

Too Much Morality

Stephen Finlay

Author's preprint version of an article published in Paul Bloomfield (ed.), *Morality and Self-Interest*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2007: 136-54. The final and definitive version is available at <http://dx.doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780195305845.003.0008>.

ABSTRACT: This paper addresses the nature and relationship of morality and self-interest, arguing that what we morally ought to do almost always conflicts with what we self-interestedly ought to do. The concept of morality is analyzed as being essentially and radically other-regarding, and the category of the supererogatory is explained as consisting in what we morally ought to do but are not socially expected to do. I express skepticism about whether there is a coherent question, 'Which ought I all things considered to obey?' and suggest that the best substitute is a question about which is more important for me. Importance for a person, in turn, is explained as dependent upon what a person is disposed to care about. I suggest that morality and self-interest are both relatively unimportant for us when compared with our other ends.

It is widely believed that morality conflicts to a significant degree with self-interest. I shall defend this ordinary wisdom, but advance a view on which the conflict is much more radical than is ordinarily thought. More precisely, I shall argue that what we morally ought to do seldom coincides with what is best or even what is good for us, on the basis of an exceptionally stringent view of our moral requirements and an unexceptional view of self-interest. I shall also suggest that while there is no simple answer to the question of which, out of morality and self-interest, ought to take priority in our lives, virtually all of us will find the requirements of morality – but those of self-interest too – excessive.

The question of the relation between morality and self-interest is for many nonphilosophers one of the most interesting and pressing questions addressed by philosophical ethics, but they are likely to find the philosophical treatment frustrating: whereas nonphilosophers intend to enquire into the relation between two largely determinate things, philosophical disagreement is largely conceptual; philosophers use

‘morality’ and (to a lesser extent) ‘self-interest’ in widely divergent ways. Most of these philosophers disclaim interest in arguing over what the words mean: you’re free to use ‘morality’ however you like, so long as you stipulate that use clearly. But you have to get the meaning of the word *right* if you intend your treatment to address the question that others mean to ask, and to minimize the risk of misleading people. I shall therefore be arguing for particular accounts of what ‘morality’ and ‘self-interest’ ordinarily mean.

‘What they ordinarily mean *for whom?*’ some may ask. I concede that ‘morality’ has had and still has many meanings and uses. The meaning I am after is that, first and foremost, which it has for me. This may seem to belie the claim to be seeking the ‘ordinary’ meaning of the word; however I believe that I inherit the meaning as a member of a language community, and that the meaning that ‘morality’ has to my ears is also the meaning it has to others in that community, even to some who have conflicting *theories* about its meaning. How far that community extends I am not sure, although it seems clear that we live in the midst of rival communities: for some it really seems that ‘morality’ has essentially to do with what some deity commands (Anscombe (1958) argues, for example, that the moral ‘ought’ has no meaning otherwise), and this sounds to my ears like a foreign usage. My account does however possess the resources to explain this divergence.

What then do we mean by ‘morality’? As I understand it, ‘morality’ has both a formal and a substantive sense. In the formal sense it has close ties to social convention, hence the etymological link to ‘mores’. A morality is a fundamentally social phenomenon: a normative code qualifies as a morality in this formal sense just in case it is a code that some society or social group *expects* (demands) people either within the

group or more universally to conform to as fundamental and overriding.¹ We speak of ‘moralities’ in this conventional sense without presupposing anything about content. But this formal characterization falls short of Morality, or what we consider to be (substantively) morally right and wrong. The fact that conservative Islamic morality sanctions stoning women for adultery, for example, doesn’t dispose us to judge that it is morally permissible for conservative Muslims to stone adultresses to death: substantive morality (or ours, at least) is not relativistic. Rather, what we judge to be morally right or wrong is fixed by the normative code that occupies this privileged status in our *own* moral community.

Being a member of a particular moral community doesn’t require actual subscription to or fundamental concern with your community’s moral code, but merely that your communicative context presupposes these social expectations² – the extreme example is the amoralist who declares, ‘I know it’s wrong, but I don’t care’, but even for most of us (as I shall argue) moral considerations are only one kind among many, lip service to their overriding status notwithstanding. This account might still seem objectionably conventionalist. First, it may seem to disallow fundamental moral breaks from one’s community.³ But by a ‘moral community’ I merely mean a group of people whose discourse presupposes a normative code as fundamental for communicative and rhetorical purposes. This might be only a subset of the actual community (at the limit it might consist of a single person, a moral revolutionary), and it is no condition on a morality that its subscribers demand it only from others in their moral community –

¹ Traffic and etiquette codes are socially demanded, but are not supposed to be fundamental and overriding: in certain circumstances violations are socially permitted, even expected. A similar view of the nature of a morality is offered in Baier 1954.

² See my 2004: by failing to relativize terms like ‘wrong’ explicitly to a particular normative code, a speaker pragmatically expresses the social expectation that a certain code is shared and fundamental.

³ Anscombe 1958.

indeed, this is not true of our own morality. Second, this account might be taken to construe the normative authority of morality as being essentially conventional: that we ought to comply *because* it is socially demanded of us. But this is a mistake: I haven't yet made any claims about the source of morality's authority for us. Social pressures to be moral are not intrinsically moral motivations, which spring rather from the incorporation of morality into our personal values.

When I ask, therefore, what we mean by 'morality', I mean *Morality*: the normative code with which my own moral community demands conformity as overriding. People in a divine-command oriented moral community might mean something different, but this essay does not address them or their usage.

There is close isomorphism between morality and self-interest. For one thing, each is a normative domain: there is a moral 'ought' and an 'ought' of self-interest (and many more besides).⁴ The concepts of morality and self-interest have both a subjective aspect, to do with motivation, and an objective aspect, involving action or behaviour. Being morally motivated to perform an action is neither necessary nor sufficient for one's action being morally right – we can do morally wrong things with the best intentions, and we can do the right thing with the worst intentions – and similarly an act's being self-interestedly motivated is neither necessary nor sufficient for it's being in one's self-interest. The claim that morality and self-interest conflict is therefore ambiguous. I am interested here in objective conflict: I claim that the actions we morally ought to perform are seldom the actions that are in our self-interest to perform. It will also turn out on my account that moral and self-interested motivation are mutually

⁴ Many philosophers claim the normative 'ought' is univocal – e.g. Thomson (forthcoming).

exclusive⁵: insofar as motivation is moral, it cannot be self-interested.⁶ Importantly, neither are they mutually exhaustive: most motivation is neither moral nor self-interested. It does not follow and is not the case that moral motivation is incompatible with objective self-interest, or that self-interested motivation is incompatible with morally right action. We *can* do the morally right thing while pursuing our own personal good (e.g. stopping a terrorist from detonating a bomb on one's flight). And some level of morally good motivation (falling short of motivation to act as we morally *ought* – i.e. as is morally *best*) is plausibly an indispensable component of our own good for at least most of us: it enriches our lives, and a life without it is likely to be petty and impoverished.⁷ But acting as we morally ought is only seldom in our own interest.

