover, Whiting notes that a "virtuous circle," wherein virtuous activity was only valuable for making possible yet more virtuous activity, would be problematic. The virtuous circle's "acceptability seems to depend on there being other eudaimonic values (besides virtue) that virtue promotes" (290). Whiting, then, has correctly identified the feature that poses a problem for character virtue eudaimonism. But though these authors have correctly described Aristotle's views on the matter, they have failed to appreciate how damning these facts are for character virtue eudaimonism, ancient or contemporary.

Now so far, we have only considered paradigmatic prudential and moral activities expressing the canonical character virtues like justice, moderation, and generosity. But the same point about instrumental justifiability seems to apply to exercises of most kinds of other candidate character virtues. Exercising courage at a counter-protest or in a literal battle helps to advance one's other ends: engaging in only necessary risk helps to win the battle or to display solidarity and commitment to the cause. Courageous activity is justified by such ends and not worth doing solely for its own sake. That is, we should not seek battles, heated protests, or other risky situations for the sake of exhibiting courage. Other Aristotelian virtues are similar. Exercises of proper anger like speaking out against a colleague's offensive remarks are useful for changing people's behavior for the better or for defending the rights of injured parties (sometimes including oneself). But better for everyone that the colleague, for example, had never engaged in the problematic behavior in the first place.

A few Aristotelian character virtues may not characteristically be justified by the further ends they help to realize. These are character virtues which concern conversation and emotion, rather than action. For example, while being witty or friendly may help advance one's ends in certain situations, it seems like it is also valuable to be witty or friendly even when nothing is to

be gained by it. Similarly, it seems valuable to feel proper shame, not too much or too little, about the right sorts of things, even when nothing results from the feeling. However, while these exercises of character virtues are not obviously instrumentally justified, they still fail the heuristic test for being plausible ultimate ends. It would not make much sense to seek or create opportunities to feel shame to appropriate degrees in appropriate contexts. Neither would it make sense for most of us to organize our lives around being friendly or witty.[24] We certainly do not think the point of prudent and moral actions is enabling ourselves and others to be funny or properly ashamed. Even if these are ends in themselves, in a sense, they hardly seem like instances of the ultimate end constituting flourishing and justifying all other actions.

Again, the same points obtain for modern candidate character virtues which Aristotle does not recognize. Exercises of beneficence, kindness, or charity are characteristically other-benefitting, and therefore instrumentally justified, in just the same way as exercises of justice and generosity. Industriousness is only as good as the kinds of pursuits industriously engaged in, and most forms of "industry" are only instrumentally justified, if justified at all. And again, character virtues which concern emotion rather than action may not be characteristically instrumentally justified, but also seem not to justify most of the actions which make up a life. I mean, for example, virtues like hope, compassion or empathy, patience, and humility. Even if such emotions are worth feeling (in the right sorts of situations) independently of their effects, it does not make sense to seek or create opportunities to feel hopeful, compassionate, patient, or humble. It would be strange, for example, to seek achievements for the sake of being properly humble about them. Nor should

[24] This is not to say that it makes no sense for anyone to organize their lives around engaging in friendships or exercising wit. Most people can presumably flourish by engaging in loving relationships and comedians can plausibly flourish by doing comedy. But there is more to engaging in friendships than simply exhibiting characteristic friendliness. And clearly not everyone can or should be a comedian—a point analogous to the objection to intellectual virtue eudaimonism below.

we hope for people to experience pain or misfortune for the sake of feeling appropriately compassionate towards them.

If this is all correct and exercises of character virtues are characteristically justified by their effects—or if they are, at any rate, implausible candidates to be the ultimate end which serves to justify all other actions—then the exercise of character virtue is a poor candidate to be the sole or primary constituent of human flourishing, at least for the purposes of ethical eudaimonism. One could insist, despite all the foregoing, that flourishing consisted of character-virtuous activity, but this would divorce flourishing from its role in a eudaimonist ethical theory as the ultimate justificatory end of action. The present objection is a serious problem for character virtue eudaimonism, if not for the character virtue conception of flourishing when removed from its natural home in eudaimonist ethical theory.

1.5 Responses Considered on Behalf of Character Virtue Eudaimonism

What might be said in response on behalf of character virtue eudaimonism, which is by far the most well-represented form of eudaimonism in contemporary ethics?

(1) The first response I wish to head off is the suggestion that the scholarship on Aristotle's ethics has already identified and treated just this putative problem for character virtue eudaimonism. As I noted above, scholars of Aristotle are aware that character-virtuous activity characteristically serves further ends. But Aristotle also suggests that the exercise of character virtue is choiceworthy or good for its own sake and that the virtuous agent is motivated by this intrinsic value. Some commentators find a tension or outright inconsistency here. How can virtuous actions be both ends in themselves and for the sake of further ends? And what does this mean for the virtuous agent's motivation in acting? Scholars have attempted to address this

interpretive puzzle (e.g., Ackrill 1978; Keyt 1983; Whiting 2002; Meyer 2016; Hirji 2018). Solutions tend to involve distinguishing different aspects of character-virtuous activity that bear the different kinds of value, intrinsic and instrumental. Hirji (2018), for example, appeals to Aristotle's distinction between the external act that the virtuous person would perform (i.e., the act described without reference to the agent's actual motivation), which has instrumental value, and the virtuous (i.e., robustly well-motivated) performance of the act, which has intrinsic value as an exercise of virtue.

However, this interpretive problem is not the non-ultimacy objection that I am putting forward. Nor are these scholars' proposed solutions to the interpretive problem responses to the non-ultimacy objection. The interpreter is attempting to explain and render consistent Aristotle's position and his various relevant comments. I am perfectly happy to grant that there is some such successful explanation. Any of the explanations heretofore proposed in the scholarly literature might do. For my part, I have no objection to the idea of a category of goods that are choiceworthy both for their own sakes and for their effects, a category which Plato and Aristotle both recognize (*Republic* 357a-358a; *NE* I.7 1097a30-34). I am not charging the character virtue eudaimonist with internal inconsistency for placing character-virtuous activity in this category.

Rather, the non-ultimacy objection says, in the first instance, that it is a substantive mistake to place character-virtuous activity in this category. And this is because, in light of our other, independent normative judgments and commitments, it is implausible that character-virtuous activity is an end in itself. (If the character virtue eudaimonist is guilty of any inconsistency, it is only inconsistency with these other judgments.) I have tried to make the case that character-virtuous activity is only instrumentally and not intrinsically valuable. If it had the kind of intrinsic value necessary to be a plausible ultimate justificatory end for the purposes of eudaimonism, there

would be at least some normative pressure to create opportunities for people to exercise their character virtue. But as I have said, this is implausible. For example, the chance to exercise courage is no good reason to court danger and the chance to exercise proper humility about an achievement is no good reason to seek to achieve it. In my opinion, the extant interpretive solutions in the scholarly literature on Aristotle simply do not address this challenge.

(2) With the non-ultimacy objection so clarified, one possible response is that we have not considered all of the relevant character virtues or all of the possible activities which exercise them. Perhaps the best list of character virtues will avoid these objections. It is true enough that we have not been exhaustive: there are many candidate lists of virtues and virtuous activities. However, the examples discussed so far are quite telling. We examined the most paradigmatic character virtues, by both ancient and modern lights, and some of their most paradigmatic activities. And we examined some of the less paradigmatic ones too. In all the cases discussed, we found that character-virtuous activities were not very good candidates to be the sole ultimate end of action. In light of this inductive evidence, there is little reason to think some few special character virtues and their exercises will escape the general problem. This is not to conclusively rule out the possibility, but it does at least shift the burden to the character virtue eudaimonist.

(3) Another possible response draws attention to the fact that, while no single character-virtuous activity is by itself a good candidate to be the ultimate end of action, the class of character-virtuous activities is quite broad and diverse, and engaging in those kinds of activities as a class might yet be a sufficiently valuable ultimate end. Certainly, it makes better sense to organize one's life around keeping one's promises *and* feeding the stranger *and* fighting injustice, etc. than to seek and create opportunities just to keep one's promises. The diverse range of all character-

virtuous activities, taken together, is more likely to justify the diverse kinds of actions involved in ordinary practical life than is any one character-virtuous activity alone.

Nevertheless, the problem remains that all these prudential and moral activities are not worth doing just for their own sakes but, importantly, for their further effects. The instrumental value of each individual activity does not add up to intrinsic value when you take the activities collectively. To put the point another way, all these character-virtuous activities taken together are still remedial or corrective. They address problems, lacks, or deficiencies in people's lives: poverty, hunger, danger, injustice, and so on. If the exercise of character virtue were the ultimate end of action and constituted our flourishing, then we should be grateful for these problems and deficiencies to arise, for they give us opportunities to flourish. But this would be perverse. It would surely be better if there were no danger and injustice to virtuously rectify, if there were no need for character-virtuous activity in the first place. We want flourishing to be a goal around which to organize our lives, but if flourishing consists solely in character-virtuous activity, then the very act of flourishing undermines our opportunities to flourish (and it would be perverse to create problems so as to create opportunities for virtuous action).

(4) To this it might be replied that "the poor you will always have with you." It is no problem for character virtue eudaimonism that it makes our ability to flourish depend on undesirable circumstances in the world because these undesirable circumstances will always obtain. People will always become hungry, there will always be danger and injustice, and so on. Such is the human condition. And this means that there will always be opportunities to flourish by exercising character virtue.

This response strikes me as unnecessarily defeatist. Of course humans will always have bodily and mental needs which must be addressed. And by hypothesis, we should address these

needs virtuously (e.g., justly, moderately). But I daresay we, as a global community, could be doing much better at alleviating these undesirable circumstances than we are. Humanity has the resources, ingenuity, and ability to significantly reduce injustice, poverty, war, disease, and danger in the world, if we would only try. (We have made progress already, albeit with frequent backsliding.) And one of the important things an ethical theory should do is explain why we should try, why we should intervene to alleviate these undesirable circumstances. If character virtue eudaimonism pressures us to accept the tragic status quo, it would surely be better to pursue another conception of flourishing which did not rely on that status quo. A better ultimate end would be one that we could still pursue even under ideal circumstances; even better if morally ideal circumstances are *conducive* to the pursuit of that ultimate end. Such an end could then serve to justify the drastic moral action necessary to bring us closer to those ideal circumstances.

(5) So far, my replies have emphasized my position that character-virtuous activity is not an end in itself. Despite all this, however, the character virtue eudaimonist could flat-footedly insist that the exercise of character virtue has some kind of intrinsic value in addition to its instrumental value. It may simply be a conceit of their theory that, despite appearances to the contrary, character-virtuous activity is in the category of mixed goods that are choiceworthy both for their own sakes and for their effects. Disagreements about intrinsic value are, after all, difficult to settle and mistakes are possible. Certainly, it seems better to act on the basis of virtuous motivational dispositions than to act for other motives, holding fixed the external act and its consequences. If that suggests that exercising virtue has some intrinsic value, then it may be that, counterintuitively, we do have *some* reason (perhaps usually outweighed) to create opportunities to exercise virtue. Or perhaps the intrinsic value of character-virtuous activity is of a special, non-teleological sort that does not entail any reasons to create opportunities to exercise character virtue. However we

explain it, if character-virtuous activity were to have intrinsic value, could it not then serve as the ultimate end of action and thus constitute flourishing?

Unfortunately, this response will not save character virtue eudaimonism from the non-ultimacy objection, primarily because intrinsic value is merely a necessary condition and not a sufficient one for counting as a plausible ultimate end. Even supposing that character-virtuous activity has intrinsic value, it also undeniably has instrumental value. And its instrumental value is not accidental to the activity, as it would be if, say, someone offered you money to exercise character virtue. Rather, instrumental value is essential to character-virtuous activity, in the sense of making the activity virtuous in the first place. I mean that part of what makes an act, e.g., moderate or generous is its contribution to a further aim, e.g., health or benefits to others. This entails that character-virtuous activities are justified, at least in part, by their instrumental value in realizing other ends. Thus, no particular character-virtuous action is ever an ultimate justificatory end.

Even if an exercise of character virtue has some intrinsic value, this value provides at most a partial answer to a justificatory "why?" question. A full justification of a particular character-virtuous action must also appeal to the other aims which the action realizes. The very nature of character-virtuous activity makes it cry out for this instrumental justification, in addition to any intrinsic justification it may have. This is the natural result of locating character-virtuous activity, as we inevitably should, in a category of goods choiceworthy, at least, for their effects. Since character-virtuous activity is characteristically justified by further ends, regardless of whether it also has some intrinsic value, it cannot be the ultimate end of all other actions, that for the sake of which we do everything else that we do. An ultimate end permits no further justification; character-virtuous activity, since it has instrumental value, requires such justification. Since eudaimonism

assumes that flourishing is the ultimate end that requires no further justification and serves to justify all other actions, the character virtue conception makes for a poor conception of flourishing for the purposes of eudaimonism.

(6) The character virtue eudaimonist might concede the point that character-virtuous activity, being at least partially instrumental, does not terminate series of justification. But they might attempt the following two-pronged reply. The first prong is that, while no *particular* exercise of character virtue is an ultimate justificatory end, nevertheless the *class* of character-virtuous activities provides the most final justification of action available. That is, all actions are justified by their contribution to character-virtuous activity, including character-virtuous activity itself. A particular exercise of character virtue has some intrinsic justification and is also instrumentally justified by making possible other, future exercises of character virtue. My prudential activity enables my future prudential and moral activity, and my moral activity enables others' prudential and moral activity. On the assumption that human flourishing just consists in such character-virtuous activity, this equates to instances of flourishing being justified both for their own sake and for the sake of further instances of flourishing.

This sounds like an acceptable eudaimonist conclusion. But notice that it requires a second prong of response, namely that the eudaimonist should abandon the idea of a genuine ultimate justificatory end, a termination to series of justification. For there is no such termination on the model being proposed, wherein each instance of flourishing is (even partially, but non-accidentally) instrumentally justified by further instances of flourishing. Series of justification may inevitably loop back around to the class of character-virtuous activity, but they nevertheless go on without a stopping point.

It seems to me that the committed character virtue eudaimonist must ultimately accept something like this picture of ethical justification. And again, I do not intend to argue that this "non-terminating" version of eudaimonism is logically incoherent. My objection remains substantive: this version of eudaimonism is both implausible and unattractive. It is unattractive at least for those of us who would prefer for ethical justification to come to a real end and not to continue *ad infinitum*. To some of us, Aristotle included (*NE* I.2 1094a18-22), it seems that endless series of justification would be unsatisfying and meaningless. We would like for there to be a point to living and acting, some final goal at which to aim and which makes everything else worthwhile. And we think this goal, if it exists, must be an ultimate end that is not instrumentally justified (except perhaps accidentally). To be sure, the fact that many of us would prefer this theoretical outcome is no guarantee that it obtains. But the desideratum at least gives us some reason to look for and prefer a version of eudaimonism that renders flourishing a genuine ultimate justificatory end.

The non-terminating model of character virtue eudaimonism is thus theoretically unattractive in form, but it is also implausible in content for claiming that character-virtuous activity in particular is the last, best justificatory end, the closest thing available to an ultimate end. As Whiting (2002) notes, the "virtuous circle" of character-virtuous activity being instrumentally justified by more character-virtuous activity is a vicious circle without other eudaimonic values besides virtue. The character virtue eudaimonist must hold that moral and prudential activities are the most final goal for us to strive for. In other words, the point of ethical life is just to virtuously help ourselves and others. Help ourselves and others *to do what?* To help ourselves and others. There is no further purpose. This supposition is at odds with our other normative judgments and commitments. Simply put, we think there is much more to life than being prudent and moral. Moral

and prudential activities are really some of the most irksome tasks to perform. It is often a pain to put others' interests ahead of your own by, e.g., giving until it hurts or facing a dangerous situation, or to put your long-term interests ahead of your present desires by, e.g., saving money or dieting. Even if a virtuous person finds some personal reward or pleasure in such activities, this is merely making the best of a bad situation. As I have emphasized, it would be preferable not to need to do these things in the first place. And it would be strange indeed if the point of living were to do things that most of us, including the virtuous, would rather not have to do.

We could perhaps stomach this counterintuitive commitment if there were no viable alternative, if there were no other justificatory ends more final than character-virtuous activity. But in fact, plausible ultimate ends are not hard to come by. We will consider Aristotle's own proposed ultimate end, intellectually virtuous activity, in the next two sections. But in addition, people regularly devote their time and resources to a number of other activities that are not (essentially) instrumentally valuable in the way prudential and moral activities are, activities such as socializing with loved ones, producing and enjoying objects of beauty, playing games and sports, and learning. We do not think people are making ethical mistakes in pursuing these sorts of ends for their own sakes. Rather, we encourage people to pursue them. These are the kinds of activities that do seem to give life meaning and purpose. Intuitively, what actually justifies prudentially helping ourselves or morally helping others is that we are helping people to engage in non-instrumentally valuable activities such as these and not that we are helping them merely to do more prudential and moral helping in turn. But the problem for character virtue eudaimonism runs deeper than intuitions about the direction of ethical justification. The existence of any ethically justifying ultimate end besides character-virtuous activity would contradict both (a) the non-terminating model we are currently considering, which holds that series of justification never end but loop endlessly through the class

of character-virtuous activities, and (b) the original, terminating model, which holds that character-virtuous activity is the sole ethically justifying ultimate end.

Thus, the character virtue eudaimonist is forced to reject all appearances that there are any ultimate ends besides character-virtuous activity. It would strain belief too much to insist that activities like socializing, art, games, and learning are not often ethically justifying ends. That would necessitate radical revision of our ordinary normative judgments and practices. Instead, the character virtue eudaimonist should attempt to subsume such ends under the end of character-virtuous activity. They should hold that, whenever instances of these other putative ultimate ends are ethically justified, they are always eventually justified either for instrumentally contributing to character-virtuous activity or for constituting an exercise of character virtue. Of course, such a claim is far from obvious. Most of us do not think, for example, that we should only engage with loved ones, art, etc. when doing so builds or exercises character. The character virtue eudaimonist owes one or more explanations of the systematic connections between these putative ultimate ends and character virtue.

One such explanation might be that these other activities are recreational activities that help us to relax and "recharge" so that we can then resume our character-virtuous activities. But in that case, we should view these activities as perhaps practically necessary but ultimately regrettable distractions from our main purpose, when in fact we view some combination of them as integral to meaningful and fulfilling lives. Another explanation might be that these other activities are only valuable when performed well, i.e., virtuously. In effect, we pursue these putative ultimate ends as ways to exercise virtue. This could only help specifically *character* virtue eudaimonism, however, if the value-conferring virtue in question were always character virtue, and this seems unlikely without expanding what counts as a virtue specifically of character. Artistic and athletic activities,

for example, often seem valuable even when they do not exercise paradigmatic character virtues like justice, courage, moderation, or generosity. Of course, these explanations again remain logically coherent and, in those cases where one such explanation fails, another explanation might succeed. But a pattern emerges in which the character virtue eudaimonist is forced to make some rather implausibly radical revisions away from our ordinary normative judgments and practices. At a certain point, these revisions seem less like independently motivated commitments and more like *ad hoc* maneuvers to defend a thesis at all costs.

(7) A final response might go like this: surely at least moral activities can constitute flourishing. Some people dedicate their whole lives to helping others—working for charities, combating disease or starvation, resisting injustice, and so on—and these seem like perfectly valuable, indeed very admirable, lives. How, then, can we deny that people can flourish by exercising character virtues?

In fact, we need not deny this. But given our confidence that these moral activities can constitute flourishing, moral virtue begins to seem superfluous. These activities could plausibly still constitute flourishing even if the people engaging in them were not particularly virtuous. Take your favorite humanitarian or activist and ask whether they would have failed to flourish by their work if it turned out that they lacked character virtue. Suppose that Martin Luther King, Jr., for example, struggled with doubts and conflicting desires to avoid the costs of his activism. He may have performed the correct, just actions, but suppose he performed them enkratically, overcoming opposing inclinations, instead of virtuously.[25] Would MLK's pursuit of justice cease to constitute

[25] Or, if you prefer a Kantian view of virtue, flip the case: suppose he helped others out of a "pathological" love of mankind and not from a rational commitment to justice or the moral law.

flourishing in that case? Presumably not. Instead, the flourishing-constituting activities which express character virtues seem to constitute flourishing whether or not character virtue is present.[26]

Moreover, it is important that these moral activities, and character-virtuous activities more generally, are not the *only* kinds of valuable activities, that people can also flourish in other ways. If flourishing consisted solely in moral activity, then moral activity could only be justified by yet more moral activity, and we have seen that this is implausible. But if flourishing also consists in activities beyond moral activities, then moral activity can be instrumentally justified by its contribution to people's flourishing. The instrumental value of moral activity must ultimately bottom out in the intrinsic value of non-moral ways of flourishing. But assuming that there are non-moral ways of flourishing, then moral activity can inherit value and itself constitute flourishing. Meanwhile, the existence of non-moral ways of flourishing would entail that flourishing in general does not require undesirable circumstances in the way that specifically moral activities do. There is only a problem if we think flourishing is exhausted by prudential and moral activity, as contemporary virtue eudaimonists suggest.

1.6 The Elitism Objection to Intellectual Virtue Eudaimonism

Aristotle himself would likely agree with everything just said about the deficiency of character virtue. On his view, even the best exercises of character virtue (in war and statecraft) are "unleisurely and aim at some end and are not choiceworthy for their own sakes" (*NE* X.7 1177b6-18). This is one of the main reasons why he considers the exercise of character virtue to be

[26] It does not matter here if we think that the unvirtuous MLK would flourish *less* than the virtuous MLK. What matters is whether or not the unvirtuous MLK could count as flourishing at all. I submit that he would still flourish to a relevant degree without character virtue. In that case, even if the presence or exercise of character virtue makes someone flourish *more*, something else (e.g., the moral activity itself) must be able to constitute or contribute to flourishing without virtue. So, character virtue alone cannot exhaust the concept of flourishing. This is all we need to refute character virtue eudaimonism.

eudaimonia only secondarily and the character-virtuous life to be the second happiest (X.8 1178a9). Moral and prudential activity is productive, it serves other ends, and so it is not fit to be the ultimate justificatory end. *Eudaimonia*, and the activity that primarily constitutes it, is supposed to be choiceworthy for its own sake and never for the sake of anything else (I.7 1097a28-1097b7). For that, Aristotle looks to an entirely unproductive activity, namely the exercise of intellectual virtue in the philosophical contemplation of necessary truths (X.7 1177a12-22). All practical action is ultimately supposed to aim at creating opportunities for people to contemplate. Character-virtuous activity is valuable as the best kind of practical action, but its value still derives in no small part from this ultimate aim.[27]

Aristotle's view, that the only intellectually virtuous activity constituting flourishing is philosophical, is needlessly restrictive for our purposes. We may expand our notion of intellectually virtuous activity to include other paradigms such as study, research, and teaching in any of a wide variety of fields, humanistic or scientific. It turns out that intellectual virtue

[27] This is a slightly tendentious summary of Aristotle's view on the relation between intellectual and character-virtuous activity in *eudaimonia*. Any such summary would be, since it is a subject of much scholarly puzzlement and debate (e.g., Cooper 1987; Kraut 1989; Broadie 1991; Richardson Lear 2004; Thorsrud 2015). But while some scholars may disagree with the kind of interpretation I am here sketching, I am quite confident that these minimal interpretive commitments are supported by the text of the *NE* as we have it. Unfortunately, this is not the article to prove that. More to the point, the present arguments against character virtue eudaimonism, intellectual virtue eudaimonism, and (in §1.8) combined, character-and-intellectual virtue eudaimonism do not depend on a particular interpretation of the relation between the two kinds of virtue. There is an independent objection concerning each kind of virtue and these objections retain most of their force when the two kinds of virtues are combined. As such, the objections should apply against Aristotle's virtue eudaimonism on *any* plausible interpretation of the *NE*.

Another debate concerns what precisely Aristotle means by the term for contemplation, "*theōria*." Contemplation includes, at the very least, knowing and thinking about the metaphysical first principles of the universe. It may also include reflection on other necessary truths, such as the first principles and theorems of other sciences. And other activities besides intellectual reflection may constitute or, at least, approximate contemplation (cp. Richardson Lear 2004). We need not settle this interpretive issue since what concerns us is not contemplation *per se* but the exercise of intellectual virtue, which might take various forms, as discussed below, whether or not Aristotle would recognize these.

eudaimonism encounters difficulty no matter how restrictive or capacious our notion of intellectually virtuous activity (unless we severely strain the meaning of "intellectual").

The fundamental problem for intellectual virtue eudaimonism is that intellectual activity could not reasonably serve as the sole ultimate end for most people. A eudaimonist ethical theory built upon intellectual activity as the sole justificatory end consequently could not recommend actions for most people. But an ethical theory should be comprehensive: it should give most people recommendations about how to live. This is not to assume that an ethical theory must be universal in the sense of giving the same recommendations to all. But we do not want an ethical system which only applies to some select few. At best, such an ethical system would be woefully incomplete, merely a part in a broader system that remains to be worked out; at worst, it would simply be the wrong ethical system to adopt.

Why can intellectually virtuous activity not reasonably be most people's ultimate aim or end? One reason is that, if intellectual virtue is as difficult to achieve as Aristotle suggests, most people could never hope to have it.[28] Intellectual virtues like wisdom, understanding, or a strong intuition for abstract principles do seem difficult to acquire. It would plausibly require access to education, as well as time and resources to dedicate to intellectual development, which many people in fact lack (often as a result of unjust social conditions). And if someone lacks the ability to acquire intellectual virtues, it makes little sense for them to aim at the exercise of intellectual virtue.

It is also clear that many people have little interest in engaging in paradigmatically intellectual activities like studying, researching, or teaching for their own sakes. These people

[28] Aristotle seems to follow Plato in thinking that complete intellectual virtue, especially wisdom, can only be achieved by the best and brightest and requires a lifetime of cultivation and academic study—that is, if it is even an achievable ideal at all. It is clearly not thought possible for most people. Indeed, Aristotle rules out a great number of people along gender and ethnic lines (*Politics* I.12-13; VII.7).

might prefer instead to focus on family life, on producing tangible goods and services, on athletic achievement, and so on. And it would seem to contribute not at all to such people's flourishing to engage in intellectual activities in spite of their own desires. Must we think that such people are making some grave mistake? That they would be better off if they had the ability and desire to pursue intellectual activities at the expense of these other pursuits? Clearly not. It would be arrogant and self-aggrandizing for those of us in the ivory tower to insist that everyone would be better off if they engaged in intellectual activities instead of pursuing their own actual interests.

So then, many people in fact lack interest in, or the resources and ability for, acquiring and exercising intellectual virtues,[29] and it would be absurd to expect these people to aim to engage in that intellectual activity. Moreover, it would be practically impossible for everyone to engage in intellectual activities for much of their lives. In Aristotle's time, the reason that a few elite Greek men had the leisure necessary to engage in philosophical contemplation was that women, slaves, and poorer free men did almost all of the productive labor. Aristotle was aware that not everyone could spend their lives in contemplation. Since it is necessarily unproductive (that is what makes it a prime candidate to be human flourishing), if everyone were to do it, nothing would get done. And our society in the present day is much the same in this respect: those who engage in intellectual activities for much of their lives (e.g., in academic careers) are supported by a now global labor economy producing practical goods and services. Those of us who do seriously pursue intellectual activities need many other people not to. Without drastic changes to our social structures, it would be impossible for most people to give up their current labor and instead engage in intellectual activities. If flourishing consisted solely or primarily in intellectual activity, then it would be

[29] To emphasize a point suggested above, a lack of either ability or interest may often be the result of unjust social structures limiting certain people's access to education and intellectual activities. As a matter of justice, everyone should perhaps have access to intellectual activity, but even in a just world, it is likely that many people would still lack interest, if not ability also.

practically impossible for most people to flourish—and, in that case, ludicrous for the vast majority of people to aim at it.[30]

There is one way everyone *could* aim at intellectual activity: namely, those who do not desire or are unable to engage in intellectual activities themselves could aim at the intellectual activity of those who are willing and able to engage in it. The many can work to make possible the intellectual activity of the few. Aristotle views this as the right and natural order of things. He addresses his *Ethics* to an elite audience, but his complete ethical theory is not silent on how the rest should live. He thinks that women and natural slaves should obey and serve those men who partake of complete human reason (*Politics* I.5, 12-13) and that the rest of civil society (including the labor of free, working-class men) should be structured so that the elites have leisure to rule and do philosophy (*Politics* I.7 1255b35-37; III.4-5; VII.9).[31]

Now, it would be possible to dispense with Aristotle's sexist, racist, and classist essentializing while retaining the suggestion that an ethical theory ultimately aimed at intellectual activity could be comprehensive. Such a theory could give recommendations to most people by recommending that people either (a) engage in intellectual activity, if they can, or (b) contribute to making possible others' intellectual activity, if they cannot engage in it themselves. But most of us today could not stomach such an ethical theory. Even without its most essentializing parts, the proposal still seems unfair and exploitative. It would reduce most people, *as a matter of ethical right*, to useful tools for the realization of the intellectual activity, the flourishing, of the intellectual

[30] The problem is not that flourishing is difficult, i.e., that most people will not in fact flourish. Such difficulty is meant to be a datum which Aristotle's theory predicts, and we need not reject this datum. The problem is that flourishing as intellectual activity is not something most people can reasonably aspire to. It cannot even rightly serve as an ideal for most people to aim at.

[31] Note that, according to Aristotle, women, slaves, and free laborers are not only barred from intellectual virtue but also from full character virtue. They cannot even pursue their own flourishing in its secondary sense of character-virtuous activity.

elites. The proposal is to enshrine slavery in ethics. I trust that the reader joins me in having no interest in such an ethical theory. (One would like a refutation here but that is beyond the scope of this paper.) We prefer an ethical theory which does not subordinate the interests of one class of people to the interests of another. Our ethical theory should (*ex ante*) permit or encourage everyone to advance their own interests equally, and where it recommends advancing the interests of other people (namely, in moral theory), it should make the same kinds of other-concerning recommendations to all people, on the basis of mutuality and reciprocity.

1.7 Responses Considered on Behalf of Intellectual Virtue Eudaimonism

(1) One response on behalf of intellectual virtue eudaimonism is to broaden our understanding of what counts as intellectual virtue and its exercise. For Aristotle, the other distinct intellectual virtues, scientific understanding (*epistēmē*) and intuition (*nous*), are but parts of wisdom (*sophia*), with their combined activity being philosophical contemplation (*NE* VI.7 1141a18-20, 1141b2-3).[32] But we might instead think that there is a diverse range of intellectual virtues. Contemporary virtue epistemology provides possible candidates, such as intellectual honesty, intellectual courage, intellectual humility, intellectual generosity, and epistemic justice (Roberts and Wood 2007; Fricker 2007). Such intellectual virtues are obviously modeled on familiar character virtues, and just as the different character virtues are exercised in different kinds of activities, so each of these intellectual virtues could have its own activity besides simply contemplation.

Unfortunately, these intellectual virtues encounter the same deficiency plaguing the character virtues upon which they are based. That is, activities exercising these intellectual virtues

[32] Since intuition and understanding are included in wisdom, exercises of intuition or understanding on their own would naturally be justified by serving the more ultimate end of exercising wisdom.

are not plausible ultimate ends of action. This is clear if, on the one hand, the value of these virtues consists in their being conducive to forming true beliefs, justified beliefs, knowledge, or any other kind of valuable epistemic state. For then the exercises of these virtues would be characteristically justified by the value of the relevant epistemic states, whatever the source of their value in turn. On the other hand, even if epistemic value is to be located fundamentally in the having or exercise of intellectual virtues themselves rather than in the epistemic states they conduce to forming, it would still be bizarre to organize most of one's actions around the exercise of these character-like intellectual virtues—around, for example, accepting one's own epistemic limitations, giving people the benefit of the doubt, believing things no matter how unpopular, and apportioning everyone their fair share of testimonial weight. These might be great ways to form beliefs, but they hardly seem to justify going to work every morning and all the other things we do. In this respect, these intellectual virtues are akin to the emotion-governing character virtues like hope, patience, and humility.

(2) In addition to expanding our list of particular intellectual virtues, we might also respond on behalf of intellectual virtue eudaimonism by expanding our list of intellectual activities. We have so far considered only intellectual paradigms like philosophical contemplation and academic study, research, and teaching. But many activities engage the intellect and so, whatever the relevant virtues are, could there not be many activities, available to many different kinds of people, which exercise the intellectual virtues? We should not construe intellectual activity overly narrowly. One may also exercise intellectual virtues, for example, while forming political views, navigating social relationships, problem-solving in non-academic careers, strategizing in games or sports, or while creating or enjoying art.[33] In that case, could not most people aim at exercising intellectual virtues

[33] Richardson Lear's (2004) interpretation of Aristotle can motivate a version of this response. She argues that character-virtuous activity constitutes *eudaimonia* insofar as it *approximates* contemplation. We could

in these ways regardless of ability or interest in academic subjects and without the need for a non-intellectual underclass? Intellectual virtue eudaimonism could then avoid the charges of elitism and hierarchy.

I agree that this is a step in the right direction for ethical theory, but it will not save the spirit of intellectual virtue eudaimonism. In the first place, while most people are capable of engaging in activities in which intellectual virtues *can* be exercised, this does not entail that most people can succeed in acquiring intellectual virtues and exercising them in these activities. It has already been suggested that many people lack the access, interest, resources, or time to acquire intellectual virtue. While these people can sensibly aim at the activities on our more inclusive list, they cannot sensibly aim at their own exercise of intellectual virtue. This is not a problem, however, if intellectual virtue is more readily attainable by most people, a possibility which I wish to allow.

The bigger difficulty for this inclusive version of intellectual virtue eudaimonism is that, in expanding our notion of the kinds of activities which can constitute flourishing, intellectual virtue begins to seem quite unnecessary to flourishing, just as did character virtue. It does make sense for people to aim to engage in social, productive, creative, skillful, or athletic activities, all of which can create opportunities to exercise the intellect. But the value of these activities, what makes them plausible ultimate ends, is clearly not exhausted by their intellectual aspects. Art, for instance, can be intellectual, but it need not be; some works of art are intended to be non-rational and to engage other important parts of the human psyche. It is similarly worth developing, displaying, and competing in the use of physical skills involved in running, playing tennis, or

take this to mean that activity which exercises character virtue also thereby exercises intellectual virtue to some degree and for that reason (and to that degree) constitutes flourishing. This particular version of response (2), however, is still subject to the objection I raise below for this type of response.

playing the fiddle even when these are performed at a sub-rational, intuitive level. And loving relationships need not be intellectually deep or challenging to be valuable. These are all clearly activities worth doing even for someone who lacks intellectual virtue. So, when we become inclusive about the kinds of activities that can realize intellectual virtue, we realize that it is not the exercise of intellectual virtue alone which makes these activities good candidates to be ultimate ends of action. The intellectual aspects of these activities might explain part, but not all, of their value.

1.8 Conclusion: The Prospects for Virtue Eudaimonism

Character virtue eudaimonism takes flourishing, the ultimate end of action, to consist in the exercise of character virtue. I have objected to this view on the grounds that character-virtuous activities are not plausible ultimate ends for the purposes of eudaimonism since they are characteristically justified by further ends themselves. This is the version of virtue eudaimonism which is most well-represented in contemporary virtue ethics. I have also argued against intellectual virtue eudaimonism, which takes flourishing to consist in the exercise of intellectual virtue, on the grounds that the resulting ethical theory will be incomplete, elitist, or hierarchical. But it is right to point out that, at least according to Aristotle's version of virtue eudaimonism, flourishing consists in the exercises of both character and intellectual virtues, not solely one or the other. So, it is worth considering whether combined, character-and-intellectual virtue eudaimonism can overcome the above objections.

It seems the combined version at least begins to solve the elitism objection to the intellectual virtue version. If it is true that most people cannot sensibly aim at exercising intellectual virtue themselves, combined virtue eudaimonism would have them aim instead at

exercising character virtues which, while not necessarily easy to acquire, do seem more universally accessible (here rejecting Aristotle's exclusion of women, slaves, and laborers from full character virtue). Even if intellectual activity is the primary form of flourishing, the exercise of character virtues is still pretty good and counts as flourishing in its own right. So, everyone can aim at their own flourishing after all, and no one is treated as a rightful slave to others.

This attempted solution is not wholly satisfying. It remains true that character-virtuous activity is characteristically justified by further ends. Combined eudaimonism says that people should be prudent and moral for the sake of people's being prudent or moral *or* intellectual. This is some improvement over character virtue eudaimonism, but only a small one. The value of character-virtuous activity can now bottom out in an intrinsically valuable activity, which avoids the problem of a justificatory regress. But that intrinsically valuable intellectual activity will still only be available to a small portion of the population. This would still subordinate most people to the intellectual few. Granted we can now say that most people are able to flourish in their own right, but most people's character-virtuous flourishing will depend for its justification on a few people's intellectual flourishing. As a result, most people will have strong reason to prioritize others' intellectual flourishing in order to make their own character-virtuous activities worthwhile.

I submit that the underlying problem for these standard forms of virtue eudaimonism is that their conceptions of flourishing are too restrictive. Moral and intellectual activities can, intuitively, constitute flourishing, but so can many other activities such as engaging in loving relationships, raising children, participating in cultural practices, pursuing stimulating or socially useful careers, creating or enjoying arts or crafts, and engaging in athletic or other skill-based training, performance, and competition. Many such activities are intrinsically valuable, thus avoiding the non-ultimacy objection to character virtue eudaimonism. And they are much more plausibly

available to everyone, especially when taken together, thus avoiding the elitism objection to intellectual virtue eudaimonism. A conception of flourishing which includes these various activities as possible contributors to a good life will be a much better conception for the purposes of eudaimonist ethical theory.

In light of this, at least one possibility remains to save virtue eudaimonism: that is, to greatly expand our notion of virtue beyond simply character and intellectual virtues to include social virtues, creative virtues, athletic virtues, and any others that might be needed. Such an expansion is certainly a step in the right direction. Again, however, we may find virtue to be superfluous. Engaging in loving relationships and playing the banjo, for example, may well be worth doing and constitutive of flourishing even for those who are quite bad at them. In all such cases, it seems to be the valuable activities themselves that contribute to a good life, rather than the opportunities they provide to exhibit virtue. This may be too brief to count as a decisive refutation but, with all that has been said, the prospects for virtue eudaimonism do not look good. At the very least, there are some major challenges for advocates of Aristotelian or Neo-Aristotelian eudaimonism to overcome. And these challenges may motivate looking elsewhere than virtue for a conception of flourishing.

Chapter 2: The Concept of Living Well

If the arguments of the last chapter are correct, then canonical virtue-based conceptions of *eudaimonia* or human flourishing are poor candidate conceptions for the purposes of a eudaimonist ethical theory. In that case, anyone interested in developing or defending a eudaimonist ethical theory will have reason to seek a better candidate conception of the concept of human flourishing. In the chapters to come, I will defend a "hybrid value" conception of the concept of human flourishing—or, as I prefer to call it, the concept of living well. On this conception, for an agent to live well is for that agent to successfully engage in objectively valuable activities which they subjectively value. But to set the stage for this substantive conception of the concept, it will be useful first to clarify the target concept and identify some canonical features or heuristics that will allow us to adjudicate between rival conceptions of the concept.

2.1 *Eudaimonia*

We can first shed some light on the concept of human flourishing by recalling its history. The question of how to live a good life was considered by ancient Greek philosophers to be the fundamental question of ethics. To paraphrase Aristotle (1894), the Greeks nominally agreed as to the answer to this question: the good life is the life of *eudaimonia* (*Nicomachean Ethics* I.4 1095a17-20). One should aspire to be *eudaimōn*, i.e., to flourish or live well (*eu zēn*).[34] But again, as Aristotle notes, this agreement was merely verbal, for it was highly controversial what *eudaimonia* consists in (1095a20-22). Plato, Aristotle, and the Stoics all held, for example, that living well consists in having and/or using virtue, while the Epicureans held it to consist in pleasure

[34] I use all of these terms synonymously: "*eudaimonia*," "the good life," "human flourishing," and "living well."

and the absence of pain. All of these philosophers also felt the need to argue against more popular conceptions of *eudaimonia*, such as that it consists in having and using wealth, honor, or power.

2.2 Living Well Is Not Living Morally or Rationally

We can get a better grip on this historically influential but contested concept of living well by distinguishing it from other concepts. First, the concept of living well is distinct from the concept of leading a *morally* good life. As ordinarily construed, morality concerns how we treat other people. This ordinary construal corresponds more or less to the ancient Greek concept of justice (cp. *Nicomachean Ethics* V) and is captured by Scanlon's (1998) slogan of "what we owe to each other." On a broader, modern philosophical construal, the concern of morality is to make the world a better place "from the point of view of the universe" (Sidgwick 1981)—that is, in terms of agent-neutral or impersonal value. On either construal, leading a morally good life is not a matter of how things go for the agent in question. It is rather a matter of how the agent's actions affect others or the world as a whole.[35] Living well, on the other hand, is a matter of how things go for the agent, of whether their life is a good one *for them*. It is not a measure of their impact on others or the world.[36] On some conceptions, such as Plato's and Aristotle's, a good life for the agent will necessarily entail morally correct or even virtuous action. But such is a substantive commitment about the good life rather than a part of the concept. On other conceptions of the good life, doubtless represented by many ordinary people's judgments of the matter, even the morally

[35] Some philosophers might also, or instead, suppose that one's contribution to the overall value in the world determines not (just) whether one's life is morally good but whether one's life is good *simpliciter* (all things considered). That is also not the sense of living well or the good life at issue here.

[36] Dworkin (2002) discusses and rejects the "impact model" of living well. By my lights, the model of how much impact one has on others or the world is a non-starter to be the concept, or an exhaustive conception, of living well. It is changing the topic from living well to living morally.

wicked can prosper personally. I will return to the substantive question of whether morality is necessary for living well in Chapters 9-10.

Both historically and in contemporary philosophy, morality is often closely associated with rationality. For this reason, it is also worth noting that living well is not necessarily the same thing as living rationally or doing what one has most reason to do. It could be that we always have most or sufficient reason to live well, but this is not essential to the concept of living well. It could happen instead that some people have more reason to act in ways that exclude their living well in some cases. Presumably, it is the nature of reasons and rationality, not the nature of living well, that will determine whether or not we have (most or sufficient) reason to live well. Even though living rationally is not an essential part of the concept of living well, we could adopt a substantive conception of living well that appealed to reasons or rationality. For Aristotle, for example, to exercise human virtue is also to act on the basis of reason (*kata logon*), and so his virtue-theoretic conception of living well is also a rationalist conception. However, any such rationalism remains a substantive commitment about living well, not a conceptual truth.

In Chapter 9, §9.9, I will argue that rational adequacy and rational virtue are not necessary conditions for living well. But by and large, I will not have much to say about reasons or rationality. This silence may seem unusual to readers who accept some version of moral or ethical rationalism (either explicitly or implicitly) and therefore assume that normative ethics is intimately connected to facts about reasons. I will not argue against this assumption here, but I simply do not make it myself, however popular it may be. As a result, issues of rationality often strike me as orthogonal to practical, ethical questions about how to act, how to treat others, and how to live a good life. I am here interested in the ethics of living well; I leave the rationality of living well, and the relation between rationality and ethics more generally, to those with greater interest in such things.

2.3 Living Well Is an Objective, Personal Good

In distinguishing living well from living morally, we incidentally employed a common philosophical distinction between absolute or impersonal goodness (goodness *simpliciter*) and personal goodness (goodness *for* someone).[37] Living well is undoubtedly a personal good. It is living in a way that is good *for* the individual so living. The personal good of living well may in addition be impersonally good—i.e., good "from the point of view of the universe" or simply, absolutely good. But even if living well has the property of impersonal goodness, this would not be an essential part of the concept of living well. It would presumably be explained instead by the nature of impersonal goodness.

Focusing just on personal goodness, we should also take care to distinguish a person's life being objectively good *for* them from its seeming subjectively good *to* them, i.e., from their perspective or by their own lights. How good a life seems *to* a person is a matter of their attitudes towards that life, their normative judgments about it or their desires for it or their satisfaction or contentment with it. We have terms other than "living well" for such purely subjective states: "happiness," in the modern, psychological sense of the word, comes to mind as one of them.[38] But a life being good *for* a person is, conceptually, a more objective matter, one of their life having certain positive features—for instance, containing pleasure or virtuous activity—regardless of how they think or feel about these features. This is so even if, as on some substantive views, the only positive feature that makes a life good for a person is their subjective happiness with it. In that case, a life is objectively good for the person living it in virtue of their being subjectively happy

[37] See, e.g., Kraut (2012) for extended and historically informed discussion of this distinction, albeit one ultimately skeptical about absolute goodness.
[38] For this usage of "happiness," see, e.g., Haybron (2008).

with it. But again, even if living well consists exclusively in subjective states, this would be a substantive fact and not an essential part of the concept.

