

PHIL 260: Ethics
Winter 2006; David O. Brink
Persons & Values
Handout #8: Self & Others

If psychological reductionism is true, then there are important similarities between intrapersonal relations and concern and interpersonal relations and concern. We have explored some of these similarities in discussing the implications of reductionism for rationality and morality and in discussing Aristotle's account of friendship and the role it plays in his ethical theory. We might conclude our discussion by examining the implications of psychological reductionism for traditional debates about the authority of morality.

A PUZZLE ABOUT THE AUTHORITY OF MORALITY

It is common to think of morality as both impartial and objective, in particular, as containing various other-regarding duties of cooperation, forbearance, and aid that apply to agents independently of their own aims and interests. Most of us also regard moral obligations as authoritative practical considerations. But heeding these obligations appears sometimes to constrain the agent's pursuit of his own interest or aims. If we associate rationality with the agent's own point of view, we may wonder whether moral conduct is always rationally justifiable. We can capture this tension in terms of a puzzle about the authority of morality.

1. Moral requirements do not apply to agents in virtue of their aims or interests.
2. Moral requirements necessarily provide agents with over-riding reasons for action.
3. Rational action is action that promotes an agent's interests.
4. Other-regarding duties need not promote the agent's interests.

(1) articulates one conception of ethical objectivity, according to which moral requirements appear as impartial constraints on conduct that apply independently of the agent's own aims or interests. For instance, I do not defeat an ascription of obligation to me to help another by pointing out that doing so will serve no aim or interest that I have. (2) expresses a strong rationalist thesis about the authority of morality. It implies not only that there is always reason to be moral such that contra-moral behavior is pro tanto irrational but also that contra-moral behavior is always on-balance irrational. It is one way of attempting to understand the special authority moral considerations seem to have in practical deliberation. (3) expresses a common view of practical rationality, according to which it is instrumental or prudential. Though prudential and instrumental conceptions of rationality are different in significant ways, both represent the rationality of other-regarding conduct as derivative. Though no labels seem entirely satisfactory, we might describe this common assumption as the assumption that practical reason is agent-centered. By contrast, practical reason is impartial if it implies that there is nonderivative reason to engage in other-regarding conduct. Finally, (4) reflects a common assumption about the independence of different people's interests and attitudes, which we might call the independence assumption. Though agents often do care about the welfare of others and there are often connections between an agent's own interests and those of others, neither connection holds either universally or necessarily. My aims could be largely self-confined, and my own good can be specified in terms that make no essential reference to the good of others, say, in terms of my own pleasure or the satisfaction of my desires.

Though each element of the puzzle might seem appealing and has appealed to some, not all four claims can be true. In fact, a number of influential historical and contemporary views can be seen as responses, perhaps tacit, to this puzzle that reject at least one element of the puzzle on the strength of others. Some moral relativists and minimalists appeal to (2)-(4) to reject (1). They reject the existence of impartial and objective moral norms asserted in (1) and claim that genuine moral requirements must be relativized to and further the agent's interests or aims in some way. Anti-rationalists deny (2) and claim that failure to act on moral requirements is not necessarily irrational. Others reject the agent-centered assumptions about practical rationality in (3) and defend the existence of impartial practical reason. Finally, metaphysical egoists reject the independence assumption in (4) and resolve the puzzle by arguing that, properly understood, people's interests are interdependent such that acting on other-regarding moral requirements is a counterfactually reliable way of promoting the agent's own interests.

RELATIVISM AND MINIMALISM

Relativists and minimalists appear committed to highly counter-intuitive claims about the nature and scope of other-regarding demands, because they hold the content of morality hostage to the aims and interests of agents. If we ground moral demands in the agent's desires, then we may be able to recognize other-regarding moral demands for those with social sentiments. But such sentiments are neither universal nor fixed. But then we cannot explain why those who lack social sentiments are subject to other-regarding moral demands, and we cannot explain why those who have such sentiments would remain subject to other-regarding moral demands even if they lost these sentiments. Some relativists or minimalists could appeal to strategic aspects of self-interest. On this view, it is in the long-term interest of agents to develop, maintain, and act on other-regarding attitudes, because compliance with familiar other-regarding moral norms of restraint, cooperation, and aid is mutually advantageous. Though each would be better off if others comply while she does not, the compliance of others is generally conditional on her own. If so, the way to enjoy the benefits of others' compliance is to be compliant oneself.