There are superficial similarities here with the thesis of Susan Wolf's seminal essay 'Moral Saints,' which also 'call[s] into question the assumption that it is always better to be morally better.'⁸ However my thesis is significantly different. First, Wolf is concerned in large part with quasi-aesthetic or third-party criticisms of moral perfection (she argues that 'there seems to be a limit to how much morality we can stand'⁹ *in other people*), rather than with the conflict between one's own morality and one's own self-interest, which is my concern here. Although Wolf characterizes the perspective from which she finds moral perfection wanting (the 'point of view of individual perfection') as concerning the good of the 'individual himself', she is explicit that this is not concerned

⁵ For an opposing view, see Badhwar 1993.

⁶ This is not to say that an action cannot be *jointly* morally and self-interestedly motivated.

⁷ Singer 1995: 230-3, Schmitz 1993. While there is an intrinsic human disposition to have concerns that extend both geopolitically and temporally beyond the self, one's own life is a small, short-lasting affair that typically spends its last few decades, if not cut short, in decline. A purely self-interested life is therefore a life of small and diminishing rewards in comparison to the rewards of a life of interest in broader and more enduring matters (pure self-interest has no 'legacy'). Our objective self-interest itself therefore counsels us not to live an overly (subjectively) self-interested life.

⁸ Wolf 1982: 438.

⁹ Wolf 1982: 423.

with a person's self-interest, but rather 'with what kind of interests it would be good for a person to have', and even allows that moral sainthood may be in the self-interest of certain kinds of people. Even then, she urges that 'we have reason not to aspire to this ideal, and that some of us would have reason to be sorry if our children aspired to and achieved it'.¹⁰ The view put forward in this essay is thus similar but not the same.¹¹

An attractively simple and intuitive approach to defining and individuating normative domains is to do so teleologically, as determined by particular ends or goals:¹² the self-interested *ought* is determined by the end of attaining one's own good, the *ought* of etiquette by the end of meeting social expectations, the epistemic *ought* by the end of having beliefs that accurately represent reality, and so on. On my teleological view of normative language, 'good' and 'ought' are to be understood as relativized to particular ends: ϕ -ing is *good* relative to some end E if and only if (and to the degree that) ϕ -ing promotes E, and one *ought* (in order that E) to ϕ if and only if ϕ -ing is, out of all available alternatives, *best* (i.e. most good) relative to E.¹³ The 'oughts' of morality and self-interest are thus to be individuated by reference to particular ends. We must look to the content of morality and self-interest.

The Content of Morality is Purely and Radically Other-Regarding

¹⁰ Wolf 1982: 436.

¹¹ For other contrasts see notes 17, 28, 43, 49 and 53.

¹² See also Ziff 1960 (chapter 6), Mackie 1977, Harman 1977. A popular rival approach appeals to 'norms' or rules (e.g. the work of Allan Gibbard, Stephen Darwall, and David Copp). But rules, unless they can be justified by appeal to something beyond themselves, are merely conventional and arbitrary. While there are rules of etiquette, chess, and inference, the reason why one *ought* to comply with them is not simply that they are rules, but in order (respectively) to meet social expectations, play chess, and preserve truth. A morality of rules accordingly lacks normative authority unless those rules have a deeper justification – i.e. serve some important end.

¹³ This begs no questions against proponents of a 'categorical' ought, because an end-relational 'ought' will be inescapable for us if the end in question is inescapable: Kant's categorical ought is therefore accommodated, as 'ought (in order that one acts only on maxims one can will as universal law)', where this end is inescapable for us insofar as we are rational beings. It is plausible that this is Kant's own view.

The realm of morality is commonly characterized in two distinctive ways: first, by a particular kind of *content*: morality is commonly seen as purely *other*-regarding, as having its basic function in placing constraints on the pursuit of one's own ends and interests for the sake of the interests of others. Second, morality is distinguished by a particular kind of *force*: it is presented as 'categorical' (demanding things of us regardless of our ends and interests), and as 'overriding' ('trumping' other sorts of considerations). Both of these elements are in need of interpretation, however: what does the other-regardingness and categoricity of morality amount to? Here I will address first the content of morality, arguing that it is indeed *purely and essentially* other-regarding, concerned only with the interests of others, and then consider an objection to this view based on morality's force. I then argue that morality is *radically* other-regarding, championing others' interests without mercy for the self.

Practically everybody agrees that other-regarding considerations have a central place in morality – paradigms of morally right behaviour are acts that directly benefit others (e.g. the story of the good Samaritan) while the paradigms of immorality are acts that directly harm others (e.g. genocide, torture) – but opinions divide as to whether these exhaust its area of concern.¹⁴ Here I'll briefly offer some considerations that weigh in favour of a view of morality as purely and essentially other-regarding. Morality may be thought to heed the interests of the self in two ways; (1) positively: there may be actions that we have a moral duty or morally ought to perform *for our own sakes*: that is, duties to ourselves; (2) negatively: moral demands may be limited/ constrained in certain ways that protect our interests (e.g. we morally ought to help the poor, but are not obliged to do so to the extent of making ourselves destitute). In addressing whether

¹⁴ E.g. the discussions of Frankena 1963, Falk 1963.

morality is *purely and essentially* other-regarding I am concerned only with positive consideration of the self; negative consideration is relevant rather to the question of how far our other-regarding obligations extend.

Moral duties to oneself are sometimes invoked in order to protect us from the extreme self-abnegating demands of others' interests. On this view I'm not morally obligated to expend all my resources of time, money, assets, and energy in helping all those in desperate need of help, because I am morally obligated to myself to preserve my life, pursue my own projects, and so forth.¹⁵ But if this were the case, then self-sacrifice beyond this limit, wherever it lies, would be *morally wrong*. To my ear it is absurd to condemn a person as *immoral* because he sacrificed too much for the sake of others – unless some others were somehow harmed by that sacrifice.¹⁶ Some might think it irrational or foolish, for example, should one be trapped in a burning and overcrowded building, to refrain from fighting towards the exit in order that others might escape, but it is contrary to our ordinary grasp of the meaning of 'moral' to suggest that such behaviour is immoral or morally wrong. It seems rather a classic case of supererogation: going (commendably, from a moral point of view) 'beyond the call of duty.' Morality is not properly conceived, for example, as directing us to balance our interests against those of others, because of this basic asymmetry: supposing there is a morally correct balance to strike, deviations to the benefit of the self are appropriately deemed immoral, while deviations to the benefit of others are not. (Standard utilitarianism, which bids us count ourselves as morally worth no more but *no less* than anyone else, falls afoul of this

¹⁵ E.g. Hampton 1993, 1997; Rogers 1997; Rand 1964.