2.4 Assuming a Single, Universal Conception

It is an open question in value theory whether there are many, equally fundamental personal goods or whether there is only one fundamental personal good that explains why anything else is good for someone, when it is. An "objective list" theory of personal goods asserts the former (as long as there is more than one item on the list). By contrast, hedonism asserts the latter, claiming specifically that pleasure is the only fundamental personal good and that other goods are only goods insofar as they cause pleasure.

Just as we might take a monistic or pluralistic view of personal goods generally, so we might take a monistic or pluralistic view of living well in particular. A monistic view of living well would recognize only one fundamental way of living well, although there might be many different, more concrete ways of realizing that fundamental way of living well (just as monistic hedonism recognizes many different, more concrete ways of experiencing pleasure). By contrast, a pluralistic view of living well would recognize more than one way of living well, with no one way being more fundamental than, or explanatory of, the other ways of living well. A pluralistic view could assert a simple list of a few different ways of living well that are the same for everyone, in analogy to an objective list theory of personal goods. Or it could be combined with a kind of relativism about living well that holds that different ways of living well are available to different people, without a common, unifying explanation.[39] Or pluralism could be combined with a kind of

[39] This form of relativism would be analogous to what Harman (1978) calls normative moral relativism: roughly, that different people are subject to different ultimate moral demands.

particularism that denies any informative, general characterization of the many, various, concrete ways of living well—we simply know it when we see it.[40]

I will not attempt to disprove any form of pluralism about living well, but I will assume in what follows that pluralism is false and that there is a single, fundamental way for persons to live well (where persons include typical human beings and creatures sufficiently like them). This monistic assumption also rejects particularism and embraces generalism, since a monistic conception purports to offer a single, informative generalization that applies to all concrete instances. This monistic assumption also rejects the aforementioned relativism and embraces universalism, since the one fundamental way of living well is the same for all individuals. If there are different concrete ways of living well, these will all be explained as instances of the single, fundamental way of living well. And if different ways of living well are available to different individuals, these differences will be explained by other differences relevant to the single, fundamental conception.

I make this monistic assumption because of a theoretical preference for universals. By my lights, we should look for a single, universal conception of living well that applies to all instances and all people, and only despairing of that turn to some form of pluralism. Assuming pluralism, relativism, or particularism at the outset might blind us to important common features shared by all the different concrete ways of living well. And since I will go on to offer what I take to be a single, universal conception of living well, I see no need to accept pluralism. My case for monism, generalism, and universalism about living well will rise or fall with my proposed conception of living well and its ability to adequately characterize all and only good lives. My hope is that my

[40] This in analogy to Dancy's (2004) more general ethical particularism.

hybrid value theory of living well is plural enough at less fundamental levels to sufficiently account for any intuitions which might initially draw us towards a more fundamental pluralism.

2.5 Living Well Is Not Well-Being

To review, we want to know what it is to live well in the sense of leading a life that is good for the agent, to be distinguished from a morally good life, a rational life, a life that is impersonally good, and a life which merely seems good to the agent. And we are looking for a single, universal conception that will be the same for all people and apply to all instances of living well. We have yet more distinctions to draw, however, foremost of which is the conceptual distinction between living well and well-being.

As it is typically construed in the philosophical literature on the topic, well-being, or welfare, is the state of having what is ultimately or non-instrumentally good for a person (creature, etc.), i.e., having what is of (final) prudential value, what (non-instrumentally) benefits a person or makes them better off. Since living well is living a life that is good for the person living it, it would be easy to think living well just is the same thing as having (a sufficiently high degree of) well-being. This is indeed what many philosophers of well-being think. Darwall, for example, uses "the good life" interchangeably with "welfare" and its synonyms: "'benefit', 'welfare', 'a person's good', 'well-being', and 'prudential value'" (2002, 82). He even calls "*eudaimonia*" "Aristotle's term for the human good or welfare" (76). Haybron explicitly treats "well-being" and "welfare" as equivalent to "flourishing" and "*eudaimonia*" (2008, 29). And Kraut (2016) and Besser-Jones (2016) also treat theories of living well or *eudaimonia* as theories of well-being.

Contrary to these philosophers' usage, there is room for two separate concepts here. 'Well-being' is the broader concept, encompassing all final, personal goods, i.e., whatever ultimately

benefits a person at all. 'Living well' is narrower, applying only to a particular kind of personal good or benefit. Living well—or whatever constitutes living well—*is* good for a person and so it is at least a part of, or a contributor to, well-being, but it need not exhaust well-being. At least on some conceptions of the two concepts, a person could have a high degree of well-being yet fail to live well.

For example, there are three canonical conceptions of well-being which now make up a standard list for philosophers of well-being (following Parfit 1984). First, hedonism holds that pleasure (or positive experience more generally)[41] is the sole fundamental contributor to well-being. Second, desire fulfillment theory holds that only the fulfillment of a relevant set of an agent's possible desires fundamentally contributes to well-being. And third, objective list theory lists one or more goods, e.g., knowledge or friendship, that fundamentally contribute to well-being independently of the agent's attitudes towards those goods.[42] So imagine an heir to a family fortune whose resources afford him large amounts of pleasure, desire fulfillment, and objective goods. He is well-educated, has lots of friends, satisfies all of his desires, and receives quite a lot of pleasure by partying in clubs and casinos. By any of the three most typical theories of well-being, the *Trust Fund Playboy* has a high degree of well-being. Yet suppose that this playboy, with all his potential and opportunities, does nothing with his life but party and play. He does not contribute to the family business or fortune, nor does he engage in politics, philanthropy, or any other serious pursuit. Many of us would judge that, though the playboy is very well-off in terms of well-being, something important is missing from his life. He has not made anything of his life or his opportunities; he has not lived well. By contrast, we might easily judge that, say, a working-class

[41] Gregory (2016) argues that hedonism is best and most neutrally formulated in terms of positive and negative experiences rather than pleasure and pain. My arguments will not hinge upon the distinction.
[42] Fletcher (2016) defends the view that objective list theories are distinguished by their attitude-independence.

woman who joyfully dedicates herself to her job and to her family lives well, though she has far less overall well-being than the *Trust Fund Playboy* by these standard measures.

2.6 Heuristics for the Concept of Living Well

But what exactly is missing from the life of the *Trust Fund Playboy*? So far, we have characterized the concept of living well mostly negatively: it is not the same thing as well-being, nor subjective happiness, nor living morally. It is time to characterize living well positively. Unfortunately, I do not have a single, succinct definition of the concept of living well. What I have are heuristics or canonical features which will help us narrow in on the concept. We can later appeal to these heuristics in the defense of a particular conception of the concept.

2.6.1 Heuristic 1: Making Something of Your Life

We have already mentioned the first heuristic in the discussion of the *Playboy*. That is that living well involves making something of one's life and opportunities. Much of life comes to us as a matter of luck: where and when we are born, who our family is, whether we are healthy, and so on. These matters of luck determine a great deal of our overall well-being. For example, I plausibly have a higher degree of well-being than a feudal lord simply in virtue of being born in the United States in the late 20th century, with all its medical, technological, and cultural resources.

Living well is less a matter of what fortune brings you and more a matter of what you do with what you are given. Do you, for example, use your ample resources to develop yourself (physically, intellectually, emotionally, creatively, etc.) or to improve society or the lives of others? Or do you skate by on your resources, settling for cheap, unengaging entertainment? Or, if you have few resources or face adversity, do you strive to overcome these challenges, to improve

your situation or that of others? Or do you despair, seeking small escapes from an unfair lot in life? The question is not what happens to a person throughout their life but what they do with what they have, what they add to their life, to the lives of others, or to the world through their own agency. This is what Dworkin calls the "challenge model" of the good life, or people's "critical interests": "[t]he model of challenge holds that living a life is *itself* a performance that demands skill, that it is the most comprehensive and important challenge we face, and that our critical interests consist in the achievements, events, and experiences that mean that we have met the challenge well" (2002, 253).

2.6.2 Heuristic 2: The Life We Wish or Hope For

We can get at the concept of living well another way, by saying that it is to live as we would wish or hope to live, given our circumstances. But here we should be careful to abstract away from our own particular goals and interests. I may personally wish to lead the life of an academic philosopher, for example, but I do not think this entails that the life of the academic philosopher is the best life for everyone—*contra* Aristotle, that would be too specific. We need to distinguish between what universally makes a life well-lived and what is simply a matter of taste.

For this reason, a better version of the heuristic says that living well is to lead the kind of life we would wish for other people to live, specifically those people for whose sake we are concerned.[43] If we are particularly good-natured, we may wish for everyone to lead good lives, even strangers and those we dislike. But it is quite natural and helpful here to think specifically about the kinds of lives we would wish for our loved ones (e.g., our children) to live. I would not

[43] This is similar to Darwall's (2002) rational care theory of welfare, which analyzes the good for a person as what one should want for that person insofar as one cares about them. However, I offer it merely as a heuristic for living well (and indeed an imperfect one), not as a conceptual analysis.

want my children, for example, to be philosophers just because I happen to want to be a philosopher. Rather, I would want them to live lives that are responsive to their own goals, abilities, interests, and circumstances. Thinking about others in this way helps us to abstract away from particular tastes and get closer to a universal core of living well, assuming that there is one.

We should not be misled by speaking in terms of wishing, however. While we are already in the business of wishing for our loved ones to live well in response to their circumstances, we may also wish for those circumstances to be favorable. We wish for our loved ones to have the best life possible in terms of well-being and to respond to their circumstances as best they can. The good life, however, is not the concept of the best life possible, but of a life which is good *enough*. Living well requires only having favorable *enough* circumstances and responding well *enough* to them. We might then say that living well is leading the kind of life with which we would be satisfied on behalf of our loved ones. But even then, when it comes to our loved ones, we might only be satisfied with the best or at least a very well-off life in terms of well-being.

2.6.3 Heuristic 3: The Life We Affirm or Celebrate

It is better to say that someone who lives well leads a life that we would affirm or celebrate, rather than find tragic or regrettable. These are the kinds of judgments we make especially in end-of-life reflection, at funerals and the like. Sometimes a loved one's death is not particularly sad. We may be sad not to have them with us anymore, but we would experience that same kind of sadness if they were to move away from us, never to return. The kind of sadness which is sometimes absent is sadness for a life's being miserable or cut short. It is regret that a person did not or could not make something of their life, whether for lack of time or health or resources or through their own choices. When we do not feel this regret, it is because the person in question

lived a full (enough), and typically long (enough), life. When a person has lived well, their death often does not strike us as tragic.

We do not reserve our judgments of affirmation or celebration merely for our own loved ones. We often celebrate (or withhold celebrating) the lives of strangers of whom we are aware, including famous historical figures and living celebrities. For the purposes of philosophical discussion, it will be useful for us to reflect on such widely known figures as examples and to consider whether or not we celebrate their lives (and *why* we do or do not celebrate them). But we should always bear in mind that we are here concerned with celebrating people's lives *for their own sakes* and not for their impact on others or on the world. This matters because even a well-lived life that we affirm can seem to end tragically when we focus on what more a person could have done for others or for the world. Given more time, Mozart could have composed more music and Martin Luther King, Jr. could have done more for social justice. In terms of potential impact, these and other deaths may seem tragic. But there is comparatively little to regret,[44] and much to celebrate, about the lives which they did in fact lead and the choices they made. And note that this is not because either had an easy life or a life especially high in well-being—they both had their struggles. We celebrate their lives not for their circumstances but for what they did with, or in spite of, their circumstances. And some of us are fortunate enough to be able to celebrate the lives of our loved ones because of how they responded to their circumstances, even though they had far less impact on the world than, say, Mozart or MLK.

[44] Again, we are not concerning ourselves primarily with the morality of people's actions. Mozart, MLK, and everyone else who has lived have made moral mistakes which are apt occasions for moral regret (first-personal or third-personal). The regret that is immediately relevant to judgments about living well is regret for the agent's own sake and not moral regret for their treatment of other persons. Whether some amount of moral behavior is necessary for a person to live well is a substantive question and will be addressed below, in Chapters 9-10.

We have thus characterized, but not defined, living well as responding to one's circumstances in such a way that we are disposed to affirm or celebrate. This is not to say that living well consists in or requires actually being celebrated, either during or after one's lifetime. Nor is it necessary that agents in fact affirm or celebrate their own lives in order to live well—that would be a substantive, subjectivist commitment about living well. The idea of affirmation or celebration is merely a heuristic to help us hone our judgments about living well. By my lights, this last heuristic (affirmation/celebration) is the best one, and so it will be the most central to my arguments in the following chapters, though I will sometimes employ the other two heuristics as well. The judgments made on the basis of such heuristics will be useful for comparing substantive conceptions of living well. Before concluding the discussion of the concept of living well, however, I will now pause to make a few more miscellaneous notes.

2.7 Living Well at a Time

First, even though it is easiest to get a grip on living well by thinking about whole lives well-lived or not, I am not primarily interested in making summative judgments about when a whole life is well-lived. The backwards-looking, end-of-life heuristic is just that: a heuristic only. I am first and foremost interested in what it is to live well at a time or during an interval of time. I consider it natural to take living well at a time to be the more fundamental property that determines whether a whole life is well-lived. On this view, whether a whole life is well-lived will be some function of the amount or proportion of time a person spends living well. It is an open question what exactly this function is. Is a person's whole life well-lived if they die at 30 but spent the last 15 years of it living well? Perhaps, or perhaps their death was too premature. What about a person who lives to 70 with 30 non-consecutive years of living well? Which life is more well-lived?

I do not offer answers to these questions. In part, this is because I consider the primary purpose of ethics to be to give prospective advice about how to live now and in the future, not to render backwards-looking evaluations or rankings of lives. Of course, looking back can help us fix our ideas about how to act going forward. It is philosophically useful to think about examples of whole lives and to make summative judgments about them. But ethics does not end its life there. Moreover, even if we do care about summative evaluations of lives, it seems clear to me that living well at a time for as much of my life as possible gives me my best chance of living a whole life well. If I want my whole life to be well-lived, then, for any given interval of time, I should be trying to live well. So, wherever our personal interests lie, knowing what it is to live well at a time is more pressing than knowing how living well at a time adds up to make a whole life well-lived.

2.8 A Threshold for Living Well

Second, I wish to stress that the concept of living well that is at issue here is, in the first place, a threshold notion—living a good *enough* life—rather than a comparative notion of living more or less well or a maximal notion of living as well as possible.[45] This is not to say that living well cannot come in degrees, if the underlying constituents of living well come in degrees.

Consider again the Aristotelian theory of living well as consisting in the active exercise of virtue. Plausibly, virtue comes in degrees, but only once it is past a threshold.[46] There is a cut-off, above which one is virtuous and below which one is not. Below the cut-off of virtue, one has no virtue to exercise and so cannot live well. Above the cut-off, one has virtue which one can exercise and thereby live well. But if virtue comes in degrees above this threshold, then plausibly one can also live more or less well by having and exercising greater or lesser virtue. If there are greater or

[45] Kristjánsson (2017), for example, theorizes human flourishing explicitly as a *satis* or threshold concept.
[46] Curzer (2012) attributes to Aristotle the view that virtue is a threshold concept.

lesser degrees of activity, or if virtue can be exercised to greater or lesser degrees, then these would also plausibly affect one's degree of flourishing on the Aristotelian picture. Ultimately, I wish to reject the Aristotelian conception of living well, but it seems that one of its potential advantages is in rendering the threshold of living well non-arbitrary. It says that the threshold of living well is parasitic on an underlying threshold for virtue, a proposed constituent of living well. And the threshold for virtue is non-arbitrary—or so we may at least suppose, for the sake of the example. A good conception of living well will be like this Aristotelian one in offering a natural, non-arbitrary cut-off for living well in virtue of its proposed constituents of living well.

In this respect too, living well contrasts with well-being, which is primarily comparative. Well-being is ordinarily thought to come in degrees, which is why philosophers of well-being and normative ethicists so often represent it numerically, e.g., comparing ten "units" of well-being to five. Possible contributors to well-being like pleasure and achievement make you better off, increasing your well-being; possible detractors like pain and the frustration of desires make you worse off, decreasing well-being. On the face of it, there is no cut-off within the positive range of well-being at which one is said to simply have well-being: you can always have more or less.

This is not to say there are no thresholds of interest to us. First, philosophers do speak of a threshold of neutrality between having overall negative and positive well-being, i.e., between having a life that is not worth living and having one that is. But even negative and zero well-being are thought to be measures on a spectrum of comparative well-being. There may also be thresholds within the positive range of well-being that are of moral or political import. It may be morally required of us, or politically required of our government, to ensure that everyone has a good enough life with respect to well-being (without having to maximize well-being). But note that any such threshold would be imposed "externally" on the spectrum of well-being by substantive moral or

political principles. It would not be a threshold that arises from the concept of well-being itself or its underlying constituents, in the way that the threshold of living well arises from the threshold of its constituents (for instance, virtue). And as a result, any such threshold would appear at first glance to be arbitrary from the perspective of well-being: the positive level of well-being above the threshold would be continuous with the positive level of well-being below, with little to distinguish them.

2.9 Living Well Is Specific to Humans, Well-Being Is Generic

Third, we can distinguish living well and well-being in yet another way, namely that living well (at least as we will be using the term) is exclusive to mature humans (and creatures sufficiently like them) whereas non-human creatures and all human beings at all times, including during early childhood and periods of infirmity, plausibly have levels of well-being. Even infants and non-human animals experience pleasure and have knowledge (e.g., perceptual knowledge). They can have their desires fulfilled and can be part of loving relationships. These goods plausibly contribute to infants' and non-human animals' well-being in the same way that they contribute to adult humans' well-being. Mature human well-being is continuous with the well-being of other creatures. Even though parts of well-being may be kind-specific—plants and animals cannot appreciate jokes or art, for example—there is significant overlap at least between humans and non-human animals. Aristotle would trace this overlap in well-being to overlap in parts of the soul: in addition to the rational part of their soul, humans have animal and vegetative parts which function more or less like the souls of animals and plants in respect of perception, movement, nutrition, and growth. Even without talk of souls, it remains plausible that the well-functioning of shared bodily and mental systems will constitute well-being for humans and non-humans alike.

Living well is not like this. Aristotle, for example, considers it a datum to be explained that non-human creatures and human children could not have *eudaimonia* (*NE* I.9 1099b32-1100a1; X.8 1178b24-32). Plants and animals may have their own analogous ways of flourishing, but there is no overlap between their flourishing and specifically *human* flourishing. This is because most non-human creatures are capable of very different states and activities than are humans. Again, on Aristotle's theory, non-human animals have their own kinds of virtues, but they are not capable of *human* virtues like justice or courage and so they are not capable of exercising said virtues in *human* flourishing. Whatever constitutes human flourishing will plausibly involve states or activities that are more or less distinctive of humans (and creatures sufficiently like humans), just as whatever constitutes the flourishing of other creatures will involve states or activities that are more or less distinctive of those creatures, e.g., trees spreading roots and dogs playing with sticks.

As for humans on Aristotle's theory, infants and humans under other conditions of inability are not capable of living well either because they are not capable of having virtue in the first place or because they are not capable of exercising it. Only adults (or near-adults) with certain mental capacities can have the relevant virtues in the first place. Furthermore, the exercise of virtue requires capacities to act deliberately. Aristotle goes so far as to claim that even sleep prevents people from living well, since virtue cannot be exercised in sleep (*NE* I.8 1098b30-1099a7). In that case, other conditions which disable people from acting will also prevent living well. Similar points are likely to arise for any plausible conception of living well. Note that this exclusion of the very young from living well can help explain why the death of the very young is particularly tragic: they never had a chance to live well.

2.10 Meaning in Life

Finally, while I have argued extensively to distinguish living well from well-being, I wish to leave open whether or not living well is the same concept as living meaningfully or having meaning in life. Some philosophers do not see a distinction. Dworkin writes, "I do not address separately the question whether and when a human life has meaning or is meaningful. I cannot understand that question in any way that does not take it to be essentially the same question as the question I do discuss, which is when and why a particular life is good or successful" (2002, 241). Others do distinguish the two concepts. Wolf (2010), for instance, occasionally employs the language of a "life well lived" (10) and of a "fully flourishing, successful, good life" (12), but believes that "meaning is one ingredient of a good life, among others (like subjective happiness)" (52). Insofar as we think meaning in life has to do with rendering life intelligible or coherent, there is no guarantee that living well is the same thing as living meaningfully: whatever constitutes living well might render life intelligible or it might not. But I will take no stance on this issue in this treatise, even though I will say more about it below, in Chapter 7. I have characterized the concept that interests me here, and I leave the question of whether or not that is the same thing as meaning to be settled by those who work on meaning in life.

Part II: The Hybrid Value Conception of Living Well

We have now clarified at length the concept of living well. Now I will clarify and defend my conception of this concept: to live well is to successfully engage in objectively valuable activities which the agent subjectively values. I call this the hybrid value conception of living well. It includes four conditions which I take to be necessary and jointly sufficient: (1) activity, (2) subjective valuing, (3) objective value, and (4) success. Over the next four chapters, I will discuss each of these conditions in turn.

Chapter 3: Activity

The first condition necessary for living well is activity. Living well consists in the active exercise of one's own agency, in one's activities, and not in passive benefits that accrue to one wholly through fortune or the agency of others. Here I construe "activities" broadly to include anything constitutively involving agency, such as short-term actions and medium- to long-term projects and achievements, engaging in loving relationships and social practices, appreciating (as opposed to merely perceiving) objects of beauty, developing and standing for beliefs or ideals, and so on. Note also that activities may be either physical or mental or some combination of the two. So, for example, running around a track "on autopilot," with minimal conscious thought, is an activity, as is doing philosophy or composing poetry entirely in one's head. The activities that constitute living well are often temporally extended and complex, consisting of lots of other, smaller-scale activities. For example, engaging in a loving parental relationship with a child will involve other activities like feeding, bathing, teaching, playing, etc. Such complex activities are also often multiply realizable by various smaller actions. One can stand for an ideal in different ways, e.g., by writing tracts or by attending a protest.

3.1 Historically, Nearly a Conceptual Truth

I take the activity condition to be nearly a conceptual truth, since one of our heuristics says that living well is a matter of how we respond to our circumstances, not of our circumstances themselves. Aristotle (1894) gives voice to the activity condition when he claims that *eudaimonia* itself *is* (an) activity (*Nicomachean Ethics* I.7 1098a16; X.7 1177a12, 24; 1177b19, 24). His theory of living well is consistent with this condition since he considers *eudaimonia* to consist not in merely passively having virtue but in actively exercising it. I say that it is *nearly* a conceptual truth because, while it strikes me as quite intuitive, some competent users of the concept of living well might disagree with the condition. At least on some interpretations, Socrates, Plato, and the Stoics all held that *eudaimonia* consisted merely in the passive state of *having* virtue, such that one could be *eudaimōn* even while on the rack. The Epicureans meanwhile considered *eudaimonia* to consist in pleasure and the absence of pain, which as well seem like passive states.

Now in the first place, the passive interpretations of these views about *eudaimonia* should not be taken for granted. Annas argues that, for the Stoics, *eudaimonia* "is not just a state in which the agent is passively virtuous, but a state in which he exercises virtue, acts virtuously" (1993, 409). A Stoic sage on the rack can presumably live well by engaging in virtuous mental activity, if nothing else. Annas also argues that the kind of pleasure which the Epicureans identify with *eudaimonia*, tranquility (*ataraxia*), "is a state in which nothing, bodily or mental, is interfering with your natural state; but the natural state for humans is not one of inertness, but of varied activity" (336-337). If Annas's interpretations are correct, then other ancient authors may not have challenged Aristotle's conceptual claim at all.

Furthermore, in the case of these other ancient authors, even if one lives well by being in a final, passive state, that state is reached by activity. One cannot ordinarily be passively put into a

state of virtue or tranquility. Rather it takes a lot of active work to become Plato's true philosopher, a Stoic sage, or a tranquil Epicurean. In all three cases, it requires learning substantial philosophical truths and acting in accordance with them, slowly adjusting your desires to match what you know and what you should do. As such, becoming *eudaimōn* is, on these ancient views, an active lifestyle even if the end result of *eudaimonia* itself is in fact a state rather than an activity. And it is that active lifestyle that is the answer to the question of what kind of life we should aspire *to live* (not simply to have or experience). So, it apparently remains true on all the major ancient philosophical views about *eudaimonia* that, if someone is living well, that is so, to a significant degree, in virtue of their activities. Thus, I think there is strong conceptual pressure to accept an activity condition for living well.

3.2 Argument for the Necessity of Activity

Nevertheless, I do not wish to rest the case for the activity condition on a conceptual claim. I will not accuse anyone of conceptual confusion for insisting, perhaps inspired by certain interpretations of Greek sources, that living well consists in a passive state, be it pleasure, virtue, or other good states like knowledge. Rather, the necessity of activity can remain a substantive claim, warranted by thinking about examples. First consider another inheritor of great wealth, the *Trust Fund Spectator*, who pays employees to do whatever they want done and never lifts a finger. A staff of cooks and servants meets their daily needs, their designated executors run the family business and a charitable foundation in their name, au pairs and tutors raise and educate their adopted children, collectors and decorators fill their house with fine art objects solely for their guests' appreciation, and ghost writers write great novels which they claim as their own. All the while they spend their time idly relaxing by the pool. In terms of outcome, their life may appear

quite successful and enviable. Yet there is a glaring problem: they are not themselves doing any of the things the results of which might ordinarily signify a life well-lived. All the trappings of success accrue to them totally passively, not through their own activity. I submit that, as a result, we would not affirm or celebrate their life. After all, they are not really even living, but hiring others to live for them.

The generalizable structure of the *Trust Fund Spectator* example is to take any of a number of activities that would intuitively constitute living well in ordinary cases—activities such as running a business, working for charitable causes, raising children, collecting art, writing novels—and to remove the activity from them in order to conclude that the remaining passive states no longer constitute living well. We can perform the same operation with any passive state that might be thought to constitute living well. Let us start with pleasure and abstract away any activity on the part of the agent to receive that pleasure. In the case of *Passive Pleasure*, we can imagine that a third party employs drugs or electric shocks to the nervous system to induce pleasant feelings and euphoria in our passive "agent." Alternatively, if our interest is in so-called "higher pleasures," we can suppose that a third party reads aloud the best novels, displays the best art, and plays the best music and movies before our agent. The agent receives genuine pleasure from their aesthetic experiences, though they do not engage critically with the works of art. They simply let the experiences wash over them. In either version of the case, the life of *Passive Pleasure* is doubtless very pleasant, but it is not the kind of life we would celebrate or wish for our loved ones to have. A life spent passively receiving pleasure would be bizarre.

Other lives spent passively entering certain states would be equally bizarre. In *Passive Virtue*, suppose that a third party hypnotizes our agent into being maximally virtuous but that the agent never encounters an opportunity to exercise their virtue through acting or thinking. They

would have to be in something like a vegetative state never to act on their virtuous dispositions. Presumably, the fact that they have those dispositions is not enough to render their life worth celebrating. Likewise, in *Passive Knowledge*, imagine that a third party reads encyclopedias and advanced textbooks to our agent, who retains and knows as much of the information as they can but does not act on the information or use it to generate any new knowledge. Again, the fact that the agent has lots of knowledge does not seem to raise their inactive lifestyle to the level of a good life. If any of these passive lives were in fact ways of living well, that would seem to have radical implications for how we help others. Instead of trying to raise the material standard of living or teaching people to do things for themselves, we should focus our social efforts on stimulating people's brains in the right way or on reading them novels and encyclopedias. I take it that, since we do not think this is how we should be trying to help people live good lives, we do not think lives of passive pleasure, virtue, or knowledge are lives well-lived.

The point of all these examples is not to show that states like pleasure, virtue, and knowledge can play no role in lives well-lived. These examples simply show that some activity is always necessary. A purely passive life could never be well-lived. But pleasures and knowledge actively pursued, virtue actively developed and exercised could very well make for good lives. Consider a gourmand who learned to cook exquisite meals in order to enjoy fine food or an aesthete who studied art and art history in order to appreciate great works most fully. Similarly, consider a scientist or philosopher dedicated to the generation of knowledge, or a person striving to become just and to make the world a more just place. These might very easily be the kinds of lives we would celebrate and wish for others to lead. It is the activity of the agent that makes all the difference to our judgments about these lives. We should conclude as a substantive matter, if not a conceptual one, that living well requires activity on the part of the agent.

3.3 Living Well vs. Well-Being (Again)

I conclude this chapter by noting that this activity condition also further distinguishes living well from well-being, for it is often supposed that goods passively received can contribute to well-being. The *Trust Fund Spectator* might have a high degree of well-being. All of their desires are fulfilled, though not by them, and desire fulfillment is one of the standard candidates for constituents of well-being. They are certainly better off than a lot of people who are impoverished, starving, sick, or in pain, though they are perhaps not as well-off as they could be if they also had the active good of living well. Similarly, the agents in *Passive Pleasure*, *Passive Virtue*, or *Passive Knowledge* may be very well-off in terms of well-being, assuming that pleasure, virtue, or knowledge contribute to well-being—and again, these are standard candidates. It seems plausible, then, that there is no activity condition for well-being. And indeed, there must not be such a condition if infants are to have levels of well-being, since the goods that infants have are not the result of their activity but are passively received. So here we have yet another difference between living well and well-being: living well requires activity, whereas a person's well-being can be affected passively or actively.

Chapter 4: Subjective Valuing

The second necessary condition for living well is that the agent subjectively values or loves the relevant activity or activities they perform. (I use these verbs, "value" and "love," synonymously.) For example, a person lives well by parenting only if they value their parenting. Valuing and loving are hopefully very familiar psychological states. I will discuss specific theories of valuing below, in §§4.3-4, but for the present purposes of establishing subjective valuing as a necessary condition, I wish to remain theoretically neutral and rely only on a commonsense notion. For now, it will suffice to say that valuing involves some sort of favoring ("pro") mental state, such as an attitude or disposition, that is in some way stronger than merely liking, wanting, or otherwise desiring.

4.1 Argument for the Necessity of Valuing

Why think that living well requires subjectively valuing one's relevant activities? As with the activity condition, this is best established by considering examples. To set up these examples, let us assume (as seems plausible) that there are a number of various activities which, in the right conditions, can constitute living well. (We will have more to say about which activities these are in the next chapter on objective value.) Some intuitive examples include engaging in loving relationships, raising children, creating works of art, realizing athletic achievements, and contributing to our collective knowledge via academic research. We could run the following cases using any such candidate activity. Let us pick research. We could invent a hypothetical researcher for the purpose, but a real one will also do.

So, hold fixed that the eminent primatologist, Jane Goodall, spent decades of her life studying chimpanzees and advancing our knowledge of them. But suppose counterfactually that

she hated every minute of it, that she was positively averse to chimpanzees and research. It is hard to imagine her working so hard and for so long if she hated it, but we can invent some pretext to explain that: maybe she thought chimpanzee social networks held the secret to curing a rare disease she had, or whatever.

Now we ask, does *Chimp-Hating Goodall* live well by studying chimpanzees? We are assuming that her research is such an activity as could constitute her living well in the right conditions, but the question is whether these are the right conditions. We would surely continue to celebrate Goodall's work and achievements for their contribution to our knowledge, but that is to consider the impact of Goodall's life rather than its quality *for her*. When we consider whether her life is well-lived *for her*, we must conclude that it is not. She is doing something great, but she hates doing it. It is hard to imagine her life being anything but miserable for her in these conditions. We would not wish such a life on our loved ones nor celebrate it for her sake. Instead, we would consider her life rather regrettable, since she could have spent all that time and energy doing something she liked more. Clearly, hating an activity is not the right condition for it to constitute living well.

A better candidate case of living well is *Ambivalent Goodall*, where she does not positively hate studying chimpanzees but neither does she really care about it or enjoy it. She could take it or leave it. Maybe she just does it as a way to make a living, a job she got started on and could never be bothered to quit. I say this case is more likely to involve living well than the previous case but that is not saying much. It is still not the kind of life we would celebrate for Goodall's sake. Presumably, there are other activities she actually likes doing and it is a shame that she is not doing those things.

Better off still is *Merely Enjoying Goodall*, who likes and enjoys studying chimpanzees but does not quite value it. She would rather be researching than doing nothing, but it is still just as good as anything else she merely likes or enjoys, like reading *Far Side* cartoons. It is not just a job for her. It is a good job. But there are other good jobs she could be doing. It is not her passion or her calling. This intuitively gets Goodall closer still to living well, but it does not get her all the way there.

Again, there are still likely to be other activities she actually values and cares deeply about. If she does not value anything at all, then her life is indeed quite pitiable. Imagine going through life valuing nothing. I would not wish that somber an existence on my enemies, let alone my loved ones. But on the assumption that she does value other things, her life would surely be better for her if she engaged in those valued activities instead. The lives we really celebrate (for the agent's own sake) are those where they actively pursue their passions, not just where they do things that they like more than doing nothing. It may be easy to miss this subjective valuing condition for living well because, when we reflect on the lives of people who live well like Jane Goodall, it is difficult to imagine them engaging in the activities they do so well and for so long without being heavily personally invested in these activities. Hopefully, these cases have drawn out that, if someone *were* to engage in a relevant activity like studying chimpanzees without valuing it, something crucial would be missing, to the point that we could no longer describe their life as well-lived.

4.2 Notes on the Valuing Condition

Having established this necessary condition, allow me to fill in some details about how I construe it. First, I do not restrict the valuing condition to non-instrumental ("final" or "intrinsic")

valuing. Intuitively, we can value things either for their own sakes or for the sake of other things that we value. As far as I am concerned, either instrumental or non-instrumental valuing can satisfy the necessary condition for living well. Jane Goodall may have valued her research for its own sake or for the practical benefits her research might have for humans and chimpanzees; either way, she has lived well by valuing and engaging in this research. The inclusion of instrumental valuing will be relevant to, among other things, the inclusion of moral activity as a way of living well, which I discuss in more detail in Chapters 5-6.

Second, note that to value a complex activity, it is not necessary to value every smaller activity that is part of the broader activity. One can value parenting without valuing changing dirty diapers or arguing with teenagers. Third, note that valued activities can be specified with particular objects. For example, one may value parenting *their children* specifically (not parenting in general) or value studying *Paradise Lost* (not studying all poetry nor all studying). Of course, in addition to valuing activities involving particular objects, we can also value or love the objects themselves, objects like people, creatures, works of art, places, properties, or abstracta like justice. These are not always the same thing: e.g., loving to kick puppies is clearly not the same thing as loving puppies. In the next two sections, I will propose a general characterization of valuing that applies to valuing all types of objects and activities. However, as I formulate the hybrid value theory, living well requires subjectively valuing one's activities specifically, not objects in general.

I have four interrelated reasons for this restricted focus. First, valuing an object is often enough the same thing as valuing one or more activities involving the object, e.g., loving baseball is typically shorthand for loving to watch or play baseball. Second, even when valuing an object is not the same thing as valuing one or more activities involving the object, the former typically entails the latter. Loving a person may not be reducible to valuing activities like spending time

with them, helping them, remembering them, and so on, but it typically entails valuing at least some of such activities. It would be odd to say you loved someone but did not value engaging with them (or their work or the memory of them, etc.) in any positive way. In some cases, valuing certain activities may partly constitute valuing the object and, in other cases, we may value the activities because we value the object. Either way, valuing these activities will be relevant.

Third, in keeping with the activity condition, if valuing an object is to contribute to one's flourishing, then that valuing must involve some kind of activity. A purely passive kind of valuing that is neither actively developed nor acted upon could not, to my mind, contribute to a well-lived life. If I wake up one day struck with love for Anthony Hopkins but do not *do* anything about it—I do not watch his films, read his biography, try to meet him, etc.—it is hard to see how my love helps me live well. Fourth, to value an object, like a person or justice, is often quite ambiguous. It could mean you value any of a variety of features of the person, for example, or that you value any of a number of different activities associated with justice, like enforcing the law or breaking it in protest. Focusing on valuing activities instead of objects helps bring clarity. For although (as I am about to suggest) we can also value activities in different ways, the different ways of valuing activities are much less divergent than the myriad different ways of valuing objects generally.

4.3 A Working Theory of Subjective Valuing

By considering examples in light of our heuristics about living well, we established that subjective valuing is a necessary condition for living well. We concluded this much before committing to any particular theory of what it is to value. Our only crucial commitment so far has been that valuing is a kind of favoring mental state stronger than ordinary enjoying or desiring. This is good for the hybrid value theory of living well, as it will not depend on any particular,

parochial theory of subjective valuing. We can simply plug in any theory of valuing compatible with our initial, pre-theoretical assumption about this familiar psychological state.

However, the hybrid value theory of living well would not be complete without some theory of subjective valuing, and so I will now propose such a theory. I will also defend my proposal by comparing it to some other extant theories. But I must reiterate that the hybrid value theory of living well does not rise or fall with my own preferred theory of valuing. I offer this theory of valuing merely to flesh out the theory with which I am primarily concerned, the hybrid value theory of living well.

I consider valuing to be multiply realizable: its constituents often vary as its subjects and objects vary. Thus, I propose to treat 'valuing' as something like a cluster concept. I take several different conditions each to be more or less sufficient when combined with a single necessary condition. However, paradigm instances of valuing will typically meet several of these conditions; the fewer conditions that are met, the more borderline the case becomes. That said, we can also treat the concept as having two necessary and jointly sufficient conditions, where one of the conditions is massively disjunctive. (I will not even insist that my statement of this condition is exhaustive.)

On my view, then, to value *X* is to

1. Either (a) have a pro-attitude towards *X* (e.g., desiring, liking, wanting, approving, appreciating, etc.), or

   (b) be disposed to have positive feelings or experiences with respect to or because of *X* (e.g., pleasure, enjoyment, satisfaction, contentment, feeling good, etc.), or

   (c) be disposed to experience a range of context-dependent emotions regarding *X*[47] (e.g., to feel happy or proud when *X* fares well, to feel sad or disappointed when *X* fares poorly, to feel anger when *X* is threatened or besmirched, etc.), or

[47] I take conditions (c) and (f) directly from Scheffler (2011).

(d) be disposed to engage in or with *X* in a positive way (e.g., to do *X*, to create opportunities to *X*, to act in the interest of *X*, to spend time with *X*, etc.), or

(e) have a positive normative belief about *X* (e.g., that *X* is good, that *X* is right, that *X* is valuable, etc.), or

(f) be disposed to treat certain kinds of *X*-related considerations as reasons for action in relevant deliberative contexts (e.g., to treat *X*'s needs as reasons to help *X*, to treat a lack of *X* as a reason to avoid something, etc.), or…

AND

2. Stably identify with these attitudes, feelings, emotions, dispositions, etc.[48]

In slogan form, to value *X* is to favor *X* (or be pro *X*) and to stably identify as such, where we can favor *X* in a variety of ways: attitudinally, affectively, emotionally, behaviorally, or cognitively. Many of these different ways of favoring also come in instrumental and non-instrumental varieties (e.g., instrumental and final desires), which in turn form the basis for instrumental and non-instrumental varieties of valuing.

[48] I take this necessary condition from Raibley (2013). We might add to this necessary condition that stable identification must be authentic, to rule out problematic adaptive preferences such as those which people may form as a way of coping with oppressive conditions (see, e.g., Elster 1983; Nussbaum 2001; Cudd 2006; Khader 2011; Mitchell 2018). I consider authenticity to be a function of the modal profile of one's base mental states and identification, e.g., whether one would still have them under more ideal conditions. We might take this more restrictive view of valuing if we think that inauthentic "valuers" are not really valuing—as, indeed, an oppressed individual might conclude about themselves once they realize the oppressive source of their purported values. Even if we do not build authenticity into valuing, instead allowing for authentic and inauthentic valuing, we might consider it an additional necessary condition for living well. In that case, living well would require not simply valuing one's activities but *authentically* valuing them. This could help explain why certain circumstances that undermine authentic valuing are bad and count as oppressive: they thereby threaten people's ability to live well. However, I will not at this time commit to authenticity as a necessary condition either for valuing or for living well. I am not fully convinced that one cannot inauthentically value or live well through activities that one inauthentically values. Moreover, the philosophical issues surrounding adaptive preferences, oppression, and authenticity would take us very far afield. For now, I merely suggest authenticity as a possible addition to the present theories of valuing and of living well.

4.3.1 Condition 1: Base "Pro" Mental States

I do not think all of these ways of valuing are equally representative. To my mind, attitudinal, affective, and emotional valuing are the most paradigmatic forms of valuing, cognitive ways the least paradigmatic, and behavioral ways somewhere in the middle. Of course, these conditions often co-travel and, as I have said, the most paradigmatic instances of valuing will include several. But I think it important not to view any one of them as entirely necessary because valuing subjects and the objects of valuing vary so widely.

The point is probably more obvious in the case of different objects. The way I value spending time with my family meets all the conditions (a)-(f) and I stably identify with each of them. But the way I value drinking whiskey does not involve (c) emotional vulnerability or (e) normative belief, since I do not get emotional about whiskey, nor do I stably identify with the normative belief that it is good or valuable. (I could be convinced that drinking whiskey was not valuable, and I would still go right on stably identifying with my drinking whiskey and enjoying it.) And the way I value acting morally consists primarily in stably identifying with the normative belief that it is good (albeit instrumentally so). I have at best rather imperfect dispositions (a) to want to act morally, (b) to enjoy acting morally, (c) to be emotionally vulnerable concerning acting morally, (d) to act morally, and (f) to treat moral considerations as reasons for action. When I do desire to act morally, treat moral considerations as reasons for action, etc., it is usually because of my antecedent cognitive commitment to the value of acting morally, i.e., my cognitive way of valuing morality.

Valuing varies not just with its objects but also with its subjects, the people doing the valuing. You could value the same things as I do but value them in different ways. Some people are more disposed to feel pleasure or satisfaction than others; some are more disposed to feel

emotions and feel them more strongly than others; some are more prone to action than others; some relate to things more intellectually than others; and, as perennial philosophical debates so often remind us, some are more disposed to make normative judgments, invoking value or reasons, while others are more disposed to rest content with their own likes and dislikes, treating them as individual tastes rather than normativizing them. Some might develop these various dispositions reflectively, in response to how they think about themselves and the world around them; for others, it is probably just the way they are. Either way, different people can also stably identify with different attitudes, dispositions, etc. (henceforth, "base mental states"). Bearing these differences in mind, I am inclined not to deny that someone values something just because they do not feel the same things I would, act the way I would, or think the way I would about it. We should accept, indeed celebrate, the fact that people can value the same things in different ways. It is not just what we value but how we value them that make up our identities as individuals.

4.3.2 Condition 2: Identification

On the topic of identity, it should be clear by now that, while I am willing to let a thousand flowers bloom with respect to the base mental states that constitute valuing, I do consider the second condition—stable identification with these base mental states—as absolutely necessary to valuing. The reason for this necessary condition is quite simple: the higher-order mental states involved in identification with the base mental states are what distinguish valuing from the base mental states themselves. As we have already been assuming, valuing something is clearly more than simply desiring it, enjoying it, believing it to be good, etc. I may desire to have curry for dinner, but this does not mean that I value curry. To value is something stronger, deeper, longer lasting, and more a part of who we are. The identification condition captures this insight.

Identification may sound a bit nebulous. Raibley, from whom I take the condition, writes that "[t]o stably identify with the pro-attitude, the agent must be disposed to take it to be representative of who they are and who they want to be" (2013, 191). This clearly involves a higher-order mental state, but it is unclear whether this mental state is supposed to be cognitive, attitudinal, affective, emotional, or behavioral. I propose not to try and resolve the ambiguity here. Perhaps identification, too, is multiply realizable. It is clear, however, that identification with a base mental state must be relatively stable across time.

Finally, I note that to identify with a base mental state, it is not necessary to endorse the base mental state or one's identification with it entirely whole-heartedly. Identities can be fragmented, and a person's values can be in conflict. It may be possible for someone to love or value something, to identify with their base mental state for it, yet also wish they did not. Valuing is deep, but it need not go "all the way down."

