

Asymmetry and Self-Sacrifice*

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Recent discussions of consequentialism have drawn our attention to the so-called “self-other” asymmetry. Various cases presented by Michael Slote and Michael Stocker are alleged to demonstrate a fundamental asymmetry between our obligations to others and ourselves.¹ Moreover, these cases are taken to constitute a difficulty for consequentialism, and for the various versions of utilitarianism in particular.

I agree that there is a fundamental asymmetry between our obligations to ourselves and to others, and that this fact is inconsistent with the letter of traditional utilitarianisms. However, I do not think this represents a deep shortcoming of the spirit behind utilitarianism. In this paper I will argue that the self-other asymmetry can be accommodated in a broadly utilitarian framework.

First, in section one, I characterize moral “asymmetry” in general. Then, in section two, I argue that the cases presented by Slote and Stocker do indeed represent a genuine self-other asymmetry. In part, this involves criticism of an attempt to accommodate the asymmetry within a preferentist framework. Finally, I will present my own solution to the problem of self and other.

1. The Concept of Asymmetry

1.1 An asymmetry

First let us pretend we are old-fashioned Hedonic Utilitarians. (In this paper I consider only “act” versions of utilitarianism.) Thus, we believe that an action is right if and only if it has at least as high a hedonic value than does any alternative. By the “hedonic *value*” (“HV”) of an act I mean the total amount of pleasure minus pain that would be produced if that act were performed.²

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¹See Slote (1984); Stocker (1976). Also see Falk (1963).

²I formulate this and other utilitarian theories in the traditional way—in terms of acts and the consequences that would result if those acts were performed. However, I believe that these formulations are defective; instead I favor Fred Feldman’s “world utilitarianism” approach. See

On this view, the moral normative status of an action is completely determined by its hedonic value and the hedonic values of its alternatives. Between any pair of cases, Hedonic Utilitarianism allows no normative difference without a hedonic difference. The following pair of cases will serve as our first example of the kind of “asymmetry” that is inconsistent with Hedonic Utilitarianism:

Case 1a: I have a dollar that I can give either to Goofus or Gallant. Gallant worked all day for the dollar and deserves it. In contrast, Goofus loafed all day, and does not deserve the dollar. Each would get equal pleasure from the dollar. Moreover, there will be no hedonic effects other than those produced by the dollar—there are “no hidden hedons”. Let us idealize, and suppose that I have just two options that can be represented thus:³

- a1: Give the dollar to Goofus HV: +1
- a2: Give the dollar to Gallant HV: +1

Case 1b: I can give the dollar to Goofus or Gallant, but now Goofus rather than Gallant is the deserving party. Hedonically, however, the situation is the same:

- b1: Give dollar to Goofus HV: +1
- b2: Give dollar to Gallant HV: +1

In what sense do these cases constitute “asymmetry”?

Asymmetry in the present context means difference against a background of similarity. In two cases that are in some sense parallel, moral obligations differ. Let’s look at this more carefully.

In cases 1a and 1b, the actions correspond as follows:

- a1 \longleftrightarrow b1
- a2 \longleftrightarrow b2

such that corresponding acts have identical hedonic values. The arrows represent a one-to-one correspondence between the options in the two cases—a way of matching up each option in either case with exactly one option in the

Feldman (1986, Chapter 2). These problems with traditional utilitarianism do not affect the present discussion so I use the more familiar formulation.

³I will pretend that pleasure states, and value states in general, can be assigned numerical value.

other case. Any one-to-one correspondence between the options in two cases such that corresponding actions have identical hedonic values I call a “hedonic isomorphism”. When there is a hedonic isomorphism between two cases, the cases may be said to be “hedonically isomorphic”.

Hedonic isomorphism is the background of similarity in cases 1a and 1b. The difference is normative difference between corresponding acts. Let us focus on a pair of corresponding acts: a1 and b1. Action b1 seems permissible, for in that case Goofus is deserving of the dollar. In contrast, in the first case, Goofus doesn’t deserve the dollar. It would be wrong for me to give the dollar to Goofus; I should give it to Gallant instead.