¹⁶ Criticism of the philanthropist Zell Kravinsky (see below), centers on the charge that his sacrifices are harming his family and friends.

point,¹⁷ although it largely concurs with me about the radicalness of morality's other-regarding demands.) It is quite compatible with this view that we may be subject to some moral obligations to take care of ourselves, because we may need to do so in order to be better able to promote the interests of others. Suicide is generally morally wrong, for example, for reasons that are as other-regarding as any.¹⁸

The usual objection to the claim that morality is purely other-regarding is that this is absurdly, perversely self-abnegating.¹⁹ This is motivated by consideration of morality's characteristic categorical force. Indeed, the combination of morality's content and force is at first glance troubling, suggesting an extreme devaluation of the self according to which ultimately only others matter, and others' needs must always be placed above one's own. This has led commonsense morality to be condemned as perverse by a number of thinkers. As I observed, however, the nature of this categorical force is in need of interpretation: the objection construes this force in a particular *rationalist* way. The moral perspective is thereby construed as either (1) simply constitutive of the overall perspective of deliberation/ practical reason as such (so that the moral 'ought' is simply the all-things-considered 'ought', or ought-simpliciter, or (2) a privileged normative perspective that uniquely enjoys rational priority over all others. In either case no considerations can trump or override moral considerations. While a few philosophers champion the radical position that some extreme sort of self-abnegation is rationally required of us,²⁰ it is widely believed that reason also enjoins us to a healthy concern for our own interests: some even claim that this exhausts the

¹⁷ Contrast Wolf 1982: 436-7.

¹⁸ Some have argued on similar grounds that the morally best course of conduct is a quite extensive pursuit of one's narrowly-conceived personal advantage (e.g. Adam Smith, Bernard Mandeville, Ayn Rand), but this is implausible.

¹⁹ E.g. Rand 1964, Falk 1963, Rogers 1997, Hampton 1993.

²⁰ Kagan 1989, Singer 1995.

dictate of reason. Many philosophers therefore offer theories sweetening the content of morality by including duties to self and self-regarding constraints on duties to others, and others try to reconcile other-regarding morality and self-interest by interpreting other-regarding morality as nothing but the counsel of enlightened self-interest.

On the view I am advancing, self-regarding considerations do not belong in what is ordinarily meant by ‘morality’. Is this view then perversely self-abnegating? It is so only if it accepts the rationalist interpretation of morality’s categorical force – which I do not.²¹ Morality is only one kind of practical consideration, one normative point of view among many, without any special rational authority. It is purely other-regarding simply because this is its essential character, and its relation to other normative domains is complex, not that of simple supremacy. The categorical force of morality is a social and pragmatic or rhetorical phenomenon rather than a rational one; we can understand it by looking to the *formal* characterization of morality above. Moral demands are ‘inescapable’ (not contingent on a person’s intentions or desires) just because they arise from ends that the moral community demands people respect as fundamental and overriding – in other words it is moral criticism, not the authority of moral reasons, that is inescapable.²² There is no need to suppose, therefore, that it is a conceptual truth that morality is rationally overriding.

It is a widespread view among philosophers, however, that morality is rationally overriding and trumps all other considerations. Many think this overridingness is what we should take as focal in the concept of morality:²³ the role of other-regarding considerations would then be a contingent detail of content. But this fails to capture the

²¹ Samuel Scheffler (1992: 25-7) provides an excellent overview of the options here.

²² These two senses of categoricity are famously distinguished in Foot 1972. See also Brink 1992.

²³ E.g. Hill 1997, see also Frankena’s survey (1963: 4).

ordinary concept of morality: it does not seem incoherent to ask yourself seriously, “Why should I be moral/ do the morally right thing?”, to judge yourself to lack sufficient reason for being moral, or to find the pinnacle of moral virtue to be unworthy of your aspirations and encouragement.²⁴ This does not prove that morality lacks overriding normative authority, but it does mean that it would be a substantive rather than a conceptual truth that morality is overriding were it in fact the case. On the other hand, the idea that (e.g.) gratuitous cruelty could turn out to be morally right seems (absent some story about how it would actually be beneficial to others) quite incoherent.²⁵ Nothing deters people from the theory that morality is defined by the command of God, for example, more effectively than the implication that had God commanded cruelty then cruelty would be morally right. (Some, of course, are not deterred).

We can therefore conclude from the authority of ordinary usage that it is a conceptual truth that morality addresses to each of us only considerations arising from the interests of others, and turn now to address the extent of these demands. But here I will be arguing against ordinary opinion, which considers morality to be most of the time an indulgent mistress. She permits us to live our lives in peace, provided we tithe modestly to charitable causes and don't try to advance ourselves by directly injuring the interests of others, and only on rare occasions commands us to do something difficult, costly, or uncomfortable – and even then she permits us to put our own and our loved ones' safety and basic needs first.

²⁴ Wolf 1982.

²⁵ Falk 1963: 65 claims that ‘usage here leans uneasily either way,’ (although, he admits, it ‘favors the non-formalist more than the formalist.’ – see similar admissions by Hampton 1993) But the expressions he cites in favor of the formalist strike me as largely obsolete today: ‘moral agent,’ ‘moral freedom,’ ‘moral strength,’ ‘moral powers.’ (p. 28)

On the contrary, I shall argue, morality requires us to do the utmost we can in promoting moral ends. Morality is based on the ends of altruism, but it is not merely altruism. Altruism is subjective motivation towards some others' good for their sakes, but any 'others' will qualify – one's 'fellow Americans,' convicted serial killers, one's spouse. Any such motivation is intrinsically morally good, although it may occur in a motivational mix that is itself morally bad or wrong.²⁶ Morality, however, corresponds to a more universalistic concern: it is dictated by something like a *general benevolence*, which desires for everyone their good.²⁷ In my view morality is defined in terms of such an end: what we morally ought to do is approximately what we ought to do *in order that others not lack their good*. Objectively morality concerns what we do, not our motivations for doing it: morality requires us to act in conformity with what promotes the ends of general benevolence.

This account is significantly indeterminate, reflecting my own uncertainty about the content of morality. Do morality's concerns encompass the interests of members of other animal species, as I believe, and if so what are the minimal conditions for moral status? Does it exclude the interests of those guilty of serious moral violations? How does it enjoin us to weigh the interests of different individuals against one another? Does it require us to pursue the happiness of others, or merely the alleviation of their sufferings and deprivations? Fortunately my case does not require a ruling on any of these difficulties. There are sufficient millions of people in good moral standing who are suffering and dying at every moment of our lives (victims of poverty, war, famine,

²⁶ Kelly Rogers (1997: 9) offers the case of a woman who selflessly tries to help her husband escape from prison as an example of morally worthless altruism: in my view the altruism itself is morally good, but the woman's overall motivational state is not because she fails to be motivated by relevant considerations of third parties' conflicting interests.

²⁷ The similarities with Jesus's ethical teaching to love others as you love yourself (where I assume self-love is assumed rather than exhorted) are, I am sure, quite nonaccidental.

disease, homelessness, sex slavery, genocide, oppression, etc.) that our moral debts to others are radically, insistently, unflaggingly demanding on us: according to the latest mailing I received from UNICEF, for example, 3.6 million people are threatened with malnutrition in the country of Niger alone. You, the reader, are failing to act as you morally ought simply in virtue of the fact that you are presently wasting your time (from a moral point of view) reading philosophy when there are so many people desperately needing your help.