This observation allows us to overcome a challenge Scheffler poses for the view that valuing consists, even partly, in one's second-order mental states. Specifically, Scheffler observes that there are "cases in which one's second-order desires conflict with one's first-order desires, and yet it is the first-order desires, rather than the second-order desires, that are naturally taken to express what one values" (2011, 25). He uses Ingrid Bergman's character, Ilsa, in *Casablanca* (Curtiz 1942) as an example: Ilsa loves Rick but wishes she did not, and "the viewer is presumably meant to understand that it is Ilsa's first-order attitude toward Rick, rather than her second-order desire not to love him so much, that indicates what she really values" (Scheffler 2011, 26).

What Scheffler ignores about the case is that Ilsa's internal conflict stems from the fact that she also loves Victor Laszlo—or at least she highly values her marriage to Victor and his work fighting the Nazis—but she can remain with only one of the two men. Were Victor not in the

picture, she would feel no conflict about her love for Rick (as was the case when she believed Victor to be dead). Ilsa's predicament is not primarily a conflict between a first-order desire and a second-order desire, but a conflict between two competing loves, each involving first-order mental states with which she stably identifies at the higher order. Such competing values are not just the stuff of high romance. They are really quite common, as Tiberius appreciates, citing the need for "work/life balance" as a familiar example (2018, 79).

4.4 Comparing Other Theories of Valuing

Now that I have said what I take subjective valuing to be, we can compare my view with some other views in the literature. First, Lewis (1989) holds that to value something is to desire to desire it, developing the idea from Frankfurt (1971). I think Lewis is right to suppose that valuing involves higher-order mental states of some kind, though, as Scheffler (2011) notes, the first-order pro mental state seems important as well. Moreover, the focus on desire in both the first and second order is too narrow. Wanting something and wanting to want it may be a way of valuing, but it is not the only way. I may, for instance, value speaking my culture's traditional language without wanting to speak it (perhaps I prefer the ease and simplicity of speaking another language that is my first language) or without wanting to want to speak it (perhaps I am quite content with my first-order desire to speak my first language). Surely there are other attitudes or dispositions that can constitute my valuing speaking the traditional language.

Scheffler offers another influential theory of valuing that combines features discussed by others (e.g., Anderson 1993; Scanlon 1998; Kolodny 2003). On Scheffler's view, "valuing any X involves at least the following elements:

1. A belief that X is good or valuable or worthy,
2. A susceptibility to experience a range of context-dependent emotions regarding X,

3. A disposition to experience these emotions as being merited or appropriate,
4. A disposition to treat certain kinds of X-related considerations as reasons for action in relevant deliberative contexts." (2011, 32)

A strength of this view is its recognition of a diverse range of attitudes, emotions, and dispositions that can constitute valuing. Its main weakness lies in viewing all of these diverse mental states as necessary for, and explanatory of, valuing. To require a belief that the object is good, etc. and a disposition to treat certain considerations as reasons over-intellectualizes and over-moralizes (or over-normativizes) valuing. These may be perfectly good ways of valuing some things (e.g., justice) but they hardly seem necessary. A person can value singing, for example, without having a normative belief that singing is good. Perhaps they are a moral, or normative, skeptic and do not believe that anything is really good, or perhaps they have simply never thought to form the relevant normative belief. There are also people who, by their own admission, value singing but only ever do so spontaneously when they are alone. These "shower singers" are not disposed to treat singing-related considerations as reasons for action in deliberative contexts. They do not deliberate about whether or not to sing, they simply sing when the mood strikes them.

But even if such an example is unconvincing and we really cannot imagine valuing something without treating considerations as reasons for action, it is not at all clear that those reason-taking dispositions necessarily constitute or explain valuing. It strikes me as plausible that, at least in many cases, we treat certain considerations as reasons *because* we value something. For example, it is more natural to think that I take the fire damage to Notre-Dame de Paris as a reason to donate to reconstruction efforts *because* I value preserving historical landmarks, not that I am disposed to do so as a way of valuing historical preservation. In such cases where the valuing seems prior to, and explanatory of, the reason-taking dispositions, the valuing must consist of something besides those dispositions.

Likewise emotional susceptibility and a disposition to experience these emotions as appropriate may be perfectly good ways of valuing, say, one's intimate relationships. But again, these do not seem necessary for all cases of valuing. In the first place, not all objects of valuing are such as to provoke emotion or to merit it. Suppose someone values jogging as a way of staying healthy. They may want to jog when they can and enjoy jogging, and they may identify with these mental states, considering themselves "a jogger." Yet they may not be disposed to feel proud of jogging, to feel disappointed when they cannot jog, or to feel angry when jogging is besmirched. Jogging, to them, may just not be the sort of thing to get emotional about. And if they are not disposed to context-dependent emotions in the first place, they also need not be disposed to treat such emotions as appropriate. Perhaps our jogger would view such emotions as unwarranted. Nevertheless, the jogger can value jogging, just as I can value drinking whiskey even though I am not prone to emotion regarding it. This point should be even clearer when we recall how different valuing subjects are. While some people may be prone to emotion concerning jogging or drinking whiskey and may experience these emotions as warranted, clearly some people will not be so prone. Those less prone to emotion about a thing are not thereby excluded from valuing it.

Other theorists about valuing tend to make the same mistake as Scheffler: viewing too much as necessary for valuing and too little as sufficient for it. Tiberius, for example, says that "to value something in the fullest sense is to have a relatively stable pattern of emotions and desires with respect to it and to take these attitudes to give you reasons for action and (for the most important values) standards for evaluating how your life is going[…] Valuing, therefore, has an affective, a conative, and a cognitive dimension" (2018, 35). As I have already argued, Tiberius is right to include these different constituents of valuing but wrong to view them all as necessary.

Tiberius also goes wrong, as Scheffler does, by excluding a higher-order mental state component—Tiberius thinks the cognitive element is what distinguishes normal desiring from valuing.

Of those views in the literature on valuing of which I am aware, the closest to my own is Raibley's, since he includes the stable identification condition. Raibley and I agree that the cognitive component of valuing is not necessary, though we disagree in that Raibley does not consider it sufficient even when combined with stable identification. He considers some affective or emotional (and non-instrumental) pro-attitude to be always necessary. And Raibley thinks that, in order for an agent to stably identify with the pro-attitude, "the pro-attitude must inform or structure their emotional responses and practical deliberation" (2013, 191), a commitment about identification which I do not share. I consider informing emotional responses and practical deliberation to be paradigmatic of valuing but, as I have argued, not strictly necessary.

I have now stated and defended my own preferred theory of subjective valuing. I have also argued against some features of other extant theories. I reiterate that I am here more interested in fully explaining and vindicating the hybrid value conception of living well than I am in defending my cluster conception of valuing. The former should not rise or fall with the latter. Any consequences for the theory of living well owing to my particular conception of valuing should be viewed as inessential to the theory of living well. But at any rate, the reader now knows what I mean by "valuing." Hopefully this will serve as a satisfactory explication of the subjective valuing condition that I have argued is necessary for living well.

Chapter 5: Objective Value

In the last chapter we assumed that certain activities are such as to constitute living well under the right conditions. Those conditions included that the agent subjectively value the activity in question. But can any activity that an agent values make that agent live well? Or can only certain activities constitute living well? If the latter, which ones and why?

In this chapter, I argue that, to constitute living well, activities must be objectively valuable, by which I mean that they must be appropriate objects of subjective valuing. As before, the argument is that this is the best explanation for a range of cases where lives are or are not well-lived, according to our heuristics. There are activities that cannot plausibly constitute living well, even if an agent subjectively values them. This may strike the reader as a rather sharp change of tone. Up until now, I have been suggesting that a wide variety of activities can constitute flourishing in the right conditions. I still think we should be very inclusive in this regard. But inclusiveness has its limits, and we must be able to draw lines somewhere. The objective value condition is how I propose to draw those lines.

After establishing this condition as necessary for living well, I will go on to discuss the nature of objective value in more detail. Let me emphasize here at the outset that, despite the use of the word, "objective," the hybrid value conception of living well does not depend on any substantively "realist" metaethical or moral theory of value; it is compatible with "anti-realist" or "subjectivist" theories of "objective" value. I call it "objective" solely to contrast it with the "subjective" mental state of valuing.

5.1 Argument for the Necessity of Objective Value

First, consider a case of immoral activity, such as the criminal career of Bonnie Parker and Clyde Barrow. Bonnie and Clyde engaged in a spree of bank, store, and gas station robberies which included several murders. They seem to have valued their criminal lifestyle, or at any rate we can suppose they did. The question is, did Bonnie and Clyde live well? I think the clear answer is no. Though their lives and crimes have been treated with much public interest and, at times, glamorization, most of us (including, I trust, the reader) would not seriously wish for anyone to emulate Bonnie and Clyde by going on a killing spree. We would not celebrate—that is, not merely take interest in, but sincerely affirm—Bonnie's and Clyde's deeply immoral activities. They were not Robin Hoods; there was no higher purpose to their crimes. They simply stole and killed for their own benefit. I think they failed to live well even bearing in mind that we are concerned with how their lives went *for them*, not with how much of a positive impact they had on the world. And their lives were not well-lived for them even if they were living well by their own lights or from their own perspective. If they thought they were living well, they were mistaken, just as they were mistaken to value and engage in their immoral activities.

Next consider a case of trivial activity, that of a *Sophisticated Grass-Counter*, an engineer and researcher who invents a machine that can accurately count the blades of grass in any contiguous field. The *Grass-Counter* uses the machine to catalogue the numbers of grass-blades in major sports stadiums, becoming the world's leading expert on the topic. Again, suppose that the *Sophisticated Grass-Counter* truly values their project. Do they then live well by engaging in it? Presumably not. Even though the sophistication of their research mimics that of more worthwhile research, the knowledge they uncover is completely trivial and pointless. It is akin to knowing how many angels can dance on the head of a pin or whether the number of stars in the

universe is odd or even. It is not just niche research; it simply does not matter at all. While we might perhaps tolerate grass-counting as a fun, quirky hobby, we would not seriously affirm the *Grass-Counter*'s chosen lifestyle if that were all that they did with their time and resources. We would not wish for our loved ones to dedicate themselves to a truly pointless activity like this. And even if the *Grass-Counter* considers their research to be of great import and considers their own life to be well-lived because of it, they too are making a mistake.

What do these two cases of immoral and trivial activity have in common? I propose that the best common explanation of why the subjects in these cases fail to live well is that the activities in question are not objectively valuable. That does not mean that no one could truly value them, but it means that they would be mistaken to do so. Immoral and trivial activities are intuitive examples of activities that are not the appropriate objects of subjective valuing. One should not have any base pro mental states towards immoral activity, let alone stably identify with such mental states. And even if one is not wrong to have base pro mental states towards trivial activity, these are not worth stably identifying with. And cases like those we have just considered suggest to me that one cannot live well by engaging in activities that are not objectively valuable in this sense.[49]

5.2 Theories of Objective Value

At this point, I often receive one of two questions. The first, typically asked in the spirit of philosophical curiosity, is why immoral and trivial activities, and for that matter other activities, are not valuable. What makes some activities valuable and not others? The second question,

[49] Note that this argument does not depend on the details of the particular examples used. There may be ways of describing the *Sophisticated Grass-Counter*, for example, where their activity turns out to be valuable and capable of constituting flourishing. This on its own is no objection. My argument requires only that, according to our heuristics, *some* activities cannot constitute flourishing and that these activities share the common feature of being inappropriate to value.

typically asked with an air of healthy skepticism and almost some defensiveness, is, who is to say which activities are valuable and which are not? Who am I to pronounce on which activities are worth valuing and which can therefore constitute living well? To respond to such queries will require a theory of objective value, which will embroil us in some long-standing debates in metaethics and value theory.

I will turn now to the theory of objective value, but my main goal will be to survey viable options rather than to positively assert a view. I have my own opinions but, as with the theory of subjective valuing in the previous chapter, I do not wish for the hybrid value theory of living well to depend on a particular, parochial theory of objective value. But whereas the phenomenon of subjective valuing is obviously widespread and views about its nature agree about all but the finest of philosophical points, objective value is incredibly contentious, with some doubting its very coherence and others considering it as real and accessible as tables and chairs. As a result of this wide-ranging disagreement, I cannot assume one view about objective value and hope to retain the credulity of even a majority of readers. What I can do instead is show that there is something for everyone: the hybrid value theory of living well is compatible with a wide range of views about objective value, including positions that some would describe as skeptical. The objective value condition should be inoffensive to almost everyone.

First, then, what is it for something to be objectively valuable? I have already said that I take something to be objectively valuable if and only if it is an appropriate object of subjective valuing. This much should be fairly uncontroversial. Even if there is no such thing as objective value, that just means that nothing is appropriately or inappropriately valued—there simply are no standards for normative evaluation of valuing. The mere biconditional also requires no stance on which side is more fundamental or explanatory. It is consistent with taking value to be the most

fundamental normative property, or fittingness or reasons or norms, etc. We simply need not be mired in the metaethical debate about which normative property or relation is "first."[50] Note, moreover, that to say that an activity is appropriate to value is not necessarily to say that we should, or have sufficient reason to, or have any practical reason to engage in that activity. If we do think that objective value has any such normative implications for action or practical reasons, that involves a further substantive commitment about practical normativity, one that I will not make here. The above biconditional is intended as a very minimal commitment about the relation between objective value and subjective valuing. It is supposed to be consistent with many other, more contentful views about value and normativity more generally.

But what is the nature of objective value, as it appears in our theory of living well? Is it universal or do things have value only relative to particular individuals? Do things have value ultimately in virtue of people's attitudes towards things or independently of people's attitudes and responses? Here, too, we have a number of options. I will focus on two positions in the literature, one "robustly realist" and the other "anti-realist," leaving it open whether other positions on the spectrum between (and beyond) these two are also available.

5.2.1 Robust Realism

Darwall (2002) occupies the more realist position. He offers more or less a hybrid value theory of well-being that is very similar to my own theory of living well (and recall that he does not himself distinguish between well-being and living well). According to Darwall, "the best life for human beings is one of significant engagement in activities through which we come into appreciative rapport with agent-neutral values, such as aesthetic beauty, knowledge and

[50] Examples of entries in this debate include Scanlon (1998); Rabinowicz and Rønnow-Rasmussen (2004); Schroeder (2007); and Howard (2019).

understanding, and the worth of living beings" (75). Here we see that, on his view, well-being requires activity, appreciative rapport (which I consider to be an analog of subjective valuing), and agent-neutral value. So Darwall considers the objective value condition to be agent-neutral, meaning that it is not value *for* an individual but just value *simpliciter*. As such, the values with which we must come into an appreciative rapport (i.e., which we must subjectively value) are the same for all, providing the same normativity or reason-giving force to all agents. Darwall does not here discuss the ontology of value, but one natural and more realist interpretation is that this agent-neutral value is also response-independent (or mind-independent) in the sense that it obtains regardless of people's attitudes towards that value. So, the same valuable things would still be valuable whether or not people actually valued them and whether or not people were disposed to value them in certain ideal conditions. The hybrid value theory of living well is compatible with this "robustly realist" interpretation of objective value as being agent-neutral and response-independent.

5.2.2 Anti-Realism

But the hybrid value theory of living well is also compatible with the opposite extreme, a fully "anti-realist" interpretation of objective value. Tiberius (2018) offers one example of this position in her value fulfillment theory of well-being, which is also quite similar to my hybrid value theory of living well. According to Tiberius, "[w]ell-being consists in the fulfillment of an appropriate set of values over a lifetime," where "[v]alues are the projects, activities, relationships, and ideals that we value" (11-13). On this view, too, well-being requires activity, subjective valuing, and the appropriate objects of valuing—in other words, what we are calling "objective value," though Tiberius offers a subjectivist account of this appropriateness condition.

Tiberius writes that "*appropriate* values are (1) suited to our desires and emotions, (2) reflectively endorsed, and (3) capable of being fulfilled together over time. In other words, […] appropriate values are the objects of relatively sustainable and integrated emotions, desires, and judgments" (41). This view is not subjectivist in the strong sense that "thinking makes it so," i.e., that whatever values that we have or that we judge to be appropriate for us are thereby appropriate for us. It is possible for our actual values to be inappropriate, and it is possible for us to be mistaken about a value's appropriateness. Rather, it is subjectivist in the weaker sense that facts about which values are appropriate for an individual ultimately depend on psychological facts about that individual—namely, their actual and possible values, desires, emotions, and judgments about value—as well as facts about which values that individual can jointly and sustainably realize across time. If a value like doing philosophy is appropriate for me, that is because I either do or could value it (enjoy it, want to do it, etc.) *and* because I can sustainably do philosophy along with other things I do or could value—e.g., spending time with loved ones, experiencing art, studying the sciences, etc. Meanwhile, "[c]ompletely inappropriate values would be projects, relationships, and ideals that do not motivate us, that leave us emotionally cold, and that we could not successfully pursue over time even if we tried" (67). Pulling pranks would be an inappropriate value for me if I could never get myself to value it or if it interfered with other values of mine like friendship.

Now notice two features of objective value on this view. First, objective value is ultimately response-dependent in the sense that what is appropriate for one to value depends on one's actual and possible subjective values and other mental states (again, as well as facts about what one can do). Subjective valuing thus has ontological priority here over objective value, whereas on the more realist view objective value obtained independently of anyone's subjective valuing. Second, objective value is relative to individuals. The values appropriate for me may not be appropriate for

you, and *vice versa*, since we have different actual and possible mental states as well as different capacities. Some values (Tiberius suggests health and happiness, for example) may be appropriate for most people, but nothing necessarily precludes a person from being so constituted that even these values are relatively inappropriate for them (consider an extreme ascetic, for example). And it may be possible for someone to be so constituted that what is appropriate for them to value would be inappropriate for almost anyone else. These outliers are possible because Tiberius's criterion for appropriateness is procedural, rather than contentful: ultimately, an individual's values are appropriate in relation to one another, rather than according to some standard that is independent of that individual and their values.

The hybrid value theory of living well is also compatible with this "anti-realist" interpretation of objective value as being response-dependent and agent-relative. Some may take issue with calling this subjectivist account of value "objective," but it does provide an objective enough criterion for valuing for the purposes of the hybrid value theory: it entails that some activities are the right kind to value (for some people) and others the wrong kind (for some people).

5.2.3 Other Compatible Theories of Objective Value

These two opposing positions about objective value, robustly realist and anti-realist, are both compatible with the hybrid value theory of living well. As I have said, other positions on this spectrum are also available. One kind of "constructivist" approach to objective value would hold that what is appropriate to value is what is rationally valued and, since rationality places the same constraints on all rational beings, what is rationally valued is the same for all. This would be a response-dependent but agent-neutral (or universalist) view of objective value. Another approach might be response-independent but agent-relative. For example, adapting Plato's dictum in the

Republic (2003) that each person should do what they do best, one might hold that what is appropriate for each individual to value depends, not on their attitudes, but on their capacities, which are not universally shared. Or if the relevant capacities are shared by all humans (or all rational beings, etc.), the same activities would again be valuable for all.

There are also other ways than Tiberius's to be "subjectivist" or "anti-realist" about objective value or appropriateness of valuing. We might think, for instance, that appropriateness *is* determined by an individual's (perhaps suitably idealized) judgments of appropriateness, which might yet come apart from their actual values. Or instead, we might think that appropriateness is determined by attitude-constituted and culturally relative social norms, such that the same values are appropriate to all within a given society but not necessarily across social boundaries. These are views according to which the truth of judgments of value depends on (e.g., psychological or cultural) facts about the subjects of those judgments. But we could just as well endorse speaker-relativism or truth-relativism, wherein true value judgments are true relative to, and (at least partly) in virtue of facts about, the makers of those judgments or assessors of those judgments. Finally, we could even be non-cognitivist about the objective value of activities and hold that judgments about the appropriateness of valuing simply are (or express) desire-like or plan-like states of mind concerning valuing. (And note that any of these views about objective value would presumably carry over to living well on the hybrid value conception: that is, if we are, e.g., non-cognitivists about value judgments, we should also be non-cognitivists about judgments of living well.)

I mention all of these examples briefly just to show the broad range of metaethical theories of objective value that we could adopt compatibly with the hybrid value theory of living well. And I do this to make the point that almost anyone can get on board with the objective value condition for living well. On the one hand, the objective value of activities can be as real and robust and

universal as anyone could wish for. For anyone already committed to real normative properties, it is no stretch to suppose that some activities are valuable (are reasonable to value, are appropriately valued, etc.) and others are not, whatever the correct metaphysical explanation of these facts. On the other hand, subjectivists, anti-realists, relativists, non-cognitivists, and even some skeptics should not be put off by the label, "objective." I mean to use the term quite innocuously. "Objective" value need not be a non-natural or metaphysically queer property (though it could be that, as well). It also need not be universal. It is "objective" primarily in the sense that it contrasts the purely "subjective" psychological state of valuing. All objective value requires is that there be right or wrong, better or worse things for people to subjectively value. But for all I say here, normative differences between the objects of valuing might be relative (to individuals, cultures, etc.) and they might be fully grounded in natural facts, including psychological and otherwise empirical facts.

As I see it, there are two main kinds of views that would lead one to reject the objective value condition as I have minimally characterized it. First, at the metaethical level, a complete skeptic about value would deny any sense or truth to the normative evaluation of different objects of valuing. I can think of little to motivate such a view beyond a more general skepticism about normative evaluation of any kind. This kind of skeptic I will not convince, but then this kind of skeptic presumably does not believe there is such a thing as living well, or better or worse, anyway. Second, at the first-order level, a complete subjectivist about living well might admit that there are better or worse objects of valuing but would deny that this objective value has anything to do with making a life well-lived or not. This radical subjectivist would hold that any subjectively valued activity, no matter how heinous or pointless, could constitute living well. If examples like Bonnie and Clyde, or even Caligula or Hitler, do not dissuade the radical subjectivist on this point, it is

not clear that anything will. However, I consider this an extreme minority position. Even self-proclaimed subjectivists like Tiberius rarely endorse such outlandish licentiousness.

5.3 Objectively Valuable Activities

So much for the nature of objective value. Hopefully, I have convinced the reader that the objective value condition of the hybrid value theory of living well is almost entirely metaethically neutral. Still, other questions remain. We still want to know which activities are objectively valuable and which are not. There are obviously too many possible activities, including activities involving particular objects, to list and evaluate all of them individually. It is best to consider large classes of similar activities. In that spirit, I have already proposed several kinds of activities which I consider valuable: engaging in loving relationships, raising children, creating and performing works of art, realizing athletic achievements, and contributing to our collective knowledge via academic research. We can add other kinds of activities to this list, such as engaging in cultural or religious practices, pursuing socially useful careers, supporting charitable causes and causes of justice, engaging in stimulating hobbies, practicing skills and crafts, enjoying and engaging with works of art and nature, and playing games and sports. It is possible that not every particular instance of such activities is valuable—a particular relationship, work of art, cultural practice, or game could be problematically harmful, for instance—but, on the whole and thinking of paradigm cases, activities of these kinds plausibly tend to be valuable. Other activities and kinds of activities may be valuable besides. And we have seen some plausible examples of kinds of disvaluable activities, namely immoral (or at least harmful) activities and pointless activities. There may also be other disvaluable activities and kinds of activities.

5.4 Epistemology of Objective Value

But simply listing activities as either valuable or disvaluable raises another good question: how do we know which activities are valuable? This question relates back to the previously mentioned question: who is to say what is valuable and what is not? The short answer here is that we can know which activities are valuable the same way we know any normative facts—however that is. Here as well there are different, competing views and I do not intend to delve deeply into moral or normative epistemology. Suffice it to say that we all in fact have normative beliefs, including beliefs about what is valuable, whether we form them as a result of social conditioning, rational reflection, an occult faculty of intuition, or in some other way. Most philosophers accept that, in one way or another, some normative beliefs are true and others false, some more justified and others less justified. As for who is to say, we all are. Everyone is entitled to their own normative beliefs and beliefs about value, even if some are closer to the truth than others. In listing some kinds of activities as valuable and others disvaluable, I am merely stating my own normative beliefs. I suspect and hope that these beliefs will be widely shared. But who am I to pronounce on these matters? Just another person, with the same right to normative beliefs as anyone else, who happens to have thought quite a lot about questions of value.

I find, however, that the usual underlying motivation for asking, "Who is to say?" about value and living well is really a concern for toleration. In that case, I assure the reader, there is no cause for alarm here. I am in no way suggesting that anyone has an obligation or a right to prevent people from engaging in any activity simply because it is disvaluable. We should prevent some disvaluable activities that are especially harmful, like murder, but that does not mean we need also prevent all disvaluable activities, like counting grass. The question of which activities we, either as individuals or collectively, should promote or prevent is a normative ethical and political

question, and entirely separate from the question of which activities are valuable or disvaluable, or which activities can constitute living well or not. For what it is worth, I think we should be epistemically humble in our judgments about value and, in our actions, quite tolerant of other people's activities, regardless of their value. Too often throughout history, valuable activities have been judged disvaluable and prevented, and disvaluable activities judged valuable and promoted. We should therefore take the possibility of error well into consideration when we form our beliefs about value and think twice about intervening in people's activities that are not obviously and especially harmful. But those considerations should not keep us from theorizing about valuable activities and living well.

5.5 Theory of Valuable-Making Features

On the subject of theorizing, there is a longer, partial answer to the question of how we know which activities are valuable. There is a standard philosophical assumption, implicit in widespread philosophical practices, that we can increase our justification for our philosophical beliefs, including normative beliefs, by constructing a theory that organizes and explains the contents of those beliefs. The practice is analogous to gaining scientific knowledge of, e.g., physics by creating a physical theory that organizes and explains physical observations and phenomena. Of course, we would like a complete epistemology of value in order to explain and justify this assumption in this context, but that would obviously go beyond the scope of the present inquiry. For now, I simply take as given this widely accepted epistemological principle and its attendant philosophical practices.

Given this assumption, we can vindicate our normative beliefs about value by constructing a first-order theory of value that explains why certain activities are valuable and others not. This

is not the metaethical "why?" of metaphysical explanation, to which we might answer, "They are valuable in virtue of the irreducible reason facts," or, "They are valuable in virtue of people's attitudes." Instead, it is a first-order "why?" In normative ethical theory we ask why certain actions are right and, in the first order, we offer general characterizations or principles of right actions such as that they are acts which maximize expected value or that they are acts performed with a maxim that could be willed as a universal law. These principles identify what some call the "right-making features" of actions. For the objective value of activities, too, we may ask for general characterizations, principles, or common features that explain why certain activities are valuable, i.e., the valuable-making features of activities.

Some metaethical views of objective value may lend themselves more to this sort of first-order theorizing than others. For example, if we have an agent-relative, subjectivist construal of objective value like Tiberius's, we may not expect any general characterization of objectively valuable activities beyond the common feature that they are actually or possibly subjectively valued. We might expect more theoretical structure on a realist or constructivist framework that purports to make objective value universal. Of course, on any metaethical model, there is no guarantee at the outset that there are general characterizations of valuable activities. Particularism, the view that there are no true, non-trivial universal generalizations or principles in a domain, could be true of objective value just as it could be true of right action in normative ethics.[51] But it is worth looking for these universal or general principles (as I noted in Chapter 2, §2.4, when discussing the prospect of a monistic and universal conception of living well). This because, first, they might exist as part of the explanatory structure of the (normative) world and assuming particularism would blind us to that part of reality. And second, if we can discern principles, then

[51] Dancy (2004), for example, defends particularism in normative ethics.

we can apply them to determine whether or not particular activities are valuable in hard cases and to increase our confidence in, and our understanding of, our judgments about easier cases.[52]

Of course, the holy grail of principles here, as in normative ethics, would be a single principle that explains and unifies all the cases of value. Short of that, there may be multiple contributory principles each of which explains why some broad category of activities is valuable (or disvaluable). Bearing this in mind, I will first canvass two possible views about the valuable-making features of activities. Each has been put forward by other authors as the sole explanatory principle, though they could just as well be viewed as complementary to one another. As elsewhere, however, I will not be too committal here, because I do not wish the hybrid value theory of living well to depend on a controversial, first-order theory of valuable activities and because proving any such theory would take us too far afield. Anyone's preferred theory of valuable activities should do here. I offer these as options merely to demonstrate how we might fill in this gap in the theory.

5.5.1 Social Criterion

The first option, and the one for which I personally have more sympathy, is to say that valuable activities are those activities embedded in social communities and practices. They are, in a sense, shared or common activities, even when they are performed individually, for there is a community of other people that engages (or has engaged or will engage) in the same activity.[53]

[52] By "understanding," I mean not just knowing the fact about an easier case, but also knowing its explanation (e.g., Greco 2014). I am assuming that we are justified in adjusting our confidence about particular cases in light of coming to accept principles even if we came to accept those principles partly by way of our initial judgments about particular cases. It is a textbook example of reflective equilibrium (Rawls 1971): the general and the particular mutually confirming one another. I think this is an important aspect of how we theorize, though I am not committed to it being the only way.

[53] The possibility of individual engagement in socially embedded activities plays a role in some fringe cases. By my lights, an extreme misanthrope or a hermit may live well by valuing and engaging in a valuable

Raz (1986), who like Darwall and Tiberius also endorses something like a hybrid value theory of well-being, defends this social criterion of valuable activities. He writes that "[a] person's well-being depends to a large extent on success in socially defined and determined pursuits and activities" (309). A person's activities "can be valuable only if they can be his goals and they can be his goals only if they are founded in social forms," where social forms "consist of shared beliefs, folklore, high culture, collectively shared metaphors and imagination, and so on" (310-311). This does not prevent experimentation and deviation. As Raz notes by way of example, an open marriage is not the standard form of marriage, but it is clearly a variation necessarily based upon the more conventional social form of marriage. As another example, we can note that, when artists innovate to invent new styles, genres, and media, they are always building upon and deviating from existing artistic forms, as well as contributing to the shared overall artistic process.

The communal aspect of this social criterion is key. An activity like picking one's nose need not be valuable just because lots of unconnected people do it independently of one another. Rather an activity will be (at least *prima facie*) valuable only if it, in some sense, brings people together: e.g., if people do it together, help one another to do it, watch others perform the activity, discuss the activity enthusiastically, develop the form of the activity, build on the work of others, and so on. This principle can explain why grass-counting, even in a sophisticated form, is not valuable while other equally (in-themselves) pointless activities are. Hitting a ball with a club into a distant hole in the ground is, in itself, as pointless an activity as counting grass. When the deed is done, we simply remove the ball from the hole anyway. The crucial difference is that golf is a

activity even in the absence of participation in a community. Suppose the lonely individual writes novels or theological tracts which no one else will ever read. If being read is not part of the success condition of this valuable activity (more on that in Chapter 6 below), then they can live well, even without other people. But I take it that their novel- or tract-writing is still valuable in virtue of being embedded in social practices. After all, in the ordinary course of things, they must have gotten the concept and form of the novel or the theological tract from their earlier experiences in society.

recognized social form that has brought players and spectators together in community for centuries, whereas there is no community of grass-counters. That said, this difference is highly contingent. A community of grass-counters could develop, who, for example, compete to count fields as quickly and accurately as possible in a test of memory and speed analogous to the timed solving of Rubik's cubes in the "speedcubing" community. In that case, grass-counting too could be valuable, as could any number of other activities, even those heretofore unimagined. It all depends on social uptake. As a result, objectively valuable activities may vary across time and culture.

5.5.2 Perfectionist Criterion

The second candidate theory of value contrasts this contingent, social theory. Perfectionism holds that the valuable activities are those which develop ("perfect") and exercise capacities that are characteristic of or essential to humans. Humans are supposed to have these capacities necessarily, so these capacities promise to provide a necessary and universal basis for the value of certain kinds of activities. If a kind of activity exercises the essential capacities of one person, then that same kind of activity (at least, when described in sufficient detail) would also exercise the capacities of anyone engaged in it, regardless of time, place, or culture. The only contingency lies in the value of token performances of activities where the performance itself or its circumstances may alter its value, e.g., the degree to which the particular agent has developed and is currently exercising their essential capacities.

What are these essential capacities and which activities exercise them? According to Hurka (1993), the three essential capacities are theoretical rationality, practical rationality, and physical nature (i.e., the functioning and use of our physical bodies). Activities aiming at truth and

knowledge, such as research, exercise theoretical rationality (the more general and explanatory the knowledge, the better). Any practical activity involving planning, deliberating, strategizing, coordinating, know-how, etc., from jobs to games to politics to social relationships, exercises practical rationality (the more complex and difficult, the better). And any athletic or physically skillful activity, like a sport, exercises physical nature (and often practical rationality as well).

These three essential capacities can already do a lot to ground the value of the kinds of activities that we consider intuitively valuable, and most perfectionists are likely to accept these capacities as essential. But some perfectionists may add additional essential capacities besides. Some may count autonomy as an essential capacity, thus grounding (or, perhaps, increasing) the value of activities performed autonomously (Bradford 2016). Bradford (2015) also argues to include the will, i.e., the capacity to exert effort, as an essential capacity in order to account for the perfectionist value of achievements, which she defines as difficult (i.e., effort-requiring) processes that competently cause a product. Finally, Kraut (2009) advocates for affective, sensory, and social capacities as likewise essential, which could then bestow value upon activities like relaxing with loved ones or experiencing beauty in art or nature.

In contrast to the social theory, perfectionism's response to activities like grass-counting is a bit of a mixed bag. On the one hand, the knowledge of how many blades of grass are in a given field is not very general or explanatory, so the activity is not a very valuable exercise of theoretical rationality (at least, following Hurka's well-developed perfectionist theory). And on the face of it, simply counting grass is not a very complex or difficult activity requiring planning, strategizing, and so on, so it is not a very valuable exercise of practical rationality either. But what about the *Sophisticated Grass-Counter*, who employs their knowledge of engineering to design a complicated machine to count grass for them? The invention of the grass-counting machine would

be a complex and difficult endeavor exercising theoretical knowledge and practical know-how and skill. By the perfectionist's lights, then, it appears to be as valuable as inventing any other comparably complex machine, even though the function of the machine is a fairly pointless one, much like a Rube Goldberg machine. We also already considered the possibility of counting grass as a competitive game involving speed and memory, akin to speedcubing. But games are supposed to be paradigms of the exercise of practical rationality and/or physical nature, despite the typical pointlessness of their end states (again, at least on Hurka's view). It does not matter that grass-counting is not actually socially recognized as a game—perfectionism's verdicts about activities are not supposed to be so contingent. If grass-counting can develop and exercise the same skills as other, actual, valuable games, then, on second thought, grass-counting may be just as valuable as those other games, according to perfectionism. Contrary to our initial judgments, perfectionism does not obviously rule out the value of the *Sophisticated Grass-Counter's* activities or other equally pointless activities.

5.5.3 Objection: Immoral or Harmful Activities

Both the social theory and perfectionism on their own have difficulties explaining why immoral activities generally are disvaluable, though for different reasons. They can perhaps explain why Bonnie's and Clyde's crime spree in particular was disvaluable. Bonnie and Clyde had a small gang, but they could hardly be described as part of a criminal community. Meanwhile their crimes were not necessarily complex, well-planned, or skillful in their execution, so their activities need not have perfected their essential capacities. But these responses leave gaps for plenty of other immoral activities to count as valuable. On the one hand, immoral criminal communities do exist in the form of large gangs, mobs, crime syndicates, and terrorist groups.

Presumably, many of their activities—e.g., robbery, racketeering, selling illicit drugs, and terrorism—are disvaluable, but this disvalue cannot be explained by a lack of social community and practices. On the other hand, immoral activities can also be complex, difficult, and skillful—e.g., managing a criminal empire or planning and executing a devastating attack while avoiding advance detection—with the result that perfectionism would deem them valuable and, indeed, more valuable the better-executed and more harmful they are. Hurka, at least, admits as much: his view "finds intrinsic value in actions antagonistic to others" because a person "can achieve perfection by using complex means to carry out a long-term plan aimed at harming many people" (1993, 134).

There are a couple of possible responses we could try to give on behalf of these two theories of value, both of which are underwhelming. One response we should *not* give on behalf of the social criterion is that the disvaluable activities of organized criminals and other immoral actors are disvaluable because they are disapproved of by society at large. As Raz notes, the social criterion "does not claim that whatever is practised with social approval is for that reason valuable" (1986, 310). Social approval is neither necessary nor sufficient for value. If it were sufficient, then lots of (we think) disvaluable activities such as torturous execution, slaveholding, and genocide would have been valuable at various times and places where a society at large approved of them. If widespread social approval were necessary, then valuable forms of counterculture would be impossible and there would have been times and places where valuable activities (as we recognize them today) like painting and sculpting nude figures; making movies; and performing jazz, rock and roll, rap, or punk music was disvaluable despite being harmlessly and enthusiastically practiced and enjoyed.

The doomed response on behalf of perfectionism is to say that humans have an essential capacity for moral action or virtue. Morally good activities exercise this capacity and merely morally permissible activities at least do not conflict with this capacity. But immoral activities conflict with this capacity and hinder moral development, thus preventing the perfection of an important essential capacity. The problem lies in viewing a moral capacity as a specially justifying essential capacity. If humans have an essential capacity for moral action or virtue, then they just as plausibly have an essential capacity for *immoral* action or vice. It is difficult to imagine having the capacity to act morally well without the corresponding capacity to act morally badly and *vice versa*. After all, we do not praise cows for their pacificism any more than we blame chimpanzees for their violence against members of their own and other species. As we normally see it, these non-human animals can do no other. And despite a modern trend in the academy towards humanistic optimism, we should not forget that the idea that human beings (in this life) are essentially morally flawed, perhaps even naturally tending towards evil, has historically been quite influential, at least in the Christian world. For all these reasons, it is problematic to assume that an essential moral capacity can help to rule out the value of immoral activities on a perfectionist framework.

5.5.4 Benefit/Harm Criterion

So instead of relying on either the social theory or perfectionism to render immoral activities disvaluable, it makes more sense to supplement either theory (or both) with a criterion of value that rules out immoral or harmful activities directly. After all, the most obvious and direct explanation for the disvalue of murder, robbery, dealing drugs, etc. is that they are harmful, both to individual victims and to society at large. This additional criterion says that activities which

(independently of their contribution to living well or satisfying desires for the activity) benefit people or society, and perhaps also those activities which promote impersonal goods like the existence of beauty in the world, are valuable; activities which are harmful to people, society, or impersonal goods are disvaluable. The benefit/harm criterion can explain, in non-normative (or less obviously normative) terms, why moral activities are valuable and immoral activities disvaluable, whether or not they are embedded in social practices or exercise essential capacities. It could explain, for example, why helping to feed, shelter, or heal other people would be a valuable activity even in the absence of an established social practice and even when doing so is not especially complex or difficult. And it can explain why murder and robbery are disvaluable even in the presence of an established social practice and even when doing so is complex and well-executed. Such a criterion could be viewed as an independent, contributory principle of value, in addition to the social or perfectionist criterion, or it could be added directly to either to make for a single principle: e.g., activities are valuable if and only if they are not harmful and embedded in social practices, disvaluable if and only if they are harmful or not embedded in social practices (*mutatis mutandis* for perfectionism).

One might think that an appeal to benefits or harms (or to morality and immorality) in our principles for objective value creates the following kind of vicious circularity. What is a harm? A natural answer is that a harm is a negative effect on someone's actual or potential living well, or their well-being more generally (which still includes their living well). But now we have proposed to appeal to harms in our theory of objective value and, thus, in our theory of living well. An easy substitution then reveals that we are appealing to living well in our theory of living well. Uh-oh! (The same apparent circle will arise for anyone who wants to define morality and immorality in

terms of living well, as I am in fact inclined to do, and who appeals to morality or immorality in their account of objective value.)

However, we can avoid the objection if we approach the definition of living well not circularly but recursively. That is, in a first-pass definition of living well, we appeal only to criteria other than harm, such as the social or perfectionist criterion, in our theory of objective value. This generates a list of activities that can constitute living well which includes activities like engaging in loving relationships *and* murder. Then we apply the harm criterion to rule out some of these activities on the grounds that they have negative effects on people's living well. That is, we rule out activities that have negative effects on people's valuing and successful performance of activities on the list. Engaging in loving relationships does not negatively affect people's ability to value or engage in loving relationships or murder, so it remains on the list. But murder *does* negatively affect people's ability to value and engage in loving relationships (and murder), so we strike murder off the list of valuable, flourishing-constituting activities.

At the end of the process, we will arrive at a final definition of living well that can only be realized by those activities which can coexist without hindering one another (in addition to meeting any other criteria of value). The apparent definitional "circle" therefore stops, and fairly quickly, so it is not vicious. We could even eliminate the appearance of circularity altogether and implicitly incorporate the harm criterion by re-defining living well thus: to live well is to value and successfully engage in activities which do not inhibit people's valuing and successfully engaging in activities that [meet non-harm criteria of value, e.g., the social or perfectionist criterion]. This definition might look odd because of its quasi-recursive restatement of its conditions, but it is perfectly coherent and not at all circular. It amounts more or less to a compossibility constraint that each person's flourishing should be consistent with everyone else's.

We could say much more to spell out more precisely the details of these proposed valuable-making features or principles for objective value. For example, we may want to amend the harm criterion to rule out only *non-consensual* harms. But we have done enough for present purposes to show how a first-order theory of valuable activities can be developed along a couple of different lines. As already noted, such a theory can answer to questions about what makes particular kinds of activities valuable and (at least partially) to questions about how we know which kinds of activities are valuable. Add to this the previous survey of compatible metaethical positions and we have gestured towards several possible complete theories of objective value that can make good sense of this condition for living well. And we established at the beginning of this chapter that the objective value condition is a necessary condition, on the basis of judgments about lives not well-lived. I will finish this chapter, then, with a few concluding notes.

5.6 Final and Instrumental Value

First, notice that I have not drawn a significant distinction between finally (or intrinsically) valuable activities and instrumentally valuable activities for the purposes of the objective value criterion, just as I did not distinguish between final and instrumental subjective valuing. This is because both kinds of valuable activities are well-represented by paradigms of living well. Engaging in loving relationships, creating and enjoying art, communing with nature, playing games and sports, and conducting purely theoretical research are plausible examples of finally valuable activities that are worth valuing and can constitute living well even if nothing else valuable arises from them (though they might coincidentally also serve other valuable ends in some cases).

But lots of other valuable activities characteristically serve further ends, including most careers and moral activities. Careers in agriculture, applied research, civil service, construction, consulting, cosmetology, engineering, finance, food service, hospitality, journalism, law, manufacturing, medicine, natural resource extraction, politics, publishing, retail, teaching, and transportation (just to name a few) all serve ends beyond the activities themselves. They are all socially useful and economically important, generating the raw materials, goods, services, infrastructure, and information upon which we all rely in order to live together and to live well. Paradigmatic moral activities like helping people in emergencies, fighting for social justice, and caring for the sick, hungry, and poor also all serve further ends (as I argued at length in Chapter 1). We may say things like, "Virtue is its own reward," meaning that the agent acting morally should not demand external rewards like money or respect in compensation. But really the rewards of morally virtuous activity are the benefits we give to others. We can see that moral activities are not finally valuable from the fact that we should prefer to have conditions that render moral activities unnecessary (e.g., justice, health, safety, and sufficient resources for all) rather than delight in the flawed circumstances that create opportunities to engage in moral activity.

But the fact that so many careers and moral activities serve further ends, especially the ends of others, need not count against the value of these activities. They are some of the most paradigmatic ways of living well (when they are valued and successful). They are instrumentally valuable, to be sure—valuable in virtue of their products or effects—but appropriately valued all the same. And this explains why we need not restrict subjective valuing to final valuing either: if instrumentally valuable activities are objectively valuable, there is no reason why we should only live well if we mistakenly value these activities finally. Instrumentally valuing an instrumentally valuable activity is a perfectly fitting response, so why should it preclude living well?

5.7 Variations in Appropriate Valuing

My second note, on the topic of fitting responses to value, is to acknowledge the possibility that objectively valuable activities may be valuable in different ways that also render different ways of valuing appropriate for different activities. In the previous chapter, I argued that it was possible to value in different ways: attitudinally, affectively, emotionally, cognitively, and behaviorally. Even within one of these classes there is variation. For example, one could value (in part) by being disposed to certain positive emotions in response to something's going well or by being disposed to certain negative emotions in response to something's being threatened or besmirched. On my view, any of these base mental states, different in kind and in particulars, can constitute valuing.

