

*Moral Theory and Moral Alienation**

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Most moral theories share certain features in common with other theories. They consist of a set of propositions that are universal, general, and hence impartial. The propositions that constitute a typical moral theory are (1) *universal*, in that they apply to all subjects designated as within their scope. They are (2) *general*, in that they include no proper names or definite descriptions. They are therefore (3) *impartial*, in that they accord no special privilege to any particular agent's situation which cannot be justified under (2) and (3). These three features do not distinguish moral theories from other theories, nor indeed from most general categorical propositions we assert. Yet, in recent years, these features of moral theories have been the target of a certain concerted and sustained criticism, namely, that to be committed to such a moral theory, or to aspire to act in accordance with its requirements, results in what has come to be known as *moral alienation*.¹ Moral alienation,

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¹ This term was coined by Bernard Williams. He elaborates the criticism in a series of papers: "A Critique of Utilitarianism," in J. J. C. Smart and Williams, *Utilitarianism: For and Against* (New York: Cambridge, 1973); "Morality and the Emotions," in his *Problems of the Self* (New York: Cambridge, 1973); "Persons, Character, and Morality," in *Moral Luck* (New York: Cambridge, 1981); and "Utilitarianism and Moral Self-indulgence," also in *Moral Luck*; and in his recent book, *Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard, 1985). More recent proponents of Williams's criticism include Lawrence Blum, *Friendship, Altruism and Morality* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1980); Michael Stocker, "The Schizophrenia of Modern Ethical Theories," *The Journal of Philosophy*, LXXIII, 14 (Aug. 12, 1976): 453-466; Michael Slote, *Goods and Virtues* (New York: Oxford, 1983); and Susan Wolf, "Moral Saints," *The Journal of Philosophy*, LXXIX, 8 (August 1982): 419-438.

Williams's criticism is anticipated - and a rebuttal to it leveled - by John Rawls's observation that "in times of social doubt and loss of faith in long established values, there is a tendency to fall back on the virtues of integrity: truthfulness and sincerity, lucidity and commitment, or, as some say, authenticity. If no one knows what is true, at least we can make our beliefs our own in our own way and not adopt them as handed to us by others. If the traditional moral rules are no longer relevant and we cannot agree which ones should take their place, we can in any event decide with a clear head how we mean to act and stop pretending that somehow or other it is already decided for us and we must accept this or that authority. Now of course the virtues of integrity are virtues, and among the excellences of free persons. Yet while necessary, they are not sufficient; for their definition allows for most any content: a tyrant might display these

according to this criticism, consists in (i) viewing one's ground projects from an impersonal, "moral point of view" engendered by one's acceptance of the theory; (ii) being prepared to sacrifice these projects to the requirements of moral principle; and (iii) making such a sacrifice specifically and self-consciously in order to conform to these requirements.

Moral alienation is said to manifest itself in one (or both) of two ways, depending on the nature of the project thus susceptible to sacrifice. One may be alienated *from oneself*, if the project consists of tastes, convictions, or aspirations that are centrally definitive of one's self. In this case one's commitment to the project can be at best conditional on its congruence with one's moral theory. It is claimed that this must make for a rather tepid and unenthusiastic commitment indeed.² Alternatively, one may be alienated *from others*, if the project is an interpersonal relationship such as a friendship, marriage, or collegial relationship. In this case one's responses to the other are motivated by one's awareness of what one's moral theory requires. It is claimed that this obstructs a genuine and unmediated emotional response to the other as such.³

My aim here will be to argue that this very compelling criticism - call it the moral-alienation criticism - is nevertheless misdirected. The real culprit is not any particular moral theory, but rather a certain familiar personality type that may or may not adopt it.

I. The Moral Point of View

Implicit in the above criticism of moral theory is a distaste for the point of view that our adoption of a moral theory purportedly forces on us. It is claimed that to take the moral point of view is to view ourselves and others *sub specie aeternitatis*, in abstraction from our personal circumstances and relations to others, and hence with a "detachment... from the level of all

attributes to a high degree, and by doing so exhibit a certain charm, not deceiving himself by political pretenses and excuses of fortune. It is impossible to construct a moral view from these virtues alone; being virtues of form they are in a sense secondary" [*A Theory of Justice* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard, 1971), ch. ix, sec. 78, p. 519].

² This thesis, and, more generally, moral alienation from oneself, is a focus of Wolf's discussion (*op. cit.*, pp. 427-435).