Common sense classifies the kinds of self-sacrifice I am talking about as ‘beyond the call of duty’: the *supererogatory*. Such acts are said to be morally admirable in the extreme, and the agents who perform them – people like Mother Teresa, Oskar Schindler and others who rescued Jews from the Nazis, and Zell Kravinsky (the Philadelphia resident who has given away millions of dollars, and one kidney, to strangers) are said to be moral ‘saints’ or ‘heroes’. But it is denied that these acts are obligatory or that we morally *ought* to perform them.²⁸ I shall now argue that appeals to the supererogatory fail to establish any such limits on what we morally ought to do for others.

When coastal communities around the Indian Ocean were devastated in 2004 by a tsunami, each of us faced a moral choice: how would we personally respond? Most people (I hope) believed that they morally ought to do something, and likely will have felt righteous about giving a few hundred dollars. Obviously there is more that any one of us could have done: for example, sell our house or run up our credit card debt, in order to help alleviate suffering. It will be generally agreed, I think, that if giving hundreds of dollars is morally good, then selling one’s house and giving hundreds of

²⁸ E.g. Urmson 1958, Wolf 1982.

thousands of dollars is morally *better*: the notion of supererogation presupposes that the supererogatory act is morally superior to the obligatory act. But as a rule, 'best' seems to imply 'ought':²⁹ if the I-94 is the best route to drive to Chicago, then it's the route you ought to take; if medicine X is the best child's painreliever, then it's the painreliever you ought to give your child for her pain; if the best move is pawn to Q5, then that's the move you ought to make. It sounds very odd to say, 'A is the best, but you ought to choose B.' Similarly therefore, if giving hundreds of thousands of dollars to tsunami victims is the morally best action I can perform, it is the action I morally *ought* to perform.³⁰

It will be objected that rejection of the supererogatory flies in the face of common sense and is absurd. But the authority of common sense is not so univocal: this demanding view of morality is not merely a perverse creation of philosophers, but is also the view reached by many serious, sober, reflective nonacademic members of our moral community. Moral saints themselves act as they do because they come to judge that they *ought* so to act, that the situation demands action of them. In reaching that judgement they do not take themselves to be somehow specially distinguished people: their judgements are not, in general, to be explained in terms of a perceived special responsibility to the people they help. To declare this treatment of supererogation absurd on the grounds of common opinion is thus to beg the question against a significant group of people. Perhaps the case will be pressed by appeal to methodological democracy: moral saints are in the minority, so their view can safely be

²⁹ There is a lengthy literature on this 'paradox of supererogation', which is considerably more sophisticated than my brief treatment here. See for example Dancy 1988, Raz 1975, Zimmerman 1993, Heyd 2002.

³⁰ If the 'best' and the 'ought' are not trading in the same currency there will be no such entailment: plausibly what is morally best is not what one ought *rationally* or prudentially to do.

deemed deviant. It is an uncomfortable even if not an absurd thought that our orientation toward moral saints is to esteem them for their morally admirable acts while considering those same acts to stem from an erroneous judgement of their duty!³¹ But I also doubt that moral saints are the only people who have these moral intuitions: many of us feel shamed when we contemplate acts of moral heroism. To quote a friend of Zell Kravinsky,

I don't think I'm a bad person. I give money to charity, and I think I'm fairly generous, but on the other hand, when I look at what he's done, I can't help but notice a little voice in the back of my head saying, what have you done lately, why haven't you saved someone's life? (Strom, 'An Organ Donor's Generosity Raises the Question of How Much is Too Much,' *New York Times*, August 17, 2003)

A great many more people who are not moral saints themselves share the moral saints' judgements about what they morally ought to do.

Still, we have a conflict of intuitions: many people deny vehemently that we are subject to such stringent moral requirements. Given the aim of capturing the ordinary conception of morality, and the subsequent need to defer to ordinary judgements, ought we not at least concede that we may have here two separate moral communities and two separate concepts of 'morality'? I suggest rather that there is here a single moral community, but that proponents of a nonstringent morality are in error, and those who share the moral judgements of the moral saints are correct. One reason for suspecting this arises from consideration of *motive and character*: for one thing, moral saints are more likely to have thought long and hard about the requirements of morality, while those on the other side of the dispute have typically reflected on it less, are more inclined to take for granted everyday assumptions about moral requirements, and are less able to defend their position by articulating a theory of moral dictates. For another

³¹ Urmson 1958 suggests this. For similar criticism see Hale 1991.

thing, there is a clear motive for self-deception in the proponents of a nonstringent morality: they typically desire strongly not to act ‘beyond the call of duty,’ but also desire strongly to be in good standing with morality, given the social and personal stigma attached to moral failings.³² It is therefore to be expected that they would resist any claim that their moral obligations are uncomfortably stringent.

The problem has to be addressed, however, of how it can be that the concept of ‘morality’ is determined by ordinary usage, but that ordinary judgements are wrong most of the time. The idea here is simple enough: ordinary usage applies a criterion of what counts as morally required and permitted. But it misapplies this criterion, such that it judges actions to be morally permitted that in fact are not.³³ Consider analogously the cases of witches and of knowledge. The (traditional) concept *witch* is determined by the referential intentions of the linguistic community as applying to any woman with supernatural powers. But they judge incorrectly that certain women meet this criterion, and hence systematically misapply their own word. Consider now this (plausibly fictional) story about knowledge: the concept of knowledge is determined by the referential intention to pick out cases of infallible belief. The community then judges incorrectly that numerous beliefs meet this criterion, and erroneously ascribes knowledge willy-nilly. Now, why think that such an analysis is correct, if it has the result that our ascriptions of witchhood or knowledge are systematically incorrect? One very good reason is if, were it to be brought to their attention that the alleged witches or knowledge do not satisfy the proposed criterion, a significant proportion of the

³² If the stringent view is correct, however, this motivation is misguided: there is no reasonable social stigma for these moral shortcomings.

³³ For a similar diagnosis of moral error, see Joyce 2001 (the witch example is his). Joyce however goes further and argues that all positive moral claims are false. The rationale for this error theory is that (unlike myself) he takes moral concepts to be committed to morality’s necessarily possessing rational authority for us, which (like myself) he denies it does.

intelligent membership of the community would then form the judgement that those persons and beliefs are not respectively witches or knowledge after all, which is clearly the case with witches, and arguably the case with knowledge.

Is the analogy to morality plausible? There are close parallels. Most people spend most of their time mindless of the concurrent sufferings endured by others or the actions they themselves could be performing to alleviate those, and many intelligent people do have the response, when confronted with this fact, that their lives are far less in conformity with morality than they ordinarily like to believe. Of course some do not have this response, but if as I have suggested there is a plausible story of self-deception to tell about those people, then we may be justified in dismissing their opinions. However, it remains possible that we should, after all, ultimately concede that some people mean something much narrower by ‘morality’ than the rest of us.