And with that, we might think that certain objects of valuing call for certain valuing responses and not others. Perhaps engaging in loving relationships is valuable in such a way that valuing emotionally is particularly fitting (and perhaps valuing unemotionally is unfitting). Meanwhile perhaps conducting theoretical research is valuable in such a way that valuing cognitively is more fitting and valuing emotionally is less crucial. Perhaps it is appropriate to value the pursuit of social justice in a way that disposes one towards negative emotions like anger in response to injustice while it would be inappropriate to value participating in a sport in a way that disposes one towards negative emotions like anger when, e.g., funding is cut for the sport. If it is true that different objectively valuable activities call for different kinds of subjective valuing responses, then we should amend the hybrid value theory of living well slightly. It would not be enough to say that we live well by successfully engaging in valuable activities that we value, for we could be valuing those activities in the wrong way. Instead, we should say that we live well by

successfully engaging in (valuable) activities that we value *appropriately*—i.e., in the way that the objective value of the activity prescribes.

While I note this possibility, I have chosen not to formulate the hybrid value theory of living well in this way. This is because I am not convinced that different ways of valuing are indeed variously appropriate for different objects. Rather, it seems to me that there are different ways of valuing the same objects and activities that are no better or worse than one another. As I said in the previous chapter, different people have different inclinations to respond to value in different ways, some more emotionally, some more behaviorally, and some more cognitively, for instance, and I think that variety is just fine and, indeed, something worth appreciating. I would not want or expect everyone who values appreciating art, for example, to value it in the same way, to have the same responses and mental states, any more than I would want or expect everyone to value exactly the same valuable things.

Moreover, in light of people's varying inclinations towards kinds of valuing responses and the apparent involuntariness of many of our base mental states, it seems problematic to tell people how to think and feel about the things they value, even if those directives are supposed to arise from our theory of objective value. It is one thing to expect people not to stably identify with pro mental states towards certain disvaluable activities like murder—we have good reasons to do that, both for their own sake and for the sake of others. But it would seem to go too far to tell people who value valuable things that they are not valuing them the right way, especially since people cannot always or easily change the way they think or feel and since people's personal pro mental states towards valuable things tend not to negatively affect others or the valued objects

themselves.[54] For these reasons, I think we ought to reject the view that different valuable activities normatively call for valuing in different ways (though certain ways of valuing certain things may indeed be more common and might therefore be more understandable to most of us). Instead, we should treat people's different ways of valuing the same activities as mere differences and not better or worse ones.

[54] In a similar spirit, Pickard (2019) forcefully objects both to the practice of (morally) criticizing people for their emotions and to the underlying theoretical assumption that there are (morally) right or wrong ways to feel.

Chapter 6: Success

6.1 Argument for the Necessity of Success

The fourth and final necessary condition for living well, I argue, is success in one's valuable, valued activities. To live well one must *successfully* engage in valuable activities they value. The defense of this criterion will be relatively brief, for I consider it a fairly intuitive point. Failing in one's worthwhile pursuits is a bad thing for a person. It does not make a life better off and living well is obviously supposed to make a life better off. It is not hard to generate examples of failure undermining living well. An aspiring professional actor who cannot book a role or whose performances are panned is not living well by acting. A person who is driving their friends away with nitpicking or gossip is not living well by engaging in friendship. A teacher whose students are not learning is not living well by teaching. And a social activist who cannot garner any public support is not living well by their activism.

6.2 Objection: Trying is Sufficient for Living Well

As I said, I consider the success condition intuitive, but there is an available, opposing view that merely trying to engage in valuable, valued activities is sufficient for living well, whether or not one succeeds in those activities. One might be persuaded to hold this somewhat Romantic view by examples of failed or even doomed activities that nevertheless seem well worth pursuing. For example, we admire the German conspirators of the Black Orchestra (Schwarze Kapelle) who plotted to overthrow Hitler even though they did not succeed in doing so, and we might for this reason declare that they were living well through their efforts at resistance to an evil regime. If any case of trying and failing could constitute living well, it would presumably be an activity as valuable as this.

There are a few things to say about the case, however. First, the example would only suggest that trying is sufficient for living well if the conspirators did not achieve success along any relevant metric. But in fact, they did achieve an important part of their aim. True, they did not themselves kill Hitler or oust the Nazi Party. As Adams has noted, however, the conspirators

> seem to have been motivated in large part by the meaning they hoped their deeds would have for others, believing that even if it couldn't succeed in its own terms, the plot against Hitler should be attempted for the honor of Germany, to show the world that some Germans stood up against Hitler's crimes. (2010, 80)[55]

The conspirators did succeed in their secondary and still valuable goal of demonstrating resistance to injustice. This kind of success was non-trivial: there was a chance that the Nazis would erase all evidence of the conspiracy, especially if they had won the war. The conspirators' success in demonstrating resistance seems sufficient to constitute their living well, if indeed we think they did live well by their deeds. We might similarly revise our judgments about the flourishing of the failed actor, friend, teacher, or activist if we learned that these agents were actually attempting something other than (or in addition to) what we ordinarily consider a success for the activity, e.g., if the actor simply wanted to experience the Hollywood or Broadway lifestyle, or if the activist, despairing of effecting real change, just wanted to show that *someone* cared about the cause.

Moreover, the conspirators' project to end Hitler's reign did succeed in a way, albeit through the efforts of others. The Allied victory in World War II could well be said to have redeemed the conspirators' activities, rendering the conspirators successful and as having lived well even after many of them had been executed. We can see this by supposing that the opposite had happened, that the Nazis had won the war and covered up the conspiracy. In that case, would we still judge that the conspirators had lived well? It seems unlikely. Then all measures of success in their project would have been denied them. They would truly have struggled and made the

[55] Adams cites Hoffman's (1995) biography of Claus von Stauffenberg as evidence.

greatest sacrifice in vain. To be sure, their sacrifice would still have been noble and morally admirable. But we should not confuse our moral admiration for the failed conspirators with a recognition that they lived well. Living well is not primarily a moral notion, even if it can be constituted by moral activity in some cases. Indeed, what makes the conspirators' actions so morally admirable is that they risked their own lives and potential for living well for the sake of the greater good.

6.3 Special Case: Trying is Sufficient for Success

Perhaps this is still too quick. Maybe the conspirators did not just value *demonstrating* resistance to injustice to the rest of the world but also valued the act of resisting itself. Presumably resisting injustice is itself a valuable activity, especially if demonstrating resistance is valuable. So in that case, the failed conspirators would still have lived well by their resistance whether or not others ever became aware of it. This would be an example where simply trying is sufficient for living well. But note that this is easily explained on the account I am proposing: resisting injustice is a kind of activity where trying is sufficient for *success* and that success is what makes the case an example of living well. If trying can be sufficient for success, does this trivialize the success condition and speak in favor of the view that trying itself is sufficient for living well? No. The success condition would only be trivial if every valuable activity were such that trying was sufficient for success and this is not the case. As we already noted, merely trying was not sufficient for success in the valuable activities of ousting an unjust regime and demonstrating resistance. Similarly, merely trying to teach students is not sufficient for succeeding in teaching students, trying to be an actor is not sufficient for succeeding in acting, and so on. The activities of the Black Orchestra might, in the end, be an example of a special case where trying is sufficient for success

and thus for living well but, since this is a special case, it does not count against positing a more general success condition.

These observations generalize: regardless of the example in question, if we screen off all plausible measures of success, it becomes highly doubtful that the agents in question are living well by their activities simply in virtue of trying. Suppose a scientist toiled for years in a lab but came away with no result, not even a negative one, that advanced knowledge in their field. All manner of scientific success eluded them. Though they might value their scientific activity, I imagine their plight would be immensely frustrating and not such as to contribute to a life well-lived. In some cases, especially those of experiential or expressive significance, simply trying or making a sincere effort to accomplish something worthwhile is a way of succeeding. But this is not generally the case for all activities. The scientist with no useful result is not succeeding in their scientific activity simply by trying. They are failing. And the lives of those who fail so thoroughly are tragic, not the kind we would wish for those we care about. This remains true even if there is something morally or otherwise admirable in their doomed efforts, as was no doubt the case for the conspirators of the Black Orchestra. So, trying is not in general sufficient either for success or for living well. Having rejected the opposing view, we should stick with the highly intuitive success condition for living well.

6.4 Standards of Success

In light of these considerations, the more interesting question is not whether some degree of success is necessary for living well but what can count as success or, relatedly, what generates the standards of success for an activity.

6.4.1 Competitive or Recognitional Success

We might be tempted to take the view that success is essentially competitive or positional, requiring recognition as "top of one's field," which may often correlate with fame or commercial success. This model of success fits some ordinary ways of thinking about who counts as successful in the arts, athletics, academia, and professional careers. When thinking of successful, flourishing athletes, for example, one is likely to think of Olympic medalists and all-star players. Similarly, one is likely to think of award-winning actors, popular musicians, and best-selling authors as successful artists.

However, this view of success is too restrictive. For one thing, the model does not easily apply to other paradigms of valuable activities like engaging in loving relationships, cultural or religious practices, and moral activities like charity and activism. One need not, for instance, be a better friend or family member than most in order to have a successful friendship or family life, and one certainly need not receive fame or make money by doing these things. For another, a competitive or recognitional model of success has difficulty explaining how someone could flourish by engaging in valuable activities as an amateur, hobbyist, or unsung professional. I mean, for example, those professionals like teachers, programmers, and studio musicians who rarely receive widespread recognition for their work, as well as amateurs who paint only for their own pleasure, play pick-up basketball on weekends, or play in a garage band. Though there are high-profile and lucrative professional scenes for some such activities, it is just as plausible that ordinary workers and mere enthusiasts can flourish by engaging in them. One way to succeed in playing music is to sell out stadiums as a rock star; another is simply to play small gigs or even just for oneself.

6.4.2 Success Specific to "Fine-Grained" Activities

So, success need not be competitive. How, then, do we account for the variable success conditions of activities like playing music? A natural explanation is that there are really different "fine-grained," valuable activities here—e.g., being or becoming a rock star, being a professional musician, playing in a band, simply playing an instrument, etc.—that are all ways of performing a "coarse-grained" activity like making music. A fine-grained activity is one with a particular success condition built in as a constitutive part of the activity. The success condition for being a rock star *is* competitive in the sense that it requires an exceptional degree of fame that not all musicians can possess. The success condition for being a professional musician is a little, but far less, competitive, since all it requires is that one make some money by making music. And the success condition for playing in a band or simply playing is not really competitive at all. Similarly, medaling in the Olympics has a competitive success condition while merely playing pick-up basketball for fun does not. The goal in the latter case is simply to have fun, not even necessarily to win.

While there are many such fine-grained activities, not just any combination of an activity and a success condition will do. There are constraints on what can count as success for any given coarse-grained activity. For example, watching the Olympics on television cannot count as success in athletic activity. Here the constraint seems to fall out of the nature of the activity itself. Other constraints may be socially imposed. For example, what counts as success in parenting may vary somewhat with culture. In one culture, it might be a success in parenting for one's adult children to become personally and financially independent; in another, that might be a scandal. This is not to say that watching sports or raising independent children cannot be (part of) some valuable

activity or other in some contexts, but that there are contexts in which, and activities for which, these will not count as successes.

Plausibly, which fine-grained activities a person values and pursues determines the success conditions relevant to their living well. So, a person who only values being a rock star but does not value playing music for its own sake can only live well if they succeed in becoming a rock star. A person who values playing music for its own sake can live well by playing music without becoming a rock star. So can a person who values both becoming a rock star *and* playing music for its own sake. Even if they fail to become a rock star and thus fail to live well from that activity, they can flourish by nevertheless succeeding in simply playing music. *Mutatis mutandis* for athletics and other activities. There is no obvious limit to the number of fine-grained activities a person can value and pursue in the course of pursuing a coarse-grained activity. But our other conditions still apply here: a fine-grained activity with a particular success condition will only contribute to living well so long as it is valuable and the agent values it. If becoming famous is not in itself (part of) a valuable activity, then the fine-grained activity of becoming a famous musician will not constitute living well, even if the coarse-grained activity of playing music is, generically, a valuable activity (i.e., even if many fine-grained instances of the coarse-grained activity are valuable).

6.5 External Effects on Success

There are a number of interesting implications of the success condition so described. The first is that, for better or worse, one's success, and thus one's living well, can be affected by things outside one's complete and direct control, including chance and other agents. Becoming a rock star, for instance, requires not just talent and will but a great deal of luck and the support of fans,

agents, label executives, etc. Competitive athletic success requires natural endowment and health, which is only so much under one's own control, and also depends on the level of one's competition. This lack of full control cuts both ways. Fortune does, in fact, favor some and not others. Through bad luck or interference by others, one can be made to fail in one's valuable pursuits. But one can also be made to succeed. The Black Orchestra's 20 July plot to assassinate Hitler with a suitcase bomb failed by dumb luck: the suitcase was unwittingly moved, and Hitler was shielded from the blast by the conference room table. But the Black Orchestra's project to end Nazi rule was ultimately made a success by the intervention of the Allied forces. The fact that success is not fully up to us can thus help as well as hamper our living well through activities the success of which is not guaranteed by simply trying.

6.6 Temporal Effects on Success

A second, related consequence is that whether a person is living well at one time can be affected by events at a later time, since the success of an activity can be affected after the activity takes place. The case of the Black Orchestra makes this point as well. I have already mentioned that the project of demonstrating German resistance to Hitler depended for its success on the spread of knowledge of the conspiracy after the fact of the conspiracy's failed coup, knowledge which a victorious Nazi regime could have kept secret. If the conspirators did indeed live well through their resistance, it is due in part to what happened after their resistance ended. Notice too that not only was their flourishing affected by later events, but it was also affected by events after their deaths—most of the conspirators were executed before the war was over.

To some, this may seem a surprising theoretical result, that events after a life has ended can determine whether or not the life is well-lived. I note it as of interest, though I do not consider

it an objectionable result. The idea that events after a person's death can affect their flourishing is not without precedent: Aristotle (1894), the foremost theorizer of living well, considers this a popular view and commits to a moderate version of it himself (*Nicomachean Ethics* I.10-11). And though this kind of "backwards causation" is a curious phenomenon to ponder, it fits intuitively with various examples. Frege, for instance, apparently strove for recognition for his philosophical work, recognition which eluded him in his lifetime. Had that been the end of his story, his life would strike an observer as rather miserable and tragic. But since he has posthumously become recognized as an important founding figure in modern logic and analytic philosophy, we can look back favorably on his life as being well-lived in at least this respect, his ambitions realized. Similarly, Lincoln's troubled presidency would scarcely have been an example of living well if the Confederacy had risen up again upon his death and fended off re-joining the Union, thus preserving slavery. But as things turned out, Lincoln's substantial efforts were well worth it and, as hard as those years were for him, they were ultimately years of flourishing.

6.7 Limits to Temporal Effects

There is, of course, a question as to how long after a person's activities or death future events can affect their living well. The force of this question is particularly striking when we consider that the universe will presumably eventually end, along with all life and any evidence of human accomplishments. To some, the eventual death of the universe threatens to rob life of all meaning. This dire thought holds some credibility if I am right that success can affect flourishing even after death. Can we truly live well when all of our successes will one day be undone?

Fortunately, we have tools to avoid a nihilistic conclusion. Intuitively, the impact of events diminishes the further into the future they are. At some point, the future no longer seems to impact

the flourishing of past peoples. If the world today abandoned philosophy, it would presumably not entail that Socrates had not lived well by sacrificing his life in its pursuit, though if Plato and his contemporaries had abandoned philosophy, it might have. Between Plato and the present, there was a rich history of philosophy that rendered Socrates's sacrifice a success. How long exactly did Socrates's successors need to engage in philosophy in order to render him successful? I cannot say. Presumably, we will have to be satisfied with some vagueness as to when exactly future events cease to matter to past living well altogether. It depends, at least in part, on the goals an agent values and pursues, and such goals are probably often vague. Socrates, for example, sought for others to take up his philosophical mantle but probably did not have in mind a determinate length of time for this goal, either 10 years or 100 or 2000.

Though some vagueness is inevitable, we can say something to explain why backwards impact diminishes. Activities are marked by an agent's control, or at least deliberate influence, over circumstances—that is at least part of what distinguishes activity from mere occurrence. Activities and their results also necessarily unfold across time. Agents have most direct control over their present actions, what they are doing here and now, and have some control of present circumstances. Agents also have some, though less, influence over their future actions and circumstances. Part of engaging in a medium- to long-term activity is planning ahead and ensuring that one can engage in actions constitutive of that activity in the future. For example, an athlete engages in long-term athletic activity not only by running a race now but also by taking care to train, to avoid injury, and to remain healthy so as to continue running well in the future. But an agent's ability to foresee and guide future events diminishes as those circumstances get further into the future. Given a long-enough timeline, the athlete can be sure that they will become unable to run well, either as a result of injury, illness, age, or, eventually, death. As an agent's control

over the future diminishes, so the impact of future events on present living well also diminishes as those events get further into the future. This is because events are only part of an agent's activity, including its success or failure, insofar as they fall within the agent's ability to foresee and deliberately influence. To put the point another way, while it is not entirely up to us whether we succeed or fail in our activities, the events which constitute our success or failure have to be at least partly up to us, within our ability to deliberate influence. If they were not, they would not be part of our activity, but merely outcomes we wish for. And events very far removed in time are not typically even partly up to us.

Socrates foresaw that, under his influence, other Athenians would continue to engage in his philosophical practices after his death—no doubt he saw great promise in Plato in particular. Plato's philosophy is thus an extension, and part of the success, of Socrates's philosophical activity and his sacrifice. Socrates continues to influence philosophy today, though only indirectly and non-foreseeably, via Plato and millennia-long lines of transmission. In the relevant sense, present philosophical activity cannot be viewed as part of Socrates's (token) activity, since there was no way he could have predicted or deliberately caused it (even though he indirectly and unknowingly helped to cause it). So, the present fate of philosophy can no longer affect Socrates's living well, since it cannot affect (the success of) his activity, even though Plato's philosophy could. As already mentioned, we cannot say precisely where Socrates's direct and foreseeable influence ended—with Aristotle, the Hellenistic schools, the Neo-Platonists, etc. But though we cannot say *when*, we can now at least see *why* future events eventually stopped affecting Socrates's activity and thus his living well.[56]

[56] Note that, despite the above examples, temporal effects on success and flourishing, as well as their limits, can also occur within a life and not just after death. My success as a coach, for example, might be affected by how my trainees perform after I quit coaching them but still during my lifetime. However, these temporal

6.8 Limited Control over Living Well

We have seen that events outside our full control can affect success, and thus living well, including events after our activities and even after our deaths. As a result, we do not have complete control over living well. It is not entirely up to us. However, a third noteworthy consequence of the success condition as we have formulated it is that we have some control over our ability to live well insofar as we have control over our aspirations, over the fine-grained activities and their success conditions which we value and choose to pursue. The musician who only values and pursues becoming a rock star is taking a big risk with their own flourishing, since so much of succeeding in that fine-grained activity is out of their hands. But the musician whose aspirations include the humbler goal of merely playing music faces significantly less risk of failure since the ability simply to play music is much more within their control. The risk of failure is still not entirely absent, for they could, e.g., become too ill to play, but there are fewer factors outside their control which could prevent their success and thus their living well. The example suggests that, if the goal is to live well, we would do well to value and pursue fine-grained activities over which we have a reasonable amount of control and in which we have a reasonable chance of success. Living well is more up-to-us the humbler our aspirations.

This observation may disturb some readers. It seems to imply that we have eudaimonistic reason to aim low, to settle for engaging in less valuable and less risky activities in order to ensure that we live well. Am I giving the counterintuitive advice that we should choose the safe and easy route with our flourishing? That sounds un-American! It goes against our deeply engrained sense that one should always strive, push boundaries, and stretch limits. My response is two-pronged. First, my view does not entail that we should never (or have no eudaimonistic reason to) strive for

effects may be limited to the duration of their athletic careers and not afterwards, since their "life after sports" was in no way up to me as a coach.

lofty goals to become a rock star, write the great American novel, or make a significant impact on the world. If we do succeed in such fine-grained activities, we will presumably live even more well than we would if we merely succeeded in less valuable activities. After all (and as noted in Chapter 2, §2.8), it is plausible that living well comes in degrees and varies with the degrees of its constitutive conditions: activity, objective and subjective value, and success. But again, nothing prevents us from pursuing multiple fine-grained activities and success conditions at once, so we might as well value the pursuit of realistic goals in addition to lofty ones—insofar as it is up to us what we value. So, my advice to those who want to live well is actually to aim high *and* aim realistically (not necessarily low).

Second, however un-American it might be, I maintain that the advice to aim realistically is sound and that there is actually something unattractive in a person who only values the loftiest of goals to the exclusion of humbler ones. The kind of character we are discussing is, for example, a musician who only values becoming a rock star but not playing music simply for its own sake, an athlete who only values winning but not competing, or an academic who only values publishing and presenting in the "best" venues but not simply sharing the fruits of their research. We have all no doubt met people with these sorts of attitudes. They strike me as intolerably hyper-competitive characters with a unique ability to suck all the joy out of otherwise wonderful pursuits. Someone who cannot take pride in a comparatively humble success like playing in a local pub, competing but not placing in an Olympic event, or publishing in a "second-tier" journal seems to have a problematic attitude towards the activities they are engaged in. They seem to be blind to the value that they are realizing and that is staring them right in the face. At the very least, they are taking an instrumentalizing attitude to something which strikes most of us as finally valuable. They seem ungrateful for what life has given them and I daresay many of us are inclined not to root for such

individuals to find greater success. We are much more attracted to the musician who genuinely just cares about the music, the Olympic athlete who is just so happy to compete, and the academic who cares more about advancing knowledge in their field than about professional rankings. If you share my assessments of these various characters, then you should agree with me that the advice to value activities with realistic goals, in addition to lofty ones, actually fits very well with our intuitive views about the kinds of people we want ourselves and others to be.

6.9 Instrumental Success

The final note I wish to make in this chapter concerns success in instrumentally valuable activities. I contend that instrumentally valuable activities can succeed only insofar as they eventuate in something finally valuable (either other activities, products, or states of affairs). Unlike the previous observations, this does not follow from the success condition so far formulated, but it is an important condition to add. There are a couple of good reasons to hold this view of instrumental success.

The first is that it leads to what are, in my view, the correct verdicts about success and living well in various cases. Suppose you engage in the instrumentally valuable, philanthropic activity of donating your money and labor to Habitat for Humanity to build houses for those in need. You help to complete several homes but, just before anyone can move into them, a drought strikes and forces everyone to leave the area. The houses will now sit empty for the foreseeable future and those who needed housing remain homeless. Did you succeed in your instrumentally valuable activity? In a certain sense, yes: you intended to build houses and you built houses. But in a more relevant sense, no: your aim in building houses was to provide homes for those in need and this did not happen. The instrumental activity of building houses is only as valuable as the

final value it helps to realize, e.g., by providing shelter to families that enables their members to safely pursue their finally valuable relationships, studies, hobbies, and careers.[57] Failing to contribute to such final value, even through no fault of your own, means failing in your instrumentally valuable activity. As a result of this failure, the hybrid value theory implies that you do not live well through this instance of philanthropic housebuilding. This, too, seems like the correct verdict. However virtuous and morally admirable your intentions, your efforts were in vain. The project was ultimately not worth doing. It was a regrettable moment in your life, not something to celebrate as having made your life better. Examples like this go to show that the only way to live well by an activity is to succeed in it, and the only way to succeed in an instrumentally valuable activity is to contribute in some way to some actual final value.

The second reason I wish to constrain the success conditions of instrumentally valuable activities is to solve a puzzle that would otherwise arise for the hybrid value theory of living well. The puzzle is this: intuitively, one does not live *well* by merely living. Simply *surviving* by eating, finding shelter, and so on is not the same as *thriving*. But it is consistent with everything we have said up until now that someone could live well by merely surviving. This is because surviving is clearly instrumentally valuable. It is a necessary precondition for doing almost anything else finally valuable (with the possible exception of finally valuable self-sacrifice). Moreover, on my somewhat deflationary theory of valuing, most people probably value their own survival.

[57] As my phrasing of the example suggests, I do not consider it finally valuable either simply to act so as to help others or to give people shelter. I am personally rather stingy with final value and locate it in what people can do with help and shelter. It might strike some as unintuitive that helping others (and moral activity generally) is instrumentally, rather than finally, valuable, but I argued for it at length in Chapter 1. To make one point briefly, if moral activity were finally valuable, we would have reasons to create occasions in which others need help, reasons which we do not in fact have. That said, this particular example does not hang on this view of mine. It could be adapted to locate final value in anything downstream from simply building houses. All that matters is that building houses is not itself finally valuable, which is independently plausible.

Certainly, most people have positive affect towards their own survival and behavioral dispositions to act in ways that promote their continued existence. And it is no stretch to suppose that, at a higher-order level, most people stably identify with their base pro mental states towards survival. So, on my view, most people value merely surviving, even if only instrumentally. But I have allowed that instrumentally valuable activity that is instrumentally valued can constitute living well, so it looks as if I am forced to say, counter-intuitively, that most people live well by merely surviving. On this view, most people live well, i.e., live lives worth celebrating, just by staying alive and nothing else, which seems to undermine the distinction between lives well-lived and lives that are regrettable or tragic. It would turn out that almost everyone who is not suicidal lives well.

It would be a poor response to this puzzle to inflate our conception of valuing to the point where people cannot ordinarily be said to value their own survival. This is implausible since people manifestly *do* value their own survival. Another doomed response would be to deny that instrumentally valuable activities can constitute living well. This, too, is implausible because so many instrumentally valuable activities manifestly *can* constitute living well when they succeed, including moral activities and many productive careers.

Instead, we can avoid the puzzle's unattractive implications by constraining the success condition for instrumentally valuable activities. Since merely surviving is instrumentally valuable, on the view I am proposing, it only succeeds, and can therefore only constitute living well, when the activity of survival eventuates in something finally valuable—when, say, the agent uses their life either to engage in a finally valuable activity like participating in loving relationships or to engage in further instrumentally valuable activity (e.g., moral activity) that leads to other finally valuable activities, products, or states of affairs. Merely surviving without engaging in or contributing to anything finally valuable will not count as success and will not constitute living

well. However, surviving will count as successful and can constitute living well when it does eventuate in something finally valuable. This is a much more intuitive result. If someone makes good use of their survival to contribute to something finally valuable, then they are doing more than *merely* surviving. Their survival then becomes part and parcel of a broader, more valuable activity that realizes some final value.

In typical cases, the agent in question will also value the broader activity which ultimately realizes final value—they will also, e.g., value participating in loving relationships or engaging in moral activity. They will therefore live well by their activities beyond survival and, derivatively, also live well by surviving. In that case, I have no problem saying the person lives well by surviving, since they are already living well in another way. And if there are agents who value their survival and ultimately contribute to some final value but do not value their pursuit of that final value, I can accept that such a person is indeed living well to at least some degree by their survival. It is plausible that such agents could flourish *more* if they also valued their contributions to final value but, even if they do not, they are still doing more than *merely* surviving, so most of the sting of the puzzle is removed. In any case, I imagine that such agents, who value their survival and nothing else that contributes to final value, will be quite rare and thus pose little real challenge to the hybrid value theory. And of course, the proposed constraint on the success conditions for instrumentally valuable activities is not an *ad hoc* maneuver to avoid an objectionable result. I have already said that I find the constraint independently plausible.

Part III: The Sufficiency of Hybrid Value

Chapter 7: Living Well, Being Well, and Meaning

7.1 What Is New Here? Well-Being, Meaning in Life, or Living Well?

The first question one might rightfully ask about all that has been said is, what is new here? We have already seen that there are some very similar extant hybrid theories of well-being and meaningfulness in the literature. Parfit suggests, though does not officially endorse, the view that "what is good or bad for someone is to have knowledge, to be engaged in rational activity, to experience mutual love, and to be aware of beauty, while strongly wanting just these things" (1984, 501). Raz claims that a person's well-being consists "in the successful pursuit of valuable goals" (1986, 318), noting also that "a person's well-being can be promoted only through his willing acceptance of goals and pursuits" (308). Darwall argues "that the best life for a person (in terms of welfare) is one involving activities that bring her into an appreciative rapport with various forms of agent-neutral value" (2002, 17). Tiberius holds that "[w]ell-being consists in the fulfillment of an appropriate set of values over a lifetime," where "[v]alues are the projects, activities, relationships, and ideals that we value" (2018, 11-13).[58] Finally, concerning not well-being but meaning in life, Wolf writes that "meaning arises from loving objects worthy of love and engaging with them in a positive way" (2010, 8).

I take all of these authors to be correctly identifying more or less the same important good that I am defending as a conception of living well, varying primarily in their terminology, their construal of the objective value component, and, of course, the concept of which they take themselves to be offering a conception. The question now is whether the shared hybrid value good

[58] Note that Tiberius considers her view wholly subjectivist, not a hybrid theory. This is because of her subjectivist construal of the "appropriateness" condition. For my purposes, however, the inclusion of an appropriateness condition for values at all renders the theory sufficiently "hybrid."

so identified is better viewed as a conception of either of the concepts of well-being or meaning in life, or as a conception of living well, as I argue. The question is not merely semantic, a matter of what we choose to call this hybrid value good. It has normative ethical implications for what we should do. For if welfarism is true and ethics fundamentally recommends realizing people's well-being, then it matters a great deal whether this hybrid value good exhausts the concept of well-being. Similarly, if we instead adopt eudaimonism, the view that ethics fundamentally recommends realizing living well or human flourishing, it matters whether this hybrid value good is a complete conception of living well. On the other hand, those who employ the concept of meaning in life rarely, if ever, contend that ethics solely fundamentally recommends the realization of meaningfulness. So, if hybrid value is a conception of meaningfulness but not well-being or flourishing, ethics will presumably not recommend that we exclusively aim to realize hybrid value, though hybrid value may be on the list of goods we should aim to realize. Figuring out which concept hybrid value is a conception of is a matter of determining how hybrid value fits into our overall theory of value and normative ethical theory.

7.2 Exhaustive Conception of Well-Being

Let us first consider the proposal that hybrid value is a conception of well-being. I believe that successfully engaging in valuable activities one values is an important part—indeed, the most important part—of well-being, but I do not think it exhausts the concept. For consider that even passively received goods like pleasure, knowledge, experiences of beauty, or love from others plausibly make a person better off. They must be able to make infants better off, for example, if wholly passive infants are to have different levels of well-being. These goods make a life better in

terms of well-being, though they are not sufficient to constitute living well—that requires active engagement, as I have argued.

Likewise, consider either engaging in objectively valuable activities without subjectively valuing them or engaging in subjectively valued activities that are not objectively valuable. I have argued that neither is sufficient to constitute living well but surely it is not as if they count for absolutely nothing. A life with objective but not subjective value is quite plausibly better in terms of well-being than a life without either kind of value; the same goes for a life with subjective but not objective value. (It is irrelevant here whether objective value alone is superior to subjective value alone or *vice versa*.) The best thing is to have both kinds of value but having part of living well is better than having no part at all. For these reasons, the hybrid value theory is an implausible conception of all of well-being. Rather hybrid value is one important contributor to well-being, among others.

7.3 Focal Conception of Well-Being

There is a view in the vicinity that is not implausible. That is to take hybrid value not as exhaustive but as the *focal* component of well-being, the single contributor to well-being around which other contributors are based. On such a view, successfully engaging in valuable activities one values is the primary way of increasing well-being, but there are other, derivative ways of increasing well-being. If having objective value without subjective value contributes to well-being (as an objective list theorist might believe), that is because objective value is a *part* of hybrid value. Similarly, if having subjective value without objective value contributes to well-being (as a desire satisfaction theorist might believe), that is because it too is a part of hybrid value. If these parts are

good for a person on their own, even when they do not eventuate in full hybrid value, then, on this focal model, the explanation for this fact is their parthood relation to hybrid value.[59]

Meanwhile some passive goods like pleasure and knowledge contribute to well-being because they are typically *instrumental* to hybrid value. Knowledge of the world typically makes it easier to successfully engage in valuable, valued activities, and pleasure is typically an important part of our motivational systems that keep us so engaged.[60] Since these kinds of passive goods are typically instrumental to hybrid value, we can say they increase well-being in their own right, even when they do not eventuate in hybrid value. Again, they contribute to well-being on their own, but the explanation for this lies in their instrumentality relation to hybrid value.

This view of hybrid value as the focal component of well-being preserves some of the spirit of hybrid value theories of well-being without restricting well-being overly narrowly. And I actually have no qualms with such a view. Indeed, I find it a rather promising approach to the theory of well-being to start with hybrid value—as a conception of the narrower concept of living well—and build out to the broader concept of well-being. I do not wish to defend such a view here, however, as it is not necessary for establishing the hybrid value theory of living well. I merely offer it as an olive branch to (or a charitable interpretation of) theorists of well-being who are hitting upon the importance of hybrid value.

[59] This is not to take a definitive stance that either objective value alone or subjective value alone actually does contribute to well-being. There may be additional necessary conditions for contributing to well-being besides standing in some relevant relation to the focal conception that is hybrid value (e.g., the "Resonance Constraint"—see Railton 1986; Rosati 1996). Champions of one kind of well-being often reject the other, and I do not wish to weigh in on that dispute at this time. My suggested focal conception does not necessarily arbitrate between "objectivists" and "subjectivists" about well-being. Instead, it offers tools to explain either view or both.

[60] I owe the suggestion about the motivational role of pleasure to Jason Raibley in conversation.

7.4 Conception of Meaning in Life

Now let us consider the alternative proposal that hybrid value is a conception of meaning in life. It is not necessary to reject this proposal. Either meaning in life is the same concept as that of living well or it is not. First, let us suppose that living meaningfully is the same thing as living well. As I mentioned in Chapter 2, §2.10, this is Dworkin's position when he writes, "I do not address separately the question whether and when a human life has meaning or is meaningful. I cannot understand that question in any way that does not take it to be essentially the same question as the question I do discuss, which is when and why a particular life is good or successful" (2002, 241). If living well and living meaningfully are the same thing, then the hybrid value conception of living well is also a conception of living meaningfully. There is no conflict here. In that case, my hybrid value conception of living well is not a new position, since others, like Wolf, have defended hybrid value conceptions of living meaningfully. Nevertheless, I hope to have contributed to the discussion by precisely explicating the view and its implications and by defending its correctness against alternatives.

Now let us suppose instead that meaning in life and living well are different concepts. This is Wolf's view. She writes that "meaning is one ingredient of a good life, among others (like subjective happiness)" (2010, 52). We might be inclined to view them as different concepts if we ascribe to them different functional roles in our theory of value or, relatedly, if we employ different heuristics to identify them. I have already offered the heuristics for living well that it is the kind of life we would celebrate or wish for on behalf of those we care about. The heuristics for a meaningful life might well be different. Drawing on the meaning of "meaning," a meaningful life might be one that allows someone to make sense of themselves or their place in the world. Even if

lives well-lived are often meaningful and *vice versa*, the concepts would then have distinct intensions and be distinct concepts.

The first thing to note about this possibility is that, even if living well and living meaningfully are distinct concepts, they may apply to the same lives. That is, we could adopt the same conception for both concepts. It could be that hybrid value is the best account of both living well and living meaningfully—I am right about living well *and* Wolf is right about meaning in life. I am happy to accept this result. My project here is only to defend the hybrid value conception of living well, but it is no problem for my view if theorists of meaning in life should find that hybrid value is also the best conception of meaningfulness. It is not as if living well and living meaningfully come apart extensionally in very obvious ways, as, e.g., being just and being happy seem to come apart at first glance. If someone offered the same conception—say, giving to others what they are owed—for justice and happiness, this would be a surprising and therefore defeasibly objectionable result. But the same objection does not apply to offering the same conception of living well and living meaningfully, which seem to go together quite nicely.

However, Wolf herself does not accept the co-extensionality of living well and living meaningfully. As just noted, she endorses the hybrid value conception of meaningfulness but holds that hybrid value is necessary but not sufficient for living a good life. She proposes that subjective happiness is at least one element that is also necessary for living well, and there may be other necessary conditions. Here I disagree. I want to defend the claim that hybrid value is necessary *and* sufficient for living well. But notice that Wolf and I are disagreeing about living well and not about meaning in life. As I said, I need not reject her theory of meaning in life (though I am not asserting or defending it either). Our substantive disagreement about the good life, however, gives partial answer to the question of what is new in my account. Though we both think hybrid value

is an important good, I want to defend its sufficiency for living well. I am thus advancing a theory of living well that is (to my knowledge) heretofore undefended. And as I have already explained, there is more at stake for normative ethics than simply what we choose to call hybrid value.

7.5 Sufficient Conditions for Living Well

Hopefully, I have by now established the claim that hybrid value is necessary for living well, which Wolf also accepts. The remaining task is to defend the sufficiency claim, which she denies. Unfortunately, Wolf does not offer any arguments for her position against the sufficiency claim and does not elaborate on her own conception of the good life beyond her example that subjective happiness is necessary in addition to hybrid value—which is fair, considering her primary interest lies with meaningfulness and not with living well. Moreover, I cannot think of an argument on her behalf that would fill this gap beyond reliance on intuitive judgments and heuristics of the same kind I have employed to establish the foregoing necessary conditions. When Wolf insists that subjective happiness is also necessary for living a good life, presumably this is based on her judgments about the kinds of lives she would consider well-lived.

This means that there is no principled objection I need to overcome in order to establish the sufficiency claim. Rather, the method to establish the sufficiency claim will be to carry on as we already have been and consider examples of lives well-lived or not in order to determine whether there are any conditions for living well that hybrid value, as so far formulated, has left out. I cannot use this method to rule out every possible further condition for living well—that would take infinite space. But I will consider some major contenders for additional necessary conditions, starting with Wolf's suggested condition of subjective happiness (or more generally, positive subjective experience). If, upon reflection, we deny that these contenders are genuine

necessary conditions for living well, then we will have made a strong, albeit necessarily defeasible, case for the sufficiency of hybrid value. Let us then consider some of these potential necessary conditions: in Chapter 8, positive subjective experiences like pleasure or satisfaction; in Chapter 9, a wide variety of different virtues, practical and intellectual; and in Chapter 10, moral adequacy or decency.

Chapter 8: Positive Subjective Experience

The first kind of potential additional necessary condition I wish to consider is any of a range of positive subjective experiences. Under this heading I mean to include subjective happiness, as per Wolf's (2010) suggestion, as well as pleasure, contentment, satisfaction, and an experience of flow.[61] I have two reasons for discussing these various positive subjective experiences as a class. First, within and across academic disciplines, people will disagree about what each kind of experience is. Relatedly, it is not clear to what extent each of these experiences or mental states is distinct from all the others. Subjective happiness might just consist in pleasure or in subjective satisfaction, etc. As such, it can be a bit nebulous which kind of experience is potentially relevant to living well. The easiest thing to do in this case is to treat all positive subject experiences as a class in order to avoid controversy about these experiences themselves. Second, I wish to offer the same kind of response regardless of precisely which kind of experience is suggested to be necessary for living well. Treating all positive subjective experiences as a class will allow me to avoid unnecessary repetition of the same points.

8.1 Argument from Ordinary Language or Folk Psychology

Why think that positive subjective experiences are necessary for living well? One reason may be an intuitive connection between the good life and the happy life. In ordinary parlance, we often treat a person's happiness and their living well as interchangeable ultimate prudential goals. "Happiness" can be just another way of describing the good life, as evinced by the fact that Greek "*eudaimonia*" has historically been frequently rendered in English as "happiness" (likely under the influence of the common Latin translation, "*beatitudo*"). A parent is as likely to wish for their

[61] Csikszentmihalyi (1990) theorizes flow generally; Kristjánsson (2020) offers it a role in human flourishing.

child's happiness as for their living a good life, with no obvious distinction between the two sentiments. But happiness seems to have an ineliminable experiential component. Again, in ordinary parlance, we use "happiness" to name a positive feeling or mood and we would hesitate to describe someone as "happy" who lacked such a positive subjective experience. Thus, the concept of happiness plays an intermediate role in linking living well with positive subjective experience. Based on this folk psychological connection, it is easy to suppose that positive experience is necessary for living well.

However, this line of thought only goes so far. "Happiness" is an infamously imprecise term in ordinary parlance. We do commonly use the word to refer to a positive feeling or mood, but this is not its only use. We can distinguish between someone's *feeling* happy at a time and someone's *being* happy across time and across changes in their transient moods. A person can *be* happy overall, for example, even when they are temporarily grieving a loss and therefore not *feeling* happy. One way of *being* happy less transiently is to be overall satisfied or content with one's life, taking account of all its ups and downs. Such satisfaction would still qualify as a positive subjective experience. And this could be what someone has in mind when they seek their own happiness or wish for the happiness of a loved one.

But this is not the only sense of longer-term "happiness" one might seek. When a parent wishes for their child's happiness, for example, they probably do not wish simply for their child to feel satisfied or content no matter what the child's life is like. Rather, they wish for the child to have a *happy life*, a life full of good things that is worthy of being satisfied with. This sense of "happiness" is the one most closely connected with the original meaning of the Middle English word, "hap": that is, "fortune" or "luck." It is also this sense that most closely corresponds to "*eudaimonia*," "living well," and its synonyms. But this is an objective sense of "happiness"

distinct from the subjective senses of feeling or being happy. One could have a happy (i.e., fortunate, good) life and yet feel unhappy or be unsatisfied with it. The argument from ordinary language and folk psychology in favor of a positive subjective experience condition for living well relies on an equivocation of these distinct senses of "happiness." We should not be misled by the fact that we use the same word in an objective sense to correspond to living well and in a subjective sense to correspond to positive experience. The two senses are related and may very often co-travel. One may have positive experiences in response to living well. Moreover, having and identifying with positive experiences can be a way of subjectively valuing and so can partly constitute flourishing. But ordinary language and folk psychology do not settle whether or not subjective and objective "happiness" necessarily co-occur.

8.2 Argument from Heuristics

Even once we screen off a possible conflation brought on by ordinary language, we might still think that positive subjective experience is necessary for living well. One of our heuristics for the concept of living well is that it is the kind of life we would wish for or be satisfied with on behalf of our loved ones. And we do wish for our loved ones to have positive subjective experiences: to feel happy, to feel pleasure, to feel satisfied or content, to experience flow, etc. We may not be satisfied for a loved one to have a life without such positive experiences. Another heuristic is that to live well is to live the kind of life that we would affirm or celebrate, not one that is regrettable or tragic. And at first glance it would be regrettable or tragic for a person to lack positive subjective experiences, especially while they are successfully engaging in the valuable activities which seem to merit such positive experiences. Simply put, it seems somewhat tragic for

someone to do something good but not feel good about it. For these reasons, we might expect positive subjective experience to be necessary for living well.

We can defuse these arguments but only by paying closer attention to our heuristics for living well and to their limitations. In the first place, it is important to bear in mind that the synchronic kind of living well which is our focus in the present work is not perfectly represented by our heuristics for living well. Our heuristics focus on the kinds of entire lives we would wish for or affirm, since it is easier to form and test judgments about whole lives. But we are not here primarily interested in when a whole life is well-lived. Instead, we want to know what it is to live well at a time or across a relatively brief period of time. This is important for determining whether positive subjective experiences are necessary for living well. For a whole life that entirely lacked positive subjective experiences like pleasure or satisfaction altogether would indeed be an odd—perhaps practically impossible—and probably unaffirmable kind of life. But the question which we need to answer is whether one needs positive experiences *at a time* in order to be living well *at a time*.

The simplest view asserting the necessity of positive subjective experience would be one which says that one must experience pleasure, satisfaction, or the like *at the same time* one is successfully engaging in valuable, valued activities. As we have seen in the case of success, however, the constituents of living well at a time are not restricted to being located at that time: the conditions constituting success in an activity, for example, may occur after the activity in question (e.g., a work of art gains recognition only after it is created). So, another plausible view might instead hold that one needs to experience pleasure, satisfaction, etc. that is related to one's successful engagement in valuable, valued activities, either at the same time or after the fact. The most obvious way to spell out being "related to" in this case is that one must, in fact, take pleasure

or satisfaction *in* (or *because of* or *in response to*) one's valuable, valued activities either while one is engaged in them or at some time afterwards.