If we have a pair of cases in which acts that correspond under some hedonic isomorphism differ in moral normative status,⁴ then I will say that the cases constitute a “hedonic-background asymmetry”. ‘Hedonic’ signifies the background of similarity; the difference is understood to be normative.⁵

1.2 Asymmetry Generalized

We can generalize this idea. Let V be any kind of numerical value; denote the V -value of an action a by “ $V(a)$ ”.⁶ Say that a V -isomorphism is a one-to-one correspondence f between the possible actions in a pair of cases such that for any a, a' of the actions in the first case, $V(a) = V(a')$ iff $V(f(a)) = V(f(a'))$. Suppose that acts that correspond under some V -isomorphism differ in normative status. Then, the cases constitute a V -background asymmetry.

The existence of various asymmetries will refute various theories. Hedonic Utilitarianism would be refuted by the existence of any hedonic-background asymmetry, for, as I mentioned above, Hedonic Utilitarianism entails a certain “supervenience” thesis: that the normative status of an action is entirely determined by its hedonic value and the hedonic values of its alternatives. Ideal utilitarianism, the view that an act is right iff it maximizes intrinsic value, would be refuted by the existence of an intrinsic value-background asymmetry, for

⁴By “moral normative status”, I mean to consider only rightness, wrongness, obligatoriness, and gratuitousness. I assume that the pairs (rightness,obligatoriness) and (gratuitousness,wrongness) are pairs of duals, and that wrongness is the negation of rightness.

⁵Notice that case 1a is a hedonic-background asymmetry on its own, as is 1b.

⁶We can generalize to the case of non-numerical value as follows. Let S be any set of value properties and relations. Say that a one to one correspondence f between the options in a pair of cases is an S -isomorphism iff for any outcomes $a_1 \dots a_m$ in the first case and any m -place $R \in S, a_1 \dots a_m$ stand in R iff $f(a_1) \dots f(a_m)$ stand in R .

Ideal Utilitarianism entails a corresponding supervenience thesis of normative status on intrinsic value. For any type of value V , V -utilitarianism, the view that an action is right iff it maximizes V -value, would be refuted by the existence of a V -background asymmetry.

We might want to go further than merely asserting the existence of some asymmetry. We might want to *explain* that asymmetry. For example, it seems intuitive to explain the existence of the hedonic-background asymmetry in Cases 1a and 1b by invoking considerations of *desert*. The normative difference between a1 and b1 is present *because* of the differences in desert—specifically, the fact that Gallant deserves the dollar in the first case whereas Goofus deserves it in the second. If this explanation is correct, then I say that those two cases constitute a Hedonic-background “Deserving/Undeserving” Asymmetry. When we consider cases of Hedonic-background “Self/Other” Asymmetry, the occurrence of the phrase ‘self/other’ will signify that the asymmetry is to be explained in some way by considerations of self and other.

As another example of how these concepts apply, consider the dispute over the so-called “principle of impartiality”.⁷ Some have claimed that we have stronger obligations to those “close” to us, such as family and friends, than we have to total strangers. Others deny this, and affirm the principle of impartiality. We can take one impartiality principle to be the following:

(IP) There are no hedonic background family/neighbor asymmetries

Alleged examples of such asymmetries might be pairs of cases in which, though the hedons are identical, my obligations differ in virtue of my family being involved in one case, mere neighbors in the other.

In the next section I investigate the claim that there are Self/Other asymmetries. I consider first the existence of Hedonic-background Self/Other asymmetries.

2. The Self/Other Asymmetry

2.1 A Hedonic-background Self/Other Asymmetry

In “Morality and Self-Other Asymmetry” Michael Slote says:⁸

⁷See, for example, Sommers (1986) and Cottingham (1983).

⁸Slote (1984, 180, 181).

...in a situation where no one else is concerned (or even, if you will, where no one else exists) if I ignore an opportunity to enjoy a pleasure or do not bother to avoid a pain, then (other things equal) I do wrong by consequentialist standards, but ...not by ordinary standards.

...common sense might concede that it was irrational, stupid, or gratuitous to do so, but surely not that it was morally wrong.

On the other hand it does seem morally wrong to fail to grant someone *else* a pleasure or to allow them to suffer a pain. Therefore, Slote concludes that

...ordinary moral thinking seems to involve an asymmetry regarding what an agent is permitted to do to himself and what he is permitted to do to others.

The following pair of cases illustrates this claim as it applies to Hedonic Utilitarianism.