The main problems with strategic egoism have to do with the scope and stability of its justification of other-regarding norms. The strategic egoist can justify other-regarding duties only toward partners in systems of mutual advantage. But it's a common view that morality has wide scope; it imposes obligations of restraint and aid where the agent stands to gain nothing strategically from the cooperation or restraint of the beneficiary. So, for instance, on this view (a) a person can apparently have no reason to be concerned about future generations, and (b) if the wealthy and talented have sufficient strength and resources so as to gain nothing by participating with the weak and handicapped in a system of mutual cooperation and forbearance, the former can have no reason, however modest, to assist the latter. If morality itself is interpreted in terms of strategic egoism, then these are counter-intuitive limitations in the scope of morality itself. Even where the strategic egoist does justify other-regarding norms, the justification is unstable. For on this view, compliance with moral norms is always a second-best option behind undetected noncompliance. So as Glaucon and Adeimantus point out in Plato's Republic, if only I was able to enjoy the benefits of the compliance of others without the costs of my own compliance, then I would have no reason to comply (Rep 359b8-360d8). But moral norms seem counterfactually stable -- they would continue to apply in these counterfactual circumstances -- as other-regarding norms that the strategic egoist can justify are not. This counterfactual instability represents a further limitation in the strategic egoist account of morality.

ANTI-RATIONALISM

We needn't hold morality hostage to the agent's aims or interests if we insist that morality and rationality are independent points of view. We could insist, with Foot ("Morality as a System of Hypothetical Imperatives") that impartial moral requirements are inescapable, even if their rational authority is hypothetical, rather than categorical. Foot sees no problem conceding that our commitments to justice are contingent.

This conclusion may, as I said, appear dangerous and subversive of morality. We are apt to panic at the thought that we ourselves, or other people, might stop caring about the things we do care about, and we feel that the categorical imperative gives us some control over the situation. But it is interesting that the people of Leningrad were not struck by the thought that only the contingent fact that other citizens shared their loyalty and devotion to the city stood between them and the Germans during the terrible years of the siege. Perhaps we should be less troubled than we are by fear of defection from the moral cause

This sort of anti-rationalism makes the authority, though not the content, of morality hostage to the agent's aims and interests. Most people do not want to be amoralists. We can still beat the amoralist with the club of immorality, what is lost if we cannot also beat him with the club of irrationality?

But this threatens to reduce the authority of morality to that of etiquette (whose demands are inescapable but lack categorical authority). It fails to explain why those without such sentiments should cultivate them and why those who do have sentiments have reason to maintain them. The anti-rationalist could appeal to strategic egoism, not as an account of morality itself, but as an account of its authority. This would explain why most people have reason to cultivate, maintain, and act on other-regarding moral norms most of the time.

But this strategic justification of the authority of morality is limited in scope and counterfactually unstable. Agents have no reason for moral concern for those who are not strategic partners, such as the infirm or future generations. Moreover, justified moral concern is unstable, inasmuch as I lose my reason to be moral if only my noncompliance with my norms could go undetected. These are counter-intuitive limitations in the scope and stability of the authority of morality.

IMPARTIAL PRACTICAL REASON

Rationalists often reject these agent-centered assumptions about practical reason and argue that there is non-derivative reason to be concerned about others. Many rationalist conceptions claim that practical reason is fundamentally impartial. For instance, this seems to be true of the Kantian tradition that treats moral demands as demands of practical reason and concludes that the fundamental moral demand is to respect rational agency as such, whether in your own person or that of others.

Oh Yeah? One question is how one justifies this impartial concern for rational agency. Kant may be able to explain why we have reason to identify with our rational, rather than our empirical, selves if he can argue that reasons can only be grounded in the agent's capacities for practical reason. But even if he can show this, it's not clear if he can show why identification with my rational self should lead me to be concerned about other rational selves.

So What? If the Kantian (or some other) conception of impartial practical reason can be defended, this would provide a rationalist defense of the authority of morality. But it would not yet

vindicate the strong rationalist thesis about the supremacy of morality. There may be impartial reasons, but as long as there are also prudential reasons, we seem faced with a sort of dualism of practical reason that threatens the supremacy of other-regarding morality.

METAPHYSICAL EGOISM

These doubts about the adequacy of appeals to impartial practical reason give those with rationalist sympathies reason to explore the metaphysical, and not merely strategic, reconciliation of prudence and altruism contained in metaphysical egoism. We might consider one version of metaphysical egoism that appeals to psychological reductionism about personal identity and exploits some Platonic and Aristotelian analogies between intrapersonal and interpersonal relations and concern.