Moving on to our particular heuristics, we flagged at the outset (in Chapter 2, §2.6) that the second of our three heuristics—that to live well is to live the kind of life we would wish for on behalf of those we care about—could mislead by suggesting that to live well is to live the best life possible. After all, while we are in the business of wishing, we will naturally wish for the very best for our loved ones. But the concept of living well is not the concept of the *best* life but of the *good enough* life. A good enough life, in terms of living well, can of course be made better by adding other contributors to well-being, such as positive subjective experience. To identify living well with the life of maximal possible well-being, however, would force us to ignore the distinction between living well and well-being, which we have already defended. The heuristic of what we would wish for on behalf of our loved ones can therefore only take us so far, and I will contend that the good enough life that we should wish for on behalf of our loved ones need not include the relevant positive subjective experiences.

Before I make this counterargument, however, we should also discuss the limitations of the final heuristic, that to live well is to live the kind of un-regrettable, non-tragic life which we would reflectively affirm or celebrate. The point to remember about this heuristic is that we are concerned with a sense of living well that has to do not with the circumstances in which people happen to find themselves as much as with how they act in response to those circumstances. The determinants of well-being are hugely influenced by circumstances beyond our control, including our health, our psychological makeup, and where and when we are born. There are senses of "regrettable" and "tragic" that attach to these uncontrolled circumstances. It is always regrettable, in a sense, when someone has worse luck and less well-being than they might have had, especially

when they have good character or make good decisions and seem therefore to deserve good things in life. In this sense, it is of course regrettable when a person lacks positive subjective experiences that they could have had. But this sense in which circumstances are regrettable is not the sense relevant to our heuristic for living well. If it were, then again it would eliminate the distinction between living well and well-being: since it would always be regrettable to lack a possible additional contributor to well-being, the only way to live well and un-regrettably would be to maximize one's well-being and live one's best possible life.

Instead, since living well or not is a matter of how people respond to their circumstances, the more relevant kind of regret (and "regrettableness") is the kind that attaches to decisions and actions. This is the primary sense of regret, as when one regrets one's own or others' decisions, for example, to buy that car or to date that person or to drink that third vodka tonic. In this sense, it is clearly regrettable, i.e., deserving of regret, to engage in harmful or otherwise disvaluable activities or to engage in activities that one ultimately does not value at the cost of engaging in valuable, valued activities. But in ordinary cases, lacking a positive subjective experience is not something to regret in this sense, since it is not a decision. Excepting cases where one decides, e.g., to pass up an experience that would have been enjoyable, it is not up to us whether we feel pleasure or feel content or experience flow. We can try to work to feel positively by, e.g., undergoing therapy, meditating, exercising, or taking antidepressants, but at the end of the day there is no guarantee that such efforts will bring about positive subjective experiences. These experiences are simply circumstances that happen either to attend us throughout our activities or not, depending on our neurological and psychological makeups. Since having positive subjective experiences is not up to us in the right way, lacking such experiences is not regrettable in the decision-tracking sense relevant to living well.

We have seen a few attempts to motivate the necessity of positive subjective experiences for living well and found these attempts ultimately unpersuasive. In particular, arguments that appeal to our heuristics for living well rely on incomplete understandings of these heuristics and of their limitations. Interpreted correctly, our heuristics do not support the necessity of positive subjective experiences. But we can go further and provide positive arguments against the necessity of positive experiences for living well. As before, these arguments take the form of considering cases of lives well-lived or not.

8.3 Argument Against the Necessity of Positive Subjective Experience

So, consider first the case of a *Tortured Artist* who never takes pleasure in or feels satisfied with their work, no matter how great their works of art are and no matter how successful they become. They are never content with their completed work but always look to do better, or to say something different, next time. As a result, they are subjectively unhappy, but this unfulfilled ambition is precisely what drives them to create artistic masterpieces. The *Tortured Artist* is, of course, a stereotype and a trope but for good reason. Many of our most celebrated artists seem to have been pretty subjectively unhappy, from painters like van Gogh and Jackson Pollock to authors like Poe, Hemingway, and Plath to musicians like Tchaikovsky, Syd Barrett, and Kurt Cobain to comedians and actors like Robin Williams. These and other artists' unhappiness can often be explained by factors such as family and personal problems, social oppression, economic hardship, physical and mental illness, and drug abuse. While such troubles doubtless inform their art, we need not romanticize hardships like mental illness and claim that these are necessary to make tortured artists great. After all, there do seem to be plenty of happy, untortured artists as well. At a minimum, however, we can be sure that some tortured artists succeeded in creating great art in

spite of their personal demons. The *Tortured Artist* is thus a paradigmatic example of a person who responds to their circumstances, including negative subjective experiences (or at least a lack of positive ones), in a valuable way.

Our question is whether the *Tortured Artist* lives well by creating art, despite lacking positive subjective experiences in response to doing so. They do live well according to the hybrid value conception. By hypothesis, artistic activity is valuable. It seems, furthermore, that the *Tortured Artist* values artistic activity. How else could we explain their continued commitment to creating art? At the very least, we can stipulate that our hypothetical *Tortured Artist* values artistic activity, as long as that is consistent with their deriving no positive subjective experiences from it (we will return to this point below). And our *Tortured Artist* can be as successful as you like, by most ordinary standards of success for artistic activity. They create genuinely aesthetically great works, which might be all the *Tortured Artist* cares about doing. We may add that their works are recognized as great in their lifetime and afterward, and they might even be quite commercially successful. But all this success fails to make them subjectively happy. So, is the verdict of the hybrid value conception the correct verdict?

For what it is worth, I think this is the correct verdict and that the *Tortured Artist* does live well. It is too bad that the artist does not have positive subjective experiences in response to their artistic activity. Their lives would doubtless be better, in terms of overall well-being, if they did have these experiences. But then they could also be subjectively miserable *and* fail to produce great art or to engage in any other valuable, valued activity. Whether we have positive subjective experiences or not is largely outside our control, but the *Tortured Artist* has at least made something out of or in spite of their misery. And at the end of the day, I think that this is good *enough* to count as living well.

The *Tortured Artist* has no need to regret how they have spent their life (in the relevant sense of "regret" that is tied to agency). Rather, we have reason to affirm and celebrate them—as we do in fact celebrate actual tortured, great artists. I would be grateful if one of my loved ones were to live such a life. This does not mean that I would not wish they were also subjectively happy or that I would not do everything in my limited power to help them feel positive subjective experiences. But though I might lament their *circumstances*, I would not lament their *life* and *choices*. What they *feel* is unfortunate; what they *do* is excellent. Given the circumstance of their feeling subjectively unhappy, they are doing as well as they could. And if I had the choice, for myself or for a loved one, between a subjectively happy life without hybrid value or a subjectively unhappy life with hybrid value, I would almost certainly choose the latter. Or to put this point another way, if a single person had one period of life with only subjective happiness and another period with only hybrid value, I might be glad for them during the first, but I would be *proud* of them during the second. Only in the second period would I affirm or celebrate their life and choices.

For me, this judgment is not isolated. Consider another case, that of the *Ambitious Altruist*. This altruist is, say, a philanthropist or social activist, sincerely dedicated to helping others and pursuing justice in tangible ways. But they are ambitious in that they are never content with the good that they do, instead always focusing on the greater evils—the poverty, injustice, illness, etc.—that persist in the world. As a result, they lack positive subjective experiences in response to their altruistic activity. They do not feel good about the good they do; they are too busy feeling bad about the good they could have done, have yet to do, or cannot do.

Spielberg's *Schindler's List* (1993) paints Oskar Schindler in such a light when, in the presence of a crowd of people he has saved from the Holocaust, he laments all of the other people

he *could have* saved. While this movie moment may have taken dramatic license with Schindler's life and personality, the *Ambitious Altruist* is no less believable than the *Tortured Artist*. Mother Teresa's brand of philanthropy is not without its controversy, but it is clear that she dedicated her life to providing for others' needs, as she saw them. Yet her now-published personal correspondence reveals that, despite her smiling public demeanor, she was not a subjectively happy person. She was in fact wracked with doubts and crises of faith throughout her life (Kolodiejchuk 2007). Her good works (as she saw them, at least) did not satisfy her. The same is true for many caregivers and social activists, who often experience mental health problems such as depression, anxiety, and stress associated with "compassion fatigue" (Eligon 2018; Burton 2019), in addition to feeling frustration and anger towards the systems they hope to change. It is really no wonder: if you confront the evils of the world on a daily basis, it is likely to leave you feeling worse, not better, even as you fight to change them. After all, fighting is hard work, especially when fighting what are, or often seem to be, losing battles. These examples are a reminder that, while we are prone to think of altruistic activity as fulfilling, in reality it often takes a significant psychological toll on the altruist.

If we agree that the *Ambitious Altruist* is a plausible character, then our question, again, is whether they live well by their altruistic activity. My answer should come as no surprise: yes, I believe they live well. By hypothesis, their other-benefiting activity is valuable. And an *Ambitious Altruist* seems to value that activity. After all, they engage in the activity despite its hardships, and they are ambitious in their engagement—they always want to do more. (Or we can stipulate that they value it, again, as long as that is consistent with their deriving no positive subjective experience from it.) And they can be reasonably successful in helping others, e.g., in treating the sick, in delivering goods and providing shelter to the needy, in seeing relevant legislation enacted,

etc. They are not so successful that they solve all the world's problems, rendering further altruistic activity unnecessary, but then that measure of altruistic success is likely beyond the reach of any individual. For all these reasons, it strikes me that the *Ambitious Altruist* is living well.

And crucially, this judgment is not threatened by their lack of positive subjective experience in response to their altruistic activity. Again, they would of course have higher well-being if they also had positive experiences. We might wish on the altruist's behalf for them to feel good or satisfied in addition, but to lack these feelings does not take away from their living well *enough*. I would celebrate and affirm the life of anyone who valued and successfully engaged in altruistic activity even if those positive experiences did not follow. In fact, I would probably respect their altruistic accomplishments even more if they achieved them while grappling with negative subjective experiences, since that would seem to display even greater strength of character and commitment to helping others. This *Ambitious Altruist* is overcoming the circumstances of their subjective experience to do good things, which is quite impressive and worth celebrating.

Another example to bolster the point: we can all probably agree that Martin Luther King, Jr. lived well by his social activism. He may have had his faults, but his life is well worth celebrating (for him and not just for his effects on others and on the world). Now, I do not know about his inner mental life but, knowing what I know about other activists, I would not be surprised to learn that his activism often left him feeling tired, frustrated, or stressed rather than happy or satisfied. Knowing that this were the case, would we affirm MLK's life any less? I certainly would not think his life any less worth celebrating. I would still think he nevertheless lived well.

We have now seen two kinds of examples of living well (at a time or during an interval of time) without positive subjective experiences, the *Tortured Artist* and the *Ambitious Altruist*. These

kinds already represent large numbers of actual and possible people. And we could generate more examples besides to make the same point. As a result of such cases, I conclude that positive subjective experiences, while plausible as contributors to well-being, are not necessary for living well. Before moving on to the next candidate necessary condition, a few notes on this conclusion.

8.4 Subjective Valuing and Positive Subjective Experience

First, we should consider the connection between subjective valuing and positive subjective experiences so as not to overstate the case against positive subjective experiences. While I have argued that positive experiences are not strictly necessary for living well, they may very often result from and be indicative of living well. This because a disposition to feel positive experiences like pleasure or satisfaction from an activity is one common way of valuing that activity, at least when the agent stably identifies with those experiences or the disposition. When endorsed positive subjective experiences are taken in valuable and successful activities, the agent is living well. And thus, living well with positive experiences may be more common than living well without. If, as an empirical matter, living well almost always occurs with positive experiences, the hybrid value conception of living well already has the tools to explain this.

My point in this chapter is a modest one: merely that people can still live well without such experiences, as long as there are other ways of valuing, as I argued there are in Chapter 4. However, I acknowledge that *if*, contrary to my own view, valuing actually does require an unmasked disposition to feel positive subjective experiences, then those positive experiences will be necessary concomitants of living well. In that case, my argument in the present chapter is moot. But in that case, I would also point out that the hybrid value conception already gets the extension

of living well correct without adding a condition for positive subjective experience—the valuing condition already takes care of that.

8.5 Necessary for Some but Not All

Second, there is another way that we can employ the tools of the hybrid value conception to mitigate the surprisingness of the claim that positive subjective experiences are unnecessary for living well. When I claim that positive experiences are unnecessary in general, I mean only the weak claim that some people in some cases can live well without experiencing them. This is consistent with positive subjective experiences being necessary for some people in some cases, perhaps even for very many people in very many cases. Positive experiences can be necessary in particular cases either by being partly constitutive of a particular valuable activity or by being part of the success condition for an agent's valued activity. As an example of the first, we might think that experiencing certain positive feelings, or at least being disposed to feel such, is a constitutive part of engaging in a loving relationship like a friendship or a romantic partnership. If some valuable activities constitutively require positive subjective experiences, then living well by engaging in those activities will obviously require having those experiences.

As for success conditions, recall the proposal that agents determine the success conditions for their coarse-grained valuable activities by valuing particular fine-grained instances of those activities with specific goals in mind, e.g., valuing playing music *in order to be famous* as opposed to valuing playing music *for its own sake*. Perhaps very many people engage in certain valuable activities with the goal in mind of being subjectively happy. This is a plausible motive, and not at all an unflattering one, for engaging in many valuable activities like hobbies or careers, for example, in medicine or in philosophical research. Faced with many possible options of valuable

activities, many people probably do make their decisions about how to spend their time at least partly with an eye to what would make them feel positively. But notice that, if positive subjective experiences are a person's goal (or one of their goals) in valuing and pursuing a particular valuable activity, then actually feeling those positive experiences may be one of the success conditions of that activity for that individual. And in that case, the person may not be able to live well by that activity without those positive experiences. In that particular case, but not in all cases generally, positive subjective experiences may thus be necessary for a person to live well.

The short version of these points is to say that some people—again, perhaps very many—value having positive subjective experiences, either as constitutive parts of coarse-grained valuable activities or as parts of the success conditions of fine-grained valuable activities. For those people, it is no surprise that positive subjective experiences may be integral to their living well. The point I am making here, again, is that not everyone values positive subjective experiences in that way. Very plausibly, some people, like our *Tortured Artists* and *Ambitious Altruists*, value other things much more than how they feel, whether that is approaching some aesthetic ideal or bringing about concrete change in the world for the better. There is no need for us to decide here which of these two kinds of figures is better off or more admirable, the one who values positive subjective experiences or the one who does not. For present purposes, all that matters is that people do in fact vary in the amount of stock they place in positive subjective experiences. And it is plausible that, due to this variance, people also differ in whether and to what degree positive subjective experiences are necessary for them to live well. The hybrid value conception of living well has the virtue of explaining why some people might require positive subjective experiences to live well and why other people do not.

8.6 Mental Health

Third, we should consider the implications of the present chapter for the role of mental health in living well. Mental health problems like depression are one significant kind of reason (not to say the only kind of reason) why people may fail to experience positive subjective experiences in response to their valuable, valued activities. Many real examples of *Tortured Artists* and *Ambitious Altruists* attest to this. By appealing to these as possible examples of living well, I am claiming that people can live well while suffering from such mental health conditions as depression. This strikes me as a strength of the view. Mental health exists on a spectrum (or more than one), just like physical health, and different people are located all across that spectrum. It would be bizarre if only a perfectly mentally healthy person (if there is such a thing) could live well, just as it would be bizarre if only a perfectly physically healthy person could. Nor should we draw an arbitrary line on a spectrum of health to divide those who can live well and those who cannot. It seems possible in many cases for someone experiencing a mental disorder like depression to be able to overcome it and live well, just as someone with a physical illness like cancer or a physical impairment like paraplegia can overcome it and live well. Mental and physical illnesses and impairments are kinds of circumstance that may befall anyone (just like, say, poverty), but these are not always insurmountable and so do not necessarily prevent living well.

I have tried to motivate this result as a strength of the view, but some might still consider it a weakness. Is it not *bad* to have a mental disorder like depression that keeps one from feeling positive subjective experiences? Do we not think we should try to improve people's mental health in order for them to be able to live well? This objection can be pushed further: is it not implausible that we have *no eudaimonistic reason* (i.e., reason to do with living well) to try to improve people's mental health (or physical health, for that matter)? If, on my view, people with mental health

disorders can live well, it seems like there is no reason to improve their mental health—they can live well enough without it.

To this I reply, again, that of course people will have higher well-being if they are able to feel positive subjective experiences and to be otherwise mentally healthy. So, we certainly have *welfarist reasons* (i.e., reasons to do with well-being) to improve people's mental health. Besides increasing well-being, improved health might also improve people's flourishing and make them live *more well*, assuming they are already living well *enough*. So, there may be eudaimonistic reasons to improve people's health (and other aspects of their lives) beyond a threshold needed for merely living well. My point is that the threshold for living well enough is not so high that people need to be *perfectly*, or even *especially*, mentally or physically healthy to achieve it.

Moreover, on my view, there will be eudaimonistic reasons *in some cases* to improve people's mental health to the point where they can successfully engage in valuable activities they value. Again, mental health is a spectrum: there is depression and then there is *depression*. I may experience a degree of depression that inhibits my ability to feel pleasure, but I can overcome this circumstance to value and engage in valuable activities. Others may experience depression to such a degree that they do not value anything or cannot get out of bed to engage in valuable activities. These people are experiencing a mental impairment so severe that it keeps them from living well, so we certainly have eudaimonistic reasons to try to improve their mental health. We have similar eudaimonistic reasons to try to improve severe physical impairments that prevent people from valuing and engaging in activities at all, e.g., reasons to try to cure the bed-ridden or to wake the comatose. But for those with relatively mild mental health disorders, who are able to function, to value, and to engage in valuable activities, we do indeed have less (perhaps even no) eudaimonistic reason to improve their mental health, just as we may not have eudaimonistic reason to try to

change every physical difference that is seen as sub-optimal from a functional or health perspective, such as deafness or obesity, which do not prevent people from valuing and engaging in valuable activities.[62]

I take it, then, that the more nuanced implications of the view I am defending take the sting out of the above objection. We probably always have *some* (e.g., welfarist) reason to help people improve their health, mental or otherwise. And we have specifically eudaimonistic reasons to do so to the extent that improving a person's (mental) health enables them to value and successfully engage in valuable activities. We may also have such eudaimonistic reasons to the extent that health contributes to someone's flourishing above the threshold for merely living well *enough*—but I take no firm stance on that, since I am at present only concerned with the threshold for living well enough. Rather than being objectionable, these implications are intuitively correct about when we do or do not have certain kinds of reasons to promote mental and other forms of health.

[62] Barnes (2014) emphasizes the distinction between bad differences and mere differences, and argues that many physical and mental disabilities are of the latter kind.

Chapter 9: Virtue

We have just argued that positive subjective experiences such as pleasure and satisfaction are unnecessary for living well. And we have thus rejected Wolf's (2010) proposed conception of the good life (i.e., meaningfulness as hybrid value plus subjective satisfaction, etc.), as well as hedonistic conceptions of flourishing, which have been historically influential. Next, we should consider the perhaps even more influential thesis that virtue is necessary for living well. This ancient thesis—probably endorsed by Socrates and Plato and certainly endorsed by Aristotle and the Stoics—is so influential that most contemporary theorists of flourishing (as distinct from well-being) take it for granted as the only available option, with the result that a eudaimonist approach to ethics is often, but mistakenly, identified with a certain form of virtue ethics. This identification is a mistake because there are alternative conceptions of *eudaimonia* including, at least, the hedonistic conception endorsed by the Epicureans as well as the present hybrid value conception. On these other conceptions, virtue may still be instrumentally useful for living well, being conducive either to positive subjective experiences or to hybrid value, but it is not strictly necessary for (let alone exhaustively constitutive of) living well.

9.1 The Limitations of Arguments against Eudaimonist Virtue Ethics

In Chapter 1, I argued that eudaimonism—which Aristotle (1894) explicitly formulated but which all ancient Greek philosophers accepted as a guiding principle of ethics—is most accurately construed as the thesis that *eudaimonia* (living well, flourishing) is the sole ultimate end for the sake of which actions and institutions are ethically (i.e., prudentially, morally, and politically) recommended, when they are. I also argued that canonical, Aristotelian versions of the virtue conception of living well are actually at odds with eudaimonism since they are ill-suited to serve

in the role of the ultimate justificatory end of ethics. I consider this an important and interesting conclusion, and it largely motivates the present positive project. But notice its limitations: Aristotelian virtue conceptions of living well are poor conceptions *for the purposes of* (or *when combined with*) ethical eudaimonism. This is consistent with the view here under consideration that virtue is at least necessary for living well for at least three reasons.

First, we could give up eudaimonism and accept an Aristotelian virtue conception of living well. Though this would divorce the concept of living well from its original, eudaimonist context, it could for all that still be the correct conception of the concept. Second, we could look for an "un-Aristotelian" virtue conception that diverges from the Aristotelian view that living well consists in intellectually virtuous or character-virtuous activity. I offered some tentative reasons for doubting any virtue conception, but I did not exhaustively refute all possible versions. Third, we could deny that any virtue conception is exhaustive of the concept of living well, yet still maintain that virtue is one necessary condition among others. We could, for example, accept all four of my proposed necessary conditions—activity, subjective valuing, objective value, and success—but think that virtue is necessary besides. Without going into specifics, I concede that such a view would plausibly overcome the challenges for Aristotelian virtue-ethical eudaimonism that I put forward in Chapter 1. In response to all of these possibilities, my aim in this chapter is to go beyond the earlier chapter and argue that no kind of virtue is strictly necessary for living well—though, again, many virtues might be awfully useful.

9.2 Having vs. Exercising Virtue

To that end, we should begin by noting the ways in which virtue might be thought to be necessary. We should acknowledge Aristotle's distinction between merely *having* a virtue (i.e.,

being virtuous or being in a virtuous state) and actively *exercising* that virtue. The latter obviously entails the former. Aristotle thought that living well consisted in virtuous *activity*, not in simply having virtue while potentially failing to exercise it. The alternative view, that the good life requires merely being in a virtuous state, is sometimes attributed to Socrates, Plato, and the Stoics (rightly or wrongly). Since I also accept an activity condition for living well, it should come as no surprise that I think Aristotle's version of the virtue conception is the better view. But for present purposes, we can cut our work in half by considering just versions of the view that merely having virtue is necessary for living well. If I can show that having virtue is unnecessary, then *a fortiori* exercising virtue is unnecessary.

9.3 Classifying the Virtues

Next, we should classify the different kinds of virtues which might be thought to be necessary. Aristotle held that two types of virtues could constitute living well, intellectual virtues like wisdom and character virtues like justice, courage, and moderation. Of course, we should also consider other kinds of virtues and other particular virtues which Aristotle did not recognize as necessary for living well. But Aristotle's theory suggests a useful distinction between two broad classes of virtues: practical virtues (including character virtues), which govern action and emotion, and intellectual virtues, which govern thought. I will consider each of these broad classes in turn, distinguishing additional sub-classes as needed as we go along.

9.4 Arguments for the Necessity of Virtue

In order to guide our discussion of particular kinds of virtues, it will be useful to ask why in the first place we might think that virtue, of one form or another, is necessary for living well.

We may observe that it is better for a person to be better, more virtuous, more skilled, or otherwise more excellent. Who would prefer to be worse, in any relevant respect, than to be better? To appeal once again to one of our heuristics for living well, we would of course wish for ourselves and for our loved ones to be virtuous in a given respect rather than the alternatives: being vicious, being incompetent, or lacking character altogether. But of course, this line of argument once again mistakes living well with having maximal well-being or being as well-off as one can be. Our question is not whether virtue makes a life better but whether virtue is necessary for a life to be good enough, sufficiently well-lived.

With this in mind, we might instead appeal to the other of our heuristics for living well. We might observe that we affirm and celebrate people who are virtuous or skilled or excellent. We celebrate the morally virtuous who work for good in the world, the intellectually virtuous who make great discoveries, and the technically virtuous who exhibit skill in the arts, athletics, and so on. Since our heuristic tells us that to live well is to live the kind of life that we are wont to affirm or celebrate, it stands to reason that the virtuous live well. A couple of points here, however. First, it could be that we celebrate different things for different reasons. The fact that we celebrate virtue does not establish that we celebrate it *in the same way* or *for the same reasons* that we celebrate a life that is well-lived. We celebrate a life well-lived as being good for the individual who lives it. Perhaps we celebrate virtue for its own sake, or for realizing some aesthetic ideal or some ideal of human perfection, and not for the sake of the virtuous individual. Furthermore, we could grant that cultivating and exhibiting virtue is a way to live well without thereby accepting that virtue is *necessary* for living well. To establish necessity, we would need to consider also whether or not there are lives we would affirm or celebrate (for the agent's own sake) that *lacked* virtue. In what

follows, I intend to motivate the view that, in fact, virtue is not necessary to warrant affirmation or celebration of an individual's life.

9.5 Moral Virtue

Let us begin with the practical virtues governing action and emotion. As we said, this class includes the traditional, Aristotelian character (or "ethical") virtues. In modern terms, we can divide character virtues into prudential (i.e., self-concerning) virtues like moderation and moral (i.e., other-concerning) virtues like justice. Some character virtues, like courage, exist somewhere between being fully prudential and fully moral, but I take it that ruling out the necessity of prudential virtues and moral virtues would cover such "mixed" character virtues as well. To the character virtues which Aristotle would recognize, we can add any more modern virtues we like, such as compassion, humility, or industriousness (Foot 1978; Adams 2006). What is common to all character virtues is being practical (i.e., governing action or emotion) and being necessarily person-concerning or person-benefiting (either oneself or others).[63]

So, consider first the virtues at the moral end of the spectrum of character virtues, virtues such as justice, beneficence, generosity, and honesty, which typically involve concern for others rather than for oneself.

First, observe that, if we step outside the mindset instilled in us by the millennia-long Aristotelian tradition, moral virtue is actually no obvious companion of living well. For in characterizing living well in the abstract, we were careful to distinguish the concept of a life well-lived for the sake of the individual living it from a life that is morally good or beneficial to others. This is not to beg the question against the relevance of morality but merely to note that a moral

[63] I say "person" here for simplicity, but nothing prevents, say, justice or compassion from also concerning and benefiting creatures that are not persons, such as non-human animals.

conception of the concept of living well is a *substantive* conception and by no means an automatic one. And indeed, why would we expect that morality, or moral virtue specifically, is an integral part of living well for one's own sake? After all, morality is, by its nature, *other*-concerning, *other*-benefiting. It is not obvious why concern for others would be beneficial *to oneself*. That is why philosophers from Plato onward have felt the need to put forward substantive explanations of why morality (or, at least, justice) *is* beneficial to the moral (or just) individual.[64] It is far from a given. Again, this is not to deny that moral virtue is beneficial to the individual who has it. And in fact, we do not need to deny this, since we can accept that any kind of virtue, moral virtue included, contributes to a person's well-being, as many contemporary theorists of well-being do accept. I mention this merely to prepare us for the possibility that moral virtue is not a necessary component of living well.

9.5.1 Not-Especially-Moral Exemplars

So prepared, we can establish that moral virtue is unnecessary as we have established the necessity or non-necessity of all the previously proposed conditions, namely, by considering examples. First, we can consider examples of people who lived well in ways that seemed to have nothing to do with morality, such as great artists, athletes, or researchers. Consider Mozart, Jackie Robinson, or Jane Goodall. I say nothing about their actual moral characters, but we can easily imagine not-especially-moral versions of these and comparable figures. Whatever the real facts are, suppose instead that they were not especially concerned for the good of others, that they did little to intentionally help other people, that they were not honest when it did not benefit them to

[64] It is also worth noting that Plato's attempt in the *Republic* (2003) to align justice with self-interest—the most famous such attempt—involves a surprising and revisionary definition of justice in the individual soul that seems to strip it of its more standard other-concerning elements: for Plato, the virtue of justice for an individual is the proper functioning of each of the parts of the individual's soul.

be so, and that they were overridingly concerned with their own lives, their own activities, and their own careers. It is no stretch to believe that Mozart would still have composed great music, that Jackie Robinson would still have been a great baseball player who broke the color barrier, and that Jane Goodall would still have conducted ground-breaking research with chimpanzees in a then-male-dominated field.

Would the not-especially-moral versions of these individuals fail to have lived well by engaging in these activities and achieving what they did? I cannot see why that would be the case. Their moral character seems quite irrelevant to the main reasons for which we actually celebrate these people. They would still be inspirational figures even if we discovered that they were not morally virtuous in either their professional or personal conduct. Of course, we would not then hold them up as moral exemplars, but it is not clear that we do actually hold them up as *moral* exemplars anyway. We would still celebrate them as exemplars of other kinds: aesthetic, athletic, and intellectual exemplars. We might also celebrate Robinson and Goodall, at least, as exemplars of courage and perseverance, which are more prudential than they are moral (as we will discuss below, in §9.6). We affirm and celebrate the lives of figures such as these for their (valued, valuable) activities, for what they accomplished in their respective domains, whether or not we also ascribe moral virtue to them.

9.5.2 Not-Especially-Virtuous Moral Exemplars

These kinds of examples alone make a strong case against the necessity of moral virtue for living well, but we can go on to consider cases of people whom we celebrate for their moral activities. Consider figures like Mahatma Gandhi or Martin Luther King, Jr., who upheld ideals of nonviolence while fighting for justice on behalf of others. It is easy to think they lived well by

their moral activities. Were they morally virtuous? Gandhi for his part thought it was a good idea to test his own asceticism by sleeping naked next to two teenage family members in his care, for which he was criticized even by his own supporters. And MLK is thought to have had numerous extramarital affairs. I mention these scandals not to condemn either man but merely to suggest that even our moral heroes may have had moral faults. Complete moral virtue is hard, and nobody is perfect. But even if Gandhi and MLK were actually morally virtuous, let us imagine that they were not. We can suppose this even while holding fixed all of their moral activities since, on all accounts, moral virtue is a matter of, at least, robust motivational dispositions. Merely performing the right, moral actions is not sufficient for virtue; virtue requires a robust disposition to perform such actions for the right reasons in the right circumstances.

On an Aristotelian account, moral virtue requires *desiring* to perform the correct, moral action for its own sake. This distinguishes *virtue* from cases of mere *self-control* (*enkrateia*) in which one acts correctly only by overcoming one's conflicting desires to do otherwise. And we can easily imagine versions of Gandhi and MLK who experienced conflicting desires (e.g., to pursue an easier, self-interested lifestyle or to use violence to obtain just results) and engaged in their moral activities only through self-control. Though their outward behavior would be exactly the same in that case, they would not possess Aristotelian moral virtue. On an alternative, and more Kantian, account, moral virtue consists in something like just this kind of self-control: one is robustly, rationally disposed to engage in correct, moral actions regardless of one's "pathological" (that is, "felt," appetitive, or non-rational) desires. We can also easily imagine that Gandhi and MLK engaged in their moral activities whole-heartedly, based on nothing but their "pathological" love of mankind, their desires to realize justice and help others. Again, though their outward behavior would be exactly the same in that case, they would not possess Kantian moral virtue. The

correct account of moral virtue is not at issue here. We could repeat this process for any plausible account of moral virtue, precisely because virtue requires something dispositional in the agent over and above their outward behavior. Whatever moral virtue is, we can imagine Gandhi and MLK, or any other outwardly moral exemplar, engaging in correct, moral activity without it.

The question, then, is whether our outwardly moral exemplars live well by their moral activity even when they lack the relevant kind of disposition that constitutes moral virtue. It seems to me that Gandhi and MLK would still have lived well by their moral activity regardless of the precise makeup of their inner dispositions and motivations. Their moral activity, though perhaps *less* valuable or *less* successful than it could have been, would still have been eminently valuable and successful. They could still have subjectively valued their moral activity, on at least some conceptions of valuing, including my own.[65] What does moral virtue add that is necessary for living well? A steady state of moral character would render their moral activity more modally robust, but we do not obviously only affirm or celebrate lives *robustly* well-lived. Michael Jordan lived well by playing basketball even though he might have had instead (not just in addition) a mediocre baseball career. On an Aristotelian account, moral virtue would entail that Gandhi's or MLK's desires were unified in favor of their moral activity. This might make them better off in virtue of being more self-satisfied or subjectively happier than their non-virtuous counterparts, but we have already found that such positive subjective experiences are not necessary for living well. Regardless of what moral virtue might add to their well-being, regardless of how it might make

[65] As a reminder, on my view, valuing consists in stably identifying with any of a number of pro attitudes or dispositions. These can include cognitive attitudes and behavioral dispositions. So, our outwardly moral exemplars could value their moral activity even if they lacked certain desires to perform such activity or felt conflicting desires. The only kind of conception of valuing that would imply that non-virtuous moral exemplars did not value moral activity would be one that required a valuer to have certain (in this case) virtue-constituting desires and/or no conflicting desires. But such a conception would raise the bar for valuing too high, since we think that ordinary people can value things, and value morality or moral ends specifically, even with conflicting desires or without virtue.

them live *more* well, I submit that we would still affirm and celebrate the lives of Gandhi and MLK for their own sakes even if their underlying motivations did not rise to the level of moral virtue. We would be pleased for anyone to live so well as they did by their successful, valued, and valuable activity alone. (By contrast, take away any of these four conditions and it is not clear that we would celebrate their lives *for their own sakes*, as opposed to celebrating them for what they did for the world and for others.)

I submit, then, that moral virtue is not necessary to live well by engaging in specifically moral activity or any other kind of valuable activity. But this should not be so surprising, since, as we said, there is no obvious, necessary conceptual connection between living well for one's own sake and being robustly disposed to benefit others. Furthermore, according to both the Aristotelian and Kantian virtue traditions, moral virtue is a demanding state of character that few people achieve.[66] But many ordinary people live well all the time, far more than can be considered truly morally virtuous. At least, this is the case when we consider full-blooded moral virtue, as I have been, as entailing a robust disposition to act morally in all (or at least very many) situations.

9.5.3 Moral Adequacy, Postponed

But perhaps there is a conception of moral virtue which is not so demanding. Perhaps when someone (other than, say, Aristotle) claims that moral virtue is necessary for living well, they mean

[66] For now, the reader will have to take this historical claim on faith, since proving it here would take us too far afield. In unpublished work, my co-author, Thomas Lambert, and I argue that philosophers as widely disparate as Aristotle and Nietzsche believed that stable character traits, virtues included, are difficult to acquire. We believe this philosophical hypothesis is (defeasibly) empirically supported by "situationist" psychology results that suggest that ordinary members of the general population lack robust, global character traits, as documented by Doris (2002). Doris believes this psychological evidence is damning for character/virtue ethics, but only because he mistakenly presumes that character/virtue ethicists consider character/virtue common. (Doris might be right about contemporary character/virtue ethicists but not, we argue, about these foundational figures.)

only that a certain kind of *moral decency* or *adequacy* is necessary. This is to claim that living well requires being an ordinarily (not exceptionally) moral person, one who, for instance, avoids serious wrongdoing and helps others a reasonable amount and especially when it really counts. We might identify this moral decency with a baseline level of respect for other persons: a moderately robust disposition to help and not to interfere with others, though perhaps not as robust, far-reaching, or well-motivated as full-blooded virtue.[67] Ordinary moral adequacy is not what the virtue-ethical tradition considers moral virtue, but I will not for that reason dismiss this sense of "virtue" or the claim that moral adequacy is what is necessary for living well. This claim, however, deserves its own separate treatment apart from the rest of the discussion about virtue, so I postpone it for the next chapter. For now, consider the present conclusion—that moral virtue is not necessary for living well—restricted to moral virtue in its full-blooded sense.

9.6 Prudential Virtue

Next let us consider the other kind of character virtue, namely prudential or self-benefiting virtue. The paradigm of prudential virtue is moderation, e.g., in exercise and the consumption of food and drink. This virtue is self-benefiting in that acting moderately keeps one, as much as possible, in a state fit for pursuing any of one's ends. This does not preclude moderation from

[67] I take the idea of a distinction between the robustly demanding goods of virtue and respect from Pettit (2015). However, Pettit considers respect to be the *more* robustly demanding of the two. We can only have this kind of respect in a properly democratic society that externally enforces and reinforces its citizens' internal, virtuous goodwill. What I am here calling "respect" involves only an internal disposition (with corresponding outward behavior), akin to virtue but less demanding. I do not think Pettit's conception is not deserving of the term "respect," but it seems hardly relevant to the present discussion. If respect in the stronger sense were necessary for living well, then no one could live well outside of a properly constituted polity. And since few, if any, actual polities in human history have come close to realizing Pettit's republican ideals (or any other plausible ideals of political justice), this would entail that almost no one in human history has lived well. But this is rather implausible. It seems that people can overcome far-from-ideal political circumstances and still flourish, as with other negative circumstances. We have already been examining plausible examples of lives well lived, some actual and historical, and we have so far felt no pressure to artificially situate these lives within a just, democratic framework.

being turned to specifically moral ends, e.g., moderately remaining sober at a party in order to safely drive inebriated partygoers home. But the range of ends advanced through moderate behavior goes beyond the moral. A moderate lifestyle enables one to pursue any of the wide range of non-moral activities from art to zoology.

All of the other prudential virtues, like thrift and industriousness, are similarly flexible in the ends and activities they allow one to pursue. This flexibility of purpose is why I earlier categorized courage and perseverance[68] as virtues more prudential than moral. They can certainly serve moral ends, as when one exercises courage in speaking out against injustice, but they also regularly serve non-moral ends, as when one exercises courage in skydiving. If we accept a thesis of the unity or inseparability of the character virtues such that the requirements of the various virtues never conflict, then morality will constrain, but not exhaust, the ends which prudential virtues like courage and moderation can serve. That is, even if we think, for example, that a soldier fighting for an unjust cause cannot thereby exhibit courage since their end conflicts with justice, we should still think that one can exhibit courage in a non-moral but morally permissible activity like skydiving. (There is more to life than moral ends!)

Prudential virtues are certainly quite *helpful* for successfully engaging in all manner of activities and are therefore *conducive* to living well. Our question, of course, is whether prudential virtues are *necessary* for living well. To see that they are not necessary, take any example of a person who lives well and suppose that they are imprudent while holding fixed their success. Any kind of valuable activity will do for this exercise but, to make it concrete, let us consider an *Imprudent Parent* who is lazy, cowardly, weak-willed, and prone to overspending and

[68] We might identify perseverance (or willpower) with the virtue or excellence of the will that Bradford (2015) posits in her discussion of the value of achievement (previously mentioned in our discussion of a perfectionist criterion for objective value in Chapter 5, §5.5.2).

overconsumption. In short, suppose they have a vice corresponding to each prudential virtue, whichever prudential virtues there are.[69] But suppose that the *Imprudent Parent* loves their children and the valuable activity of parenting and that, despite all of their own faults, they happen to be successful as a parent, however we (or they) choose to define success: the parent spends a lot of time with their adoring children, the children grow and thrive and cultivate virtue, they have many loving relationships and get into good schools and start successful careers, etc.

Since we cannot attribute the *Imprudent Parent's* success in parenting to any deliberate, prudentially virtuous activity on their own part, we seem forced to conclude that they got very lucky. But this luck does not diminish their living well through their parenting. Prudential virtue may have made successful parenting less accidental, more likely, and more modally robust, but even the most prudent parent's success is substantially subject to fortune, e.g., in the health and dispositions of their children. Luck plays a role in being able to engage in, let alone succeed in, any flourishing-constituting, valuable activity. Prudence might help us mitigate the role of fortune, but it never eliminates it. If eliminating the role of luck were required for living well, no one would live well. We should not think someone fails to live well just because they lucked into it. We should wish for everyone to be so lucky. At most, we might think that prudential virtue, like any other form of virtue, adds something to living well, i.e., makes someone live *more* well than they would have without. But there is no reason for thinking it is necessary for living well. Prudential virtue helps one realize one's ends, whatever they are, but we can always luck into realizing those same ends without prudential virtue, and we have to think that one can luck into living well.

[69] In fact, this is stronger than we need. We do not need to imagine that the imprudent person is prudentially *vicious* but only that they lack robust prudential character traits. The fact that we can make our case with a prudentially vicious person suggests that we do not even need prudential *adequacy* like we might think we need *moral* adequacy.

9.7 Technical Virtue

The fact that character virtues necessarily concern or benefit people distinguishes this class of virtues from another class of practical virtues or excellences, namely domain- or activity-specific technical skills such as skill at flute-playing or carpentry. A technical virtue or expertise allows one not just to perform an activity but to perform it reliably *well*. In considering whether practical virtue is necessary for living well, we should also consider such technical skills: we might think that living well by engaging in the valuable activity of flute-playing requires playing the flute *well* or *skillfully*.[70]

Why might technical virtue be necessary? On the hybrid value conception we have defended, living well consists in successfully engaging in any of a wide number of valuable activities. It is easy to think that living *well* requires performing these activities *well*. After all, it would seem paradoxical for one to live well by performing one's activities poorly. We might even consider performing activities well to be part of the success condition for those activities.

9.7.1 Performing Well Without Technical Virtue

On reflection, however, it is not really so implausible that one could live well without technical virtue. In the first place, one could luck into performing one's activities well without stable technical virtue or skill. We have already seen how an *Imprudent Parent* can luck into successful parenting. An *Inexpert Parent* who does not know what makes for good parenting might also luck into parenting well despite their lack of robust skill. This goes beyond merely a successful outcome, as when a child luckily thrives despite bad parenting. The *Inexpert Parent* might actually

[70] In the vicinity of domain-specific technical skills, we might also think there are role- or occupation-specific virtues associated with respecting the norms of an activity like parenting (e.g., not showing favoritism) or a discipline like research, law, journalism, or medicine (e.g., confidentiality). But I take these to overlap with character virtues and technical virtues, and so we need not consider them separately.

behave in such a way that counts as parenting well but, again, through guesswork or luck rather than through expertise or a stable disposition.

This possibility might be more likely for some activities than for others. While one can luckily hit upon good parenting behavior without expertise or skill, it is less clear that one can play all the right notes to a complicated piano sonata without having the relevant technical skill at piano-playing. Playing the piano well implies a skill, an ability to play it well, whether this ability is intuitive or consciously developed and exercised. To draw upon an Aristotelian distinction, the difference might be that a productive activity (a *poiesis* or "making") like parenting or, say, carpentry aims at some result or product beyond the activity itself whereas a performative activity (a *praxis* or "doing") like piano-playing is itself its own end or "product." It is possible to take the right steps accidentally or luckily towards a good product, e.g., building a level table without measuring, but perhaps not to perform well accidently. In any case, as long as there are *some* valuable activities that can be done well without technical virtue, these cases counter the claim that technical virtue is necessary for living well, even if living well requires carrying out one's activities well.

9.7.2 Living Well Without Performing Well

But furthermore, living well does *not* require that one perform one's activities well. It is surely enough that one succeeds in the valuable, fine-grained activities that one values. And there are valuable, fine-grained activities the success conditions of which do not include performing the activity *well*. Again, take piano-playing as an example. Playing the piano is a valuable, coarse-grained activity, one that could have a wide variety of success conditions. Specify one or more particular success conditions and it becomes a fine-grained activity. One kind of success condition

for playing the piano is to play it *well*—e.g., to play great compositions with accuracy and feeling or to improvise in an aesthetically pleasing way. Playing the piano *well* is a valuable, fine-grained activity that *does* require technical, piano-playing virtue. Only a sufficiently skilled pianist will succeed in this fine-grained activity.

But this is not the only success condition that makes for a valuable, fine-grained version of piano-playing activity. Another success condition might just be to enjoy playing, whatever the quality of one's performance. Someone with a tin ear and little talent might really enjoy playing what they can on the piano. The fact that they are bad at it is little to no reason for them not to value or pursue playing. Surely playing piano with the goal of enjoyment is as valuable as any other enjoyable pastime and as valuable for this *Talentless Pianist* as it would be for someone more talented. This point generalizes. We could cite all manner of arts and crafts that can serve as valuable hobbies. Moreover, it is quite plausibly valuable to engage in loving relationships like friendships even if one is not particularly skilled in creating or maintaining such relationships. Similarly, learning in school is valuable even if one is not a diligent and efficient note-taker, paper-writer, or test-taker.

The point of all these examples is that one can successfully engage in valuable activities without performing those activities *well*. In some contexts, or to some valuers, performing the activity well might be what counts as success. But there are plenty of contexts in which and plenty of valuers for whom performing the activity well is beside the point. What these agents value is just doing the activity at all, or enjoying it, or doing it to bond with others, etc. And if someone values just performing a valuable activity, well or not, why should we think that they cannot live well through the activity unless they perform it well?