³ This claim, and, more generally, moral alienation from others, provides the target of Stocker's discussion (*op. cit.*), as well as of Blum's discussion (*op. cit.*, ch. iii).

motivations and perceptions other than those of an impartial character."⁴ The idea seems to be that, quite regardless of the particular *content* of a particular moral theory, we are forced to view the world without reference to our place in it, simply in virtue of the theory's impartiality. Thus it is not a necessary condition of such a perspective that the moral theory in question identify impartiality as itself a value: it need not direct us, say, to treat all human agents as equals or to assign the happiness of each a numerical value of 1 and no more than 1. Instead, the prescription may be, for example, to cultivate one's talents and moral dispositions or to render aid to the needy when it does not involve undue personal sacrifice. In these cases, too, the impartiality of the principle requires the so-called "moral point of view": My reason for cultivating my talents and moral dispositions is not that I, Piper, have a special attachment to *my* own potential for creativity and moral virtue, but rather that it happens to be, in this particular case, my potential that stands in the relation "one's own" to me; hence it is my potential that the prescription enjoins me to cultivate. Similarly, my reason for helping the needy is not that I am moved by compassion for the needy whom I see before me, but rather that my moral theory prescribes that one render aid to the needy, and I identify these individuals before me as "needy." In all such cases, the impartiality of the moral principles I accept is supposed to entail that I view myself and others without any special reference or relation to my personal circumstances and relations.

This version of the moral point of view fails to distinguish between *impartiality* and *impersonality*. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, *impartial* means "unbiased, unprejudiced, just, fair, or equitable." This corresponds roughly to the characterization of impartiality given in the introductory remarks of this discussion. By contrast, *impersonal* means "having no personal reference or connection." This is the view of oneself and others *sub specie aeternitatis* on which the moral-alienation criticism seems to rely. Proponents of this criticism assume that there is an intimate connection between the impartiality of the principles of moral theory and the impersonality of the point of view one must take as a consequence of adopting it. But this assumption is false. One may adhere to impartial moral principles without adopting an impersonal point of view, and one may adopt an impersonal point of view without adhering to impartial moral principles.

Consider the first possibility: that an agent adheres to impartial moral principles without adopting an impersonal point of view. Suppose you are

⁴ This is Williams's characterization in "Persons, Character, and Morality," *op. cit.*, pp. 2-5; also see *Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy*, *op. cit.*, pp. 19/20, 51, 65-67, 103/4, 110, 118.

personally invested in a moral theory that contains various impartial prescriptions of fairness, sympathy, honesty, compassion, and so forth. Also suppose that there are clear psychological reasons for your personal investment, deeply rooted in your personal history. Perhaps, in addition to having had a sound moral upbringing, you discovered early on that these deeply instilled principles were your only resource for coming to terms psychologically with repeated personal injustice or confusing or threatening personal encounters. Suppose further, then, that your investment in these principles informs your entire social and personal life. You try to do what is right, to be fair and honest in your dealings, to understand and sympathize with others, and to respond to them compassionately and without prejudice, as your moral convictions prescribe. These principles also inform your private life: you attempt to secure and maintain good physical health, to live modestly but tastefully, and not to deceive yourself about who you are or to what you aspire. The moral prescriptions that guide this conduct are universal, in that they apply not only to you, but to all rational human agents. They are also general, in that they include no proper names or definite descriptions. They are therefore impartial, for they do not permit you to accord any special privilege to your personal requirements, merely in virtue of the fact that you are the agent whose behavior you are evaluating. Of course your moral theory includes provisions for different circumstances and social relations, for example, that the elderly deserve special respect for their wisdom and experience, that one has special obligations to family and loved ones, and so forth. Nevertheless, it applies universally, generally, and impartially, for there is nothing in it tailored to fit your particular situation.

Now if your adherence to this moral theory implied an impersonal point of view, then since this point of view is the symptom of moral alienation, it would follow from your overriding investment in this moral theory that you were alienated from those of your central desires and ground projects thus overridden. But surely you are so alienated only if your personal investment in your ground projects outweighs your personal investment in the moral theory with which they may conflict, and this is an open question. We cannot simply *assume* that you are morally alienated *merely* by virtue of your overriding personal investment in your moral theory. For that would make the moral-alienation criticism a definitional rather than an empirical thesis.

Let us say that an agent A is *personally invested* in some state of affairs x if (1) x's existence is a source of personal pleasure, satisfaction, or security to A; (2) x's nonexistence elicits feelings of dejection, deprivation, or anxiety from A; and (3) these feelings are to be explained by A's identification with x. A *identifies with* x if A is disposed to identify x as personally meaningful or valuable. According to the criterion of personal investment, you are alienated

from your ground projects if (because you identify with them) sacrificing the possibility of their realization when your moral view so prescribes elicits the feelings of profound loss described by (2). You are alienated from your moral theory, on the other hand, if, because you identify more completely with this theory, these feelings of loss result from pursuing your central projects at the expense of your moral theory. For in this case, it is your moral theory that is the focus of your personal investment, not your desires and ground projects.