Recall the reductionist account of fission as a case of interpersonal psychological continuity that preserves what matters, even if does not preserve identity. Fission is an exotic case. Though exotic, it is the limiting case of a very common phenomenon. Though I am normally most strongly continuous with myself in the future, I can be psychologically continuous with others with whom I interact psychologically. Interpersonal, as well as intrapersonal, psychological continuity is quite common. Interpersonal connections and continuity can be found among intimates who interact on a regular basis and help shape each other's mental life; in such relationships, the experiences, beliefs, desires, ideals and actions of each depend in significant part upon those of the other. We can see this in the familial friendships that Plato and Aristotle take as their model. Parents make plans for their children that affect the children's actions, opportunities, and experiences; they impart information and teach skills; they make suggestions, act as sounding boards, and set limits. In these and countless other ways, parents help shape their children's faculties, experiences, beliefs, desires, values, opportunities, and goals. Similar relations hold among spouses and friends who share experiences, conversation, and plans. They can also be found, to a lesser extent, among partners in cooperative ventures where the deliberations, desires, plans, and expectations of each are formed together and conditioned by each other. More generally, membership in various sorts of associations will affect the beliefs, desires, expectations, and plans of members so as to establish significant interpersonal psychological continuity among the association's members. In these ways, interpersonal psychological connectedness and continuity can extend broadly, even if the degree of connectedness (and sometimes continuity) often weakens as these relations extend further.

In more normal (non-branching) interpersonal cases, what distinguishes intrapersonal continuity and interpersonal continuity is the degree of continuity. There are more numerous and more direct psychological connections -- between actions and intentions and among beliefs, desires, and values -- in the intrapersonal case. And where the connections among links in a chain are all weaker, continuity between any points in the chain will also be weaker. If so, we can see how I am more weakly continuous with my intimates than I am with myself. We can also see how I might be continuous with others, besides my intimates, even if more weakly so. I interact directly with others, such as colleagues and neighbors, and this interaction shapes my mental life in certain ways, even if the interaction in such cases is less regular than is my interaction with intimates and even if the effect of such interactions on my mental life is less profound than is the effect produced by interaction with my intimates. Moreover, I interact with a much larger net of people indirectly, when our psychological influence on each is other is mediated by other people and complex social institutions, though the continuity thus established is, as a result, weaker. Indeed, the nature of my relationship to others and of the bonds between us are a function of the degree of interpersonal

psychological continuity between us. In branching cases, such as fission, there is no intrinsic psychological difference between intrapersonal and interpersonal relations, not even one of degree. Tom bears the same intrinsic psychological relations to Dick and Harry in case 3 as he does to his recuperating self in cases 1 and 2. What makes fission an interpersonal case is simply that continuity takes a one-many form.

If so, we might agree with Parfit that the separateness or diversity of persons is not so fundamental. Insofar as distinct individuals are psychologically connected and continuous, each can and should view the other as one who extends her own interests in the same sort of way that her own future self extends her interests. Precisely because it is the limiting interpersonal case, fission brings this out most clearly. In non-branching cases, such as cases 1 and 2, psychological continuity extends Tom's interests in the sense that later selves inherit, carry on, and carry out the projects and plans of earlier selves. In non-branching cases, it also extends Tom's life. In the fission case, however, continuity does not literally extend Tom's life, only because it takes a one-many form. But, by virtue of being fully psychologically continuous with Tom, Dick and Harry will each inherit, carry on, and carry out Tom's projects and plans (though presumably in somewhat different directions over time). This seems to be a good ground for claiming that Dick and Harry extend Tom's interests, in the very same way that his own future self would normally extend his interests, even if they do not literally extend his life. This helps us better understand the common claim, which Plato and Aristotle endorse, that in more conventional interpersonal cases there is interpersonal extension of interests. Among intimates, they claim, B's good can be regarded as a part or component of A's good. The ground they offer for this claim is that A and B interact and help shape each other's mental life; the experiences, beliefs, desires, ideals, and actions of each depend in significant part upon those the other. These are the sorts of conditions of psychological continuity and connectedness that are maximally realized in normal intrapersonal cases and in fission cases. Here they are realized to a very large extent in familiar interpersonal cases. This means that each should regard the good of those to whom they stand in such relationships as a constituent part of her overall good, just as she should regard the good of her own future self as a constituent part of her overall good. This allows us to agree with Aristotle that insofar as A and B are psychologically connected and continuous, each is justified in regarding the other as a second self (EN 1161b19, 28, 1169b6, 1170b7).