To put the point another way, for any given valuable activity like piano-playing, there are many more relatively unskilled amateurs than there are virtuosos and experts. Yet we think activities like piano-playing are valuable and life-enriching for all of these people, not just the elite, virtuous few. We have eudaimonistic reasons to enable and encourage lots of people, not just the talented, to take up such activities, as hobbies if nothing else. If we think this, then we should also think that living well does not always require performing valuable activities especially well. And if we do not even need to perform valuable activities well in order to live well through them, then it is plausible that we do not need to be especially technically skilled or virtuous in our activities in order to live well. As with other virtues, technical virtue might make the performance of an activity *more* valuable or *more* successful, thus making one live *more* well above the threshold for simply living well. But we have hopefully shown that technical virtue, like character virtue, is not strictly necessary for meeting that threshold in the first place. And with that, unless there are other practical virtues besides moral, prudential, and technical virtues which we have not considered, then it appears that no practical virtue is strictly necessary for living well.

9.8 Intellectual Virtue

Having argued that practical virtues of character and skill are unnecessary for living well, let us now turn to the second class of virtues, the intellectual virtues, or virtues of the mind. Aristotle recognizes two main intellectual virtues, theoretical wisdom (*sophia*) and practical wisdom (*phronesis*). Practical wisdom is a little complicated. While Aristotle considers it a virtue of the rational intellect, and rightly so, it also governs action and is connected with the virtues of character: full practical wisdom and full character virtue are mutually entailing (*Nicomachean Ethics* VI.13). We can thus treat practical wisdom, in this sense, as roughly synonymous with complete virtue of character. So, having dealt with the character virtues, we have already dealt

with this kind of practical wisdom. But there might be other senses of practical wisdom, or practical rationality, independent of the character virtues, and we will return to those as potential intellectual virtues below, in §9.9. For now, let us focus instead on theoretical wisdom, or purely intellectual virtue, which governs thought alone and not action.

9.8.1 Philosophical Wisdom

For Aristotle, theoretical wisdom (*sophia*) combines intuition (*nous*) of first principles and deductive, scientific understanding (*episteme*) of what follows from those principles. He restricts this kind of wisdom to the understanding of eternal, necessary truths like those of metaphysics and mathematics. As a proposed necessary condition for living well, this is highly specific. When Aristotle and other Greek philosophers praised wisdom and the life of the mind as constituting the good life (*eudaimonia*), they had in mind philosophical wisdom specifically (albeit with a slightly more capacious understanding of "philosophy" that included some of what we today consider "science"). It is really no surprise that they would feel the need to justify their own nascent philosophical practices. We need only consider the charges brought against Socrates, formal and otherwise as Plato details in his *Apology* (1995), to see that philosophy in classical Greece needed defending.

But hopefully we can all agree today, safe in our armchairs as we are, that philosophy is not *the* good life to which all should aspire. It is *a* good life, not the only one. The unexamined life is worth living too. We can forgive our philosophical forebears their perhaps very necessary hyperbole, but the idea that only philosophers truly live well is a philosopher's fantasy. We have already argued that living well consists, at least, in successfully engaging in valuable, valued activities, and surely there are many valuable activities besides philosophy. Even philosophers

should think this, if they value doing anything else with their time like socializing, playing games or sports, or enjoying the arts. So, the idea that living well requires intellectual virtue in the form of philosophical wisdom is a non-starter. People can live well without doing philosophy and, therefore, without acquiring philosophical wisdom.

9.8.2 Particular Knowledge or Understanding

We need not here be so restrictive as the Greek philosophers. Intellectual virtue can consist in an excellent ability to grasp and understand complex or abstract ideas, necessary or contingent (perhaps even hypothetical or untrue ideas), including, e.g., political, historical, psychological, or biological facts and explanations. But it would be no great help to the proposal that intellectual virtue is necessary for living well to restrict intellectual virtue to knowledge or understanding of just such particular intellectual or academic domains in the humanities and the sciences. As with practicing philosophy, studying, researching, and teaching in various academic disciplines are perfectly good ways to live well, but they are not the only ways. We have so far been taking it as data that parents, athletes, and artists—just to name a few—can all live well by their activities too.

If intellectual virtue is necessary for living well, it must be a kind of intellectual virtue that is applicable across all domains of valuable activity. It would be too big a stretch to believe that living well consisted in successfully engaging in valuable, valued activities *and*, by the way, having working knowledge of organic chemistry, or of any other particular domain. As far as I can tell, there is no particular domain of knowledge or understanding that is universally applicable across all other domains, with possible exceptions such as logic or epistemology. But we do not think people need to know and understand logic or epistemology in order to live well. If anything, they would just have to *use* logic or employ epistemologically sound reasoning, consciously or

not. (An analogy: people do not have to know that the air they breathe is composed of 78% nitrogen, 21% oxygen, etc. in order to live well; they just have to breathe it.) I conclude, then, that any kind of intellectual virtue that might be necessary for living well is not a kind of knowledge or understanding about a particular domain (that is, one and the same domain for all people).

If we think that intellectual virtue is necessary for living well, and if we accept that the intellectual virtue in question must be universally relevant or applicable to all of the valuable activities which can constitute flourishing, then we have two options. Either, first, being intellectually virtuous in the relevant way consists of having knowledge or understanding about (i.e., in the domain of or at least in domains determined by) the particular valuable activities one pursues. Or, second, intellectual virtue is not a matter of *what* you think in particular but rather *how* you think in general.

9.8.3 Relevant Domain-Specific Knowledge or Understanding

Let us consider the former option first. On this proposal, there is not one domain of intellectual virtue required for living well but rather intellectual virtue in different domains is required in different cases. Each valuable activity that can constitute living well determines an intellectual domain and to live well by engaging in that activity also requires being intellectually virtuous with respect to that domain. So, for example, living well by engaging in historical research requires historical understanding while living well by playing music requires musical understanding. The requisite kind of knowledge, understanding, etc. constituting intellectual virtue might look very different across different domains. Historical understanding might consist of propositional knowledge (i.e., "knowledge *that*") of various historical facts and of their explanatory connections. On the other hand, the requisite musical understanding might not include

propositional knowledge of musical facts and their explanations—e.g., the mathematical or physical explanations of certain patterns of sounds—but instead technical knowledge (i.e., "know-*how*") of how to arrange and produce sounds in certain, aesthetically rich ways.[71] In any case, however, we can assume that domain-specific intellectual virtue is specifically an intellectual or cognitive achievement, one distinct from possessing practical, technical skill. We have already argued that domain-specific technical skill is not necessary for living well so, if intellectual virtue in a domain *were* the same thing as technical virtue or skill in that domain, we would already know that said intellectual virtue was not necessary.

The proposal that the requisite intellectual virtue is domain-specific avoids the obvious implausibility (not to mention the self-aggrandizement) involved in locating intellectual virtue within a particular, recherché domain like philosophy or another academic discipline. It very plausibly makes living well available to many people engaged in many kinds of activities. Nevertheless, reflection on examples again suggests that even domain-specific knowledge or understanding is not generally necessary for living well.

When discussing technical virtue, we noticed, for instance, that even an *Inexpert Parent* could successfully raise their children and could live well by doing so. Now we may observe that an *Ignorant Parent*, with no theoretical knowledge or understanding of child development, psychology, nutrition, etc., and with little to no practical knowledge about what to expect or what to do when raising a child, can do the same. Indeed, the common wisdom is that very few parents actually feel knowledgeable and prepared when they start parenting, but very many seem to figure it out as they go and do a good enough job at it. The *Ignorant Parent* who values parenting as much as anyone else does not seem unable to live well through their parenting.

[71] Ryle (1949) is the *locus classicus* for the knowledge-how/knowledge-that distinction.

Or consider a *Savant Pianist* who can play any piece that they have heard but who has no knowledge of musical theory, cannot read sheet music, and cannot even tell you how they are able to play so well. This player is technically virtuosic but has no domain-specific knowledge or understanding to speak of, whether theoretical or technical. Nevertheless, if they value playing the piano, it is very plausible that playing is a way for them to live well. Certainly, the *Savant Pianist* has a different sort of relationship to the piano than does a studied, intellectual pianist, but neither of the two approaches seems less valuable or less beneficial to the performer.

And again, performing the valuable activity *well* may be beside the point. Consider a *Casual Bowler* who knows nothing about strategy or technique but enjoys going bowling every week. They may be terrible at it, but as long as they value the activity, why can it not contribute to their living well? Whether because of the game itself or its common social aspects, bowling—even bowling badly—may be just as meaningful to the *Casual Bowler* as other people's work or hobbies are to them. The fact that the *Casual Bowler* does not know anything about the sport except the very basics needed to play does not seem to detract from that.

To be sure, some valuable activities require a great deal of knowledge and understanding simply to perform the activity at all and, especially, to perform the activity well. We have already mentioned research and teaching in academic fields, but we might just as well consider the chances of successfully building a modern house or a suspension bridge, for instance, without a great deal of know-how (and "knowledge that"). This is to say that intellectual virtue understood as domain-specific knowledge or understanding may be necessary for living well in some cases and for some activities. This is also not to deny that domain-specific knowledge can *enhance* the value or success of an activity, perhaps allowing one to live *more* well by an activity than one would otherwise. But

the point here is that, if the relevant kind of intellectual virtue is domain-specific knowledge or understanding, then intellectual virtue is still not strictly necessary for living well in all cases.

9.8.4 Intelligence

We come now to the second alternative, that the kind of intellectual virtue potentially relevant to living well is not a matter of *what* you think (i.e., the content of your beliefs, knowledge, or understanding) but instead a matter of *how* you think.

Along these lines, we might first think to identify virtue of thought with a kind of general intelligence or a set of strong cognitive abilities, e.g., to learn and apply new information, to grasp complex ideas, to recognize patterns, to solve problems, to plan, etc. In short, we might think of intellectual virtue, colloquially, as being "smart"—not necessarily in the sense of possessing much knowledge but in the sense of being highly capable of coming to possess it. I take no stance here on what exactly such a general intelligence might be. If there is a single phenomenon here, it is presumably the purview of psychologists and cognitive scientists to define and delineate it. Normative epistemologists may also play some role, if intelligence is or includes a robust disposition to reason correctly in accordance with certain epistemic norms, e.g., to apportion one's belief to one's evidence, to be coherent, and to avoid fallacious inferences.

Our question is whether or not intelligence, however defined, is necessary for living well. I doubt that it would be a popular position to maintain that it is necessary, particularly if, by "intelligence," we mean specifically some degree of intelligence above the statistical average for human beings. This proposal, like the Aristotelian identification of *eudaimonia* with philosophical contemplation, is likely to strike many as objectionably elitist. It reserves the good life for a relative few at the upper end of the inevitable bell curve of human intelligence. Any threshold that excludes

the majority of people on the basis of intelligence is likely to seem arbitrary, especially after we have established other necessary conditions for living well that bear no obvious connection to above-average intelligence. It would weaken the charge of elitism to consider the necessary degree of intelligence to be lower. If, say, the threshold was set at the lower end of average, this might then admit the vast majority of people to the class of those who are capable of living well.

However, a necessary condition of even statistically average human intelligence is implausible for reasons independent of any objectionable form of elitism. We can see this by once again considering examples. Consider the fictional case of Forrest Gump as portrayed in the movie of the same name (Zemeckis 1994). Gump has an IQ of 75, well below average, but this does not prevent him from, among other things, becoming an international ping-pong star, building a successful shrimping company with his friend, and lovingly raising his son, Forrest, Jr. Any of these activities seems like it could ordinarily constitute someone's living well (and none is obviously outside the realm of possibility for someone with the level of intelligence ascribed to Gump). Does Gump fail to live well through these activities just because he happens to be relatively unintelligent? Are his activities no longer worth celebrating or affirming for his sake? I see no reason why this should be so. Gump is manifestly intelligent enough to successfully pursue these (presumably) valuable activities and to value them. (In his own words, Gump tells us, "I'm not a smart man, but I know what love is.") How does any comparison of his intelligence with that of other people detract from the quality of his life?

We could make a similar case by considering again the *Savant Pianist*. Earlier, we specified that this pianist lacked domain-specific knowledge relevant to piano-playing. Now we can further stipulate that, like many of those actually considered savants, our pianist has an intellectual disability (which entails an IQ below 70). Does that preclude their living well by playing the piano?

Not for any discernible reason. Artistic performance is a paradigmatic way of living well. The *Savant Pianist* is surely capable of valuing piano-playing. They may even play better and more successfully than most pianists of greater intelligence, which certainly does not make their playing less valuable or less good for them. It is really quite implausible that the *Savant Pianist*, simply because of their degree of general intelligence, cannot live well by performing the same activity in otherwise similar circumstances as other people who do thereby live well.

Only two things can really be said of intelligence when it comes to living well. First, higher degrees of intelligence *may* be instrumentally useful in successfully engaging in certain valuable activities and *may* increase the value of certain activities, but they are not thereby *necessary* for living well. Judging by our examples, people can manifestly live well without even statistically average levels of human intelligence. Second, some minimal threshold of intelligence is necessary as a *precondition*, but not a *constituent*, of living well. I mean that some level of intelligence is obviously necessary for a creature to value and pursue valuable activities at all, and thus to have the capacity to live well in the human sense that is under discussion. Most non-human animals are probably not so intelligent, though some may be and almost all adult humans are. But though this minimal level of intelligence is necessary for living well, it is trivially so. It is necessary for the previously established component parts of living well, just as breathing and eating are (practically, not conceptually) necessary for engaging in activities at all. These are preconditions which must be met if a creature is even to be capable of living well in the first place. But meeting these preconditions does not make it the case that a person lives well. Preconditions like minimal intelligence do not constitute living well. In any case, this level of intelligence cannot possibly be what we mean by "intellectual virtue." It is but the bare capacity of intellect that we attribute to typical human beings, not the excellent state or instantiation of said capacity.

9.8.5 Epistemic Virtue

If intellectual virtue is a matter of how you think but not of "descriptive" intelligence as ordinarily conceived and as defined by empirical psychologists, it might instead consist in epistemic virtue as defined by normative epistemologists. In the first instance, being epistemically virtuous might involve being robustly disposed to adhere to certain epistemic norms of belief formation, e.g., to avoid inconsistency and to apportion one's belief to one's evidence. While normative epistemologists disagree about which such norms are the best or correct ones to follow, these kinds of norms are generally taken to be truth-conducive: adhering to these norms in one's belief formation is supposed to give one a better chance of forming only true beliefs.

Robust adherence to truth-conducive norms of belief could be one kind of epistemic virtue, but virtue epistemologists have recently been discussing other kinds. These include epistemic virtues such as curiosity, intellectual honesty, intellectual courage, epistemic humility, and epistemic justice (Roberts and Wood 2007; Fricker 2007). These more recently theorized intellectual virtues are not necessarily conducive to forming true beliefs or successfully navigating the practical world, in contrast both to the aforementioned epistemic norms and to the cognitive abilities and dispositions generally associated with intelligence. These newer virtues are more like moral virtues in that they are supposed to be good traits to possess even if they happen not to instrumentally benefit their possessor (i.e., benefit them in a way that goes beyond any intrinsic benefit that consists simply in possessing the trait itself). This should be no surprise considering that most of these virtues are explicitly modeled on familiar virtues of character.

Our question, as always, is whether either truth-conducive or character-like epistemic virtues are necessary for living well. That is, does living well require being disposed, e.g., to avoid inconsistency, to apportion one's belief to one's evidence, to seek new information, to form one's

beliefs honestly, to hold one's beliefs no matter how unpopular, to be aware of one's epistemic limitations, or to afford different people's testimony just evidential weight?

To see that these epistemic virtues are also unnecessary, we can consider a narrow-minded version of anyone who, we think, otherwise lives well, e.g., a *Narrow-Minded* (but loving and successful) *Parent*. Let this parent be correspondingly vicious in every way there is of being epistemically virtuous. They outsource much of their reasoning to epistemically unreliable authority figures, basing very many of their beliefs on the testimony of, say, fundamentalist religious officials and biased political pundits. They uncourageously accept opinions popular in their own circles, yet they dishonestly claim that they came by their beliefs all on their own. They stubbornly cling to their often-incoherent beliefs despite competing evidence. They are not curious to discover new information and they do not acknowledge their own limitations or ignorance. And they explicitly, but unjustly, afford less evidential weight in their reasoning to the testimony of members of disadvantaged groups, such as women and people of color. This *Narrow-Minded Parent* is, of course, a caricature. But somewhat disconcertingly, they are not an altogether implausible character. This description might very well remind someone of a certain family member they would rather avoid during a holiday gathering.

For all their epistemic vices, however, the *Narrow-Minded Parent* might be perfectly successful in the valuable activity of parenting. On the whole, their beliefs are approximately true enough (or irrelevant enough) that they can successfully navigate the world—they are not insane. They love parenting, and they love and engage positively with their children. And their children could grow up healthy, happy, and thriving. Lest we think that this individual is somehow failing as a parent and harming their children by imparting their own epistemic vices, we can stipulate that the parent keeps their problematic beliefs and reasoning entirely to themselves. Just as a parent

of vicious character can luck into raising prudent and morally upstanding children, so the *Narrow-Minded Parent's* children can be as epistemically virtuous as you like. We think other, less narrow-minded parents who do as well by their children can live well through the activity of parenting. So why would the *Narrow-Minded Parent* not also live well? Their epistemic vices need not negatively affect their parenting at all, and successful, engaged parenting is a paradigmatic way of flourishing. We could fault their beliefs and reasoning all day, but we would nevertheless affirm and celebrate their lifestyle, their practical decisions, and their behavior. We should all be so lucky as to live as they do, despite their mistaken beliefs and reasoning.

9.8.6 Summary: Purely Intellectual Virtue is Unnecessary

So then, it appears that neither truth-conducive nor character-like epistemic virtues are necessary for living well. We have already seen that general intelligence is not necessary either. And I cannot think of another candidate kind of virtue of how one thinks in general. Without any other such candidate virtues, we can conclude that living well does not require having a virtue of how one thinks in general. But we also already concluded that living well does not generally require domain-specific knowledge or understanding, either in domains specifically relevant to one's valued activities or in any particular domain like philosophy or another academic discipline.

These are all candidates for the kind of purely intellectual virtue—virtue governing thought alone and not action also—that might be considered necessary for flourishing. Perhaps there are other versions of purely intellectual virtues that we have not considered, but I take it that we have now considered a fairly representative sample. Our examples strongly suggest that people live well by successfully engaging in valuable, valued activities even when they are ignorant, unintelligent, narrow-minded, etc. Plausibly, we could follow this pattern and craft examples to show that any

other kind of purely intellectual virtue is similarly unnecessary for living well, except insofar as those intellectual dispositions we might call "virtues" are necessary background conditions for the other four, established necessary conditions for flourishing. So, it seems fair to conclude that purely intellectual virtues, just like the purely practical virtues, are not additional necessary conditions.

9.9 Rational Virtue

9.9.1 Practical Wisdom and Rationality

Now let us return to the "impure" intellectual virtue of practical wisdom which we set aside before. This virtue is not purely intellectual in that, while it involves thought and intellect, it primarily governs action, as did the practical virtues of character and technical skill. We already observed that, if practical wisdom is coextensive with complete virtue of character, as Aristotle believed, then we ruled out the necessity of practical wisdom when we ruled out the necessity of character virtue. However, there is a weaker sense of practical wisdom that comes apart from character virtue. Aristotle (1894) calls this "cleverness" (*deinotēs*) and it roughly corresponds to excellent means-end reasoning. Note that this excellence, in and of itself, can be used for good or bad, beneficial or harmful purposes. That is why you have to add character virtue to ensure that it is practical wisdom in the full sense, aimed at the right ends (*NE* VI.12 1144a20-36). On the other hand, a person of comparatively good character without excellent means-end reasoning would be well-intentioned but ineffective at actually realizing good ends.

In more modern terms, we might identify excellent means-end reasoning with the virtue of practical rationality, and this suggests another class of virtue worth considering, namely *rational* virtue. On the influential Aristotelian model, theoretical wisdom and practical wisdom (and its

correlate, character virtue) are but kinds of rational virtue—of thinking, desiring, and acting *on the basis of reason* (*kata logon*)—each corresponding to a different part or aspect of the essentially rational human psyche. So, there is a long tradition that says that, in the most general terms, the kind of virtue necessary for living well is the virtue, excellence, or perfection of *rationality*.[72] We must also consider this as a possible interpretation or version of the claim that virtue is necessary for living well: specifically, that rational virtue, or rationality, is necessary for living well. But there are more ways to construe rationality than simply the combination of intellectual and character virtue, so, in spite of the influential Aristotelian interpretation, we should consider this proposal on its own terms as well.

9.9.2 Rational Capacity

With this goal in mind, let us begin by disambiguating various senses of rationality. There is a sense in which every typical, mature human is rational, the sense of having a capacity for rational thought. This is the sense employed in the Aristotelian claim that humans are essentially rational animals. (It cannot be the claim that humans are essentially rationally excellent or virtuous, or we would have no need for virtue-theoretic terms to distinguish people in the first place!)

I take it, however, that this is not the sense of rationality involved in the hypothesis that rational virtue is necessary for living well. The mere capacity for rational thought may very well be a necessary background condition for living a good human life, as opposed to, say, a good life for a tree. But this would be a fairly trivial necessary condition for specifically human flourishing and not an informative condition the fulfillment of which partly constitutes living well. The mere rational capacity does not help us distinguish flourishing human agents from non-flourishing ones.

[72] For a modern example of this tradition, see, e.g., Hurka (1993).

Moreover, the hybrid value theory can already account for this background condition: a rational capacity is plausibly necessary both to count as valuing in the way that humans do (as opposed to, say, merely desiring) and to count as engaging in (valuable) activities in the way that humans do (as opposed to, say, merely moving in response to physical stimuli). To say that a rational capacity is necessary for living well as humans do is probably true, but it is not an interesting intervention at this point in the dialectic.

9.9.3 Rational Adequacy

There is a slightly more restrictive sense of "rational" that entails something like exercising one's capacity for thought normally or adequately well. Most people are presumably rational in this sense for most of their lives, with exceptions for cases where a person's ability to reason adequately is impaired or masked, for instance by intoxication, grief, wishful thinking, or mental illness. This only slightly restrictive sense of rationality, that of *rational adequacy*, could be what someone has in mind as a virtue of rationality that might be necessary for living well.

This proposed necessary condition would only be slightly more interesting and informative than that of mere rational capacity. If rational adequacy counts as rational virtue, then most people are rationally virtuous most of the time. This condition would bar from living well only those people who have and exercise their rational capacity but do so notably less well than most other people. We have already seen examples, however, that suggest that below-average reasoners can live well. Forrest Gump and the *Savant Pianist*, for example, seem capable of living well despite their below-average intelligence, which is easily interpreted as entailing below-average practical and epistemic reasoning. We could further stipulate that the above *Imprudent Parent* is a subpar practical reasoner who, e.g., regularly mistakes the means to their own ends. And we could

stipulate that the above *Narrow-Minded Parent* is a subpar epistemic reasoner who, e.g., regularly falls prey to obvious fallacies. We judged before that such prudential and epistemic vices do not necessarily preclude living well by valuing and successfully engaging in a valuable activity like parenting. But these extreme vices are indicative of robust failures of practical and epistemic reasoning.

It would seem then that typical rational adequacy is also not strictly necessary for living well. Rational adequacy undoubtedly makes one more likely to succeed in one's activities and, thus, more likely to live well. But it nevertheless remains possible for people to get lucky and live well anyway despite rational inadequacy. If there is some level of extreme rational inadequacy below which a person cannot live well, then the hybrid value conception of living well as already formulated can presumably account for this. Such a person would have to be so rationally inadequate as to be unable to successfully function as a valuing agent. We might well wonder whether such a person had the requisite rational capacity to begin with. But even if exercising reason merely sufficiently to function as a valuing agent is a step above having the mere capacity for reasoning, both make for comparatively trivial background conditions for living well rather than substantive necessary conditions which must be added to the hybrid value theory.

9.9.4 Rational Virtue: Internalist and Externalist

Rational adequacy does not seem necessary for living well. But moreover, it is presumably not what most theorists of virtue mean by "rational virtue" anyway. For Aristotle and many other philosophers, being in a virtuous state is an exceptional achievement that relatively few people accomplish. A virtue of rationality, in this full-blooded sense, would be a robust ability to reason correctly or sufficiently closely to correctly. In this sense, rationality exists as a spectrum ranging

between the bare capacity to reason and completely correct reasoning, and rational virtue is reserved for the higher end of this spectrum, with most people sitting somewhere between the bare capacity and virtue. In that case, what exactly is rational virtue?

We have already seen two kinds of answers. An example of the first kind is that full practical rationality consists merely in correct means-end reasoning, for good or for bad. A corresponding account of theoretical or epistemic rationality might hold that one is rational to the degree that one believes on the basis of their evidence (or to the degree that they are coherent). These are *internalist* (or procedural) conceptions of rationality and rational virtue in that what is rational for an agent to think or do is determined by the ends and evidence the agent possesses (or by the totality of their beliefs). By contrast, the view that rational virtue consists in independently defined character virtue and intellectual virtue is *externalist* (or contentful) in that it imposes a standard for rationality that is external to the agent's actual ends and evidence: the agent rationally ought to reason through to and act for the right ends, not just the ends they have, and ought to believe according to all the evidence there is available to them, not just the evidence they possess. Another, similar externalist account would hold that to be fully rational is to be correctly responsive to all the reasons there are, not just to the reasons one possesses or recognizes as such. There may be other conceptions of rational virtue besides, but any conception will presumably fall within one of these two camps, internalist or externalist.

Regardless of how we conceive of full-blooded rational virtue, however, we have already done all the work necessary to show that rational virtue is not required for living well. This is because full-blooded rational virtue is more demanding than, and thus entails, rational adequacy. If living well required possessing rational virtue, then *a fortiori* it would also require being at least typically rationally adequate. And we have already argued that mere rational adequacy is not

strictly necessary for living well. Even subpar reasoners who exhibit practical and epistemic vices, like extreme imprudence and narrow-mindedness, can luck into living lives worth affirming and celebrating. Rational adequacy and, indeed, rational virtue may make lives better and enhance flourishing. They may lead to greater value and greater success. But reliably adequate reasoning is not necessary to make a person's life, including their activities and the outcomes of those activities, good enough for that person's own sake.

It is even clearer that the merely rationally adequate can live well. For most of us are clearly not rationally virtuous in the full-blooded sense. We make rational mistakes all the time that exclude us from virtue and place us within the range of rational adequacy. But many people actually do live well, from famous moral, artistic, and athletic exemplars to comparatively mundane hobbyists and loving family members. There are too many people who live well to think that they are all rationally exceptional. To be sure, we do celebrate the lives of some rationally virtuous people like, say, Socrates or Einstein. But just as surely, we celebrate the lives of, for example, humble community musicians and sweet grandmothers. And when we contemplate why we celebrate lives of the latter kind, their ability to reason correctly is neither here nor there. Let the musician or grandmother be an utterly unremarkable reasoner. They can still make music or care for their loved ones, and they can still live well by doing so.

And so, full-blooded rational virtue is clearly not necessary for living well. Nor is "rational virtue" in the weaker sense of typical rational adequacy. This should not be so surprising, in light of what we have already established in previous sections. For the virtue-theoretic tradition has long associated rational virtue with the practical and intellectual virtues which we have already dismissed as unnecessary. On the more demanding externalist conceptions, complete rational virtue just is, or is at least coextensive with, intellectual virtue and the practical virtues of character.

They all require acting and thinking reliably correctly. Even on rather less demanding internalist conceptions, practically rational virtue is fairly similar to at least prudential virtue in requiring reliably and competently realizing one's given ends, and theoretically rational virtue is similar to at least some epistemic virtues in requiring certain patterns of belief-formation. But we have already argued that moral, prudential, and intellectual or epistemic virtues are unnecessary for living well. Insofar as rational virtue is or approximates these other kinds of virtues, it would seem just as unnecessary.

Chapter 10: Moral Adequacy

Having rejected all manner of full-blooded virtue as a necessary condition, it is now time to pick up the thread about "moral virtue" in the weak sense of moral adequacy or decency, or a baseline level of respect for other persons. It is somewhat tempting to think moral adequacy is a necessary condition for living well. When we consider the lives of truly wicked people, the Hitlers and Charles Mansons of the world, we are loath to describe them as well-lived. And this even when we bear closely in mind that we are considering only how a life goes for the one living it and not its impact on others. Even if "living well" is not an epithet of specifically moral praise, it is still some kind of honorific and one we strongly wish to withhold from the worst people in the world, no matter how successful they might have been in the activities they valued. We would not affirm or celebrate their lives in any way. But the hybrid value conception of living well already has the tools to explain why genocidal dictators, murderous cult leaders, and serial killers do not live well: the activities they pursue are positively disvaluable.

10.1 Morally Indecent Achievers of Value

To truly test whether moral adequacy is a further necessary condition of living well, one not already captured by the four necessary conditions of the hybrid value theory, we must consider cases of valuable activities pursued immorally or at least by otherwise morally inadequate characters. Instead of a genocidal dictator like Hitler, we would do better to consider a more morally complicated figure like Napoleon. A warmonger and nepotist, surely, but Napoleon also established order out of revolutionary tyranny, resisted feudal autocrats, created infrastructure, and introduced lasting legal, educational, and religious reforms. Political rule and even the conduct of war can be valuable activities; we are generally happy to celebrate other figures, like George

Washington and Winston Churchill, for such.[73] Yet Napoleon's obvious zeal for conquest casts doubt on his being even ordinarily morally decent, despite some genuinely valuable achievements.

Or we could consider the painter, Paul Gauguin, a popular character of philosophical discussion since Williams's and Nagel's "Moral Luck" (1976). Williams draws particular attention to Gauguin's presumably immoral decision to abandon his wife and children in France in order to paint in Tahiti. This understates the case against Gauguin's moral decency. In Tahiti, he took child brides and arguably exploited his indigenous subjects for his own gain all the while considering them, in his own word, "savages." Yet the creation of art is a paradigmatically valuable activity and those who decide such things apparently consider Gauguin to have been successful in painting valuable works.[74]

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[73] It is worth noting, however, that even these comparatively "safe" figures are not without their own moral baggage, particularly concerning their acceptance of racial and other social hierarchies. Did Washington fail to be even morally adequate by owning slaves or Churchill by staunchly supporting British imperialism? And if so, did this cause them not to live well by their more valuable and successful activities?

[74] For the purposes of the present discussion, I will assume that Gauguin's works are aesthetically valuable and, thus, that Gauguin succeeded in his artistic pursuits, though there are some potential sticking points here. First, if Gauguin did immorally exploit his Tahitian subjects while painting them, this may undermine the aesthetic value of those particular paintings. The (controversial) principle of criticism here is that works of art that are themselves the products of morally problematic behavior cannot have artistic value. If we adopt this principle, then Gauguin's paintings of Tahitians may be the fine art equivalent of snuff films: they are records, in oil on canvas, of Gauguin's own misdeeds. In that case, we could perhaps still consider Gauguin successful in light of his other, less exploitative work. Or we could consider instead other morally problematic artists whose moral failings are less part-and-parcel to their creative work. Pablo Picasso, for example, reportedly abused the women in his life, which might tarnish our aesthetic appreciation of his paintings of those (and maybe other) women but need not directly affect our judgments about such paintings as *The Old Guitarist* (1903-1904) or *Guernica* (1937).

That said, some art critics may be tempted by a stronger and even more controversial principle, namely that we should not aesthetically value or esteem any artistic works by deeply immoral and problematic artists. According to this line of thought, Gauguin's and Picasso's moral reprehensibility taints *all* of their work and not just those individual works that are the direct products of their immoral behavior. Such thinking underlies some of the current rhetoric in favor of "canceling" certain modern filmmakers, comedians, etc. along with their existing work. If we accept this particularly strong principle, then no artist can serve as an example to consider for the purposes of the present inquiry. No morally indecent artist would live well through their artistic activity, but the hybrid value theory would already have the tools to explain this: if immorality undermines the aesthetic value of art, then immoral artists do not succeed in their otherwise potentially valuable artistic attempts to create works of aesthetic value. In that case, we would have to restrict the present discussion about moral adequacy to non-artists (and hope that similarly strong principles do not obtain to undermine the success of immoral agents in other valuable domains). I wish to

10.2 Reasons to Think the Morally Indecent Can Live Well

Our question is whether morally indecent achievers of value like Napoleon and Gauguin fail to live well as the direct result of their moral indecency. To be frank, I am not quite resolved one way or the other. I have some sympathies for the view that, as much as we might like it to be otherwise, even the wicked can prosper and live well. It lends credence to this view to remember that living well is a matter of how things go for the individual agent and not of their moral contributions. Why would bad people be unable to have things go well for them? And if things can, in general, go well for bad people, why could they not also specifically live well? Our lived experience does suggest that the wicked often do prosper, for which we typically resent them. The possibility of benefit seems necessary to explain the motivation to act immorally in the first place. If crime did not pay, why would clear-eyed people commit crimes? The view that, despite appearances, things cannot go well for bad people smacks of wishful thinking: we would like bad people not to benefit from their immorality, so we concoct a normative theory that says they do not. Those of us who suppose ourselves to be morally decent can then rest comfortable in the thought that immoral people are simply blind to the normative facts and making mistakes about their own well-being and flourishing. The wicked, I think, would accept this charge with a laugh and a shrug as they go on enjoying their ill-gotten gains.

The view that the morally indecent can indeed live well, on the other hand, permits more nuanced responses to people and to the lives they lead. It is clear to me that Napoleon and Gauguin, for example, led lives that were in large part very good for them (in Napoleon's case, at least until he was defeated and exiled). Important parts of their lives are worthy of our envy and affirmation.

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remain officially neutral on each of these two candidate principles of art criticism. However, I ignore these principles in the main text for the practical purpose of resolving the present discussion about whether immorality has a direct effect on living well that is not mediated through one of our previously established necessary conditions.

They both greatly succeeded in some genuinely valuable pursuits that they obviously valued, whatever moral failures they had and disvaluable activities they also pursued. We should be so lucky for anyone we care about to accomplish as much as did Napoleon in statecraft or Gauguin in art. But while we acknowledge their greatness in certain respects, we can criticize these figures in other respects. We can think they lived well through some of their activities but not *as well* as they might have, had they not also acted morally indecently. Having taken the reins of state, Napoleon could have employed his genius solely to peacefully revitalize France and set a standard of enlightened modernization for all of Europe to follow. Gauguin could have honored his familial obligations and still made great paintings of other subjects, or he could have painted his Tahitian subjects more respectfully, without raping and exploiting them. Had either figure done so, he would have achieved even greater, more valuable success in more areas of his life, and we would admire him and affirm his life all the more. As things stand, we can regret the disvaluable activities these figures engaged in and regret on their behalf that their lives, though good for them, were not as good as they might have been.

In addition to regret, when we accept that the wicked can prosper and live well, we have better grounds for our anger towards them and for our censure of them. We can always blame people for their moral wrongdoings. But if, as a conceptual matter, the morally indecent cannot flourish because of their wrongdoings, then our anger should stop there. The wicked are already receiving their just deserts by being denied the chance to live well. Their ill-gotten "gains" are not really gains for them at all. Once we have finished criticizing their moral wrongdoing, they are now as pitiable as anyone else who, through their own choices, fails to flourish. If instead we think that some morally indecent people do live well, then we can justly resent them for it. They are "getting away with it" and being rewarded for, or in spite of, their immorality. These are ongoing

grounds for righteous anger and censure as long as the morally indecent continue to thrive. They are grounds for us, as observers to an unjust situation, to step in and actively feel or do something about it. I, for one, see the theoretical appeal of making available these additional grounds for action and emotion over leaving the "punishment" of moral wrongdoers up to our normative theory, lest "good men should look on and do nothing."

10.3 If the Morally Indecent Cannot Live Well…

For all that, I am not completely convinced. As I indicated earlier, I also have some sympathy for the opposing view that the morally indecent cannot live well. Napoleon was not the monster Hitler was, but neither is he a clear-cut example of someone who lived well. When we contemplate his whole life for the purposes of making a summary judgment, our feelings are mixed at best. And mixed feelings do not lend themselves to celebration, which is one of our heuristic devices for recognizing flourishing. We can affirm some of Napoleon's valuable successes, but it is difficult to celebrate, full-stop, the life of a man who has struck many, including his contemporaries, as a villain of history. Even the most charitable historical commentators surely do not think he merits unqualified admiration, let alone emulation. Similar remarks would likely apply to Gauguin and to any other morally indecent achievers we might consider. And if we cannot confidently assert that any particular morally indecent people live well, this suggests that moral indecency does undermine flourishing. I do not wish to commit to this view, but I do consider it very much a live option. And since this view, unlike its negation, could affect the hybrid value theory, we should further explore its implications.

So, what does it mean for the hybrid value conception of living well if we deny that morally indecent people can live well? The main question is whether this represents an additional constraint

on living well or whether the four established necessary conditions of the hybrid value theory can entirely account for this datum. Three of the established conditions—activity, subjective valuing, and success—are not likely to be of much help here. As the cases of Napoleon and Gauguin attest, success in subjectively valued activities is compatible with moral indecency. But the objective value condition might be able to explain why the morally indecent cannot live well.

10.4 The Circumstantial Value of Activities

Up until now, we have largely focused on broad types of activities such as governing and creating art. Unlike genocide and murderous crime sprees, these activities are not essentially harmful and therefore disvaluable. In many cases, good governance and artistic creation are positively valuable. But a type of activity that is generally valuable can become disvaluable when pursued in certain contexts. For example, as a type of activity, golfing seems as generally valuable as any other codified sport. However, maintaining and using golf courses in a region prone to drought, such as Southern California, may come at too high a price to the environment and its inhabitants. Golfing in St Andrews, Scotland, may be fine and valuable, but golfing in Los Angeles may be harmful and therefore disvaluable. (As global environmental conditions worsen, a resource-intensive sport like golfing may eventually become immoral and disvaluable everywhere.) Moreover, even when a type of activity is generally valuable in a given context, a particular instance of the activity may be disvaluable when pursued immorally or at a morally indecent cost. If Arnold Palmer played through a hole at St Andrews while a child was noticeably drowning in the nearby water hazard, that particular round of golf would come at a morally indecent cost and therefore plausibly be disvaluable. Golfing, like many activities, is not

essentially disvaluable, but some real-world circumstances could make it disvaluable in certain contexts.

Acknowledging the circumstantial value of activities can help the hybrid value theory explain why morally indecent achievers like Napoleon and Gauguin fail to live well. Napoleon's enlightened rule would perhaps have been valuable had he not pursued it with lust for power and at the cost of millions of human lives. As it happened, the moral cost was far too high and so his political rule was disvaluable. Gauguin's artistic pursuits, though aesthetically successful, were similarly disvaluable because he exploited and harmed his subjects, and perhaps also because the moral cost of abandoning his family in France was too high. Pursued in other contexts and in more moral ways, their successes would have been valuable and would have constituted their flourishing. In actuality, these morally indecent men did not live well.

This is the move to defend the sufficiency of the four established conditions of the hybrid value conception of living well: to subsume a candidate moral adequacy requirement under the objective value condition. In order for a type or token activity to count as objectively valuable, it must be pursued morally decently and not at a morally indecent cost. This is not an *ad hoc* maneuver. We already proposed, when we introduced the objective value condition in Chapter 5, that harm or immorality renders an activity disvaluable. This seemed necessary to explain why activities like Bonnie's and Clyde's crime spree were disvaluable. The present move is merely an explication of this principle. It is not only *essentially* harmful or immoral activities that are disvaluable; otherwise valuable activities that are *circumstantially* harmful or immoral are also disvaluable in those particular circumstances. In this way, we can take on board some of the central intuitions motivating an additional moral adequacy condition while retaining merely the four established necessary conditions of the hybrid value theory.

10.5 Moral Double Lives

I say "*some* of the central intuitions" because there might still be examples of morally indecent non-flourishers that cannot be explained by appeal to circumstantial (dis)value. Napoleon's and Gauguin's moral indecency was directly tied up with their otherwise valuable activities. Their activities were disvaluable because they pursued them morally indecently. But we can imagine people whose moral indecency is more compartmentalized and does not undermine the value of their flourishing-constituting activities. Imagine, for example, a medical doctor who very successfully pursues a valuable career in medicine, who has excellent bedside manner and observes medical ethics perfectly, but who goes home and cheats on their taxes and abuses their family members. This doctor is morally indecent but not in a way that affects their medical practice. Such a moral double life is not difficult to imagine. We are so very often confronted in the news with the moral failures of once seemingly respectable public figures. These failures tarnish reputations and bodies of work even when they have little or nothing to do with the initial grounds of our esteem. And instances of this kind of moral compartmentalization may not be any less common among ordinary people than they are among those in the public eye.

If those living moral double lives like the *Morally Indecent Doctor* fail to live well, this cannot obviously be explained by appeal to the objective value condition. This doctor's medical practice is itself morally good and comes at no morally indecent cost. It fits all four conditions of the hybrid value conception of living well. If the doctor's moral indecency in other domains undermines their flourishing, it would seem to do so directly and not by undermining the value of their medical practice.

So, the question is, does the *Morally Indecent Doctor* live well or not? As before, I experience some pull towards thinking that this doctor does in fact live well, with some caveats.

First, while the doctor lives well in virtue of their medical practice, they are not living *as well* as they might if they also successfully pursued valuable activities in their roles as family member and citizen. They are, in effect, wasting their time on morally indecent, disvaluable (or potentially valuable but unsuccessful) activities. Second, the doctor is living well but, importantly, they do not morally deserve it. They are an appropriate target of anger, resentment, and censure for flourishing despite their moral indecency. But while I understand this way of thinking, I do not wish to commit to this view of the case. Just as with Napoleon and Gauguin before, our mixed response to the *Morally Indecent Doctor* makes it difficult to affirm or celebrate their life as being well-lived on the whole. It seems somehow worse, perhaps even for the doctor's own sake, that they spent their non-work hours acting morally indecently and disvaluably instead of doing nothing at all. I can therefore also accept that the *Morally Indecent Doctor*, and anyone else leading a moral double life, does not live well.

10.6 Conceding a Moral Adequacy Condition

As I said, however, the four established conditions of the hybrid value theory do not seem able to explain this verdict.[75] So, here I am willing to conditionally concede. If we accept that no

[75] We could perhaps stretch or reimagine the objective value condition to accommodate even some cases of moral double lives. I have been advocating a view wherein valuable activities (when also successful and subjectively valued) just constitute living well during that time, whatever else the agent might be doing at other times. We might instead consider that a person lives well conditionally on all of their activities being *on balance* more valuable than disvaluable. In that case, whether the *Morally Indecent Doctor* lives well is a matter of whether the value of their medical practice outweighs the disvalue of their morally indecent activities. If domestic abuse and cheating on taxes outweigh good medical practice, then the doctor would not live well.

I myself do not like this proposal and would rather simply concede an independent moral adequacy condition. As a dialectical point, this proposal would not satisfy someone who thought the morally indecent could never live well, for it would imply that the morally indecent would live well as long as their other activities were valuable enough. Not all valuable activities are specifically *morally* valuable, and morally neutral valuable activities (e.g., artistic and athletic ones) presumably cannot tip the scales away from an individual's moral indecency towards their moral adequacy. So, you would still have cases of morally indecent people living well by engaging in very valuable but morally neutral activities that outweigh their

morally indecent people can ever live well, then I am also willing to accept moral adequacy as a fifth and independent necessary condition for living well. In that case, I will happily amend the hybrid value conception with four necessary conditions for living well to the "hybrid value+" conception with five: activity, subjective value, objective value, success, and moral adequacy. I would then maintain that these five necessary conditions are also mutually sufficient for living well, in place of merely the previous four. The reason I have not incorporated a moral adequacy condition into the hybrid value theory from the beginning is that I am not convinced that it is indeed impossible for the morally indecent to live well. But I extend this option as an olive branch to anyone who is so convinced. Unlike positive subjective experience and more stringent forms of virtue, the irrelevance of moral adequacy is not a hill I am willing to die on.

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immoral activities in the determination of their flourishing. (Unless, of course, the disvalue of moral indecency always swamps morally neutral value in the calculation, but that maneuver seems functionally equivalent to an independent moral adequacy condition anyway.)