Proponents of the moral-alienation criticism do not speak directly to the importance of something like the criterion of personal investment in determining when, whether, or from what a person is morally alienated. They seem, on the one hand, to incorporate it, by referring to that from which they presume agents to be alienated as "commitments" and as that with which they "identify." On the other hand, an important supposition of the moral-alienation criticism is that a morally alienated agent regards her ground projects with detachment - i.e., *without* these feelings of loss. But it does not follow from the fact that the abdication or sacrifice of certain things with which we identify fails to elicit profound feelings of loss from us that we are alienated from those things. For they may have been only peripherally important sources of self-identification to begin with.

Consider another, analogous conflict between impartial principles and psychologically central desires. Suppose you have a settled, long-standing, and recurring desire to smoke. You also hold wholeheartedly the universal, general, and impartial conviction that it is both unhealthy and inconsiderate to others to smoke. Although you are frequently tempted to smoke, the force of your conviction usually enables you to resist this temptation. Your unqualified personal investment in the view that smoking is a moral evil leads you to fear your desire to smoke and to anticipate its onset with anxiety at the possibility that you may give in to it. When it occurs, you are simultaneously torn by craving for a cigarette and by self-disgust at your inability to rid yourself of this craving once and for all. When the desire passes, you rejoice, relax, and hope that you have seen the last of it. Of course you experience temporary feelings of deprivation, dejection, and anxiety at not smoking when the desire to smoke overtakes you. But these feelings are to be explained by your physical addiction to smoking, not your identification with it. Though you often desire to smoke, you have no personal investment in smoking. If you have no personal investment in smoking, it is inappropriate to describe you as alienated from your desire to smoke, even though that desire may be long-standing, central, and powerful.

If one is not commonly assumed to be alienated from the desire to smoke when one withstands it in favor of the impartial prescription not to smoke, it is unclear why one should be assumed to be alienated from any other desires when one sacrifices them in favor of an impartial prescription to, say, render

aid to the needy. This supposition of an agent's personal investment in her projects at the expense of her moral theory needs to be demonstrated, not taken for granted.

II. The Impersonal Point of View

Next consider the possibility that an agent adheres to an impersonal point of view without adopting a set of impartial moral principles. Take the question of whether or not I should save my husband Jeff first from some natural disaster, and suppose my moral theory sufficiently fine-tuned to yield the answer that I should - say, by the inclusion of a special-obligations-to-loved-ones clause. The objection then would be that I am morally alienated from Jeff nevertheless, if I am motivated to save him first because my moral theory prescribes it, rather than out of love for him. The moral-alienation critic would say that my investment in this theory detaches me from my love for Jeff, since it is only in virtue of my theory that I am overridingly and unambivalently motivated to save him first. My impersonality is evinced by my primary attachment to my moral theory.

But the same objection could be made even if no such theory intervened between me and Jeff. For my desire to save him first may also intervene between Jeff and me. In this case, the complaint would be that my investment in the satisfaction of my desires - especially, let us suppose, the altruistic and other-directed ones - takes precedence over my love for Jeff, since it is only in virtue of my unsatisfied desire to save him first that I am overridingly and unambivalently motivated to do so. Here my impersonality, my lack of personal connectedness to Jeff, is evidenced not by my attachment to my moral theory, but rather by my attachment to my own desires.

In both cases, there *may* be some validity to these complaints. I may be, indeed, so enamored of my moral theory and the fact that I subscribe to it that I really do regard other moral agents as nothing more than occasions for instantiating its precepts. But alternatively, I may be so committed to the satisfaction of my other-directed desires that I regard other moral agents in a similarly superficial way, as mere occasions for exercising my beneficence. This is the stereotype of the "do-gooder," whose moral behavior somehow seems entirely self-aggrandizing and neither elicits nor presupposes any attachment to the individuals her actions serve. The do-gooder, too, foregoes the depth and insight that accompanies attention to the specifics of who they are, for the sake of an essentially egocentric conception of reality. In the first case, the self is personally invested in a theoretical moral stance that degenerates into impersonality because it is used to deflect and disguise unmediated interpersonal contact. In the second case, however, the self is

invested in a *nontheoretical* moral stance that also generates into impersonality because it deploys others as a means to the achievement of its personal moral ideal.

Thus I may subvert my personal connection with myself and others, not only by interposing an impartial moral theory between us. I may accomplish this by interposing self-aggrandizing emotions and desires as well. For in both of these cases, the very real problem to which the moral-alienation criticism calls attention is not just personal detachment, but a deeper, more generalized pathological narcissism, of which the condition identified as "moral alienation" is merely a contingent and localized symptom.