On this view, interpersonal psychological interaction and dependence provide a metaphysical egoist justification of other-regarding conduct and concern. Of course, concern itself is an ingredient in many associations, especially intimate associations. For instance, concern is part of what it is to be a friend to someone, whether the friendship is toward another or toward oneself. But this does not mean that our justification of concern is circular. For we can justify concern for associates in terms of other associative relations. Typically, concern is preceded by other kinds of associative relations. For instance, people interact with each other before they display the special concern for each other characteristic of friends or neighbors. The development and expression of this concern arises from and is justified by these past interactions and shared history. Moreover, it is significant for the purposes of my argument, that people often have these associative reasons for concern without having and expressing (proportionate) concern. Concern takes the form of a cluster of dispositions, among other things, to share the other's joys and sorrows, to keep abreast of developments in the other's life, to protect the other against certain sorts of harms and risks, and to advance the other's plans and prospects in certain ways. If so, concern for oneself or another clearly contributes to further psychological interdependence. In this way,

associative relations justify concern, which can strengthen associative relations, which then justifies further concern, and so on. There is no circularity here.

However, even if we accept this much of the metaphysical egoist justification of other-regarding concern, a number of foundational worries remain. It is worth raising these worries and exploring resources for reply.

THE GOOD OF SELF-EXTENSION

What is the value of interpersonal self-extension? We might agree that proper self-love requires a concern for others proportional to the amount of interpersonal psychological interaction and dependence that already exist between oneself and others. But presumably the amount of interaction one has with others, as well as the form it takes, is often under one's control. Why should one cultivate interpersonal psychological relations? It seems a circuitous way to benefit oneself. Why not just spend my financial, emotional, and intellectual resources directly on myself, rather than cultivating relationships through which I can then benefit myself?

The metaphysical egoist should claim that interpersonal self-extension promotes my eudaimonia in distinctively valuable ways. As Aristotle makes most clear, it is in my interest to exercise those capacities that are central to the sort of being I essentially am (EN i 7). If I am essentially a person, then a principal ingredient in my welfare must be the exercise of my deliberative capacities. Indeed, if we endorse a deliberative conception of welfare or eudaimonia, we can begin to explain how prudence can be a requirement of practical reason. For when prudence is understood in deliberative terms, it aims at the exercise of the very deliberative capacities that make one a responsible agent, capable of having and acting on reasons for action. Moreover, if my persistence depends upon the extension of my deliberative control into the future, we can see how the exercise of my deliberative capacities is part of my welfare. But then it can be claimed that interpersonal psychological dependence of the sort discussed can extend my interests in important ways.

The central premise of the argument is that I am not self-sufficient at producing a complete deliberative good. Aristotle focuses on the sharing of thought and discussion, especially about how best to live, as well as cooperative interaction. Sharing thought and discussion with another diversifies my experiences by providing me with additional perspectives on the world. By enlarging my perspective, it gives me a more objective picture of the world, its possibilities, and my place in it. This both explains and qualifies how we should understand Plato's and Aristotle's suggestion that part of the value of intimates, with whom one shares thought and conversation, consists in their providing a "mirror" on the self (Phdrs 255d5 and EN 1169b34-35). Insofar as we regard the exercise of deliberative capacities as the chief ingredient in eudaimonia, we can see how self-understanding and self-criticism are both parts of eudaimonia. Interaction between those who are psychologically similar provides a kind of mirror on the self. Insofar as my friend is like me, I can appreciate my own qualities from a different perspective; this promotes my self-understanding. One need only think of the familiar way in which parents experience pride and sometimes chagrin when they see various habits and traits of their own manifested in their children. But interaction with another just like me does not itself contribute to self-criticism. This is why there is deliberative value in interaction with diverse sorts of people many of whom are not mirror images of myself. This suggests another way in which I am not deliberately self-sufficient. Sharing thought and discussion with others, especially about how to live, improves my own practical deliberations; it enlarges my menu of options, by identifying new options, and helps me better assess the merits of these options, by forcing on my attention new considerations and arguments

about the comparative merits of the options. Here we might appeal to Socratic and Millian claims about the deliberative value of open and vigorous discussion with diverse interlocutors. Moreover, cooperative interaction with others allows me to participate in larger, more complex projects and so extend the scope of my deliberative control over my environment. In this way, I spread my interests more widely than I could acting on my own. Here too diversity can be helpful; cooperation is improved and extends each further when it draws on diverse talents and skills.