Dialectic aside, I worry about the implications this balancing proposal would have for judging particular cases. Would Bonnie and Clyde have lived well if they had donated enough of their ill-gotten gains to charitable causes in order to just barely offset the disvalue of their crimes? It would strike me as perverse to let such a utilitarian calculation determine their flourishing. And I would find it troubling too if the flourishing of the *Morally Indecent Doctor* came down to *just how badly* they abused their family members. It seems to me that the moral indecency involved in crime sprees and domestic abuse either should not affect a person's living well (via their other, valuable activities) or else should completely undermine it, not simply mitigate it on a sliding scale of severity. Either the already relatively low bar of moral adequacy is necessary for living well or it is not.

Then there are more theoretical concerns. I personally prefer a conception of living well that makes it simple and clear when and in respect of what a person is living well. Introducing balancing to the theory makes the concept a lot fuzzier and more difficult to apply. Just to tell whether a person was living well at all, we would need to work out a theory of the respective weights of (dis)value in addition to our theory of what is (dis)valuable in the first place. That seems like the kind of work we might want to do for the sake of determining relative degrees of flourishing or determining whether a whole life was, on balance, well-lived. As I said at the outset in Chapter 2, I am not here primarily interested in these downstream judgments but in the mere threshold for living well at (or during) a time.

Part IV: Towards a Eudaimonist Ethical Theory

Chapter 11: Rules to Live Well By

11.1 Review of Previous Chapters

In Chapter 1 of this treatise, I clarified an ancient approach to ethics known as eudaimonism, which takes living well (human flourishing, the good life, *eudaimonia*) to be the ultimate, ethically justifying end of action. I argued to distinguish this class of ethical theories from specifically virtue-ethical versions heavily associated with the Aristotelian tradition. I also argued, against the Aristotelian tradition, that character-virtuous and intellectually virtuous activities are surprisingly poor candidates to serve as ultimate ethical ends as eudaimonism requires. If we are to pursue a plausible eudaimonist ethical theory, we should seek a better conception of living well for this purpose.

To that end, in Chapter 2, I explained several canonical features of the threshold concept of living well. A number of these features distinguish living well from the broader, comparative concept of well-being that modern philosophers invoke much more frequently in their normative ethical theories. I also provided pre-theoretical heuristics for recognizing instances of living well. In Chapters 3-6, I appealed to these heuristics to defend my hybrid value conception, according to which a person lives well by successfully engaging in valuable activities that they value. In Chapters 7-10, I again employed these heuristics to argue that the four necessary conditions of living well—activity, subjective valuing, objective value, and success—are also jointly sufficient. In particular, I argued that positive subjective experiences (e.g., pleasure, satisfaction, subjective happiness, flow, etc.) and all manner of virtues are unnecessary. Assuming that these are the most salient candidates for additional necessary conditions of living well, this result lends significant credence to the view that hybrid value is sufficient.

I also suggested in Chapter 10 that even basic moral adequacy is unnecessary and that the morally indecent can live well. As I said before, I am nevertheless willing to concede moral adequacy as a fifth necessary condition, though I will not assume this going forward. This is because, as I will explain presently, I wish to invoke the concept of living well as a theoretical starting point in a normative ethical theory. On the surface, a moral theory would appear problematically circular if its starting point—in this case, living well—included an explicitly moral component. I think it possible to render innocuous any appearance of circularity. In Chapter 5, §5.5.4, I suggested a quasi-recursive approach that could incorporate a benefit/harm (or morality/immorality) criterion for the objective value condition without vicious circularity. We could employ a similar strategy here. The first step would be to determine, as a first pass, what counts as living well non-morally, i.e., without any moral condition. We could then build up a first-pass moral theory around this non-moral conception, adjust our conception of living well in light of the resulting moral theory, and finally adjust the moral theory in light of the definitive conception of living well. But even in that case, we would still have to start by assuming living well had no moral component, if only to kick away that ladder later. So, I will make that assumption and, for the sake of simplicity, leave it intact for the rest of the present work.

11.2 Assumptions for a Eudaimonist Ethical Theory

The concept of the good life is an ancient and influential concept, and so we may be independently interested in the correct or best substantive conception of it even if we do not intend to base our normative ethical theory around the concept. Even if living well is not the only or most fundamental ethically relevant good, it is still presumably one very important kind of personal good, and we may very well like to know what it is and how to achieve it. My own primary interest

in developing a conception of living well, however, is to employ it to construct a comprehensive eudaimonist normative ethical theory of good and bad (and right and wrong) actions, attitudes, and institutions. This theory will be broadly "ethical" in the sense that it will include recommendations and requirements[76] of at least prudence, morality, and politics (i.e., "normative political theory").[77] And this theory will be eudaimonist in the sense I have already articulated: the theory assumes that living well is the ultimate end and so fundamentally recommends actions, attitudes, and institutions which contribute to people living well. In the following subsections, I will explain certain key assumptions in order to clarify the kind of eudaimonist normative ethical theory that I will be developing.

11.2.1 "Prudential," "Moral," and "Political"

As I use these terms, the recommendations of prudence govern agents' actions (attitudes, etc.) insofar as they concern or affect themselves, and the recommendations of morality govern agents' actions insofar as they concern or affect others.[78] Individual persons are the most

[76] Throughout the chapter, I will use "recommendations" in a broad sense that includes requirements, prohibitions, permissions, obligations, duties, etc. As I construe them, recommendations outline conditions for goodness and badness, whereas requirements (etc.) outline conditions specifically for rightness and wrongness, permissibility and impermissibility. I see rightness and wrongness as extreme ends of a continuum between goodness and badness (with mere permissibility right in the middle), and correspondingly I see requirements (etc.) as continuous with recommendations. As far as I am concerned, any kind of recommendation, requirement, etc. can come in either a defeasible/contributory variety (as reasons or *prima facie* duties are standardly supposed to operate) or a definitive/summary variety (as requirements are traditionally taken to operate).

[77] A comprehensive ethical theory may or may not also include recommendations of other important normative domains, such as the aesthetic. I remain neutral on such issues.

[78] This is a slightly stipulative use of these terms which may not capture exactly what other people mean by them, particularly the highly contentious word, "moral." For example, some may think that "moral" recommendations to agents also concern those agents themselves, in addition to other patients. Some might construe "morality" as making recommendations with respect to all goods (or a specifically "moral" subset of all goods), including impersonal goods in addition to personal ones. And some might wish simply to identify "moral" recommendations with all-things-considered (practically) normative recommendations.

While my usage of these terms is not wholly neutral and may not be preferable to all parties, I do consider my usage to be linguistically and conceptually *acceptable* and to align with some highly influential

paradigmatic agents subject to (and patients of concern to) prudential and moral recommendations, but group agents (e.g., charities, clubs, corporations, labor unions, lobby groups) or unorganized collectives (e.g., service industry employees, the wealthy) may also be both subject to prudential recommendations to act on their own behalf (and possibly on behalf of their individual members) and subject to moral recommendations on behalf of other agents (possibly including their individual members, individual non-members, and other group agents or collectives).

The prudential and moral domains transition into the political domain, without obvious need for clear delineation, as the agents subject to and patients of concern to prudential and moral recommendations grow in number or complexity. The recommendations of politics govern, at least, social and political institutions (e.g., electoral systems, healthcare systems, legal systems, social welfare systems); the actions of societies (collectives like, e.g., the American people), political office-holders in official capacities (e.g., the American President in their capacity as President), and political bodies (group agents like, e.g., whole states or governments and their constituent parts: administrations, bureaucracies, departments, legislatures, etc.); and perhaps also

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usage in the philosophical tradition. While the Greeks did not have our word, "moral," Aristotle (1894) does demarcate an important interpersonal sense of "justice" (*dike*) that encompasses the whole of character virtue specifically insofar as virtuous activity concerns or affects other people (*Nicomachean Ethics* V.1-2, especially 1129b25-1130a13, 1130b18-20). This sense of justice more or less corresponds to the moral domain (or important sub-domain) that Scanlon (1998) describes as concerning "what we owe to each other."

On the other hand, the sense of "prudence" I employ is that of enlightened or rational self-interest. Aristotle does not discuss or name the purely self-interested aspects of character virtue that would complement interpersonal justice. ("Prudence" is an influential translation of the Greek word, "*phronesis*," but Aristotle considers *phronesis*, or practical wisdom, to entail the whole of character virtue, including its interpersonal components.) But rational self-interest is presumably what Plato, for example, has in mind when he asks, in *Republic* (2003), whether and why individuals should be just ("moral")—that is, how does justice, especially interpersonal and political justice, benefit even a purely self-interested individual? As far as I can tell, the notion of rational self-interest, and the corresponding non-moral use of "prudence," came to philosophical prominence in the modern period under the influence of figures like Hobbes, Hume, Kant, and Bentham. (As a noteworthy exception, Adam Smith apparently dissents from this prevailing view and maintains a more traditional, moralized conception of prudence: see, e.g., Viganò 2017). For a recent example, Fletcher (2019; 2021) theorizes normative prudence in this purely self-interested sense.

the actions of individual or group agents (in unofficial capacities) insofar as they concern or affect societies, political offices, political bodies, and social and political institutions. These political recommendations can have either a prudential or moral character. A state, for example, may be both subject to prudential recommendations to act on its own behalf (or, possibly, on behalf of its "subjects"—presumably, its citizens and residents) and subject to moral recommendations to act on behalf of others (e.g., other states and their subjects).

11.2.2 Continuity and Interaction Between Domains

I find it convenient and useful to distinguish these normative ethical domains as I have, but we need not overstate the distinctions between them. It is helpful, for example, to think about how we can and should act purely in our own self-interest, apart from any moral concern for others. We inevitably must think this way when we make personal decisions, great and small, that affect us significantly more than they foreseeably affect others (e.g., deciding where to live for the next year or what to eat for breakfast today). This self-interested way of thinking and deliberating may come very naturally to some of us, but it need not end its life there, in the pursuit of wholly selfish gain. We can use our prudential thinking on behalf of other people, simulating their interests as our own deliberative goals, and thus transforming prudential reasoning into, or at least approximating, moral reasoning. Indeed, I find it a useful heuristic to think of morality as "prudence on behalf of other people." On the other hand, some of us may find it natural and intuitive to think altruistically on behalf of others. These people may benefit from at least occasionally reflecting on and emphasizing their own interests as being just as ethically important as everyone else's. And both prudential and moral reasoning eventually lend themselves to thinking about collective and political actions and institutions, as a means to realizing either self-

interest or the interests of others—and usually both simultaneously, since a rising social and political tide often lifts all individual boats.

All this is to suggest that these normative ethical domains are continuous, even overlapping, though we can conceptualize them distinctly. Indeed, we may think that the recommendations of prudence, morality, and politics interact with one another. We can usefully ask what prudence would recommend to an individual independently of any competing moral considerations, but this might only count as a defeasible or hypothetical recommendation. The real, definitive recommendations of prudence might be constrained by moral considerations and requirements. For example, it might be in your own interest to dam a stream on your land, but if it will destroy other people's livelihoods by depriving them of a crucial water source, then prudence, properly understood, might not conclusively recommend that you do it. Similarly, moral recommendations and requirements might be constrained by prudential ones. For example, morality might recommend that you share your resources with others in need, but it may not require you to give away so much that you become insecure and in need yourself. These individual prudential and moral recommendations, in turn, may inform and constrain political recommendations, and *vice versa*. I suggest below, for example, that individual prudence and morality eventually recommend political coordination and that politics recommends ways of collectively satisfying prudential and moral recommendations to individuals, thereby providing more precise content to those recommendations. We might go further still and hold that the separate recommendations of prudence, morality, and politics combine, through some function or other, to deliver a summary, "all-domains-considered" ethical recommendation. At this stage, I do not wish to commit to most of these possible views about the interactions between these normative

ethical domains, but I want to stress that distinguishing these domains conceptually as I have in no way forecloses any such possibilities.

11.2.3 Fundamental and Derivative Ethical Recommendations

The conceit of ethical eudaimonism is that living well is the ultimate ethically justifying end across all the domains that constitute a normative ethical theory. In other words, these normative ethical domains all fundamentally recommend realizing or contributing in some relevant way to people's flourishing. I say "in some relevant way" because, at this stage, "realizing" and "contributing to" are not supposed to be very specific. There might be different ways of realizing or contributing to (or "promoting") living well, and we will decide which ways are fundamentally relevant to each of the ethical domains in the course of developing the ethical theory. But by hypothesis, prudence fundamentally recommends that agents realize or contribute to their own flourishing. Morality fundamentally recommends that agents realize or contribute to others' flourishing. And politics fundamentally recommends that social collectives, political agents, and social/political institutions realize or contribute to human flourishing generally, typically on a much larger scale than is possible for individual agents.

From this starting point, the project of normative ethics is to determine more precisely *how* we are supposed to realize and contribute to our own and others' flourishing. In all the ethical domains, these eudaimonistic recommendations are fundamental in the sense that they explain and condition all other, more concrete recommendations. For example, prudence will recommend that a given agent regularly exercise only if and because regular exercise will contribute to that agent living well. Morality will recommend that agents keep their promises only if and because keeping promises will contribute to other people's living well. And politics will recommend instituting a

system of social security only if and because such a system will contribute to people's living well generally.

I just suggested, in the last subsection, that the domains of prudence, morality, and politics interact with one another. Along these lines, I do not wish to commit at this time to any of these domains being more fundamental than, and explanatory of, the others. It is theoretically tempting to view one as fundamental. For example, we might assume that self-interest is fundamental to ethics, or to practical normativity generally (perhaps by way of being fundamental to practical reasons and rationality). In that case, we might try to justify or explain the recommendations of morality and politics on the grounds that they ultimately serve individuals' prudential ends, namely individuals' own flourishing.[79] On the other hand, we might assume instead that ethics (practical normativity) is fundamentally impartial in its concern for all agents. And in that case, we might try to justify or explain the recommendations of prudence on the grounds that they ultimately serve impartial moral or political ends, namely human flourishing generally.[80] Likewise, we may think that collective political recommendations explain and condition individual moral recommendations or *vice versa*, depending on whether we consider ethics (practical normativity) to be more fundamentally concerned with collective action or individual action.[81]

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[79] Setting aside eudaimonist commitments, I take this broad approach to normativity to align more or less with Plato's defense of justice in *Republic* (2003) and Hobbes's political project in *Leviathan* (1994). It is also at work in some recent interpretive attempts to incorporate moral concern for others into Aristotelian virtue eudaimonism in order to overcome objections that virtue eudaimonism is too egoistic, concerned only with the agent's own virtue and flourishing (see, e.g., Annas 2007; Angier 2018).

[80] This stance is a common motivation for consequentialist moral theories, though it may not be necessary or sufficient for a theory to count as consequentialist. An impartial moral or ethical theory may recommend that agents advance their own interests in many cases since they are especially well-situated to realize goods in their own lives (whether personal goods, like flourishing or well-being, or impersonal goods). But by hypothesis, such prudential recommendations are conditioned on serving the more fundamental purpose of realizing goods generally.

[81] Western normative philosophy has generally had an individualist bent, but I take it this is not the only available approach. We might think instead that collectives are the primary subjects of ethical (or, more generally, practically normative) recommendations and that individuals' contributory roles in satisfying recommendations to collectives (e.g., collective obligations) determine recommendations to those

I consider any such view to be a live theoretical option, but at present I wish to remain neutral with respect to these options. I think it is helpful and illuminating to consider each of the three domains on their own terms before deciding which, if any, domain is the more fundamental and explanatory. Presumably, any good theory about the relative priority of these domains should respect and explain our independent, pre-theoretical commitments about the domains themselves. We should therefore determine what our relevant pre-theoretical commitments are.

11.2.3 Fundamental Ethical Patients: Individuals

For the sake of simplicity, I will here introduce a few stipulative assumptions about the patients whose flourishing fundamentally matters to ethical recommendations in any domain. First, though I have emphasized that group agents and unorganized collectives can be subject to ethical recommendations, I assume that individual agents are the patients of primary concern to those ethical recommendations. That is, ethics fundamentally recommends contributing only to *individuals* living well and not to the flourishing of collectives or group agents. From these fundamental recommendations may derive subsidiary recommendations to act in the interest of collectives but only as a way of advancing individual flourishing.

Making this normative assumption is not to deny that collectives and group agents can flourish in their own right. The hybrid value theory of living well holds that people live well by successfully engaging in valuable activities that they value. And on the face of it, group agents can value, engage in, and succeed in valuable activities just as can individual agents. In theory, we could allow that group agents live well in exactly the same way that individuals do (at least, if we

individuals. This group-first approach to the *subjects* of ethical (practically normative) recommendations would still be consistent with an individual-first approach to the *patients* of concern to ethical (practically normative) recommendations, which I suggest in the next subsection and assume going forward.

think group agents really "live" at all). Or we could think that individual, *human* flourishing is one thing and *collective* flourishing something else entirely. In that case, collective flourishing might ultimately reduce to the flourishing of individuals, or it might obtain independently of any individuals flourishing.

I personally find it plausible that "flourishing" is here only a term of analogy and that what it is for a collective to flourish is not the same as what it is for an individual human to live well. And indeed, I think that collective flourishing ultimately reduces to the flourishing of individuals (or to individuals' *capacities* to flourish). Moreover, I consider it more ethically important that individuals live well than that collectives themselves flourish, whatever collective flourishing consists in. That is, given a choice between making individuals live well and making collectives flourish, where the latter does not entail the former, I would prioritize the individuals every time. I do not consider this mere chauvinism. I think there is some available explanation that would justify affording greater ethical consideration to individuals than to collectives or group agents, perhaps an explanation that invokes phenomenological, metaphysical, or teleological differences between these kinds of agents.[82] But this is not the place to argue for this view. For now, I will simply assume that, whether or not and how collectives might flourish, individual flourishing is the only ultimate end that matters fundamentally to the recommendations of ethics.

[82] I explore some such explanations in unpublished work. While developing a theory of group agency, List & Pettit (2011) suggest and endorse "normative individualism," or "the view that something is good only if it is good for individual human or, more generally, sentient beings" (182). List (2016) and Pettit (2018a) also argue that group agents lack consciousness and phenomenal states, which may serve to underwrite their normative individualism.

11.2.4 Fundamental Ethical Patients: Humans

The second stipulation I make is that the patients of primary concern to ethics are *humans* and creatures sufficiently like humans. In other words, normative ethical domains fundamentally recommend contributing to the flourishing of individual, human-like creatures, not to the flourishing of all creatures, or even sentient creatures, in general. For present purposes, creatures will count as sufficiently like humans just in case they are capable of living well in exactly the way that humans live well. On the hybrid value conception of living well (that is, of specifically *human* flourishing), creatures will have to be capable of valuing and successfully engaging in valuable activities[83] to count as sufficiently like humans.

For all we know, there may be non-human creatures that share in these capacities, either now or in the future. In that case, the present theory would include these human-like creatures as patients of primary concern on a par with humans. However, I assume that very many creatures are not capable of valuing, and thus living well as humans do, including many sentient creatures capable of perceiving, feeling pleasure and pain, experiencing emotions, and desiring. Valuing is something over and above simply desiring, either in the sense of wanting or liking. It seems to require a level of cognitive sophistication that many sentient creatures appear to lack. On the view I put forward in Chapter 4, valuing requires self-consciousness—more specifically, the ability to form higher-order attitudes like identification with or endorsement of base attitudes. Other views of valuing typically include either a similar requirement of higher-order attitudes (e.g., Frankfurt

[83] I note, as a matter of passing theoretical interest, that the set of activities that are valuable for non-human valuers need not be the same set of activities that are valuable for humans. For example, social grooming might be valuable for the intelligent apes of *Planet of the Apes* (Schaffner 1968) even if it is not valuable for humans. For that matter, non-human valuing need not be exactly the same as human valuing, though it would have to have enough in common to still count as a form of "valuing." For example, a sophisticated android like Data from *Star Trek: The Next Generation* (Roddenberry 1987-1994) might be devoid of emotion yet value activities like playing the violin, even if characteristically *human* valuing required some emotional component (*contra* my own preferred view of valuing in Chapter 4).

1971; Lewis 1989) or a requirement for specifically normative attitudes (e.g., Scheffler 2011). It appears, at least at first glance, that many sentient creatures are incapable of forming both types of attitudes, though I am in no position to pronounce which creatures are and are not.

In observing that many creatures seem incapable of flourishing or living well in the way that humans do, I am not suggesting that non-valuing creatures cannot flourish in their own ways. As I suggested in the case of group agents above, "flourishing" strikes me as a term of analogy. Plausibly, flourishing in general is a matter of entities' doing well relative to their capacities and functions.[84] On such a view, non-valuing sentient creatures may flourish, for example, by functioning well to satisfy their desires or to experience positively valenced affective states like pleasure or positive emotion. Even non-sentient creatures, as plants presumably are, may flourish in their own way, for example, by acquiring and utilizing nutrients to function, grow, and reproduce. An expanded eudaimonism could also take any such non-human way of flourishing into account. But if a theory afforded equal importance to all the various forms of flourishing, the resulting ethical recommendations and requirements would presumably be radically revisionary: for instance, felling a flourishing tree would be the ethical equivalent of murdering a flourishing human being and so presumably morally forbidden. In order to avoid implausibly revisionary ethical implications, an expanded eudaimonism would anyway face theoretical pressure to assign weighted degrees of importance to the various forms of flourishing. For the sake of simplicity, and

[84] There is well-established precedent for such an analogical view. Aristotle (1894) reserves "*eudaimonia*," as I reserve "living well," for specifically human (and divine) flourishing (*NE* I.9 1099b32-1100a1; X.8 1178b24-32). However, he has a more general and analogical theory of excellence (*arete*) and goodness (*kalon*) that applies as well to plants and animals, and even to collectives like the *polis* and to non-living artifacts. Nevertheless, Aristotle restricts the domain of concern of his ethical theory to human individuals and collectives, as I restrict mine to human-like individuals. Some modern philosophers like Foot (2001) follow Aristotle in adopting an analogical understanding of ("natural") goodness that applies to plants and animals.

to avoid any such messy and potentially arbitrary rankings, I opt here to assume a restricted eudaimonism, fundamentally concerned only with specifically human-like flourishing.

To avoid any suggestion of objectionable "speciesism,"[85] however, I note that this approach need not be the final version of our eudaimonist ethical theory. I am assuming fundamental ethical concern for only creatures capable of human-like flourishing mostly for the sake of convenience and for ease of presentation. We could construe the moral domain, so restricted, as merely the domain of *interpersonal* (or "interhuman") morality, of what human-like, moral agents owe to one another.[86] There may be another, broader "moral" domain that also takes the interests, and specifically the flourishing, of other sentient creatures into account as of fundamental moral concern—the domain of what moral agents owe to all sentient creatures. And we could consider this broader moral domain to be the definitive sense of "morality," to provide definitive "moral" recommendations, and to constrain other ethical domains. Even in that case, however, the narrower, interpersonally moral domain would still be of theoretical interest, and that domain is all I wish to flesh out at present.

Even when we assume that only human-like creatures and their flourishing are of fundamental concern to our eudaimonist ethical theory, it is worth noting that we are not thereby entirely excluding non-humans as patients of concern. Even if the ultimate goal is specifically human flourishing, we will presumably have good ethical reasons to look after other organisms, ecosystems, and the environment generally. For one thing, we need other organisms, ecosystems, and our environment in order to survive and live well ourselves. For another, many of us value engaging with particular (kinds of) organisms, ecosystems, and features of our natural

[85] Singer's *Animal Liberation* (1975) is the *locus classicus* for the charge of "speciesism" akin to racism and for the modern movement towards affording equal moral concern to all sentient creatures.
[86] Again, Aristotle (1984) and Scanlon (1998) serve as philosophical precedents for interest in this restricted moral domain.

environment. For instance, many of us value caring for pets and livestock, studying flora and fauna, and preserving and enjoying pristine wilderness. We will therefore have ethical reasons to respect and protect the non-human creatures and environments that many people value—the same kinds of reasons that we will presumably have to respect and protect, e.g., valuable human practices, monuments, and works of art. The present assumption allows for such derivative ethical concern for non-human entities. And as I have stressed, an expanded ethical eudaimonism can include fundamental concern for these non-human entities in addition.

11.2.5 Fundamental Ethical Patients: All, Equally

The third and final stipulation I make for simplicity and convenience is that ethics is fundamentally concerned with the flourishing of all human (and sufficiently human-like) individuals equally. The domain of prudence provides recommendations to individual agents specifically to act on their own behalf, but by assumption it provides such recommendations to all individual human agents. Moreover, by assumption, all human individuals are of equal fundamental concern to the moral and political domains. To put the point crudely, normative ethical domains fundamentally do not play favorites or privilege some particular people, or classes of people, over others.

This universal and impartial concern is a substantive ethical assumption. We need only observe that there are ethical views which afford priority of concern to a particular class of people, e.g., on the basis of gender, race, religion, etc. I trust the reader will share my desire to reject any such view, and though we should like a refutation of them, this is not the place to offer one. But not all views espousing partiality in ethics are alarmingly chauvinistic. We could instead think, for example, that morality fundamentally recommends that individuals prioritize the flourishing of

those to whom they stand in certain special relationships of partiality (e.g., family, friends, community members, fellow citizens, etc.), or that politics fundamentally recommends that political agents and institutions only contribute to the flourishing of relevant political subjects (e.g., citizens and residents). I offer no argument here against such views, but I do reject these also. It seems to me that morality and politics do recommend helping even complete strangers and foreign political subjects live well when this is feasible. I will therefore help myself to the stipulation that ethics is universal and impartial in its concern for human individuals. I am comfortable making this assumption as I think it is a fairly standard belief among contemporary normative ethicists anyway.

11.2.6 Fundamental Impartiality Consistent with Derivative Partiality

I note, however, that universal and impartial concern at the fundamental level does not foreclose the possibility that ethics derivatively recommends partiality in concrete cases. I mean, for example, that morality might derivatively recommend that agents (in some contexts and to some degree) prioritize the interests of those to whom they stand in special relationships of partiality over the interests of unrelated or unknown agents. Similarly, politics might recommend that political agents (again, in some contexts and to some degree) prioritize the interests of their own citizens and residents over the interests of residents of other political bodies. But I am assuming that, where morality and politics do recommend partiality, this is because partiality advances the fundamentally impartial aim of realizing or contributing to people living well generally. Partiality might efficiently advance this goal in the moral domain if, for example, people are better situated to help those to whom they stand in special relationships than they are to help strangers. And partiality might efficiently advance the goal of living well generally in the political

domain if, for example, there are many independent, functioning political bodies (e.g., states), each of which is especially well-situated to help its own citizens and residents without external interference.

But efficiency is not the only reason ethical domains may derivatively recommend partiality. A paradigmatic way of living well is to engage in special, loving relationships. These are not the only way of living well, but as a matter of fact almost everyone seeks out and develops such relationships. And once we are embedded in these relationships, they give us special reasons to act partially. This is because many of these relationships are partly constituted by partial attitudes and mutual expectations of partial behavior.

If I love someone as a romantic partner, family member, or close friend, for example, I feel partially towards them: I want them to fare well and, more specifically, to live well.[87] Because the relationship is partly constituted by this desire, my living well through the relationship gets tied up with their faring and living well. When my beloved lives well, this success contributes also to my living well by engaging in the relationship.[88] On the other hand, when my beloved fares poorly, my desire is thwarted. The relationship need be no less valuable for this, but my active engagement in the relationship is less successful, and so my own living well by way of the relationship is diminished. Given all of this, when I am in such loving relationships, prudence will presumably

[87] To reiterate a point from earlier chapters, I consider living well to be a distinct kind of personal good, i.e., a contributor to overall well-being. But living well need not exhaust well-being. It may be possible for someone to *fare* well in the sense of having a high degree of well-being without *living* well in the sense of the distinct good of flourishing.

[88] Of course, this is not a new idea. Aristotle (1894) observes that our friends' *eudaimonia* constitutes our *eudaimonia* also. He explains this on the rather provocative grounds that our friends are "other selves" (*NE* IX.4-9, especially 1166a31-32, 1170b6-7). Without evaluating his proposed explanation, I am here proposing a different mechanism to explain how our loved ones' flourishing affects our own: namely, that our relationship-constituting desires for our loved ones' flourishing make their flourishing a success condition for the relationship which must be met if the relationship is to contribute to our own flourishing.

derivatively recommend that I help my loved ones to live well, as a way of constituting or contributing to my own flourishing.

In addition to attitudes of partiality, many loving relationships are also partially constituted by mutual expectations of partial behavior. Romantic partners, family members, and close friends typically enter into or maintain their relationships with the understanding that they will, in many cases, prioritize one another's interests over the interests of others to whom they are not so intimately related. Such voluntary commitments are especially salient in major, life-altering decisions, e.g., to marry or to have children. As we ordinarily construe parental relationships, for example, I would be a bad parent if I did not financially support my own child and instead supported other children unrelated to me.[89]

It is highly plausible that prudence and morality will both derivatively recommend fulfilling mutual expectations and commitments in general for the sake of contributing to people living well generally (I explain why in §§11.7-8 below). And if we have good ethical reasons for fulfilling expectations and commitments in general, we will often have good reasons specifically to fulfill the expectations and commitments that constitute our loving relationships. But these considerations border on considerations of efficiency, and there are other, more direct reasons to fulfill relational expectations. Given that our loving relationships are partially constituted by these mutual expectations of partiality, fulfilling these expectations and acting partially will be a constitutive part of maintaining and engaging in these relationships. And given that these

[89] There may be valuable versions of special (perhaps even "loving") relationships which lack these expectations. And we might very well ask whether a fundamentally impartial ethical theory would recommend entering into these less partial versions of relationships instead of more demanding partial ones. Maybe we should prefer an ideal of parenthood, for example, wherein my own child's needs are no more or less important to me than are other children's. However, the facts on the ground are that most of us actually do value and engage in paradigmatically partial relationships. Given that we already find ourselves in these valuable, partial relationships (however contingently), they presumably do exert normative pressure on us.

relationships are valuable and can therefore contribute to our own and our loved ones' flourishing, prudence and morality will presumably both derivatively recommend that we fulfill these expectations of partiality. Prudence will recommend that I act partially towards my loved ones because doing so constitutes my own engagement in the valuable relationship and thus contributes to my own flourishing. And morality will (at least defeasibly) recommend that I act partially towards my loved ones because doing so maintains the valuable relationship which can contribute to my loved ones' flourishing (insofar as they value and successfully engage in the relationship as well). If instead I were to shirk my obligations to a loved one, I would thereby undermine our relationship and deprive them of that particular way of living well.[90]

In all these ways, and perhaps others, even a fundamentally impartial ethical theory can derivatively recommend partiality. But I maintain that ethics is fundamentally universal and impartial in its concern for all human individuals because recommendations of partiality do not exhaust the recommendations of ethics. Given that I value my valuable relationships of partiality, prudence will recommend that I treat certain others partially. But there are other valuable activities that can constitute living well besides simply engaging in loving relationships, and prudence can

[90] I note in passing that similar considerations may apply in the domain of politics. A political official, for example, may be subject to expectations of partiality on behalf of their constituents. Satisfying these expectations may be a constitutive part of performing the function of their office. If performing the function of this political office is a valuable activity and the official values it, then prudence will recommend that the official act partially on behalf of their constituents in order to successfully engage in that activity. Morality might similarly recommend performing the function of the office, including its requisite partiality, either on instrumental grounds, as a matter of efficiently contributing to other ways of living well, or on constitutive grounds, if it is part of some valuable (though not necessarily "loving") political relationship—say, the relationship of fellow citizen or the representative/constituent relationship. We might generalize even further: the expectations of partiality involved in loving relationships and political office may be special cases of expectations involved in performing social roles. To the roles associated with loving relationships (e.g., partner, family member, friend) and with politics, we may add occupational roles such as those of an accountant, coach, lawyer, medical practitioner, police officer, service provider, teacher, or teammate. Insofar as any such role constitutively requires partiality, ethical domains may recommend the requisite partiality as a way of performing the role. In turn, ethics may recommend performing the role at all either because the role is instrumentally useful to flourishing or because the role is itself (part of) a valuable activity (including relationships) that can constitute flourishing.

therefore recommend these non-relational activities as well without any partiality to others. (Of course, by definition prudence always recommends partiality to self, but it does so symmetrically to all ethical agents. Moreover, as I suggested in §11.2.2, self-interested prudential recommendations may be constrained by partial or impartial moral or political ones.) Morality, too, will recommend that I act partially as a way of contributing to the flourishing of those with whom I stand in special relationships. But having satisfied my particular relational obligations of partiality, morality will also recommend that I contribute to the flourishing of other people to whom I am not intimately related. And without any special relationships or commitments on my part to distinguish between these other moral patients, by assumption morality will be equally concerned with all of their flourishing. In that case, presumably only impartial, practical considerations such as access, feasibility, and efficiency will influence morality's concrete recommendations to help others in particular ways.

11.3 Teleology, With or Without Consequentialism

Given my definition of "eudaimonism," every eudaimonist ethical theory is essentially *teleological*. As I use the term, a teleological ethical theory identifies an end (a goal, a purpose, a good, a *telos*) that is to be achieved and then recommends acting (etc.) in order to realize or contribute, in some relevant way, to that end (or ends, if more than one).[91] To the modern

[91] This sense of "teleology" is orthogonal to the thesis that Portmore (2011) calls the "teleological conception of practical reasons": that all reasons for action are wholly determined by reasons for desiring. Portmore thinks this thesis about practical reasons (at least partly) characterizes consequentialist moral theories. I am not interested in disputing his definition of "consequentialism." But I do note that an ethical theory can be teleological in my sense without committing to a teleological conception of practical reasons. One implausible but teleological ethical theory, "saucer-of-mud-ism," would treat the existence of saucers of mud as its end and recommend that agents act so as to create saucers of mud, even though there are no reasons for agents to *desire* the existence of saucers of mud. More plausibly, a eudaimonist ethical theory can recommend acting so as to realize human flourishing simply because that is the normatively justifying end assumed by the theory, whether or not there are any reasons to *desire* human flourishing. (Incidentally,

philosophical ear, the most natural way to construe a teleological ethical theory is as some or other version of *consequentialism*.

"Consequentialism" is a contested term, but for present purposes we can naïvely describe consequentialist moral or ethical theories as those which recommend particular actions (or types of actions) solely on the basis of their (expected) consequences in terms of some relevant set of goods. Most colloquially, a good is the consequence of an action when the action *causes* the good as a distinct effect, e.g., the act of painting causes there to exist a beautiful work of art. But for the purposes of a consequentialist theory, a good can also be a consequence of an action when the action *constitutes* the good, e.g., the act of dancing constitutes a beautiful work of art (see, e.g., Pettit 2018b). We could even think of constitution as a kind of limit case of causation where there is no separation in time between cause and effect. With that in mind, we can also describe consequentialist theories as fundamentally recommending causing and constituting relevant goods. And by assumption they always recommend causing and constituting more of the relevant goods than fewer, whether or not they also specifically *require* causing and constituting the most available good.[92]

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and conversely, we could also accept a teleological conception of practical reasons while endorsing an ostensibly non-teleological ethical theory. We can accept that all of our reasons to act are determined by our reasons to desire, but believe, for instance, that ethics requires following the commands of God, whether or not there are reasons to do so and whether or not doing so is in any way desirable.)

On the face of it, and at least as a conceptual matter, that something is desirable (i.e., that there are reasons to desire it) is neither necessary nor sufficient for its being a (or the) normatively justifying end in an ethical (or more generally, practically normative) theory, though the tradition of teleological ethics from Aristotle to Mill and beyond has often run the two ideas together. It would require substantive assumptions to connect the two, desirability and end-like normative justification. Portmore's teleological conception of practical reasons could only connect the two (and entail a teleological ethical theory in my sense) on the assumption of a kind of ethical (or practically normative) *rationalism* which holds that the practical recommendations of ethics (or practical normativity) are always determined by practical reasons.

[92] Maximizing versions of consequentialism require acting in ways that cause the most available good. "Satisficing" versions do not require maximizing the good but typically require causing some sufficient amount of the available good. Satisficing versions usually still recommend causing the most available good but consider this supererogatory rather than required.

Now, it is true that consequentialist moral or ethical theories are straightforwardly teleological: they assume one or more ends (goods) and recommend realizing or contributing to those ends specifically by causing and constituting them. So, consequentialism is one way of developing a eudaimonist ethical theory. Simply assume that ethics fundamentally recommends causing and constituting living well as the sole relevant end. Such a consequentialist eudaimonism will presumably recommend acting in whatever particular ways cause and constitute the most available human flourishing.

Yet for all that, we should not be misled into thinking that a teleological eudaimonist theory must be consequentialist. While all consequentialist theories are teleological, not all teleological theories are consequentialist. Aristotle's eudaimonism, for example, is undoubtedly teleological, but it would require a great deal of interpretive legwork to establish, anachronistically, that Aristotle was also a consequentialist. Aristotle does recommend exercising intellectual and character virtues for the sake of constituting *eudaimonia*, but he does not obviously speak to causing *eudaimonia* in non-constitutive ways. It is also plausible that the ultimate end of *eudaimonia* in some way determines the virtuous mean in practical situations since all action is supposed to be "for the sake of" *eudaimonia*. It is far from clear, however, that the virtuous mean is specifically that which causes the most available *eudaimonia*. If Aristotle were straightforwardly a consequentialist, we would expect him to recognize some canonical consequentialist implications, such as cases where the theory recommends foregoing some amount of *eudaimonia*-constituting virtuous activity for the sake of non-constitutively causing more *eudaimonia* (either for others or for oneself at a later time). But Aristotle draws no such conclusions. In contrast to paradigmatic consequentialist theories, Aristotle's ethical theory does not emphasize causing the

most available good and instead apparently recommends realizing or contributing to the relevant good in other ways.

I am emphasizing that teleology in an ethical theory does not imply consequentialism because I do not want to assume a consequentialist version of eudaimonist ethical theory at the outset, as if that were the only available option. There are long-standing objections to consequentialist theories, e.g., that they deliver intuitively incorrect verdicts across a wide range of cases, that they demand too much of agents, that they are self-effacing, and that they alienate agents from their projects or conscience. I will not rehearse these objections here, for it is not my goal at present to refute consequentialism. But there are enough potential problems for consequentialist theories that we should be open to alternatives. In the sections to follow, and without assuming consequentialism, I will develop a eudaimonist ethical theory which emphasizes constituting and *enabling* human flourishing, rather than *causing* it. However, I will take no official stance at present on whether the resulting ethical theory is or is not a form of consequentialism. In §11.10, I explain both how one *could* construe my proposed version of eudaimonism as a form of consequentialism and also how it is unlike some paradigmatic versions of consequentialism which the reader may have expected instead.

11.4 Realizing and Contributing to Living Well, Prudentially and Morally

To reiterate, given the eudaimonistic starting point that ethics fundamentally recommends realizing or contributing to living well, the project of normative ethics is to determine more precisely *how* we are supposed to realize and contribute to it. There are at least two different kinds of cases we need to consider: we can realize our own flourishing and we can realize other people's. As we have defined them, prudence recommends the former and morality recommends the latter.

In general, first-personal, prudential cases seem simpler and less controversial than interpersonal, moral cases, which often involve balancing the needs and interests of multiple people. So, it will be helpful to consider first-personal and interpersonal realization of flourishing side by side.

Now, in the first place, one realizes one's own living well by actually doing it—actually engaging in valuable activities one values and trying to succeed in those activities, as much as it up to one. This is not to say living well is easy. If one does not already value valuable activities, it can be hard to make oneself do so. Even if one values something valuable, one may be unable to pursue it due to illness, depression, poverty, discrimination, war, and so on. Depending on the relevant standards for success, it may also be quite difficult to succeed in one's valued, valuable activities. But, if the conditions are suitable, prudence recommends actually trying to realize one's values.

When it comes to realizing others' flourishing, however, we immediately encounter an asymmetry from the prudential, first-personal case: we cannot live well for other people. Since living well is constituted by an agent's own activity, one person's activity cannot in general constitute another's flourishing. Only in special cases can one person's activity partially constitute another person's, e.g., by partially constituting a valuable relationship for the other person to actively engage in. Moreover, we are severely limited in our ability to (non-constitutively) cause others to live well. That is, we cannot typically make other people engage in the components of living well in the same way that, in favorable circumstances, we can simply choose to do them ourselves. If it is difficult to cause oneself to value something, it would be even more difficult for one individual to cause another to value something. It would also be difficult for one individual to cause another individual to engage in the medium- to long-term, and often quite social, activities which tend to be valued and valuable, activities like careers, hobbies, raising children, and

cultivating relationships. It would be yet more difficult to cause another individual to engage in such activities successfully, besides simply engaging in them at all.

Despite this difficulty, I do not say that it is impossible. It might be possible, in theory, to cause people to live well using paternalistic manipulation or coercion. Besides being intuitively morally fraught, however, these are not live options for most of us in everyday situations. More realistically, it may be possible for groups of people to influence individuals to live well. Indeed, it seems likely that the activities which people value and perform are often heavily influenced by their communities and society as a whole. This is not unrelated to my social and political conclusions below in §11.9. For now, though, I focus on what an individual, alone, can do to contribute to others living well. And to repeat, it is not often that one individual has the power to cause another individual to live well.

So, the constitutive way of realizing one's own flourishing, as recommended by prudence, is not really an option for realizing others' flourishing, as recommended by morality. But there is another, less direct way to contribute to flourishing. Prudence recommends doing, or taking steps towards doing, all of the constitutive components of living well. But prudence is traditionally thought to recommend not only realizing one's ends, including living well, for a given moment but also stably and across time. The classic example of prudence is to forego present pleasure or endure present pain for the sake of more or longer pleasures in the future. So, in addition to recommending actually living well and its constituent components, prudence also recommends creating or maintaining the conditions in which one can reliably live well across time and across variations in circumstance. We can similarly realize other people's living well by contributing to the same enabling conditions for them.

In light of these observations, I propose a eudaimonist ethical theory that fundamentally recommends realizing and contributing to living well specifically by constituting and enabling it, rather than by attempting to cause it. Prudence fundamentally recommends that agents live well themselves (i.e., act so as to constitute flourishing) and that agents enable themselves to live well reliably across time and across changes in circumstance. Morality fundamentally recommends that agents enable other agents to live well reliably and, at least in special cases where it is feasible (e.g., in partial relationships), to act so as to partly constitute other agents' flourishing. Similarly, politics fundamentally recommends that political agents and institutions enable individual agents to live well reliably (and perhaps also that they constitute flourishing in special cases).

I wrote at length in previous chapters about what constitutes living well, namely the four necessary conditions of the hybrid value conception. The rest of this chapter focuses on how we enable ourselves and others to live well. First, it will be useful to say a bit more about enabling conditions in general. Then, we will want to know what conditions enable living well in particular. And finally, we will want to know how to create and maintain those flourishing-enabling conditions for ourselves and for others. I explain each of these in turn in the following sections.

11.5 Enabling Conditions in General

An enabling condition in general is a condition which makes an effect more likely or more (accessibly and robustly) possible than it otherwise would be, without necessarily causing the effect. For example, the presence of oxygen is an enabling condition for combustion: oxygen does not cause combustion—a source of heat energy does that—but oxygen makes combustion more possible. In fact, oxygen is (physically) necessary for combustion. However, enabling conditions generally need not be strictly necessary for the relevant effects. It is enough that an enabling

condition makes the effect more likely or possible. For example, a teacher's clearly articulating assignment expectations is an enabling condition for students to perform well on assignments. Having clear expectations is not causally sufficient nor strictly necessary for student success—they might fail with it or manage on their own without—but in general having clear expectations sure helps. Enabling conditions like this one can be merely practically necessary or conducive in most cases.

When it comes to enabling conditions for human actions, we may say that to enable someone is literally to make them more or better able than they otherwise would be. People can be better able to do something in at least the following three ways. In the first place, an agent is better able to φ if they are actually more likely to succeed in φ-ing in case they choose or attempt to φ. For example, if Shaq is actually more likely to make a free throw if Kobe encourages him, then Kobe will enable Shaq to make a free throw by encouraging him.

Second, an agent is better able to φ if they succeed in φ-ing in more accessible (relevant, "nearby") possible scenarios in which they choose or attempt to φ—i.e., if their success in φ-ing is more modally robust. For example, if Kramer has a key to Jerry's apartment, he will be able to eat Jerry's fruit both in possible scenarios in which Jerry's door is unlocked and in possible scenarios in which it is locked. Having the key therefore makes it more robustly possible for Kramer to eat Jerry's fruit, even if Kramer is not actually any more likely to eat Jerry's fruit—for instance, because Kramer dislikes Jerry's taste in fruit or because Jerry's door is actually always unlocked. So, Jerry can enable Kramer to eat his fruit by giving Kramer a key to the apartment.