Taking this line does not require that we *reject* the existence of supererogation or acts ‘beyond the call of duty’, because arguably the concept of moral obligation is narrower than the concept of what we morally ought to do. Many people resist direct inferences from ‘You morally ought to do A’ to ‘You have a moral duty/are morally obligated to do A’. One possibility is that an act you ought to perform is obligatory in this narrower sense just in case others have a right to force you to perform it or bring sanctions (including blame and criticism) against you for failing to perform it. Duties are then acts omissions of which in some way legitimize force or sanctions against you.³⁴

This line of thought suggests a response to the insistence that we just do not consider that acts of extreme self-sacrifice are *morally required* of us. The person who

³⁴ Roughly similar views of supererogation are offered by Urmson 1958, Dancy 1988, Pfannkuche 1997, and Forrester 1975. See also Falk’s discussion of H. L. A. Hart’s views (1964: 54-5).

gives hundreds of dollars to tsunami relief when she could have given hundreds of thousands of dollars is plausibly not appropriately blamed or criticized for not having made the larger sacrifice; she may well feel that she has done everything required of her, and feel justifiably guiltless. I suspect that here we need a further distinction: between (a) what morality requires of us, and (b) what level of conformity with morality is socially required of us.³⁵ First, failure to act as one morally ought is not always or necessarily blameworthy. We excuse people many of their moral imperfections, recognizing the difficulty of the moral straight and narrow, without withdrawing our judgements that they failed to act as they morally ought to have. Second, ‘Let he who is without sin cast the first stone’: it is hypocritical for people to criticize others for falling short of moral standards where they themselves fall short, and hence others generally will not hold us blameworthy or open to criticism for failures to act as we morally ought when they know themselves to be just as prone to such failures.³⁶ There is therefore a difference between what morality itself (and a moral conscience) requires, and the level of moral conformity that our neighbours and community require of us. I can excuse my moral shortcomings to my neighbours if they are shortcomings to which my neighbours are similarly susceptible. But I insist they are nonetheless moral shortcomings: confronted with the moral saint or the victim in need of my help my self-righteousness will evaporate and I will find myself morally ashamed. (Among most people I feel no shame about eating meat, but when surrounded by conscientious vegetarians I find

³⁵ The contractualist tradition in moral philosophy as represented by T. M. Scanlon (1998), for example, claims that moral requirements are constituted by the requirement to behave towards others in a manner which one is able to justify to them. In my view, this corresponds to (b) rather than (a). Indeed, Scanlon himself acknowledges that it is only part of morality.

³⁶ Urmson (1958) himself supports his contention that the supererogatory is a real phenomenon solely with the observation that nobody else could reasonably demand that we act in these exemplary ways or criticize us for our failure to do so.

myself without excuse; I suggest that virtually all of us, confronted by actual disaster victims, would find ourselves hard pressed to justify the meager amount of our charitable giving.)

I should briefly address another line of objection to this view of morality that focuses on the psychological ramifications of accepting it. If we find compliance with morality too unattractive and difficult, would this not undermine all commitment to morality altogether? If so, then oughtn't we reject this view of morality?³⁷ But this view of morality *need not* undermine commitment: so long as morality and others' interests matter to us at all, we will have personal reasons to be committed to some level of compliance with morality. Nevertheless, undermining of commitment is a likely psychological result. But it is also a real phenomenon in our moral experience that as moral demands on us multiply, our dedication to morality can wane (e.g. 'disaster fatigue'). Furthermore, unwelcome psychological consequences are no proof of a doctrine's falsity. The reaction that we ought to reject a stringent view of morality in fact looks like a *moral* judgement: we ought to encourage a less stringent view of morality, as a normative code that people are comfortably able to comply fully with, *in order that* people's commitment to beneficence is bolstered rather than undermined. Perhaps so, but that is no objection to the truth of the view of morality advanced here.³⁸

The considerations I have offered do not prove that morality requires a radical level of beneficent action, but they do present a robust *prima facie* case. To make the case that morality conflicts radically with self-interest, however, an account is needed of

³⁷ Urmson (1958) seems to argue like this.

³⁸ Nonstringent views of morality are commonly defended on the grounds that successful institutions do not require more of people than will seem reasonable to them (Urmson 1958, Scheffler 1992, Schmidtz 1993, 1997). In my view this overestimates the role convention plays in determining the content of morality.

the nature of self-interest. And while it may appear trivial to demonstrate this conflict once we're granted such a stringent conception of morality, there remains redoubtable philosophical opposition to overcome, which attempts to show that self-interest and other-interest largely coincide.

What is Self-Interest?

The notion of self-interest may seem straightforward, but its analysis is highly contested. A simple account identifies it with the objects of the self's considered and informed interests: that is, my self-interest is whatever I most desire under privileged conditions.³⁹ But on this account any successful action I perform under these conditions is in my self-interest, and rational self-sacrifice or neglect of my self-interest turns out to be impossible.⁴⁰ If I take an interest in the interests of others, then the interests of others are on this account ipso facto part of my self-interest. But whatever is ordinarily meant by 'self-interest', it is something we are supposed to be able to sacrifice and disregard: this account of self-interest is too broad. Among theories that make room for self-sacrifice, hedonistic theories are historically predominant: self-interest consists in pleasure. This view, however, derives much of its appeal from psychological hedonism, the theory that the only object of our intrinsic desire is pleasure – which is almost certainly false. A person's good consists in much more than merely pleasure. A tempting strategy, therefore, is to say simply that a person's self-interest consists in her possession of her good. For my purposes, however, this shortcut is unacceptably vague: it can be and has been argued, for example, that moral virtue is itself a basic element of

³⁹ Frankfurt (2001), for example, claims that one's interest is defined by what one loves.

⁴⁰ Overvold 1980, Darwall 1997. As Raz observes (2000), however, self-sacrifice strictly speaking has to do with compromising our personal goals, not our self-interest.

human good⁴¹, and on this basis it can be argued that conforming with morality is always best for us, no matter what else it might cost us.

As with morality, self-interest has both a subjective and an objective side. Being (subjectively) self-interested entails taking an interest in the *self*, or being *self-focused*. We can define self-focus as intrinsically desiring an end that includes an ineliminable reference to one's self. (Consider my motivation to give to charity. Whether this motivation is self-focused depends on whether the intrinsic desire motivating me is self-referring – e.g. the desire that *I give to charity* – or not – e.g. the desire that *charitable causes are well supported*.) Self-focus is however not sufficient for being self-interested: the former encompasses self-loathing and self-destructive desires, whereas being self-interested requires concern for one's own good or objective 'interest'.

Neither self-focus nor (subjective) self-interest are necessary or sufficient for being *selfish*. To label just any form of concern with oneself or one's own good 'selfish' is an inappropriately broad use of the word, as some paradigms of selfishness are motivated by desires that are not self-focused (infants, e.g., are paradigmatically selfish, but do not even have a concept of a self to focus on.) Rather our concept of selfishness has to do merely with the lack of concern for others' interests, and is significant here because I suspect it is the case that when people enquire into the conflict of morality and self-interest, they often really mean to be asking about the conflict between morality and (what in the case of its disregard would be) our *selfish* interests: that is, the satisfaction of our nonbenevolent desires. The focus here will nonetheless remain on self-interest proper.