By *narcissism*, I shall mean that persisting state of the self characterized by an excessive preoccupation with one's self-image and image in the eyes of others, with one's personal flaws and assets and an unrealistic ideal of perfection against which they are measured, and with a self-oriented conception of one's relationship to others. Moreover, a self is narcissistic if it cannot tolerate others' independence of its expectations and requirements, nor appreciate their independence as intrinsically valuable. Finally, a self is narcissistic if these preoccupations effectively shield it against unmediated interpersonal vulnerability or contact, and against the trauma of personal growth that frequently results.⁵ Among the manifestations of narcissism some psychologists have observed are envy and an inflated sense of one's own importance, the consequent devaluation of others and of their attentions to oneself, and the inability to empathize with others, to experience a sense of connectedness with them, and to form deep attachments to them. At the same time, narcissists are often highly dependent on others to buttress an extremely fragile and volatile self-esteem. They are beset by occasional eruptions of self-righteously sadistic anger and nightmares of self-contempt, both of which are recycled to fuel the grandiose belief that their ideals and aspirations are higher and purer than anyone else's. Consequently, narcissists are frequently smug, condescending, and seemingly remote as well.⁶

⁵ This characterization is based on the criteria described in *DSM III: Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, 3rd ed. (Washington, D.C.: The American Psychiatric Association, 1980), pp. 315-317.

⁶ Dr. Otto Kernberg discussed these symptoms in a lecture at the University of California at San Francisco on May 2, 1984. Also see Kernberg's books. *Borderline Conditions and Pathological Narcissism* (New York: J. Aronson, 1975), part II; and *Severe Personality Disorders* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale, 1984), part III. For a related and insightful discussion that does not, however, use the concept of narcissism explicitly, see David Shapiro, *Autonomy and Rigid Character* (New York: Basic Books, 1979).

It is not difficult to understand how a narcissistic self might have a greater allegiance to its favored moral theory than to other people, or, alternatively, a greater allegiance to its altruistic self-image than to the individuals thereby served. Nor is it difficult to understand in what sense a narcissistic self might view others from a detached or impersonal perspective, and how its concern with the opinions of others might be accompanied by an inability to establish genuine and unmediated contact with them. That is, it is not difficult to see how moral alienation might be a significant problem for a narcissistic self.

Let us speculate on the rationalized form such an attitude might take when the narcissistic self is confronted with evidence of its own narcissism, say, in the form of a complaint that one's aspiration to sainthood seems largely unaccompanied by any personal warmth. If narcissism functions as a defense against the intrusion of an undisguised other into the domain of the self, a natural response to such a complaint would be to denigrate personal warmth as an invasion of privacy. Thus, for example, it might be argued that attempting to be familiar or cozy with everyone one meets is the worst form of moral inauthenticity of all, that it is irrational and self-indulgent to allow others to make importunate emotional demands on one, or self-defeating to allow them to take advantage of one's generosity and moral concern, that it is delusory or even self-destructive to "spread oneself too thin," "try to save the world," or be a martyr, and that the preservation of a private realm within which the universalistic demands of morality cease to apply is a necessary condition for having any sustained moral impact whatsoever.

These claims derive their persuasiveness from the recognition that few of us indeed can be morally effective as martyrs. But, deployed as narcissistic defenses, they rationalize the detachment of the self from the moral requirements of others, and the withdrawal of the self into a private domain in which those demands can be safely disregarded. By contrast with views that justify the need for privacy and personal fulfillment as a condition of greater moral compassion and commitment, the narcissist would claim that there is a certain realm in which the requirements of moral compassion and commitment simply fail to apply. That is, a sanctuary for the individual self is not justified as a necessary condition of sustaining and strengthening its moral ties to others, but instead as a sufficient condition of sustaining and

It is important to emphasize that the following discussion is intended to chart some of the connections between narcissism as I have defined it and the so-called "impersonal" point of view. It should *not* be taken to imply that actual proponents of the moral alienation criticism are narcissists, since of course it is the *philosophical* force of the thesis that has garnered it so many adherents. I am grateful to Jeffrey Evans for alerting me to this possible misreading of the argument.

strengthening the self to withstand them. Others, in this view, are regarded as intrusive or disruptive of the equilibrium of the self or as exacting too great a demand on its resources, rather than as enriching them. The narcissistic self is distinguished, then, by the subordination of its moral commitments to its need for eminent domain.