Third, an agent is better able to φ if there are more accessible possible scenarios (or if possible scenarios are more accessible) in which they choose or attempt to φ. The kind of accessibility I have in mind is the kind involved in distinguishing mere possibilities which will

never be actual from those possibilities which can be actualized. For instance, it is possible, in some sense, for me to be six inches taller than I actually am, but that possibility will never be actualized—it is inaccessible to us in the actual world. Similarly, it was possible, in some sense, for Napoleon to win the Battle of Waterloo, but that possibility too is no longer accessible to us in the actual world.

Turning back to ability, it may be fully possible, for example, for you to visit the new frozen yogurt place in town. If you chose to get yogurt there, you would almost certainly succeed in getting yogurt. But if you do not know about the new frozen yogurt place, the possible scenarios in which you get yogurt there are inaccessible to you. So, I can enable you to get frozen yogurt at the new place by telling you about it and thus making those possible scenarios more accessible to you—even if I do not thereby change the probability or modal robustness of your success, should you choose to get frozen yogurt, and even if I do not make you actually more likely to choose to get frozen yogurt. Making a possibility salient, removing obstacles or negative consequences to choosing it, and attaching rewards can all raise a mere possibility to the status of a live option—an option that is more accessible to the agent.

11.6 Enabling Conditions for Living Well: Security and Discretion

So much for enabling conditions generally and, more specifically, ways of enabling agents to act. Now let us turn, even more specifically, to those conditions which enable people to live well. I will describe two plausible candidates (which need not be exhaustive) of enabling conditions to which we can contribute, both on our own behalf and on behalf of other people: security and discretion.

Being secure entails having reliable access to practically necessary resources. These include, at minimum, things like food, shelter, health or healthcare, bodily integrity, information, and social networks which are necessary for most people to live and engage in activities generally. One will be even more secure, however, and better able to live well, if one also has reliable access to those resources which are practically necessary for successfully engaging in the valuable activities one values. For example, an aspiring cellist is more secure if they have reliable access to a cello and cello lessons. To be secure, it is not enough merely to have current, actual access to such resources; this access must be reliable or modally robust across possible variations in circumstance.[93] In my view, these include variations in agents' wills and in circumstances external to agents' wills—such as the presence or absence of disease, economic hardship, natural disaster, and so on.[94] Access is reliable to the extent that it cannot or will not be easily revoked or impeded by other people or by mindless natural forces. So being secure also entails being protected against interference by other agents and against misfortune (unwilled "interference" by natural forces). I will explain how we can achieve such protection in the sections to come.

Security is not strictly necessary for living well. People can overcome all manner of adversity and deprivation to thrive. Think of the struggling artist who, despite living paycheck to

[93] This is to say that security and discretion are robustly demanding goods, in Pettit's (2015) sense. Note, however, that security and discretion are not exactly the same robustly demanding goods Pettit recognizes. Moreover, whereas Pettit claims that robust attachment, virtue, and respect are themselves unconditionally, intrinsically, agent-neutrally valuable, I make no such claim here. I claim only that security and discretion are instrumentally valuable for enabling living well. Whether or not they are intrinsically valuable is an issue I do not take up here.

[94] In claiming that unwilled, natural forces and fortune are relevant to security, I am again departing from Pettit (1997; 2012; 2015). Pettit's theory of freedom as non-domination focuses on robust non-interference only across variations in the wills of other agents. One can be perfectly free, in Pettit's sense, while being severely constrained by natural forces. Since I am not theorizing *freedom*, I am not strictly disagreeing with Pettit—I am changing the topic. But this change of topic is warranted: natural forces are a widespread obstacle to living well, as are other wills. And while we can never perfectly secure anyone against the vicissitudes of fortune, we can definitely increase people's security from natural forces and thereby render them significantly better able to live well.

paycheck, makes wonderful art; or the serf who loves their family and community, and takes pride in their labor, despite living at the command of a lord in a time with low life expectancy. Nevertheless, security sure helps: it is practically necessary for most people in most cases. Having one's basic needs reliably met frees one to pursue more valuable activities that do not necessarily advance one's mere survival. It is much easier to study Shakespeare when you are not concerned for where your next meal is coming from, much easier to climb a mountain when you are not worried that someone will push you off. Having the relevant kinds of resources makes one more likely to succeed in one's valued, valuable activities and having them more robustly makes one's success more robust. And feeling secure or being aware of one's security might make certain possible ways of living well more accessible to an agent, by removing disincentives to pursue certain valuable activities and making them live options. For example, someone may only consider having and raising a child when they are financially and medically secure. So, in all these ways, having security enables people to live well.

The second enabling condition is discretion. Having discretion entails having a reliably wide range of permissible and viable options of valuable activities to pursue and ways in which to pursue them. These options must be possible and accessible to the agent—that is what makes them options at all. Moreover, they must be viable options. A "choice" at gunpoint between "your money or your life" is not a real choice, since keeping your money is not a viable option when it comes at the cost of your life. In general, attaching disproportionately bad consequences to options renders them unviable. The mugger's threatened violence is one example of an imposed bad consequence, but bad consequences can also take the form of social or legal sanction. If it were illegal to distill whiskey (and this prohibition were enforced), then the valuable activity of whiskey-making could scarcely be considered a viable option. Similarly, if a woman would be

ridiculed or shunned (or worse) for pursuing her own career rather than marrying and having children, her possible career might also fail to be a viable option. Furthermore, these options must also be ethically (including morally) permissible to count as contributing to discretion. If, for whatever reason, you are morally required to do one thing, like work for the Red Cross, then it does not matter how many other valuable activities are available to you in other senses. It would be perverse to describe them as real options and to describe you as free to choose, since you cannot be (normatively) expected to do anything but work for the Red Cross. To have discretion, then, is to have a wide range of such permissible, viable options and, again, to have this wide range reliably across variations in circumstance. An option set is more robust the harder it is for other people or mindless natural forces to significantly reduce the size of the set.

Discretion, like security, is not strictly necessary for living well. A person could have a task or role in society assigned to them and still live well, so long as the task is valuable, they value it, and they perform it successfully. Such is the model of many a utopia. Given the plasticity of human preferences, our ability to psychologically adapt to our circumstances, such scenarios are not even especially far-fetched. Someone who has little real choice but to take over the family business may value it and succeed at it, either out of adaptive preference or simply luck. The problem is that such a person's flourishing relies on an unreliable mechanism. There are plenty of other people who have no skill or taste for the activities they are forced to perform. The heir to the family business may just as easily have been one of them and, since people's values commonly change over time, may yet turn out to be one of them in the future. Discretion, then, is not strictly necessary for living well, but it sure helps: it is practically necessary for most people in most cases. Having more options of valuable activities increases the likelihood of valuing at least some valuable activity. Having more available ways of pursuing a given valuable activity increases the

likelihood that one will succeed in it if one tries. So having a wide range of options makes one more likely to live well, and having those options robustly increases the robustness of one's living well. Moreover, to have more options of valuable activities and ways to pursue them just is to have greater access to possible scenarios in which one chooses to live well (or to do things which constitute living well). So, in all these ways, having discretion too enables people to live well.

These two enabling conditions, security and discretion, are not entirely unrelated. Indeed, they typically travel together: the globally affluent and powerful tend to have both to a high degree; the globally poor and oppressed tend not to have either. Having reliable access to important resources and protection against interference opens doors, generating options and making existing options more viable. Engaging in an expensive or risky activity like Formula 1 racing, for instance, is only a viable option for those with resources to spare. On the flip side, many people's options are limited precisely because other agents interfere or threaten to interfere by positively harming or by withholding crucial resources, as witnessed by, e.g., slavery, oppressive caste systems, and mass incarceration. Nevertheless, security and discretion are conceptually distinct and, as we will see below in §11.8.4, can sometimes pull in different directions.

For this reason, as we turn to how to create and maintain the enabling conditions of security and discretion, it is important to keep in mind that they come in degrees. One can have more or fewer resources and options; one can have these more or less robustly. In general, having more security or more discretion better enables one to live well. But this is not to say we should attempt to maximize the instantiation of these enabling conditions. There may be diminishing returns. Indeed, it seems possible to have enough security and discretion. How much is enough? As a heuristic, I suggest we have enough security and discretion when we feel like we have enough, when we feel free to do as we please, within reason, and free from worrying about basic needs or

interference by others.[95] Speaking as one of them, I can say, again, that many of the globally affluent, privileged, and powerful already experience security and discretion to this sufficient degree. We are highly enabled to live well. The question, then, is how to create and maintain such enviable conditions for others more generally.

11.7 Creating Security and Discretion: Prudence and Morality

Our proposed eudaimonist ethical theory fundamentally recommends constituting and enabling flourishing. We have just described enabling conditions in general and specifically identified two conditions, security and discretion, which significantly enable people to live well. Now we want to know how we can realize these flourishing-enabling conditions for ourselves and for others, for the purpose of giving more content to our ethical theory in the form of derivative recommendations. Enabling people to live well is one of our fundamental ethical goals, but how, more precisely, do we do that?

In the first place, we can enable ourselves to live well in some very familiar and paradigmatically prudential ways. We can maintain or increase our own security by, e.g., saving and investing money, purchasing insurance, and cultivating special relationships of mutual support. These behaviors make it so that, even if one's circumstances change, one still has access to resources necessary for living well. We can maintain or increase our discretion by, e.g., learning new information, training in new skills, and maintaining our mental and physical health through diet, exercise, medicine, and therapy. These behaviors make available new options of valuable

[95] This is similar to Pettit's (2012) "eyeball test" for a sufficient degree of freedom as non-domination. Non-domination (i.e., robust non-interference across possible variations in the wills of other agents) comes in degrees. How much is enough? Pettit's answer: when every member in a society can look any other member in the eye, without bowing or scraping, without fear or shame. The heuristic suggests that there is sufficient non-domination when everyone feels or recognizes that there is sufficient non-domination, and perhaps when this shared recognition is common knowledge.

activities to perform or keep existing options available, and those numerous options collectively ensure a reliably wide range of viable options across changes in circumstance. Prudence will often derivatively recommend all of these flourishing-enabling behaviors. But of course, there are limits to how much security and discretion we can achieve for ourselves as individuals. I may look after my money and my health as wisely as possible, but an unexpected stock market crash or serious injury could still undo my prudential efforts. To increase security and discretion even further, an individual is going to require other people who can step in and help when the individual's circumstances change drastically. This is where morality comes in.

Morality fundamentally recommends enabling other people to live well. And so, morality will derivatively recommend that agents contribute to one another's security and discretion. It is easy enough in some cases for one person to actually contribute to another's access to resources by simply transferring those resources—for instance, by lending someone a philosophy textbook—or by at least refraining from hindering the other person's access. It is also easy enough in some cases for one person to actually contribute to another's having a wide set of viable options by simply not preventing them from choosing any option—for instance, by refraining from threatening, deceiving, or coercing the other party. But the security and discretion that enable flourishing require that these actual goods be had reliably and robustly. So how does one person provide these robust goods for another?

For a start, one person can be robustly disposed to help (when necessary) and not to harm or interfere with the other person—that is, robustly disposed across possible variations in interests, desires, and external circumstances. I do not contribute to your robust security and discretion if I just happen to help you on a whim or if I refrain from harming you because I cannot be bothered right now. My assistance is more robust if I help you because you are my friend and because I am

committed to helping my friends. In that case, in all the possible scenarios where we are friends, I will still help you—though the same may not be true of those scenarios where we are not friends. My assistance is more robust still if it is not based on partiality but rather, for example, a commitment to certain impartial norms[96] to help and not interfere with other people, in all circumstances, regardless of who they are (absent relevant competing considerations).[97] If I am committed to complying with these impartial, prosocial norms, then I will refrain from interfering with you in many possible scenarios and help you in many possible scenarios in which you need help—even in many of those scenarios where it is my desire or in my interest to do otherwise. In that case, I contribute to your robust security and discretion.

That said, my commitment to prosocial norms alone does not guarantee you a satisfactory degree of security or discretion. I am but one person. I cannot provide you with resources in all those possible scenarios in which you need them because, in some of those scenarios, I will not be in a position to do so, e.g., by being absent or in need of resources myself. Moreover, there are many other agents who might interfere with your access to resources or options, even if I do not. A satisfactory degree of security and discretion for any one individual will require that very many people are robustly disposed to help and not interfere with that individual. This will be realized if, among members of a society, there is widespread commitment to and compliance with the kinds of prosocial norms just mentioned. But in that case, and as long as these prosocial norms are impartial—i.e., they recommend helping and not harming everyone, not just one's friends—then

[96] I use "norms" to designate abstract rules—including prescriptions and prohibitions—as well as recommendations and evaluative standards. When certain abstract norms are internalized or accepted by a society, they are social norms; when internalized or accepted by an individual, they are personal norms. Internalization or acceptance is some function of people's attitudes and behavior. See, e.g., Brennan et al. (2013).

[97] Such a robust, impartial commitment could also be described as moral virtue or respect for persons, in contrast to robust, partial attachment (cp. Pettit 2015).

not just that individual, but everyone in that society will have security and discretion to a higher degree. Each individual contributes to every other's security and discretion by being robustly disposed to help and not interfere with other people.

This, then, is the core of how we morally contribute to others living well: we help them and do not interfere with them out of robust commitment to prosocial norms. This contributes to their security and discretion (i.e., reliable access to crucial resources and to viable, permissible options), which in turn enables them to pursue the valuable activities they value. Therefore, for the sake of the fundamental moral end of enabling flourishing, morality will derivatively recommend compliance with some relevant set of prosocial norms. And so, I will henceforth describe these prosocial norms as "moral norms."[98]

But a glaring question remains: just what are the relevant moral norms in more detail? On the face of it, there are many different possible moral systems. If we are quite permissive in our use of the word, "moral," then, in addition to more familiar moral systems which recommend ways of helping and not harming people, there will also be, for example, the "moralities" of slave societies, ascetic communities, or warrior cultures. Even on a narrower construal, there are many variations in moral systems. Some moral systems of norms may forbid lying in any and all circumstances, others may permit it in very many cases. Some may permit abortion, others may forbid it; some may forbid abortion only in the third trimester, others sooner.

[98] Two notes about calling these norms "moral." First, this is not to beg the question about the requirements and recommendations of morality, as if these norms were fundamentally "moral" independently of the present eudaimonist framework. It does match our pre-theoretical expectations to call these prosocial norms "moral," but this is not why I am doing so. I am deriving their status as "moral" from the eudaimonist framework. Second, though these individual, interpersonal norms are appropriately described as "moral," they are not the sole purview of morality alone. As I explain in §§11.9-10, prudence will also likely recommend compliance with moral norms for the sake of securing other people's compliance and politics will recommend ways of coordinating, enforcing, and collectively satisfying moral norms.

It is important to narrow down the field of options since it will not contribute greatly to anyone's security or discretion if the individual members of a society are robustly complying with vastly diverse moral systems of norms. If you cannot be relatively certain of the precise contours of another person's moral commitments, then you cannot adequately rely on them to help you or not interfere with you. Security and discretion require coordination: it must be a matter of common awareness which moral norms individuals are committed to complying with. And since it is not feasible to coordinate individually with every person with whom we might interact, it will best realize security and discretion if all the members of a society follow more or less the same, predictable constellation of moral norms. So, again, which norms should we follow?

11.8 Constraints on Moral Systems of Norms

11.8.1 Duties of Aid and Non-Interference

We can narrow down the field of options of moral systems of norms by remembering the purpose for which a moral system of norms was introduced. The aim is to create robust security and discretion, the enabling conditions for living well, through common awareness of general compliance with those moral norms. Compliance with a set of norms can only contribute to robust security and discretion if those norms include relatively stringent (though not necessarily exceptionless) negative duties against interference with other agents and positive duties of assistance to other agents in need. And per our earlier assumption (§11.2.5), morality is fundamentally impartially concerned with everyone's flourishing, not just the flourishing of some particular class of people. So, we can rule out the "moral" norms of slave societies or warrior cultures which lack these requirements to help and not harm other people (at least certain other

people). A moral system of norms must be "moral" in the more restrictive, fundamentally impartial sense of the word.

11.8.2 Stringency of Individual Norms

We can also use the aim of the moral system of norms—to enable living well—to render more precise our duties to help and not harm other agents. Intuitively, these include duties against coercion, deception, and theft, as well as duties to provide resources like food, shelter, healthcare, information, etc. (or exchangeable equivalents like money) to other agents who are in need. But how stringent should such duties be? For example, should a rule against lying admit of exceptions or not? If so, when and of what kind? The answer is that we should prefer those norms which better enable people to live well, i.e., those which better contribute to security and discretion. Will people have more reliable access to resources, or more viable, permissible options, under general compliance with an exceptionless prohibition against lying or with a general prohibition with exceptions for those lies which help or avoid harming people in other ways, like the lie to the murderer at the door or a lie to bolster a friend's confidence to pursue their passion? This is, at least in part, an empirical matter. The epistemically best way to answer the question is to try out both norms and observe the results. But short of that, we can make an educated guess. Intuitively, we will be better enabled to live well under the less stringent norm than the exceptionless one. It is clear that we will have more permissible options under the system with exceptions, so we will have more discretion. And this does not seem to be offset by a loss of security. In fact, the latter norm might increase security, if we are permitted or even encouraged to lie to prevent worse interference like murder.

We can apply the same method in other cases. Should the moral norms permit or forbid abortion? To answer this question, we must know whether people will have more security or discretion under general compliance with a norm permitting abortion or to a norm forbidding it. It is clear that a norm forbidding abortions would reduce many women's discretion: in possible scenarios in which a woman becomes pregnant, whether through consensual sex or through rape, she would be required to carry the fetus to term, even if doing so interfered with her pursuit of the activities she values. It is also clear that total prohibition of abortion would diminish women's security: in possible scenarios in which pregnancy threatens a woman's life or health, she could not receive necessary medical treatment. So, unless forbidding abortion somehow also increases people's security and discretion in other, comparable ways, we should prefer a moral system of norms which permits abortion rather than forbids it. Of course, the relevant norms could be more fine-grained, rendering abortion permissible in some cases and not in others. To select among these norms, we might consider whether or at what stage of development a fetus counts as a moral patient, also deserving of security. I will not wade into that issue here. For now, it is enough to see how the process of selecting moral norms, and thus improving moral systems, will go: determine whether general compliance with one norm better contributes to security and discretion than general compliance with another. When it is not feasible to determine this empirically, we can make an educated guess on the basis of what we do know about the world and human psychology.

11.8.3 Interactions Between Norms

I have so far talked about comparing individual norms to one another on the basis of how well general compliance with each will enable living well. Strictly speaking, this is an oversimplification. The messy reality is that we will have to compare entire systems of norms—

or at least mid-sized subsystems of norms—since individual norms can interact with one another for better or for worse. Consider, for example, the relatively relaxed obligations between nieces/nephews and aunts/uncles in line with social norms currently widely accepted in the U.S. Aunts and uncles here are not typically expected to play a large part in the rearing of their nieces and nephews, and, correspondingly, nieces and nephews are not typically expected to defer to their aunts and uncles or to care for their aunts and uncles in old age. It is easy to imagine norms which create more stringent duties of mutual obligation between these relatives; indeed, such norms might be in place in other cultures.

How do we decide between more relaxed and more stringent norms? On their own, it seems like more relaxed norms increase discretion while decreasing security—a mixed bag. But there is little point in considering them individually, since these norms are intimately bound up with other norms governing other sorts of relations. The relaxed norms in the U.S. do not in practice seem to negatively impact security very much, since we have more stringent norms governing, e.g., the obligations between parents/legal guardians and children, as well as expectations between unrelated close friends. General compliance with these other, more stringent social norms picks up some of the slack in security from the relaxed materteral and avuncular norms. On the other hand, more stringent norms governing relations between aunts/uncles and nieces/nephews need not negatively affect security or discretion if the burdens associated with caring for extended family members are typically distributed across larger numbers of people, e.g. grandparents, cousins, in-laws, etc. At the end of the day, these two kinds of subsystems of familial norms seem roughly on a par, merely different ways of organizing social relations. Either scheme seems to increase security on the whole more than it decreases discretion. But we can only determine the true impact of, and thus fruitfully compare, individual norms in their broader contexts.

11.8.4 Balancing Security and Discretion

We can start to see from the above examples how security and discretion pull in different directions. On the one hand, we want our moral norms to require helpful actions and forbid harmful actions for the purpose of realizing security. On the other hand, requirements and prohibitions tend to reduce discretion, since they reduce people's permissible options. To be sure, it is not as if morally forbidding violence reduces discretion simply in virtue of closing the option to engage in the activity of violence—presumably, violence is not valuable (outside of certain contexts like sport). However, there may be ways of pursuing valuable activities which, in some possible scenarios, instrumentally require violence, e.g., resisting injustice or establishing a people's independence. Even if a moral prohibition on violence is, on the whole, better for enabling living well, it nevertheless comes at the cost of some discretion. How, then, do we resolve the tension between realizing security and realizing discretion? This is where we should remember that the goal is not to maximize the realization of one or the other, but to realize both to a sufficient degree—ideally, to realize each to whatever degree is typically practically necessary for people to live well. Above, I offered the heuristic for sufficiency that we have enough security and discretion when we feel like we have enough and therefore feel that there is little cause to worry.

Using this heuristic, we can safely say that it is possible to achieve a sufficient level of each, security and discretion, for the same people at the same time: the globally affluent, privileged, and powerful are proof of that. In many places in the U.S., for example, there is enough general compliance with moral norms against interference that many (though not nearly enough) people do not often feel fear of being seriously harmed or thwarted by others (except in the manner of an acceptable level of reasonably fair competition, e.g., in business or in sport). There is enough general compliance with moral norms recommending assistance—at least with norms for the

partial treatment of friends and family, if not with norms for the impartial treatment of total strangers—that many of us do not worry anxiously about changes in fortune. Yet many of these same people probably do not often feel thwarted by morality itself, as if their own moral norms were the main thing standing between them and happiness. This is evidence that it is possible to strike an appropriate balance between requirements and prohibitions on the one hand and permissions on the other. We can have both security and discretion to the degree that it feels like enough. Doubtless this is made possible, in part, by the fact that security and discretion can enhance one another.

11.8.5 Permissiveness

The need for balance between security and discretion, for moderation in the stringency of duties, entails at least one other noteworthy kind of constraint on the moral norms we should adopt—and hence a constraint on our overall ethical theory. The constraint is that moral systems of norms must be fairly permissive on the whole. They must not, for instance, permit just one or only a small handful of actions all the time, as do simple versions of maximizing act consequentialism. If one is required at all times to maximize expected value—even to maximize human flourishing—then one's own ability to live well will be easily compromised by the rapidly changing needs, interests, and circumstances of other people. Since each of us can intervene to help people globally at any time, it is likely that we would often be required to do so.[99] This will be true even if the consequentialist duty is supplemented with non-consequentialist constraints, or

[99] Singer (1972) emphasizes the ease with which we can now intervene to help others in the globalized world. He argues that any plausible moral theory will require significant contributions to global aid efforts, but the implications will be especially demanding for some theories, such as Singer's maximizing utilitarianism.

agent-centered restrictions,[100] against certain means like killing or stealing. The potential burden of the positive duty to maximize value would still be too high for people to reliably pursue their own valuable activities. What we need are agent-centered prerogatives or for positive duties of assistance to be imperfect duties. More generally, our moral system of norms should still, most of the time, leave us many options of ways to pursue valued, valuable activities. The moral norms can still be demanding in the sense that, in some rare cases, they may require or at least recommend significant self-sacrifice. But if we are to have robust discretion—including protection against undue "interference" by morality itself—then these cases must be rare enough that we need not usually worry.

We have, then, an overall criterion for the selection of moral norms to adopt as a society: in general, we should prefer those moral norms general compliance with which, in conjunction with other accepted norms, will better realize security and discretion, and hence better enable living well. At least, we should prefer those which realize these enabling conditions to a sufficient degree. From this general standard, along with empirical assumptions, we can derive some more specific constraints, such as the constraint that the moral norms be permissive enough for people to reliably pursue their valued activities. All of this, however, still leaves the "correct" moral system of norms underdetermined. Multiple systems might contribute equally or sufficiently well to security and discretion. We would have little reason to prefer any such system to any other. But again, a society needs to coordinate around roughly the same single system of norms in order to realize security and discretion. Where moral theory gives way to multiple options, therefore, social and political coordination will be necessary to narrow the field down further.

[100] For agent-centered restrictions and prerogatives, see, e.g., Scheffler (1982).

11.9 Creating Security and Discretion: Politics

As morality fundamentally recommends that individuals enable one another to live well, so normative political theory fundamentally recommends that political agents and institutions enable people to live well. And thus, politics will derivatively recommend ways of contributing to people's security and discretion. One way political institutions contribute to these enabling conditions is by precisifying and codifying moral norms and individuals' standing moral obligations to help and not interfere with others. For example, legal systems determine property rights; define crimes of harm or injury, recklessness, and breach of contract; and sometimes stipulate who is to help or provide for whom, e.g., through systems of legal guardianship and duty to rescue ("Good Samaritan") laws. To be sure, moral norms are often socially coordinated informally and non-politically as well, as people and groups work out their expectations of one another through negotiation, gossip, praise, blame, etc. There is no tool like politics and law, however, to create common awareness of relatively explicit moral expectations at a large scale.

Political institutions can play other important roles in the enabling of flourishing. We have already explained how commonsense moral principles of assistance and non-interference play a role: widespread commitment to some appropriate moral system of norms makes access to resources and options, hence security and discretion, more robust. Political coordination, however, can render these more robust still. For example, reliable legal enforcement of at least some of our most stringent moral obligations—norms against physical injury and theft, for instance—will make agents that much more likely to comply, either through direct prevention or deterrence. Even in possible scenarios in which other individuals are not personally committed to moral norms, many will comply with those moral norms under threat of legal sanction. Legal enforcement provides agents with reasons of self-interest to comply with moral norms, on top of whatever more

altruistic motivations they might have. This renders non-interference, and hence security and discretion, more robust.[101]

Politics can also make compliance with positive moral duties of assistance more robust. In part, it can accomplish this by reliably enforcing the aforementioned laws concerning guardianship, duty to rescue, and so on, but this is only a small part. Political institutions can make interpersonal assistance much more robust by directly coordinating provision of resources like education and healthcare. According to the appropriate moral norms, we are all individually and collectively required to aid and provide for those who need it. Scattered individual contributions are helpful, but coordinated, collective action is far more efficient and reliable. A society can politically coordinate to create social schemes for the provision of utilities, transportation, communication, childcare, education, healthcare, insurance, unemployment benefits, retirement benefits, disaster relief, and so on.

Determining the best version of any such scheme of provision—e.g., whether fully private, fully public, or in between—is a matter for political theory and relevant empirical disciplines such as political science and economics, so I will not address that here. But as long as there is some such successful scheme of provision, and people reliably contribute to it, either on moral or self-interested grounds, then the relevant resources will be provided to all even more robustly than they would have been with full moral compliance by uncoordinated individuals alone. For example, under full individual moral compliance, individuals will care for the elderly who need care and this care will be somewhat robust. But under, say, a cooperative scheme of social security and professional elderly caregiving, this care is even more robust. One or a few people shirking their moral duties would not then prevent someone from receiving care; it would require a breakdown

[101] Pettit (2012; 2015) makes much the same point, though he focuses on robust non-interference as constituting freedom and respect, not security or discretion.

in the whole system, including changes in a great number of wills and circumstances. So, in addition to determining and enforcing moral norms of assistance and non-interference, political institutions are a great tool for the collective satisfaction of those moral norms—in good cases, much more efficient and reliable than uncoordinated individual satisfaction. And politics will presumably derivatively recommend all of these ways of contributing to security and discretion for the sake of enabling people to live well.

11.10 Consequentialism or Non-Consequentialism

To summarize my proposal, I have put forward a eudaimonist ethical theory that fundamentally recommends enabling and, in special cases, constituting human flourishing. Prudence fundamentally recommends that individuals (constitutively) live well and enable themselves to live well in the future, and thus derivatively recommends that individuals engage in familiar activities of self-care in order to maintain or increase their robust security and discretion. Meanwhile, morality fundamentally recommends that agents enable other people to live well (and constitute certain other people's flourishing, in special cases like relationships of partiality). For the sake of enabling flourishing, morality derivatively recommends that agents contribute to others' security and discretion by robustly complying with prosocial, "moral" norms of assistance and non-interference. Prudence is also likely to recommend compliance with these moral norms, insofar as an individual's compliance is necessary to secure others' compliance and thereby increase the individual's own security and discretion along with everyone else's. And since politics also fundamentally recommends enabling people's flourishing, it will derivatively recommend political actions and institutions that render compliance with moral norms, and thus security and

discretion, more robust still, for example, by codifying, enforcing, and efficiently collectively fulfilling these moral norms.

As I explained in §11.3, this ethical theory, like any eudaimonist theory, is teleological. This does not necessarily imply that it is a form of consequentialism. As I see it, we are free either to construe it as a kind of consequentialism or not. Having laid out the theory on its own terms, I am not sure that anything hangs on its falling under one label or another. But it will be useful and illuminating to compare and contrast my "hybrid value-enabling eudaimonism" ("enabling eudaimonism," for short) with paradigmatically consequentialist versions of eudaimonism.

11.10.1 Enabling vs. Causing

The biggest difference between my proposed eudaimonism and a standard consequentialist construal is my suggestion that ethics fundamentally recommends *enabling* instead of *causing* people to live well. I described enabling generally, as distinct from causing, in §11.5. Any definition of causation would be controversial, but we can at least acknowledge some canonical features of causation in order to drive home the distinction between enabling and causing. First, you can enable an outcome which does not actually occur, but you can only be said to cause an outcome that actually occurs. Second, you can enable an outcome without making it actually more likely to occur, e.g., by making it more robustly or more accessibly possible. By contrast, it is a characteristic feature (if not a necessary condition) of causes that they increase the probability of their effects. To be sure, some enabling conditions may also be (partial or contributory) causes and some causes may also be enabling conditions.

The grounds for my suggestion in §11.4 to focus on enabling, rather than causing, were that we cannot typically cause other people to live well but we can enable our own and others'

flourishing in recognizably prudential and moral ways. These observations suggest enabling eudaimonism but do not rule out causal consequentialism. In light of the limitations to causing flourishing, enabling flourishing might be the most we can do to causally contribute to it. And so, if we construed eudaimonism along consequentialism's standard causal lines, it would also recommend enabling people to live well, though only instrumentally, as a partial causal contribution to flourishing. We can nevertheless tell enabling eudaimonism and "causal eudaimonism" apart by their divergent, derivative recommendations about certain kinds of cases.

First, since the final value is in the flourishing and not the flourishing-enabling conditions, causal eudaimonism would only recommend enabling someone to live well insofar as those enabling conditions made a causal difference to the person actually flourishing. If we somehow knew either that a given individual would live well anyway, whether or not we enabled them, or that they would not live well, even were they enabled to do so, we would have little to no reason to enable their flourishing. To do so would be a waste of resources better deployed elsewhere, on behalf of someone to whose flourishing it might make a difference. By contrast, enabling eudaimonism recommends enabling everyone to live well, whether or not they succeed in actually living well.

Second, in those comparatively rare cases where it is possible to (partially) cause someone to live well over and above merely enabling them, causal eudaimonism recommends taking those extra causal steps. For example, if an individual were highly able to live well but lacked internal motivation to do so, causal eudaimonism could easily recommend externally motivating them by offering them monetary or other rewards to live well. By contrast, enabling eudaimonism does not recommend trying to cause flourishing over and above enabling people to live well. If someone is

sufficiently able to live well but chooses not to do so, that is their choice, and enabling eudaimonism does not, as a rule, recommend that others causally intervene.

This is not the place to decide whether, in such cases, the verdicts of enabling eudaimonism or those of causal eudaimonism are more plausible or attractive. It is enough for present purposes to show how enabling eudaimonism diverges from a standard, causal consequentialist construal. A straightforwardly consequentialist eudaimonism would treat human flourishing as the sole ultimate end and therefore recommend causally promoting (and constituting) flourishing. Enabling eudaimonism also treats human flourishing as the ultimate end but fundamentally recommends enabling (and constituting) flourishing instead of causally promoting it.

11.10.2 Indirect Consequentialism

Observe, however, that enabling eudaimonism does derivatively recommend causally and constitutively contributing to people's security and discretion for the sake of enabling them to live well. And thus, if we were so inclined, we could construe enabling eudaimonism as a form of causal consequentialism at a slightly lower level: namely, as recommending causally promoting security and discretion (and any other flourishing-enabling conditions) instead of directly causally promoting flourishing itself. This would be an indirect form of consequentialism since it recommends causally promoting merely instrumental goods rather than—albeit for the sake of—the intrinsically good ultimate end assumed by the theory. But there is precedent for such an indirect consequentialism, including rule consequentialism (e.g., Hooker 2000) and Railton's (1984) "sophisticated" consequentialism. I have no objection at this time to construing enabling eudaimonism as an indirect version of consequentialism in this way, though neither do I see this as superior to construing enabling eudaimonism as an independent, "non-consequentialist" form

of teleological ethical theory. It may simply be a matter of book-keeping. But before concluding, allow me to further clarify enabling eudaimonism through comparison with some competing versions of consequentialism.

11.10.3 Maximizing vs. Satisficing

First, consequentialists face a choice between maximizing and "satisficing" versions of their theory. Enabling eudaimonism derivatively recommends causing flourishing-enabling conditions, but does it thereby require causing the maximal (or optimal) available degree of security or discretion, or does it only require causing these enabling conditions to some sufficient degree? Though I have not argued for it, my position has been that ethics only requires realizing people's security and discretion to some sufficient degree. It may nevertheless always be ethically good (or, correspondingly, we may always have some ethical reason) to exceed this requirement and maximize people's security and discretion, but I consider such ethical recommendations to be supererogatory.

11.10.4 Aggregative vs. Distributive

A second, related choice for consequentialists concerns the aggregation or distribution of the relevant goods between patients. Some consequentialist theories (e.g., classical utilitarianism) recommend causally promoting goods in the aggregate, regardless of which individuals possess or experience those goods. Other theories place some degree of value on the distribution of the relevant goods, e.g., considering more equal distributions to be better. I have been assuming that ethics is equally concerned with all individuals capable of living well and that individuals can have a sufficient degree of security and discretion. These assumptions suggest to me that enabling

eudaimonism should recommend, when possible, causing everyone to have a sufficient degree of security and discretion. This would prohibit increasing some people's security and discretion past the point of sufficiency at the expense of others' sufficient security and discretion, even if doing so would maximize (or optimize or sufficiently realize) security and discretion in the aggregate.

Note, however, that prioritizing individuals' sufficient security and discretion over aggregate security and discretion is not quite the same as ascribing value to equality as such. If it is not possible to give all individuals' sufficient security and discretion simultaneously, our ethical theory could recommend a number of different options: e.g., ensuring that at least as many individuals as possible have sufficient security and discretion, distributing subpar benefits to security and discretion equally across all patients, or prioritizing the security and discretion of those who have the least ("maximin"). I have not made up my mind which of these options is my own theoretical preference, at least in part because I do not feel like we actually face such a non-ideal choice situation. Realizing some people's security and discretion through committed compliance with universal and impartial moral norms tends to realize all people's security and discretion simultaneously. As a result, it is plausible that, collectively, we can go quite a long way towards realizing a sufficient degree of security and discretion for all individuals capable of living well. For now, I will leave it open to those less optimistic, or to those simply interested in non-ideal theory for theory's sake, to decide which way our ethical theory should rule in such cases.

11.10.5 Act vs. Rule Consequentialism

Third and finally, consequentialists face a canonical choice between act consequentialism and rule consequentialism, between recommending particular actions for their causal consequences or recommending types of actions for the possible causal consequences of following

or accepting certain rules. Enabling eudaimonism obviously resembles rule consequentialism in that it derivatively recommends coordinating general compliance with a system of moral norms (including rules). However, even if we construe enabling eudaimonism as a form of indirect consequentialism, it need not be specifically an indirect *rule* consequentialism. And so, enabling eudaimonism need not be subject to some familiar objections that plague rule consequentialism.

One standard objection to rule consequentialism is that it collapses, on pain of incoherence, into act consequentialism. Since consequentialism fundamentally recommends causally promoting some relevant goods, so the objection goes, then it should derivatively recommend breaking rules on particular occasions when doing so will cause more (or a sufficient amount) of those goods. There are responses available to rule consequentialists, but it is not my aim to weigh in on this dispute here. Despite their resemblance, enabling eudaimonism does not require commitment to rule consequentialism, and so the collapse objection to rule consequentialism is no objection to enabling eudaimonism.

In the first place, there is no danger that the fundamental ethical recommendation to *enable* people to live well will collapse into a direct consequentialist recommendation specifically to *cause* people to live well. These are simply two different fundamental recommendations on which we might base a eudaimonist ethical theory. The theory need not recommend enabling for the sake of causing or *vice versa*.

Furthermore, enabling eudaimonism's emphasis on committed compliance with moral norms is compatible with an indirect act consequentialist construal and not just a rule consequentialist one. Security and discretion are robustly demanding, and people's robust dispositions to comply with moral norms across various possible scenarios partly constitute these robustly demanding instrumental goods. Any disposition to fail to comply in particular scenarios

would therefore constitutively decrease people's security and discretion. It is unlikely that defecting from acceptable moral norms on particular occasions will often causally increase security and discretion enough to offset the defection's constitutive decrease in security and discretion. And thus, even an indirect act consequentialism would, in many realistic scenarios, derivatively recommend complying with moral norms.

But in those special cases where the benefits of defection to security and discretion *do* outweigh the constitutive costs, it is not implausible that enabling eudaimonism *will* recommend defection. This might occur, for example, when the moral norms in question are defective in realizing sufficient security and discretion, e.g., by restricting assistance and non-interference to a particular class of people. In that case, defections may work to change the moral norms operant in that society for the better, just as civil disobedience works to change laws. If defecting contributes to general compliance with better moral norms—those which better enable flourishing—then the causal benefit to security and discretion may indeed outweigh the constitutive cost of defection from the defective moral norms.

It should come as no surprise if enabling eudaimonism does occasionally license defection from moral norms. After all, enabling eudaimonism only derivatively recommends causing and constituting security and discretion for the sake of enabling flourishing, and only derivatively recommends committed compliance with moral norms for the sake of causing and constituting security and discretion. If breaking moral norms on particular occasions ever better serves the more fundamental aim of enabling people to live well, then enabling eudaimonism can recommend doing so. Thus, enabling eudaimonism is consistent with an indirect act consequentialist construal, despite its emphasis on committed compliance with moral norms, and so the collapse objection to rule consequentialism is no objection to enabling eudaimonism.

A second objection to standard versions of rule consequentialism is the idealization objection (Copp 2020). Rule consequentialism standardly recommends complying with the system of rules that would have the best consequences if everyone generally either accepted or complied with that system (Hooker 2000). That is, it selects the relevant system of rules based on merely possible, counterfactual scenarios, but recommends actual compliance with that system of rules. The idealization objection observes that, even if general acceptance or compliance with a given systems of rules has good consequences in counterfactual scenarios, actually complying with that system of rules might have terrible consequences in actual scenarios that lack general acceptance or compliance. It is highly implausible that we should follow some ideal rules even in the event that doing so actually has terrible consequences. So, if rule consequentialism recommends complying with rules even in those scenarios, then we should reject rule consequentialism.

Again, the rule consequentialist may be able to respond to this objection. But again, my point is that enabling eudaimonism does not hang upon any such response. Enabling eudaimonism recommends that agents actually coordinate widespread, committed compliance with a system of moral norms for the sake of constituting security and discretion. Actual coordination, rather than idealization, is the key here. Robust security and discretion require that very many individuals comply with more or less the same system of moral norms as a matter of common knowledge. Without widespread compliance, one individual's compliance with counterfactually determined rules will not greatly increase anyone's security and discretion. Indeed, a lone individual following an idiosyncratic moral code may expose themselves to others or undermine collective efforts at moral coordination, thereby decreasing their own or others' security and discretion. Enabling eudaimonism therefore does not recommend actual compliance with a system of moral norms based upon merely idealized, counterfactual compliance. It only recommends individual

compliance with moral norms as a constitutive part of, and conditional on mutual expectations of, actual widespread compliance. And it will prefer one system of moral norms over another based upon both the prospects for actual coordinated compliance with a given system and the consequences of that actual (not counterfactual) compliance in terms of security and discretion—prospects and consequences about which we might have reasonable expectations or which we might only discover in hindsight through experimentation with different moral norms.

So then, rule consequentialism is, at least at first glance, subject to the idealization objection because standard versions of rule consequentialism are idealist or possibilist in how they determine the relevant system of rules for their actual practical recommendations. Enabling eudaimonism avoids the idealization objection because it is actualist in how it determines the relevant system of moral norms for the purposes of its actual practical recommendations. More generally, the theory determines the relevant system of moral norms and recommends compliance with those norms "simultaneously," in the same possible scenario. Its actual recommendations depend on the prospects and consequences of coordinated compliance in the actual world, while its counterfactual recommendations for any given merely possible scenario depend on the prospects and consequences for coordinated compliance in that possible scenario.

Is the same actualizing (or, more generally, possibility-indexing) maneuver available to rule consequentialists? Perhaps, though it might increase the threat of collapse into act consequentialism. What matters for my purposes is that enabling eudaimonism is not subject to either the collapse objection or the idealization objection. If this means that enabling eudaimonism is more properly construed as an indirect act consequentialism, so be it. On the other hand, if rule consequentialists can overcome these objections on their own, then I have no objection to construing enabling eudaimonism as an indirect rule consequentialism instead. Of course, the point

may be moot, as we do not need to construe enabling eudaimonism as any kind of consequentialism. Wherever we stand on the application of the label, "consequentialism," it has hopefully clarified hybrid value-enabling eudaimonism to compare and contrast it with some canonical variations of consequentialism.

11.11 Conclusion: Evaluating Hybrid Value-Enabling Eudaimonism

There are at least three ways of evaluating a theory. The first is to consider the plausibility of its starting points, its first principles. The starting point for my proposed ethical theory is eudaimonism: we assume that we should try to realize human flourishing for ourselves and for others, and we look for subsidiary principles which tell us how to do that. This is a plausible starting point—it is, after all, the oldest ethical research program. And what could be more intuitive and appealing than trying to lead a good life? More specifically, we began with a substantive conception of living well, the hybrid value conception. I defended this conception of living well at length in previous chapters, and it is hopefully quite intuitive and attractive. Successfully engaging in valuable activities that you value should sound like a wonderful way to live. So far, so good for the present theory.

The second way to evaluate a theory is by its implications. From our values-based eudaimonistic starting point (and from basic empirical assumptions about the actual world and actual human psychology), we derived ethical recommendations to coordinate around and comply with certain kinds of moral norms. These norms included familiar duties to help and not harm other people: e.g., to give aid and not to lie, steal, or injure. These are commonsensical norms, the kind we are taught from childhood and the kind that still motivate many of us much of the time. They are intuitive and attractive moral norms to follow. And we can see the results of general compliance

with such norms: many of us feel very little fear on a daily basis, but instead feel quite secure and free to pursue the activities we value. This is an enviable way to live, and the moral norms recommended by our theory make it possible. Our theory therefore does well by this second criterion as well.

The third way to evaluate a theory is by the practical use we can put it to. This theory gives us an idea of what we should do here and now. We know how good things can be when people comply with the present ethical theory. The main problem is that more people do not receive these benefits, because many agents are failing to adequately comply with the same moral norms in their treatment of all other people. They help and do not harm their loved ones, their nationality, their race, their class, their gender—but not everyone else. Those of us who already substantially benefit from general compliance with moral norms should see to it that the same treatment and the same benefits are extended to others. Towards this goal, the present theory gives us a standard of evaluation of moral norms, which can serve as a basis for critique of the moral and otherwise social norms that are actually in place in our society. When we have good moral norms in our society that sufficiently enable living well, we should comply with them. But when our moral norms are sub-optimal, we can use this theory to explain why and to justify changing them at a social and political level. So, the present ethical theory does well by all three criteria of evaluation. This is a fairly programmatic outline for a more comprehensive eudaimonist ethical theory, but it is at least a very promising start.

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