⁴¹ E.g. Foot 2001.

Self-interested desire is intrinsic motivation towards your life's going well for you from your own point of view over the course of your whole life.⁴² Objective self-interest or what is *in your self-interest* is whatever promotes this end. As an approximation to a definition of self-interest, therefore, I offer the following: an action is in my self-interest (good for me) just in case and to the degree that it promotes a life containing intrinsically rewarding pursuit and/or accomplishment of goals that I strongly and intrinsically care about at the time of my pursuit/ accomplishment of them.⁴³ I therefore *ought* from the point of view of self-interest to perform some action A in some situation S if and only if performing A in S promotes such a life *better* than any other action I can perform in S.

On this account it remains significantly indeterminate what self-interest counsels us to do. It does not tell us, for example, what relative weight to assign to a pursuit's temporal location, duration, or likelihood of eventuating, or how to weigh a shorter life of intensely rewarding pursuits against a longer life of moderately rewarding pursuits. This is welcome to me, however, as self-interest is contestable in precisely these respects, and the account does provide all the determinacy my argument will need.

The Conflict

The conflict that is the subject of this essay lies between what we morally ought to do and what we self-interestedly ought to do. It is clear that the most extreme positions

⁴² There is a commonsense distinction between short-term and long-term self-interest, which corresponds to the distinction between the present or short-term self and the temporally extended or long-term self. My treatment is concerned only with the latter.

⁴³ Some philosophers require that such goals be 'objectively' worthwhile (Raz 2000, Wolf 1999). I'm skeptical about any robust notion of objective worth, but even if there is such a thing I doubt it is a necessary component of a person's self-interest. If the Emperor Tiberius's life of cavorting sexually with children on Capri was for him a life maximally filled with the intrinsically rewarding pursuit and accomplishment of goals which he cared fundamentally about then, I'm sorry to say, such activities were after all in his self-interest.

can be ruled out for all but artificial persons. There are circumstances where the action that best promotes the interests of others coincides with the action that best promotes a life for oneself of intrinsically rewarding pursuits (e.g. saving one's plane from a bomb) – unless someone is so psychologically constituted that (e.g.) having saved other people's lives would cause him such ongoing misery that it would be better for him if he had been blown up. There are circumstances in which the action that best promotes the interests of others coincides with the action that is among the *worst* from a self-interested point of view: for example, where one can save the lives of many others by falling on a grenade that otherwise you could escape – unless someone is so constituted that having *failed* to save others' lives would cause him such ongoing misery that it would be better for him if he had been blown up.

What is in our self-interest depends largely on how we are psychologically constituted, because what is intrinsically rewarding for us depends on our dispositions to desire or care. Questions of whether and to what degree morality and self-interest conflict for any person accordingly call for empirical psychological investigation.⁴⁴ But given my characterization of morality and self-interest, I think we can safely draw the following conclusion: doing what we morally ought is not, for virtually all of us most of the time, what we self-interestedly ought to do. Most of us have basic altruistic dispositions: we care, largely indiscriminately, about other people and their misfortunes. There is always therefore some personal cost to us in not acting as we morally ought (insofar as we are aware of this) – we miss out on the full extent of the intrinsic rewards of benefiting others, and we may suffer guilt. But the personal costs of complying with the full extent of morality's requirements are most of the time much

⁴⁴ This is not to deny that the results may turn out to converge substantially for us in virtue of our shared biology.

greater. We care about other things, such as ourselves, our loved ones, personal projects, countries, possessions, hobbies, religious faiths, reputations, and hedonistic indulgences— we care at least as much about various of these and similar things, and most of us care more. Complying with the moral ‘ought’, in most circumstances, would involve wholesale sacrifice of these, reducing the quality of one’s life much more than would failure to conform fully with morality’s requirements.

Eyebrows will be raised over the claim that concern for loved ones is in competition with morality: philosophers such as Bernard Williams (1981) and Michael Stocker (1976) have argued that morality must allow us to give special regard to those close to us. Our loved ones are of course others, and caring about them is morally good motivation, but it comes into conflict with morally right action, in my view, when we pursue their benefits at morally excessive cost to others, as is typically the case. This is notwithstanding the fact that we have particular moral obligations to our loved ones in virtue of their particular dependence upon us. The view is well expressed by Zell Kravinsky: ‘I love my children, I really do. But I just can't say their lives are more valuable than any other life.’ The dispensations for caring for loved ones urged by Williams and Stocker, I believe, are not a matter of limits on the impartiality morality requires of us, but rather a matter of the limits on the level of conformity with morality that is socially required of us: in any case, as Williams himself observes, taking care of our loved ones out of a sense of moral duty is ‘one thought too many’.

Given all the concerns competing with morality that each of us have, my hypothesis that morality and self-interest conflict radically may seem trivial and obvious. But self-interest is not strongly tied to present concerns. Suppose, for example, that I am a fan of the Chicago Cubs, baseball’s ‘Lovable Losers’, while I detest the New

York Yankees, a perennial powerhouse. Foreseeably, my life would contain more intrinsically rewarding activities if I were to switch my allegiance to the Yankees than if I retain my allegiance to the Cubs. It seems that self-interest counsels me to switch my allegiance. Similarly, it can be argued that the fact that we presently care so much about ourselves, our loved ones, and our personal projects does not show that acting as we morally ought is not in our self-interest, for were we to relinquish or weaken these nonmoral concerns and cultivate our dispositions for general benevolence, a life of morally right action would turn out to be much more intrinsically rewarding than it would be for us as we presently are.⁴⁵ It may then be argued that this path of moral asceticism⁴⁶ would be *better* than any other path open to us with respect to promoting a life of intrinsically rewarding activity, and since there is no better way to cultivate such dispositions than to act accordingly and thus habituate ourselves to benevolence, it is, in fact, in our best interests to resist our nonmoral inclinations and act as we morally ought.

The strategy is coherent: *were* it the case that the morally ascetic life promises the most such rewarding activity, self-interest and morality would coincide. But I think most people would concur that it is very implausible that this is the case, and we can support this judgement with the following two considerations. First, a life guided by perfect moral virtue is by (our) definition not in any way a life guided by self-interest, and its goals are not chosen with an eye to what will conduce maximally to a lifetime of intrinsically rewarding pursuits. Despite the fact that what will be intrinsically rewarding is largely determined by one's dispositions to care, any convergence between

⁴⁵ Singer 1995: 235, Kagan 1989: 390-393.

⁴⁶ I intend the term here in the original significance of 'asceticism' as *training*, although the connotation of *self-denial* is not unwelcome.

the perfectly moral life and the best life for oneself will be serendipitous.⁴⁷ (In a worst-case scenario, the needs of others would dictate that one expend all one's resources in a single moment, rather than in a lifetime's worth of gratifying service.) It would therefore be highly surprising if the best possible life for us is the life of moral perfection, as opposed to a life where some conscious concern is directed towards its own quality.