A narcissistic self also might be expected to regard any impartial moral theory of which it is a potential *object* as unsympathetic or distasteful. For, by definition, an impartial theory refuses to accord privileged or exceptional status to the requirements of any self, including narcissistic selves. But we have already seen that one of the defining features of the narcissistic self is the arrogation to itself of value and importance that others are perceived to lack. From the viewpoint of the narcissistic self, the privileged status of its particular requirements and its right to special treatment are both justified by their special and superior value in its own eyes.

Moreover, from the perspective of a narcissistic self committed to the preservation of its internal boundaries against unmediated contact with others that threaten or disrupt it, the obligations, for example, to treat all human beings fairly or not to be biased by one's personal preferences would naturally present themselves as particularly odious competitors to that commitment. For recall that another one of the defining features of such a self is that its central desires are specifically self-oriented, regardless of the content of those desires. The actual requirements of impartial morality disturb the integrity of the narcissistic self by threatening this orientation. For they demand, not merely the personal desire to conform to them, but rather an unmediated comprehension of and sympathy for the needs and requirements of others which, for a narcissistic self, are in direct competition with its own. We might expect, then, that the integration of personal needs and desires with the requirements of moral principle would be regarded by the narcissistic self as an abdication or sacrifice of selfhood, and rejected accordingly.

Not just moral alienation, but a more generalized social alienation is a predictable outcome for a narcissistic self. For if one's primary concern with others is the nature of their relation to oneself and if their behavior is invariably interpreted as evidence of this relation, then, obviously, one's view of others will be mediated by this interpretation and, correspondingly, detached from their independent reality. In this case, whether the terms of this interpretation are theoretical or affective is largely irrelevant. An agent who saves her spouse first in order to fulfill her moral obligations or satisfy her benevolent desires is psychologically and morally crippled, but not because of her moral theory. She is crippled because her preoccupation with her own rectitude overrides the dispositions and behavior that her moral theory prescribes.

Thus the real problem to which the moral-alienation criticism importantly draws our attention does not lie with moral theory. For we have seen that one may adopt such a theory without assuming an impersonal point of view and that one may assume this point of view without adopting a moral theory. An impersonal point of view is instead symptomatic of a more generally corruptive and debilitating pathology, namely narcissism, which bears no necessary relation to moral theory at all.

III. Moral Integrity Reconsidered

My attempt to preserve the unsullied character of moral theory against the moral-alienation criticism may remain suspect because of one feature of that thesis to which I have so far paid little attention. This is the background Humean view, according to which all action must be motivated by desire, however weakly that notion is understood. From this vantage point, it may seem that any account of moral motivation to act on impartial principles of moral theory must either presuppose a desire to act on those principles - in which case my desire to save Jeff first, for example, is not unmediated after all - or else it can issue only from the impersonal point of view *of those principles themselves*. Either possibility would belie my contention that psychological narcissism has nothing to do with moral theory. In what follows, then, I want to limn a third possibility. This is that moral conduct is motivated directly and unmediatedly by those impartial moral principles that are partly and necessarily constitutive of the *personal* point of view.

Begin by reconsidering my decision to save Jeff first because my moral view condones it. Let us bite the bullet and describe this as a case of my being motivated to save Jeff first by respect for an impartial moral imperative, derived from that part of my moral theory which assigns me special obligations to loved ones, to aid loved ones first when rendering aid to the imperiled.⁷ The complaint would be that I am then motivated by a desire to adhere to my moral theory, and not by my concern for Jeff.

But this does not follow. Recall first the distinction between a purpose and a motive for acting.⁸ A *purpose* for acting is the goal, end, or intentional

⁷ Clearly this formulation of the case is Kantian in spirit. However, I do not mean to ascribe to Kant the solution that follows, since I think it is only part of the story for Kant himself. That story is developed in my "Kant's First- and Third-person Criteria of Humanity," and "Kant's Idea of Reason," unpublished papers, 1985.

⁸ This distinction is first made explicitly by Kant, in *The Critique of Practical Reason*, Lewis White Beck, trans. (New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1956); see Remark I to Theorem IV.

object to the achievement of which my behavior is directed. A *motive* for acting is the psychological cause of action, i.e., that which moves me to behave intentionally. Under the influence of the Humean conception of the self, many philosophers assume that the purpose of my action is necessarily its psychological cause as well. They assume this because they suppose that the purpose of my action must be the object of a desire or, minimally, of a "pro-attitude" toward it, which suffuses it with a weak but rosy glow and inspires me to pursue it.⁹ According to one well-known account,¹⁰ I have such a desire or pro-attitude toward this object if, when I fail to achieve it, I experience disappointment, frustration, or regret. But that my action is *directed toward* the achievement of this object does not imply, even minimally, any such *pro-attitude* toward it in any nontautological sense.¹¹ For example, I may be caused to purposefully peel the label off the ale bottle, not by any pro-attitude toward peeling the label off the ale bottle, but rather by anxiety, or habit, or the perception of the dampness of the bottle. If I am prevented from doing so, I may experience neither disappointment, nor frustration, nor regret. Hence that my action is *directed toward* the achievement of this object does not imply that it is this object that *causes* me to pursue it. Moreover, even if I did have a pro-attitude toward this object, even this fact would not imply that this pro-attitude is what causes me to pursue it: It is an open question whether it is my pro-attitude toward peeling the label off the ale bottle or my anxiety which causes me to do so. The purpose of an action need not supply its motive.