NON-INSTRUMENTAL CONCERN

Is egoist concern too instrumental? Morality seems to require not just that we perform the actions it demands of us but also that we fulfill its demands from the right sort of motives, and sometimes morality seems to require not just that we benefit another but that we do so out of a concern for the other for her own sake. This is certainly true about the concern owed to intimates. If justified concern for another is, as the metaphysical egoist claims, a special case of self-love, then mustn't such concern be at bottom instrumental? If so, this is objectionable because it fails to justify concern for others for their own sakes and because it threatens to make the justification of other-regarding concern insufficiently stable.

In assessing this complaint, it is instructive to look at the Socratic view of love and friendship and compare it with Platonic and Aristotelian views. In the Lysis Socrates maintains that one who had a complete good would have no need of love or friendship and that friendship can only exist between people who stand to gain from association with each other (215ab). In this way, friendship is predicated on mutual benefit (214c). This view of love and friendship fits nicely with Socrates's eudaimonism, which implies that I have reason to care for another insofar as this contributes to my own eudaimonia. But for Socrates such concern must be instrumental.

1. Only an unconditionally complete good is intrinsically valuable (219e9-11).
2. Hence, those things desired for the sake of something else are not intrinsically, but only instrumentally, valuable (219c-220b).
3. A lover values his beloved for the sake of the lover's own eudaimonia.
4. Hence, it follows that a lover can love his beloved only instrumentally.

Whereas Socrates assumes that valuing something for the sake of another always reflects purely instrumental concern, Plato and Aristotle reject this assumption. In the Republic Glaucon and Adeimantus demand that Socrates show justice to be beneficial in itself and not simply for its normal causal consequences (357a-367e). Plato subsequently defends justice by arguing that justice secures the right ordering of the agent's soul and so contributes to his eudaimonia. If we are to make sense of Plato's defense of justice as a response to the challenge that Glaucon and Adeimantus pose, we must interpret him as arguing that justice is valuable for its intrinsic, as well as its extrinsic, consequences. If justice contributes to the agent's happiness, because justice is a part of the agent's happiness, then Plato will have shown that justice is valuable "in and by itself" (367b4, e2-4). Plato does regard justice as the controlling part of eudaimonia; he hopes to show that one is always better off being just than unjust, no matter what the extrinsic consequences of justice and injustice turn out to be (360e-362c). But this comparative claim does not assume that justice is sufficient for a complete good. In particular, the comparative claim allows Plato to recognize the value of external goods, independent of virtue (361e4-362a2). But then Plato's view seems to be that eudaimonia is a whole of which justice (and virtue generally) is a proper part. Justice is desirable for the sake of something else, namely, eudaimonia. But being desirable for the

sake of eudaimonia does not imply that justice is only instrumentally valuable; it is valuable in itself for its constitutive contribution to happiness. If Plato can make this claim about justice, he can make this claim about friendship and love. The lover can love his beloved for the contribution this makes to the lover's own eudaimonia and for the beloved's own sake if the good of the beloved is a constituent part of the lover's own eudaimonia.

On Aristotle's view, a good is complete if it is chosen for its own sake, and a good is unconditionally complete if other things are chosen for its sake and it is not chosen for the sake of something else (1094a18-19, 1097a27-b6). Aristotle believes that eudaimonia is the only unconditionally complete good; all other goods are chosen for its sake. Some goods chosen for the sake of eudaimonia, though not choiceworthy in themselves, are choiceworthy as causal means to some ingredient of eudaimonia; these goods are incomplete, instrumental goods. But other goods - such as the virtues -- that are chosen for the sake of eudaimonia are also choiceworthy in themselves. They are chosen for the sake of eudaimonia in the sense that they are constituent parts of eudaimonia; they are valuable in their own right and for their constitutive contribution to a valuable life. Such goods are complete or intrinsic goods, not mere instrumental goods, though they are not unconditionally complete goods. Here Aristotle is making explicit the sort of assumptions Plato must make about justice in Republic ii-iv; in Aristotle's terms, Plato thinks justice is a complete good, but not an unconditionally complete good. If the lover treats the good of his beloved as a complete good that is also choiceworthy for the sake of his own eudaimonia, the lover is concerned for the other's own sake while valuing his beloved's well-being for the constitutive contribution this makes to his own eudaimonia.