Case 2a: Suppose Gallant is contemplating his evening's entertainment. He can go to the movies or stay home. Gallant would receive some pleasure at the movies, whereas he would receive none at home. His options and their hedonic values are:

- a1: Gallant stays home HV: 0
- a2: Gallant goes to movies HV: +5

Despite the fact that he knows he would get more pleasure at the movies, on this occasion Gallant does not want the pleasure of the movies, and hence stays home.

Case 2b: This case is like Case 2a in that Gallant will either go to the movies or stay home; however it is Goofus who will decide what happens. Gallant would love to go to the movies, but has no ticket. Goofus has a ticket that can only be used by Gallant, and must decide whether or not to give it to him. The decision does not affect Goofus in the least. Thus, hedonically speaking, the situation is:

- b1: Gallant stays home HV: 0
- b2: Gallant goes to movies HV: +5

Despite the fact that Goofus knows that he could give some pleasure to Gallant at no cost to himself, Goofus spitefully rips up the ticket and promptly forgets all about Gallant.

Despite the hedonic isomorphism between Cases 2a and 2b, there seems to be a normative difference. Consider the corresponding actions a_1 and b_1 . Action a_1 seems permissible, despite the fact that it produces less hedonic value than its alternative a_2 . Gallant's giving up the pleasure does not seem *wrong*; irrational, perhaps, but not immoral. Gallant's pleasure is his own business; surely it isn't his moral *obligation* to bring it about.

On the other hand, it did seem wrong for Goofus to perform action b_1 . He could have given Gallant the pleasure of the movies at no cost to himself. Thus, we have a hedonic-background asymmetry.

And thus, Hedonic Utilitarianism is refuted. As noted in section 1.1, this theory is refuted by the existence of any hedonic background asymmetry.

It is natural to suppose that the asymmetry here is a *self/other* asymmetry, that the normative difference is explained somehow by the fact that a_1 involves Gallant giving up *his own* pleasure, whereas b_1 involves Goofus "giving up" *someone else's* pleasure for him. Abstractly speaking, there seems to be a moral difference between self-sacrifice and "other-sacrifice". We have a word for this sort of other-sacrifice: 'selfishness'.

But this conclusion is not inevitable. Perhaps the normative difference between cases 2a and 2b is not due to the self/other difference between those cases. Perhaps one of the other differences between the cases is to blame. For example, in the first case Gallant doesn't *want* the pleasure of the movies, whereas in the second case he does want the pleasure. In the next section I consider a response that exploits this difference between the cases.

2.2 Preferentism

Cases 2a and 2b refuted Hedonic Utilitarianism. But it might be thought that this was due to the hedonism, not the utilitarianism. When we use a less crude axiology to calculate value, perhaps the problem will disappear.

Let us consider how an exponent of "preference satisfaction" utilitarianism would view cases 2a and 2b. I will consider a rather simple version of this theory. I assume that my remarks would apply, *mutatis mutandis*, to more sophisticated versions.

To state preference utilitarianism ("PU"), let us suppose that for any action, a , there is a number, $PV(a)$, called the "*preference value of a*". $PV(a)$ represents the amount of preference satisfaction that would result if a were performed. For the sake of definiteness, let us consider this to be determined by the preferences that would exist were action a performed, as opposed to the preferences that in

fact exist. Nothing depends on this choice, however. For present purposes, we needn't consider more carefully how $PV(a)$ is determined. Finally, PU claims that the right actions are exactly those that maximize preference value.

So, when I consider what I ought to do, PU instructs me to do the act that will result in maximal preference satisfaction.

According to PU, the reason Gallant is permitted to fail to go to the movies in Case 2a involves the fact that Gallant does not want to go to the movies. Gallant would satisfy his preferences more by staying home than by going to the movies, and all other preferences (we may presume) are unaffected. In Case 2b, however, since Gallant does want to go to the movies, Goofus's decision not to send Gallant to the movies prevents Gallant's preferences from being satisfied as well as they would have been, had Goofus given Gallant the ticket. Thus, we may suppose the preference values in Case 2a to be as follows:

$$PV(a_1) = +1$$

$$PV(a_2) = -1$$

So, PV gives what we took to be the correct answer: Gallant isn't obligated to go to the movies. The preference values in 2b, on the other hand, would be:

$$PV(b_1) = -1$$

$$PV(b_2) = +1$$

Again, PU delivers the correct result: Goofus ought to give Gallant the ticket.

