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What Is Goodness Good For?

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The main concern of this chapter is to understand the relationship between being good on the one hand and being good for someone (or something) on the other. If I were asked what is good, I'd say a warm blanket on a cold evening, a friendly smile when one wouldn't expect one, a corkscrew when one is needed. Of course there is more: being able to do things and to do them well, a good job, a family, world peace, a cure for cancer, for depression, and for laziness. If I were asked what is good for me and others, I'd list pretty much the same things. It will come as no surprise that goodness, in many of its uses, and goodness for someone are related.

The idea that goodness-for is, in a sense yet to be specified, the basic notion is philosophically attractive for two reasons. First, it would provide a basis for moral and practical thought which escapes various forms of scepticism directed at goodness. For example, some philosophers think that accepting goodness is akin to accepting 'hurrahness'. Nothing, however, is 'hurrah' and the sceptic assigns goodness the same fate: it is revealed as a device which projects onto the world what is a matter of one's sentiments. Contrast goodness-for. If welcome news comes my way, I might well say 'Hurrah'. Nevertheless, goodness-for facts are not exhausted by 'hurrah' reactions. Goodness-for-me is an instance of the more general notion of being good for something and no one needs to react positively to all instances of something's being good for something else. Regular maintenance is good for a machine, whatever your attitude to this machine might be. Making goodness-for the basic notion thus promises to free us from metaphysical and epistemological worries about goodness.

Secondly, when we think about matters of morality and politics, goodness-for focuses our concern on what is essential to such

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thinking, namely a concern for what is good for people, i.e. a concern for preventing harm to them and, in general, for improving the conditions of human life. Goodness-for is a central notion whose importance cannot be denied. Once we have focused our attention on goodness-for, what room is left for goodness? What is goodness *simpliciter* good for?

Friends of goodness might turn to Plato, who says that 'the greatest thing to learn is the idea of good by reference to which just things and all the rest become useful and beneficial' (Plato, *Republic* 6.505b). According to this Platonic picture, which influenced much of twentieth-century philosophy via G. E. Moore's *Principia Ethica*, the idea of the good is central to morality and politics. This is not to deny the importance of goodness-for. If Plato is right, we need the notion of goodness *simpliciter* in order to understand the useful and the beneficial. This provides an entry to the debate in this chapter. Is something good for me because it is good or is the fact that something is good explained by its being good for (many or most) people? The debate is shaped by opposing views about what explains what and which notion, if any, can claim priority.[1]

In this chapter I will explore the idea that goodness-for is more basic than goodness. I don't have a compelling positive argument in favour of this view. I will try to make it plausible indirectly by rejecting criticisms of the priority of goodness-for thesis in the second part of the chapter. In the first part, I will explain the priority of goodness-for view by contrasting it with other views; I will say more about what kind of priority I have in mind, and I will motivate the view.

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[1] In addition to the priority of goodness-for, which is the thesis I will argue for, and its opposite, the priority of goodness, there is a further view, which we can call the independence view. According to the independence view, ethics deals with two independent notions neither of which is prior. See e.g. Parfit (2011: 41), who distinguishes 'good for someone' in the reason-implying sense from 'good' in the impartial reason-implying sense. For Parfit, when it comes to 'the most important uses of "good" and "bad"' (39), there is no distance between goodness and goodness-for on the one side and reasons on the other. These evaluative notions are distinguished in normative terms. Goodness-for provides personal self-interested reasons, goodness provides reasons for anyone. In contrast to Parfit, I do not want to commit myself at this stage to any claims about reasons.

i. explaining the priority of goodness-for

The No-Goodness View

Goodness-for would by default be the basic evaluative concept if there were no meaningful notion of goodness *simpliciter*. If we were non-cognitivists about goodness, whilst exempting goodness-for, the debate would be won before it got started. Non-cognitivism is not the only semantic challenge which would speak in favour of the priority of goodness-for by default.

Peter Geach has famously argued that 'There is no such thing as being just good or bad, there is only being a good or bad so-and-so' (Geach 1956: 34). There are good cars, good poker players, and good strawberries (and so on), but there is no property of goodness which cars, poker players, and strawberries would have in common. 'Good', according to this view, is logically attributive; the properties it picks out vary depending on the kind of thing which is said to be good. Being attributive, we can neither infer that something is good from something's being a good so-and-so nor will 'good' travel across different sortals. A poker player is a human being; a good poker player need not be a good human being.

Judy Thomson has pressed this point against the Moorean view that goodness is a detachable property since the early 1990s (Thomson 1991, 1994, 1996, 1997, 2008). Looking back at her latest book (2008) she writes:

I said in chapter 1 that there is no such property as goodness. And I said that people who say the words 'A is good' are not all asserting one and the same proposition, namely the proposition that is true just in case A has the property goodness; there being no such property as goodness, there is no such proposition. Rather, people who say the words 'A is good' are asserting different propositions—such as that A is a good toaster, that A is a good tennis player, and that A is good at doing crossword puzzles. (2008: 236)

Geach's point, important as it is, has its limitations. A good car is good as a car but good weather is not good as weather. In fact 'being good as weather' does not seem to make much sense. Good weather means sunshine, warmth, a light breeze maybe. It is weather which people typically enjoy. Good weather is weather good for people. (The farmer

whose crops depend on rain would certainly welcome rain but looking at the dark clouds it would be a deviation from standard usage if he said 'Looks like it's going to be a nice day'.) In general, on a grammatical level, goodness-for sentences do not fit well with the idea that all goodness-talk is using 'good' attributively.[2]