So both Plato and Aristotle have the analytic resources to provide a eudaimonist justification of interpersonal concern that is derivative but not instrumental. When I undergo a present sacrifice for a future benefit I do so because the interests of my future self are interests of mine. The on-balance rationality of the sacrifice depends upon its promoting my overall good. But because the good of my future self is part of this overall good, concern for my overall good requires, as a constituent part, a concern for the good of my future self. In this way, concern for my future self for its own sake seems compatible with and, indeed, essential to self-love. If psychological relations extend an agent's interests, then the good of others can be part of my overall good just as my own future good can be. Though the on-balance rationality of other-regarding action depends upon its promoting my overall good, concern for my overall good requires, as a constituent part, concern for the welfare of those to whom I am appropriately psychologically related. This is why Plato views interpersonal love as the next best thing to immortality (Symp 206c1-209e5; PE §231) and why Aristotle claims that a proper conception of how others figure in self-love undermines the popular contrast between self-love and altruism (EN ix 8).

SCOPE

Another worry concerns the scope of the metaphysical egoist justification of other-regarding concern. If its justification of other-regarding conduct and concern is limited to those to whom one is already psychologically related, then the scope of this egoist account of the authority of morality may seem disturbingly narrow. The scope of egoist concern will be especially narrow if the relevant relations obtain only among intimates and like-minded members of small associations. But the metaphysical egoist can claim that the relevant interpersonal relations do and should extend quite widely.

Psychological connectedness does not require like-mindedness. Though Aristotle sometimes speaks as if the relevant relations among friends must involve similar beliefs and values (1159b3-5, 1161b35, 1162a13, 1165b17, 1166a7, 1167a23-b10, 1170b16), it's not clear that this is or should be an essential feature of his position, at least insofar as he seeks to model interpersonal concern on intrapersonal concern. For within my own life, I exercise deliberative control and establish psychological connections with my future self when I intentionally modify beliefs, desires, or values, as well as when I maintain them unchanged. Now it may be that my successive selves will typically be fairly similar; perhaps wholesale and instantaneous psychological change is impossible or at least would involve a substantial change, which I would not survive. But intrapersonal psychological dependence is compatible with significant qualitative change. This allows us to explain how it is that we have prudential reason to undertake changes in our characters that count as improvements; our persistence requires only deliberative control, not fixity, of character. If so, it seems that Aristotle should allow in the interpersonal case for friends to be psychologically dissimilar provided the mental states and actions of each exert significant influence on those of the other. Indeed, if others are to extend my interests by diversifying my experiences, by providing me with resources for self-criticism as well as self-understanding, by broadening my deliberative menu and improving my deliberations, and by allowing me to engage in more complex and varied activities, it is important that we be different and not too like-minded (Pol 1281a42-b15). Moreover, psychological influence can be exerted between people, on each other, even when they have not had direct interactions, as when two people influence each other through their conversations with a common third party. The ripple effects on others of our conversations, plans, actions, and relationships can extend quite widely.

Moreover, continuous selves need not be connected. Any elements in a series are continuous just in case contiguous members in the series are well connected; this implies that non-contiguous members (e.g. the end-points) of such a series are continuous even if they are not well connected or connected at all. If so, people can be psychologically continuous who are not at all connected, provided they are members of a series of persons each of whom is connected to some degree with his neighbor in the series. There is room for debate about the comparative roles of continuity and connectedness within a suitable mentalistic view of personal identity. Perhaps both relations matter and extend one's interests, but I think it is clear that continuity must matter. If so, then the relations that justify other-regarding concern can extend far beyond the circle of those with whom one regularly interacts.

In thinking about the proper scope of eudaimonist concern, it is worth thinking about differences between Aristotle and T.H. Green about the scope of the common good. Aristotle can extend the central elements of his eudaimonist defense of friendship to political association, because political communities that are just have to a significant degree the two features that are crucial to the justification of virtue-friendship and familial-friendship: there is commonality of aims among members of the political association, and this commonality is produced by members of the association living together in the right way, in particular, by defining their aims and goals consensually (1167a25-28, 1155a24-28). This establishes a common good among citizens, each of whom has a share in judging and ruling (Pol 1275a22-33). Justice aims at a common good (1129b15-18), and this, we said, is how Aristotle can construct a eudaimonist defense of justice. But this conception of the common good is still quite limited. Restricted as it is to those whom Aristotle thinks are fit for citizenship, it excludes women, barbarians, slaves, and manual laborers (1278a3-9); indeed, he thinks that manual laborers ought to be drawn exclusively from a pool of barbarians and natural inferiors (1329a24-26).

Green's own ethics of self-realization, developed in his Prolegomena to Ethics, is heavily influenced by his study of Plato and Aristotle. Whereas he thought that Aristotle was right to ground an agent's duties in an account of eudaimonia the principal ingredient of which is a conception of practical virtue regulated by the common good (PE §§253, 256, 263, 271, 279), he thought the Greeks had too narrow a conception of various virtues and the common good (§§257, 261-62, 265-66, 270, 279-80). It is Aristotle's restrictions on the common good that Green finds unacceptable.