For simplicity, I have considered how full-blown preferentism would apply to these cases, but there are more moderate views that have the same result. For example, we might be repelled by the fact that PU allows the satisfaction of *any* preference, no matter what its object, to make a moral difference. We might want to restrict our attention to preferences with respect to a narrowly circumscribed set of "commodities". For example, it might be claimed that pleasures are the only intrinsic goods, but that the intrinsic value of a pleasure depends on whether or not I want it.⁹ This view would apply to these cases much in the same way as PU does.

If PU were an acceptable theory, it would serve two purposes. First, it would allow us to argue that the hedonic-background asymmetry in cases 2a and 2b is

⁹Fred Feldman presented a version of this view in his seminar on consequentialism during the Fall of 1991; my thinking about preferentism and the self/other asymmetry began with Feldman's presentation of that view.

not really a *self/other* asymmetry. The asymmetry is merely a preference/lack of preference asymmetry. That is, the asymmetry between the cases is explained by the fact that Gallant wants to go to the movies in the one case but not in the other. Secondly, it would be a version of utilitarianism that would not be refuted by the sorts of cases we have been discussing. No wonder that we could construct a *hedonic-background* asymmetry, for there is more to normative status than hedons. By moving to preference satisfaction we would hope to dissolve the problem.

However, I believe that the *self/other* asymmetry runs deeper than this. I think the problem can be recreated for Preference Utilitarianism. In the next section I argue for the existence of a *preference value-background self/other asymmetry*.

2.3 A new self/other asymmetry

Case 3a: Suppose that Gallant has the choice of whether or not to go to the movies, as in case 2a. This choice will affect no one but Gallant. But unlike case 2a, Gallant really wants to go to the movies. The case may be described thus:

- a₁: Gallant stays home PV: -1
- a₂: Gallant goes to the movies PV: +1

I factored in 1 unit for Gallant going to the movies, for he would be getting what he wants. Gallant's staying home would be worth less since his desire for the movies would be frustrated.

Case 3b: Here the situation is unchanged, save that Goofus is doing the deciding. Gallant wants to go to the movies; Goofus can either send him there or fail to do so. As before, the choice affects no one but Gallant:

- b₁: Gallant stays home PV: -1
- b₂: Gallant goes to the movies PV: +1

In Case 3b, it would seem to be selfish and wrong for Goofus to perform b₁. For no reason, he would be denying Gallant what he desires. On the other hand, it would not seem wrong for Gallant himself to forfeit that experience. Even though he wants to go to the movies, failing to go doesn't seem wrong. It would indeed be odd for him to fail to go to the movies, given that he wants to go. Perhaps it would be foolish, or irrational. But surely it would not be morally *wrong*. Gallant's satisfaction of his own preferences is his own business. Thus, we have a PV-background asymmetry.

2.4 Persistence of the self/other asymmetries

I think the asymmetry of the previous section is a self/other asymmetry. In fact, I conjecture that self-other asymmetries will reappear on any plausible theory of intrinsic value, for I believe that there are *intrinsic-value*-background self/other asymmetries. If this is so, then ideal utilitarianism, the view that we ought to maximize intrinsic value, is false.

It is not easy to argue for such a claim, however. I have two meager pieces of evidence. First, there seems to be some inductive evidence for the persistence of the self/other asymmetries. We had a hedonic-background asymmetry that appeared to be due to differing obligations to self and other. We considered an attempt to explain away the asymmetry in terms of preference. But the fact that we were able to reconstruct the asymmetry as a preference value-background asymmetry shows that differing preferences cannot be the complete explanation.

Secondly, there seems to be some intuitive appeal to the following line of (admittedly abstract) reasoning. Suppose that Gallant can either enjoy something or not; it will affect only him. Suppose that enjoying the thing would generate more intrinsic value (however intrinsic value is determined) than not enjoying it, and yet Gallant passes up the opportunity. This does not seem wrong. Yet it does seem wrong for Goofus to keep the intrinsic good from Gallant in the intrinsic-value isomorphic case that stands to the first case as 3b stands to 3a.

These considerations give us reason to search for a theory that accounts for the asymmetry by a direct built-in asymmetry between self and other. The goal of the next section is to show how this can be done in a theory that may fairly be counted utilitarian.