Second, existing desires and dispositions are not wholly irrelevant to the question of which life is best for us. In order to acquire sufficiently moral dispositions that our life of moral sainthood would not be burdensome for us, these existing desires and dispositions must first be weakened or extinguished. The cost, in life quality, of this ascetic training in combating nonmoral desires will be significant, giving a presumption to lifestyles that chafe less against the dispositions we already possess. Indeed, we have reason to doubt that most of us *could* relinquish or weaken our nonmoral dispositions to the requisite degree that a life of perfect moral virtue wouldn't be onerous for us. For these reasons it is most implausible that the life of moral asceticism is better stocked with intrinsically rewarding activity than any other available to us.⁴⁸

How Ought We to Live?

For most of us for most of the time, I have argued, what we morally ought to do is incompatible with what we self-interestedly ought to do. This leaves us with the question, given such a conflict between morality and self-interest, to which ought we conform and give precedence, and which ought we to flout? As I indicated, however, this

⁴⁷ See Wolf 1982: 425, Raz 2000.

⁴⁸ These claims are not so far from Singer as it may appear: I have not denied that we would be much better off adopting a morally *better* life than we presently lead, and Singer concedes that he has not 'dissolved' the clash between morality and self-interest (1995: 223).

question has no clear answer. The reason for this is that it is not, in my view, a clear question. There is a difficulty regarding how we are to understand this 'ought'. As we have encountered it up until now, 'ought' has always presupposed some perspective or standpoint, identified with the standpoint of being oriented toward some end. We have 'ought' from the standpoint of morality and 'ought' from the standpoint of self-interest. Clearly the 'ought' is not here asked from either of these standpoints: it is trivially true that we morally ought to conform with morality and self-interestedly ought to conform with self-interest. The intended question, it will be said, is rather about which of morality and self-interest we ought simpliciter (all things considered, from the standpoint of practical reason as such) to conform. But it is a serious question whether there is such an overarching standpoint, the standpoint of practical reason as such.⁴⁹ Given the teleological view of normative standpoints adopted here on which 'ought' always presupposes an end, there is no 'ought' simpliciter. (As I do not have the space to argue for this view here, this section aspires merely to present a point of view.) Instead, on this view, there are a variety of different, contingent perspectives from which the question, 'Ought we conform with morality or with self-interest?' can be asked.

This rejection of a unified standpoint of practical reason may seem untenable. Don't we deliberate over and choose between conflicting ends, and don't we ponder over what we ought all things considered to do? But although it is clear we often ask simply, 'What ought I to do?' it is not so obvious that these queries do not always presuppose

⁴⁹ The existence of such a standpoint is also denied by Copp 1997. Contrast Wolf, who appeals to a need to 'raise normative questions from a perspective that is unattached to a commitment to any particular well-ordered system of values.' (1982: 439).

some implicit end or ends.⁵⁰ We can always evaluate even our fundamental ends from the standpoint of other ends: arguably, for example, a significant component in our practical thought is deliberating over what we ought to do in order not to act in a manner we will later regret, or what we ought to do in order to promote the ends that are most important to us. But also, deliberation between fundamental ends is often not deliberation about what I *ought* to do, but rather deliberation over what I *shall* do: there are no ‘oughts’ in weighing incommensurable ends.⁵¹ Sometimes we can adjudicate a conflict of ends by turning to some further end that is better served by one than the other (e.g. when someone chooses a relationship over a career opportunity on the grounds that the relationship promises more happiness than does career advancement), but sometimes we just have to choose; in the latter circumstance at some point we just prefer one end to another.

We can simply prefer, and in doing so choose for no reason that we can give to justify our choice to ourselves. But we can also choose to pursue a certain end *for the reason* that we prefer it: in this case we may judge that it is what we *ought* to choose, in order to satisfy our all-things-considered preferences. The best approximation to the question intended by the sentence, ‘Which ought I, all things considered, to choose’ is ‘Which matters more for me?’ What matters, or is important *for* a person, is a function of what can matter or be important *to* a person. In my view something is important for a person just in case and to the degree that it promotes something that the person would find intrinsically important if fully aware of it. There are two fundamentally different

⁵⁰ A number of philosophers argue that practical reasoning has a constitutive aim: for Christine Korsgaard (1986), for example, practical reasoning aims to discover something like what I ought to do *in order that I conform with my practical identity*. See also David Velleman (2000: 139).

⁵¹ There is no answer to the question, ‘Which pile of hay *ought* Buridan’s ass choose,’ but if the ass is to have any hay, he must settle the question ‘Which pile shall I choose?’ (here of course the goods are equal rather than incommensurable).

ways of understanding what it is to find something intrinsically important. On a *cognitivist* model, to find something intrinsically important is to perceive or judge it to have an objective property of value or worth.⁵² On a *conativist* model, it is rather to care intrinsically about it. It is this latter view that I think is correct: to adopt the former is to allow an answer to the all-things-considered normative question that looks beyond our subjective preferences, contrary to my claims in this section. To say that morality is more important for me than self-interest, therefore, is just to say that living as I morally ought is more promotive of states of affairs that I would care intrinsically about if fully aware of them than living as I self-interestedly ought, or in other words, that I have an all-things-considered preference under conditions of full information for the wellbeing of anonymous others over my own wellbeing.

This standpoint of personal importance differs significantly from that of self-interest in that it is based solely on *present* dispositions to care.⁵³ If I am presently disposed to care more about the fortunes of the Chicago Cubs than I am to care about a small increase in my future happiness, for example, this standpoint directs me not to switch my allegiance to the Yankees, and if I am presently disposed to care more about the well-being of some other person than my own well-being, it directs me to sacrifice my interests to the other's in a situation where they conflict. It may also direct the spurned lover to choose revenge over benevolence, or suicide over self-maintenance. The standpoint of personal importance is not dictated to us by either psychological or rational necessity. It is possible to deliberate and choose without regard to what we would prefer if fully informed (we can embrace our ignorance, and sometimes with good

⁵² E.g. Raz 2000, Wolf 1997, 1999.

⁵³ It corresponds closely to the standpoint of rationality on what Derek Parfit calls the 'critical present-aim theory' (Parfit 1984).

reason), and hence our choices need not be informed by what is important for us, although it is unavoidable that they are shaped by what we find important.

On this picture there is no objective or impersonal issue over whether morality or self-interest is more important. Questions of importance and normative priority are subjective or personal questions, although if we are all sufficiently alike in our dispositions of concern, the answers for us all will largely coincide. So in addressing the normative question, ‘Ought we comply with morality or with self-interest?’ we are left with the psychological question: Which do we care more about, anonymous others’ interests or our own?