The idea of a society of free and law-abiding persons, each his own master yet each his brother's keeper, was first definitely formed among the Greeks, and its formation was the condition of all subsequent progress in the direction described; but with them ... it was limited in its application to select groups of men surrounded by populations of aliens and slaves. In its universality, as capable of application to the whole human race, an attempt has first been made to act upon it in modern Christendom [§271].

As the last part of this passage suggests, Green's own conception of the common good is universal; full self-realization occurs only when each respects the claims made by other members of a maximally inclusive community of ends (§§214, 216, 244, 332).

There are good eudaimonist reasons for recognizing a more inclusive common good than Aristotle does. First, there already are significant forms of personal, social, and economic interaction and interdependence between Aristotle's citizens, on the one hand, and women, slaves, manual laborers, and resident aliens, on the other. This provides a backward-looking justification for recognizing a more inclusive conception of the common good.

But can the common good be genuinely universal in scope, as Green wants it to be, if it is the result of interpersonal association? The story of the Good Samaritan is supposed to illustrate the existence of duties toward others with one has no previous association (Luke 10: 29-37). Consider the proverbial remotest Mysian (Plato, *Theaetetus* 209b8), with whom one has no previous association, however indirect. Should it somehow come within my power to help the remotest Mysian, at little or no cost to myself, it might seem the eudaimonist cannot explain justified concern for him. This might seem like a defect in an account of the scope of morality or its authority.

If the remotest Mysian and I have had no direct or indirect psychological interaction, then his good is not already part of mine. So I can have no backward-looking eudaimonist reason to be concerned about him. But I can have forward-looking reasons. Even when the remotest Mysian and I have no prospect of further interaction, my assistance will enable or facilitate his pursuit of his own projects, and this will make his subsequent actions and mental states dependent upon my assistance. Indeed, other things being equal, the greater the assistance I provide the greater is my involvement in his life. To the extent that another's actions and mental states are dependent upon my assistance, I can view the assistance as making his good a part of my own. Assistance to the remotest Mysian earns me a share, however small, of his happiness, much the way care and nurture of my children grounds posthumous interests I have in their continued well-being. If so, it seems Aristotelian eudaimonism could seek a universal common good, of the sort Green contemplates.

WEIGHT

A final worry concerns the weight of the reasons for other-regarding concern. Both connectedness and continuity are matters of degree. Normally, there are more numerous and direct psychological connections among successive stages within a single life than between lives. And where the connections among links in a chain are all weaker, continuity between any points in the chain will also be weaker. If so, we can see how I am more weakly continuous with my intimates than I am with myself. We can also see how I might be continuous with others, besides my intimates. I interact directly with others, such as colleagues and neighbors, and this interaction shapes my mental life in certain ways, even if the interaction in such cases is less regular than is my interaction with intimates and even if the effect of such interactions on my mental life is less profound than is the effect produced by interaction with my intimates. Moreover, I interact with a much larger net of people indirectly, when our psychological influence on each is other is mediated by other people and complex social institutions. We can think of the degrees of connectedness and continuity in terms of a set of concentric circles with myself occupying the inner circle and the remotest Mysian occupying the outer circle. As we extend the scope of psychological interdependence, the strength of the relevant psychological relations appears to weaken and the weight of one's reasons to give aid and refrain from harm presumably weakens proportionately. Despite the wide scope of justified concern, it must apparently have variable weight. Is such an interpersonal discount rate acceptable?

This depends, in part, on the precise shape of the interpersonal discount rate. As long as psychological connectedness is itself one of the psychological relations that matter, then there will be an interpersonal discount rate, because an agent will be differentially psychologically connected to others. But as long as psychological continuity is also one of the relations that matter, a significant level of concern can be justified for anyone with whom one is psychologically continuous. Suppose A is friends only with B, whereas B is also friends with C. All else being equal, A is as continuous with his friend's friend, C, as he is with his friend, B. So insofar as continuity is one of the relations that matter, A has as much reason to be concerned about his friend's friend as about his friend. He will have reason to give greater weight to the interests of his friend insofar as connectedness also matters. These points generalize beyond friendship. So the importance of psychological continuity, ensures that a significant threshold of concern can be justified well out into outer circles. There will nonetheless be significant differences in the degree of concern that can be justified, above this threshold, in different circles if connectedness has independent significance.