Of course some purposes of action *do* supply its motives, as when the intentional object at which my action is directed is one I desire, or aspire, or

H. A. Pritchard relies on this distinction, although he uses it to different ends, in "Does Moral Philosophy Rest on a Mistake?" *Mind*, xxi, 81 (January 1912), 21-37.

⁹ See, for example, Donald Davidson, "Actions, Reasons, and Causes," *The Journal of Philosophy*, LX, 23 (Nov. 7, 1963): 685-700; and Alvin Goldman, *A Theory of Human Action* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1970), chs. iii and iv. This assumption is central to Alan Gewirth's argument for the Principle of Generic Consistency in his vigorous and challenging *Reason and Morality* (Chicago: University Press, 1978), chs. 1.12-1.14, 2.1-2.6.

¹⁰ Richard Brandt and Jaegwon Kim, "Wants as Explanations of Actions," *The Journal of Philosophy*, LX, 15 (July 18, 1963): 425-435.

¹¹ And it is, of course, only the nontautological sense we are interested in, when addressing the question of what discrete, causally efficacious internal events move the agent to action. The tautological sense of 'desire' that makes it a conceptual truth that actions are motivated by desire gives at best a prematurely conversation-stopping answer to this question. This problem is discussed in greater detail in chs. iv and v of my *Rationality and the Structure of the Self*, *op. cit.*

resolve to achieve. Desires, aspirations, and resolutions are psychological causes of action that take the agent's purposes as intentional objects and would not be motivationally effective without them. These are the cases in which it makes sense to describe the agent as having a motivationally effective "pro-attitude" toward the purpose of the action. I shall describe these causes of action as *forward-looking motives*. My claim is that not all action is caused by forward-looking motives.

For there are other psychological causes of action that are unrelated to the purpose of my action, and instead presuppose perceived intentional objects as causes. For example, perceived traffic jams cause frustration, which in turn motivates honking the horn. Honking the horn is a fully intentional action. I may have a pro-attitude toward it, but then again I may not. In either case, honking the horn need not be motivated by its purpose. Instead, it may be motivated by an emotion that is caused, in turn, by the perception of an intentional object. Call such psychological causes *backward-looking motives*. My claim is that much action is motivated solely by backward-looking motives.¹²

Backward-looking motives, in turn, may be of two kinds. In the example just described, the immediate psychological cause of action is an emotional reaction to a perceived intentional object. Describe such motivationally effective emotional reactions as *affectively motivating states*. Affectively motivating states constitute one kind of backward-looking motive. But, sometimes, perceived intentional objects can elicit a goal-directed behavioral response almost automatically, without the intervention of an affectively motivating state, if the disposition to respond to that perceived intentional object in that way is deeply instilled, as when I respond to the perceived ringing of the telephone by picking it up and saying, "Hello?" Call these *perceptually motivating states*. In these cases, the mere perception of an object is motivationally effective in causing an overt behavioral response directed toward a different object. Backward-looking motives may be either affective or perceptual.

Now, according to the prevailing Humean model of motivation, any such backward-looking motive must be followed by a forward-looking motive, namely, a desire, if it is to cause action. Thus, for example, the Humean picture implies that my feeling of expansiveness, caused by my having just got a raise, can only indirectly cause me to scatter dollar bills in the street, by first engendering in me a *desire* to scatter dollar bills in the street. But no such

¹² My distinction between forward- and backward-looking motives parallels Michael Stocker's distinction between the "in order to"/"for the sake of" and "out of/from" locutions. See his "Values and Purposes: The Limits of Teleology and the Ends of Friendship," *The Journal of Philosophy*, LXXVIII, 12 (December 1981): 747-765.

desire (non-tautologically construed) is necessary to explain action. It is often sufficient that deeply inculcated norms of social behavior simply dispose me to react or behave in certain ways in response to my perception of a situation as being of a certain kind.¹³ In the present example, my emotional reaction to getting a raise, i.e., my feeling of expansiveness, is direct in that it is unmediated by any conscious conception of how I ought to feel or behave under these circumstances. And this affective motivational state in turn causes me to perform a purposeful action, namely, to scatter dollar bills in the street. But this action is equally unmediated by any desire or "pro-attitude" toward scattering dollar bills in the street, for I would feel no frustration or regret if I were prevented from doing so.¹⁴ My motive for doing so is that I am feeling expansive. And I was caused to feel expansive by having just got a raise.