Even the answer to this psychological question is far from simple, however. First, it’s vital to note that for virtually all of us *both* moral and self-interested ends are relatively low in our order of priorities, ranking well below our personal projects, be they our families, professions, intellectual quests, hedonistic indulgences, and so forth. We care more about having a nice house, car, or lawn, for example, than we care about distant human misery, more for our favorite foods and sports teams than for some level of health or future happiness. For virtually none of us, therefore, is it the case that doing what we morally *or* self-interestedly ought to do is what matters most for us in most circumstances. ‘Morality *or* self-interest’ is a false dichotomy.

Second, even where we care more about one kind of end than another, this usually doesn’t result in a simple ordinal ranking where the demands of one kind always take priority over those of the other. We care both about ourselves and about others, even if not equally, but a greater degree of promotion of a lesser concern may be more important for us than a lesser degree of promotion of a greater concern: while few philosophers are willing to abandon their careers in philosophy in order to devote

themselves to improving conditions in the Third World, most are more than willing to divert some amount of time and money away from philosophical pursuits for charitable causes.

Third, regarding the relative priority in our lives of morality and self-interest, I can only say from my unexceptional observation of the world that humans differ greatly. Some people care greatly about their self-interest, but many seem hardly to care at all (witness all the carefree substance abuse and other willful self-destructive behaviour). Some people care greatly about the welfare of anonymous others, while many seem hardly to care at all (witness widespread attitudes in the United States towards wars on foreign soil), and a casual glance delivers no evidence of a statistical relationship between the degree of people's self-concern and the degree of their other-concern: some care little about self or others, some care a lot about self and others, some care much about themselves and little about others, some care much about others but little about themselves. We can however conclude this much: even virtually all self-disregarding people have nonmoral concerns that for them are more important than most of their moral requirements, and so it is fair to say that for virtually all of us, most of what we morally ought to do – like what we self-interestedly ought to do – is less important than the pursuit of certain of our *selfish* concerns.

References

- Elizabeth Anscombe (1958), "Modern Moral Philosophy" *Philosophy* 33: 1-19.
Neera Kapur Badhwar (1993), "Altruism Versus Self-Interest: Sometimes a False Dichotomy" *Social Philosophy & Policy* 10(1): 90-117.
Kurt Baier (1954) "The Point of View of Morality" *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 32(2): 104-135.
David O. Brink (1992), "A Puzzle About the Rational Authority of Morality" *Philosophical Perspectives* 6, 1-26.

- David Copp (1997), "The Ring of Gyges: Overridingness and the Unity of Reason" *Social Philosophy & Policy* 14(1): 86-106.
- Stephen Darwall (1997), "Self-Interest and Self-Concern" *Social Philosophy & Policy* 14(1): 158-178.
- Jonathan Dancy (1988), "Supererogation and Moral Realism" in Dancy (ed.) *Human Agency*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- W. D. Falk (1963), "Morality, Self, and Others" in Hector-Neri Castaneda & George Nakhnikian (eds.) *Morality and the Language of Conduct*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press.
- Stephen Finlay (2004), "The Conversational Practicality of Value Judgement" *Journal of Ethics* 8 (3): 205-223.
- Philippa Foot (1972), "Morality as a System of Hypothetical Imperatives" *Philosophical Review* 81(3): 305-316.
- Philippa Foot (2001), *Natural Goodness*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Mary Forrester (1975), "Some Remarks on Obligation, Permission, and Supererogation" *Ethics* 85: 219-226.
- William K. Frankena (1963), "Recent Conceptions of Morality" in Castaneda & Nakhnikian (eds.)
- Harry Frankfurt (2001), "The Dear Self" *Philosophers' Imprint* 1(0), <http://www.philosophersimprint.org/001000>
- Susan C. Hale (1991), "Against Supererogation" *American Philosophical Quarterly* 28 (4): 273-285.
- Jean Hampton (1993), "Selflessness and the Loss of Self" *Social Philosophy & Policy* 10(1): 135-165.
- Jean Hampton (1997), "The Wisdom of the Egoist: The Moral and Political Implications of Valuing the Self" *Social Philosophy & Policy* 14(1): 21-51.
- Gilbert Harman (1977) *The Nature of Morality*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- David Heyd (2002), "Supererogation", *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/supererogation/>
- Thomas E. Hill, Jr. (1997), "Reasonable Self-Interest" *Social Philosophy & Policy* 14(1): 52-85.
- Richard Joyce (2001), *The Myth of Morality*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Shelly Kagan (1989), *The Limits of Morality*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Christine Korsgaard (1996), *The Sources of Normativity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- John Mackie (1977) *Ethics: Inventing Right and Wrong*. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books.
- Mark Overvold (1980), "Self-Interest and the Concept of Self-Sacrifice" *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 10: 105-118.
- Derek Parfit (1984), *Reasons and Persons*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Walter Pfannkuche (1997), "Supererogation als Element moralischer Verantwortung" in Georg Meggle (ed.), *Analytomen 2, Volume III*. Hawthorne: de Gruyter.
- Ayn Rand (1964), *The Virtue of Selfishness*. New York: New American Library.
- Joseph Raz (1975), "Permissions and Supererogation" *American Philosophical Quarterly* 12: 161-168.

- Joseph Raz (2000), "The Central Conflict: Morality and Self-Interest" in Roger Crisp & Brad Hooker (eds.), *Well-Being and Morality: Essays in Honour of James Griffin*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Kelly Rogers (1997), "Beyond Self and Other" *Social Philosophy & Policy* 14(1): 1-20.
- T. M. Scanlon (1998), *What We Owe to Each Other*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Samuel Scheffler (1992), *Human Morality*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- David Schmidtz (1993), "Reasons for Altruism" *Social Philosophy & Policy* 10(1): 52-68.
- David Schmidtz (1997), "Self-Interest: What's In It For Me?" *Social Philosophy & Policy* 14(1): 107-121.
- Peter Singer (1995), *How Are We to Live? Ethics in an Age of Self-Interest*. Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books.
- Stocker, Michael (1976), "The Schizophrenia of Modern Ethical Theories" *The Journal of Philosophy* 73: 453-66.
- Judith Jarvis Thomson (forthcoming), "Normativity" *Oxford Studies in Metaethics* 2.
- J. Urmson (1958), "Saints and Heroes" in A. Melden (ed.) *Essays in Moral Philosophy*. Seattle: University of Washington Press.
- David Velleman (2000), "What Happens When Someone Acts?" reprinted in *The Possibility of Practical Reason*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Bernard Williams (1981), "Persons, Character and Morality" reprinted in *Moral Luck*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Susan Wolf (1982), "Moral Saints" *Journal of Philosophy* 79 (8):419-439.
- Susan Wolf (1997), "Happiness and Meaning: Two Aspects of the Good Life" *Social Philosophy & Policy* 14(1): 207-225.
- Susan Wolf (1999), "Morality and the View from Here" *Journal of Ethics* 3: 203-223.
- Paul Ziff (1960) *Semantic Analysis*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Michael J. Zimmerman (1993), "Supererogation and Doing the Best One Can" *American Philosophical Quarterly* 30 (4): 373-380.