3. A Solution

3.1 Selfless Utilitarianism

As a first stab, let us state *Selfless Utilitarianism* (in a hedonistic form). For any person, s , the s -less *hedonic value* (“HV_{-s}”) of an action is the total pleasure minus pain that would result from the performance of that action *not counting pleasures and pains that accrue to s*. Ned Markosian has called this the “Rest Of The Community”, or “ROTC” value of that state of affairs, relative to s .¹⁰

¹⁰In private correspondence.

Selfless utilitarianism (which is *not* defended by Markosian) states that an action performed by person s is right iff it maximizes s -less hedonic value.

Part of the intuition behind selfless utilitarianism seems sound. This is the intuition that one is not obligated to produce good for oneself; only others. The intuition is implemented in selfless utilitarianism by utterly ignoring the agent's well-being in ranking that agent's possible actions.

But such utter disregard for the agent's well-being leads to extreme results.¹¹ Suppose that I can spare you a minor inconvenience only by undergoing extreme pain:

- | | | |
|-----|---------------------------------------|---------|
| a1: | inconvenience for you, nothing for me | HV: -1 |
| a2: | nothing for you, great pain for me | HV: -20 |

My intuition is that it would be permissible (although foolish) for me to spare you the inconvenience. However, I do not think many would hold that I am *obligated* to make this sacrifice. But this is just what selfless utilitarianism entails, for the Ted-less HVs are as follows:

$$\begin{aligned}HV_{\text{-Ted}}(a1) &= -1 \\ HV_{\text{-Ted}}(a2) &= 0\end{aligned}$$

Loosely speaking, the problem with selfless utilitarianism is that it *requires* us to ignore our own well-being. I don't think that I am required to ignore my own well being—I am merely permitted to ignore my own well-being. The view I will propose incorporates this intuition.

I think that preference utilitarianism has an analogous problem. In case 2a above, where Gallant does not want the pleasure of the movies, we focused on the action of Gallant staying home. We noted that it seems permissible for Gallant to forgo the movies and stay at home, despite this action's non-maximal hedonic value. PU supported this intuition. But surely it would not be *wrong* for him to go to the movies, and yet PU contradicts this, since a2 has a lower PV than a1.

3.2 Self/Other Utilitarianism

The leading intuition here is that it is permissible, but not obligatory, to ignore one's own well being. I will lay out a theory based on this intuition under the

¹¹Fred Feldman and Ned Markosian have made this point in personal correspondence.

assumption of hedonism, but my general approach is consistent with virtually any axiology.

Consider any situation of choice, where agent s deliberates among actions $a_1 \dots a_n$. I define the following ranking \prec_s of those actions:

$$a_i \prec_s a_j =_{\text{df}} \text{i) } HV(a_i) > HV(a_j) \\ \text{and} \\ \text{ii) } HV_{-s}(a_i) > HV_{-s}(a_j)$$

When we consider any two of the options, one is higher than another in the ranking if and only if it is better *both* from the impersonal perspective of hedonic value *and* from the selfless perspective of s -less hedonic value. Otherwise, the options are “tied” (that is, neither outranks the other).¹² Finally, *Self/Other Utilitarianism* (SOU) (in this hedonistic form) states that an action as performed by person s is right iff it has no alternative that ranks higher in the \prec_s ranking.

There will be a lot of *ties* in these rankings. A pair of my options will fail to be tied only when one has *both* a higher hedonic value and a higher Ted-less hedonic value than the other. If they are tied in hedonic value then they will be tied in my ranking. If they are tied in Ted-less hedonic value then this will produce a tie as well. And if one has a higher hedonic value while the other has a higher Ted-less value, again we have a tie.

I do not claim that these rankings are rankings in terms of *betterness*.¹³ The overall betterness ranking, as I see it, is impersonal, whereas these rankings are different for each person. Nor do I claim that they correspond to any independently important axiological facts. All I claim for their importance is their role in determining moral normative status.

Let’s see how SOU applies to some concrete examples.

The problem case for selfless utilitarianism: Here, the options

a1: inconvenience for you, nothing for me

a2: nothing for you, great pain for me

¹²It may be somewhat inappropriate to call the relation that holds between actions just when neither outranks the other “tied with”, since this relation is possibly intransitive.