Thus a backward-looking motive (my feeling of expansiveness) can cause purposeful action (scattering dollar bills in the street) without the intervention of a forward-looking motive. Some other examples: free-floating anxiety, consequent on my perceived social incompetence, causes me to roll my napkin into little balls at dinner; irritation at my government's obtuseness causes me to bang the plates and cutlery while setting the table; fear, consequent on my awareness that I could be hauled into court by the Internal Revenue Service for income-tax evasion, causes me to pay my taxes. Each of these is an example of purposeful action motivated by backward-looking affectively motivating states.

Similarly, feelings of respect for the moral imperative to aid imperiled loved ones first, consequent on my awareness of Jeff as an imperiled loved one, causes me to save Jeff first. An intentional object, i.e., a loved one's peril and my primary obligation to aid him, causes a backward-looking affectively motivating state, i.e., respect, which in turn causes a purposeful action, i.e., my saving Jeff first. Now I feel respect for imperatives thus derived from my moral theory, because I feel both the force of logic, and the immediacy of the application of this theory to our situation: My moral theory governs my understanding of the events I perceive - i.e., that Jeff is imperiled and that I must save him right away - and it motivates my responses to them - i.e., my direct and unambivalent attempt to save him. But it would have neither of

¹³ I defend this claim at somewhat greater length in "Two Conceptions of the Self," *Philosophical Studies*, XLVIII, 2 (September 1985): 173-197; reprinted in *The Philosopher's Annual*, viii (1985).

¹⁴ And again: even if I did feel frustration or regret at being thus prevented, it would still be a moot question whether it was my pro-attitude toward scattering dollar bills in the street, or my feeling expansive, that caused me to scatter dollar bills in the street.

these features if it furnished no guidance for the treatment of loved ones, nor for rendering aid to the imperiled. And of course no one would be tempted to take seriously a moral theory as impoverished as this. Only a theory capable of guiding and making sense of moral experience *in practice* can elicit our respect.

I could not, however, identify Jeff as an imperiled loved one relative to my respected moral theory, were it not for my prior, unmediated love and concern for him. Moral-alienation critics tend to speak as though to have an overriding personal investment in an impartial moral theory is not only to suppose that moral principles apply to all human agents (true), but to be motivated primarily by concern to conform to this theory to enter into personal relationships in the first place¹⁵ (false). To be sure, if I am in fact a moral person, then moral principles apply to my personal relations, and my behavior toward others either exemplifies or violates these principles, regardless of any changes in my attitude toward either: All is fair neither in love nor in war. If, further, I identify myself as a moral person, then the principles derived from my moral theory not only apply to my personal relations, but also guide them. But that moral imperatives *guide* my personal relations cannot imply that moral imperatives are *presupposed by* my personal relations. For if we could have no personal relations without presupposing moral relations, there would be no examples for the imperatives that define moral relations to apply to: if I did not already love Jeff (and recognize his peril), I could not apply the moral imperative to aid imperiled loved ones first to our situation. And if I bore no such personal relation to anyone, obviously this imperative could have no application at all.

Hence my respect for this imperative need not blind me to Jeff's uniqueness, nor pre-empt my affection for him, any more than my impartial belief that smoking is unhealthy blinds me to the temptation of the cigarette before me, or pre-empts the craving to which I am in danger of succumbing. It is an interesting view of moral obligations that regards them as stifling or

¹⁵ Bernard Williams, for example, claims that, for the Kantian, "personal relations at least presuppose moral relations... [T]hey are applications to this case of relations which the lover, qua moral person, more generally enters into" ("Person, Character and Morality," *op. cit.*, p. 16). Similarly, Michael Stocker argues as follows: "Suppose you embody this utilitarian reason as your motive in your actions and thoughts toward someone. Whatever your relation to that person, it is necessarily not love (nor is it friendship, affection, fellow feeling, or community). The person you supposedly love engages your thought and action not for him/herself, but rather as a source of pleasure" ("The Schizophrenia of Modern Ethical Theories," *op. cit.*, p. 458).

distorting our personal relationships; as though the obligation to treat a loved one with special care somehow took all the fun out of it.

Moreover, it is precisely my respect for this moral imperative that obviates any doubt or ambivalence that might otherwise cause me to hesitate in deciding whom to save first. If I didn't respect my special moral obligation to loved ones, my disposition to save Jeff first might be overriding, but it would not be unqualified by ambivalence about where my moral obligation lay. Without my recognition of Jeff as a loved one, my disposition to save him first might not be qualified by qualms about my moral duty, but it might not be overriding either. Being motivated to save Jeff first by this moral imperative, then, as much presupposes an unmediated personal relationship to Jeff as it does respect for my moral theory.