But this kind of interpersonal discount rate need not be a threat to our understanding of other-regarding morality or its authority. For it is commonly thought that, even if morality has universal scope, the demands that it imposes are a function not simply of the amount of benefit that one can confer but also of the nature of the relationship in which one stands to potential beneficiaries. Commonsense morality recognizes more stringent obligations toward those to whom one stands in special relationships -- for instance, toward family and friends and toward partners in cooperative schemes -- than toward others. Aristotle, for one, clearly accepts this sort of moral discount rate; he thinks that, all else being equal, it is better to help and worse to harm those to whom one stands in special relations than it is to do these things to others (EN 1160a1-6, 1169b12; Pol 1262a27-30). It seems a reasonable hypothesis that the interpersonal relationships that have special moral significance are just those relationships of psychological interaction and interdependence that extend one's interests. If so, then there will be a moral discount rate that is isomorphic to the egoist interpersonal discount rate. Indeed, it would be a virtue, rather than a

defect, of this justification of other-regarding concern that it embodies an interpersonal discount rate.

THE BALANCE OF REASONS

The metaphysical egoist models interpersonal relations and concern on intrapersonal relations and concern and thereby extends the boundaries of self-interest and self-love so as to include the good of others. This view figures importantly in Platonic and Aristotelian eudaimonism and in Green's ethics of self-realization. I have tried to articulate one conception of metaphysical egoism that draws on these traditions and appeals to plausible claims about persons and their persistence. This view implies a conception of interpersonal relations that should lead us to see people's interests as metaphysically, and not just strategically, interdependent. Moreover, this egoist justification of other-regarding conduct is robust. We can explain how each should view this interdependence as good; interpersonal self-extension makes possible the fuller realization of the deliberative powers of each. We can also explain how the justification of other-regarding concern is derivative but non-instrumental. We can defend an inclusive conception of the common good and thereby offer a defense of other-regarding conduct with wide scope. Finally, we can see how differences in the very relations that, on this view, justify concern appear also to be morally significant differences. Metaphysical egoism implies that complying with other-regarding duties is a counterfactually reliable way of advancing the agent's own overall good, properly conceived. This is a significant result, whether we understand practical rationality in exclusively prudential terms or not.

However, my argument, even if successful, does not itself imply that the authority of other-regarding moral demands is overriding or supreme. Unlike Green, I do not see these claims as establishing the strong thesis that there can be no conflict or competition of interests among people (§244). I have argued that the good of others is a necessary and distinctively valuable part of an agent's overall good. But it is one aspect of an agent's overall good that must interact and may compete with more self-confined aspects. When I expend intellectual, emotional, and financial resources on meeting the legitimate claims of others, this contributes to my overall good in distinctive ways; but it also consumes resources that might have been spent on my education, my vocation, or my avocations. There are opportunity costs to every commitment, even especially important commitments, and sometimes the opportunity costs of important commitments are themselves important. If so, other-regarding and more self-confined aspects of an agent's overall good are distinct and at least potentially conflicting.

Whether and to what extent there can be a successful accommodation of other-regarding and self-confined aspects of self-interest is an important issue that requires further study. But this does not simply leave us where we started. For I have argued that the good of others forms a distinctive part of the agent's overall good whose importance must be reckoned with in the balance of reasons. This is an important claim. Even if practical reason is exclusively prudential, it vindicates the weak rationalist thesis that there is always reason to act on other-regarding demands, such that failure to do so is pro tanto irrational. It is less clear whether it helps vindicate the strong rationalist thesis that there is always overriding reason to act on other-regarding demands, such that failure to do so is on-balance irrational. This depends upon the resolution of other issues. If practical reason is exclusively prudential, the plausibility of the strong rationalist thesis will depend upon whether self-confined and other-regarding aspects of an agent's overall good can be accommodated in non-competitive ways. As I've suggested, there may be possible circumstances of democratic equality that allow this accommodation, but it is unlikely that they already obtain

generally. If so, it will be hard to maintain the strong rationalist thesis on purely prudential grounds. If, however, practical reason has impartial as well as prudential dimensions, then the prospects for a reasonably strong rationalist thesis look better. For then both impartial reason and prudence, in one voice, will speak in favor of other-regarding morality, and only prudence, in another voice, might speak against it. How often the balance of reasons will tip toward other-regarding morality will depend upon the details of metaphysical egoism, impartial reason, and other-regarding morality. Nonetheless I hope to have said enough about the nature and resources of metaphysical egoism to show that it has an important role to play in our understanding of the rational authority of morality.