¹³Michael Slote has pointed out in conversation that SOU might be viewed as yielding a kind of *better-than* ranking for acts, *considered as acts*. This may very well be. My point is simply that these rankings are *not* the usual better-than ranking in terms of overall goodness of consequences, for the latter is not person relative.

wind up tied in the \prec_{Ted} ranking. a_1 has a greater hedonic value but a lower Ted-less hedonic value. So SOU gives what I take to be the correct answer: I am permitted to do either a_1 or a_2 .

Cases 2a and 2b: The original self-other asymmetry: Case 2a involves Gallant choosing between:

a_1 : Gallant stays home

a_2 : Gallant goes to movies

Here, Gallant would get 5 hedons from going to the movies; none for staying at home. Action a_2 does have a higher hedonic value than a_1 , but it does not have a higher Gallant-less hedonic value than a_1 (the two are tied). Hence, a_1 and a_2 are tied in the \prec_{Gallant} ranking, and hence each is permissible according to SOU. Again, I think that this is the correct result.

On the other hand, case 2b involves *Goofus* choosing between:

b_1 : Gallant stays home

b_2 : Gallant goes to the movies

where the hedonic values are as in 2a. Since it is now Goofus doing the choosing, we consider the \prec_{Goofus} ranking. Action b_2 has a higher hedonic value, and also a higher Goofus-less hedonic value than b_1 , and hence outranks b_1 in the \prec_{Goofus} ranking. SOU again delivers the correct result: b_2 is obligatory.

Let us talk about SOU in general terms. SOU's approach to the self-other asymmetry can be grafted onto any axiology that singles out *some* value as accruing *to* persons. Thus, we can separate the problem of self and other from the general problem of finding an appropriate theory of value for use with utilitarianism. My approach takes as input an axiology, and gives as output a normative theory. Given an axiology, to calculate the Ted-less value of an action, simply take whatever value that axiology assigns to the action, and subtract out all that accrues to me. Then proceed as above.

I do not advocate the hedonistic version of Self/Other Utilitarianism, for I think that hedonism leads to other, unrelated trouble. I do not have a proposal for a theory of intrinsic value. Whatever the correct theory of intrinsic value may be, I propose the corresponding version of Self/Other Utilitarianism.

SOU seems to me to be a utilitarian theory. It incorporates the central utilitarian intuition that right action is maximizing action under some suitable

scale. As a result, SOU possesses the theoretical simplicity and desirable formal properties that are characteristic of utilitarianisms.

I must grant, however, that SOU represents a departure from ordinary versions of utilitarianism in that the relation it postulates between value and normative status is not as straightforward as those postulated by traditional versions. According to traditional utilitarianisms, one must always perform the best action, where bestness comes in a single impersonal scale. According to SOU, impersonal value is not the sole determiner of normative status—each individual must consult a separate scale (although these scales are systematically related to the one impersonal scale).

To further understanding of SOU, let us state some principles it entails. Say that one “does the best that one can” iff one maximizes hedonic value. Fred Feldman¹⁴ has noted that the following sort of moral advice seems wrong: “Here are your choices. And here is the one that would be best. Now, by all means, *don’t do it!*”. I agree—this would be odd advice. Fortunately, SOU entails:

(1) It is always permissible to do the best that you can

Similarly, say that a person *s* “does the best that she can for others” iff she maximizes *s*-less hedonic value. SOU entails:

(2) It is always permissible to do the best that you can for others

Hedonic utilitarianism and SOU agree on (1). (2) represents a point of disagreement, for Hedonic Utilitarianism forbids doing the best one can for others if it would mean ignoring one’s own hedonic well-being and thereby failing to maximize hedonic utility. (3) is another point of contention:

(3) It is possible that someone not be *obligated* to do her best

Hedonic Utilitarianism clearly entails the negation of (3), but case 2a shows that SOU entails (3). Intuitively, this is so because a person’s best might be her best because it includes hedons accruing to her; SOU permits (but does not require) her to forfeit those hedons. (3) embodies SOU’s stand on the self-other asymmetry: one is permitted to forgo one’s own pleasure. Finally, notice that SOU entails:

¹⁴In conversation.

(4) It is possible that someone not be obligated to do her best for others

The case that illustrated the difficulty with selfless utilitarianism shows that SOU entails (4). If my own well-being outweighs the good I could do for others, then I am permitted (though not required) to choose my own good.

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