Some might maintain that it is precisely the potential for ambivalence, or for a conflict between love and duty, that shows the fundamental defect of impartial moral imperatives. That they might prescribe one course of action, and my natural inclinations another, reinforces the alienation that, I claim, is a straw man. But the problem is then not local to impartial moral prescriptions, but instead common to any morality - indeed, to any prescriptions of any kind that happen to diverge from what I am naturally inclined to do.¹⁶ If we think of a morality as, roughly, a way in which our actions and emotions are or should be regulated by the legitimate requirements of others, then the objection is, in fact, an objection to heeding those requirements at the expense of one's personal inclinations, and a complaint that one is not invariably encouraged to indulge them. But I have already suggested that such complaints ultimately support pathological narcissism.

A motivationally effective moral imperative, then, ordinarily presupposes rather than precludes unmediated feelings of concern or affection. So to be *motivated* to save Jeff first by respect for a moral imperative does not imply that my *purpose* in acting is to obey that imperative to the detriment of my overriding concern for Jeff, any more than being motivated by fear of the IRS to pay my taxes implies that my purpose in acting is to obey the IRS to the detriment of my overriding concern to pay my taxes. In both cases, my complex response to a perceived intentional object (the specter of the IRS, a loved one's peril) includes a backward-looking affectively motivating state (fear of the IRS, respect for the moral law) that motivates purposeful action (paying my taxes, saving Jeff first).

Let us then think of a *morally integrated agent* as, very roughly, one whose dispositions, prescribed by her moral theory, are sufficiently deeply instilled,

¹⁶ Marcia Baron touches on this point in "The Alleged Repugnance of Acting from Duty," *The Journal of Philosophy*, LXXXI, 4 (April 1984): 197-220, p. 213.

preferably in the normal process of socialization, as to be motivationally effective most of the time.¹⁷ This means, first, that her actions usually, although not invariably, conform to its prescriptions. Second, it means that her actions are invariably guided by these prescriptions in the following ways:

First, she naturally develops relationships with others that elicit mutual trust, affection, respect, etc., or their opposites, and interprets these relationships, actions, emotions, and individuals with the help of the impartial vocabulary and concepts her moral theory supplies. Thus she views people's actions, her own included, as right or wrong, well intended or malicious, honorable or shameful, and so on; and people themselves, herself included, as accordingly judicious or partial, benevolent or malevolent, virtuous or corrupt, generous or spiteful, good or bad, and so on. That is, she recognizes the terms and prescriptions of her moral theory to apply to her experience.

Second, these morally theory-laden judgments reinforce some affectively or perceptually motivating states at the expense of others and some behavioral dispositions at the expense of others. Thus, for example, her judgment that she is selfish makes her feel ashamed, and so motivates her to behave unselfishly; her judgment that others are beneficent disposes her to reciprocate. That is, her morally theory-laden experiences reinforce or undermine her moral training.

On this skeletal account, it would be misleading to deny that an agent has a conscious commitment to her moral theory; for its concepts and prescriptions saturate her interpretation of morally appropriate behavior, of her own emotions and actions, and of herself and other people. She thinks of them as, for example, friends, responsible agents, rational beings, loved ones, etc. But it would be similarly misleading to complain that her moral theory alienates her from the objects of her moral concern. For it is only with the aid of her moral theory that she is able to recognize situations as being those in which moral concern is appropriate. Without her moral theory, she would lack the concept of a person as good, valuable, a friend, or deserving of aid or respect. Without these concepts, it is unclear what would cause her to feel respect, compassion, or sympathy for him. Then it is equally unclear what would motivate her moral behavior. But of course to be consciously committed to a moral theory does not imply that one must be constantly preoccupied with it. On this account, our moral behavior is motivated by our theory-laden perception of moral perceptions as moral. Our moral behavior

¹⁷ This very rough sketch is amplified in greater detail in my *Rationality and the Structure of the Self*, xii, *op cit*.

successfully conforms to the prescriptions of our moral theory to the extent that this theory is sufficiently fine-tuned, that its prescriptions are coordinated with our normative dispositions, and that these dispositions have been fully internalized.

All of this is not to deny that moral alienation is a problem for some agents. But I have tried to show that whether our sensitivity and our vision of others is obscured or clear, and our social relations alienated or integrated, is largely independent of whether our view of the world is theoretical or affective. So although moral alienation may well be a problem for some agents, it is not a *moral* problem.