On a philosophical level, however, the priority of goodness-for over goodness is not threatened by attributive goodness.[3] One could criticize a theory built on goodness from both angles. I focus on goodness-for because many instances of attributive goodness can be explained in terms of being good for us. Geach and Thomson are certainly right that good cars and good strawberries do not share any relevant first-order properties. Nevertheless, in both cases there is a clear relation to human interests. A good car is a car that satisfies the car-related interests of people who want or need cars; the same holds for a good strawberry. In general, being a good K is such that it satisfies the interest of people who want or need Ks. In this way, there is a property, a second-order property, which good cars and good strawberries have in common after all. They have the property that their first-order properties are such that they satisfy the interest of those interested in Ks. In good-for talk we can say that good Ks are good for those who are interested in Ks(in

[2] Thomson's earlier work had more distance from Geach's thesis. Her view then was that all goodness is goodness in a way. She distinguished between four main categories of being good in a way: the useful, the enjoyable, the skilful, and the beneficial. A similar project has been pursued by G. H. von Wright in his *The Variety of Goodness* (1963). Thomson had applied her criticism—to be good is to be good in a certain way—not only to Moorean goodness but to the attributive use of 'good' as well and, thus, also to Geach's thesis. 'What do you mean', she asks, 'by claiming that this is a good book? Do you mean it's good to read, or good to look at, or good to use as a paperweight? In general, there has to be a context that tells us what a speaker means by "That's a good K" or we simply do not know, for the expression "good K" leaves this open' (1997: 278). I feel Thomson is overly critical at this point. Geach's idea was that our understanding of what it is to be a K can provide us with an account of what it is to be a good K. Especially in case of artefacts this is very plausible. When challenged whether a good book is good to read or good to look at or good as a paperweight, there is an obvious reply. Books are not pictures; they are things to be read, so if there were no point in reading it, it would not be a good book. I have discussed Thomson's earlier view in more detail in Piller (2001).

[3] Often the debate is about goodness *simpliciter* or unqualified goodness versus qualified goodness with both attributive goodness and goodness-for being part of the latter group; see e.g. Kraut (2011). However, the logic of attributive goodness and that of the relation of being-good-for are quite different, and arguments valid for one notion have no role to play in regard to the other notion. Thomson (2008) focuses on attributive goodness; I focus on goodness-for.

terms of their being interested in them). Being interested in K is different from being interested in K* even if all Ks are K*s. An interest in cars is ill described as an interest in coloured objects, although cars are coloured objects. Attributive goodness does not travel across sortals because the second-order property it refers to is fixed by interests which are essentially K related.

Some philosophers think that there is no such property as being good. If they are right, the notion of goodness-for will have a kind of default priority. The priority view defended here does not rely on such a semantic challenge to goodness.

Normative Motivation

Why should we be interested in the priority of goodness-for? Even if the battle could be won on metaphysical grounds, the main motivation for the priority thesis is normative. The task is to capture good practical thought. As a defender of the priority of goodness-for I claim that thinking about what to do in terms of goodness leads practical thought astray. A defender of goodness will want to say the opposite: good practical thought needs goodness. I will come to this view later on when I consider objections to the priority of the goodness-for view. First, I want to look at the normative case in its favour.

In his paper 'Should the Numbers Count?' John Taurek (1977) argues for a negative and a positive thesis. The negative claim is that the number of people affected by some harm or benefit is not in itself morally relevant. The positive claim is that in cases in which we can help one of two non-overlapping groups of people, but we cannot help both, we should choose by randomization. According to this positive thesis, respect and fairness require that everyone gets an equal chance of being benefitted.[4]

When one can either save one person from some harm or a group of five persons, and one cannot save all six people, what supports the idea that we should save the bigger number? If the harm is death, we can argue as follows. Human life is valuable; the more people we save, the more of what is of value is being preserved. We should save the five

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[4] Although I disagree with Taurek about his normative conclusion, I think there is something true about both his negative and his positive thesis; for a position which, in this respect, is similar, though different in others, see Broome (1984).

and let the one die because, if we did not do so, matters would be even worse.

At first sight this is not a bad answer. Isn't it common ground that human life is valuable? If it is a good answer, it should persuade every-one, including the one who cannot be saved. Taurek asks us to imagine how the one would respond. According to Taurek (cf. 1977: 299), he would respond as follows. 'What do you mean when you say that it would be *worse* if the many died than if I died? It would be *worse for me* if you saved them and it would be *worse for each of them* if you saved me. That's all there is to it.'

The question of the one is legitimate: what do you mean by 'worse'? There is more to Taurek's challenge than just this question. Relevant evaluations, it is suggested, must tell us for whom something is good or better or worse. Such goodness-for evaluations are points to start from. If goodness-for points in different directions, there is no resolution of this conflict by any simple appeal to goodness.

Assume, just for the moment, that hedonism is the correct way to give content to the idea that life is valuable. You would save the many because thereby you would ensure that there is more pleasure in the world. You'd say to the one, 'I can't save you because if you live less pleasure will be created than by the lives of the five.' Imagine saying this to the one. Can anyone really think that the one has now been given a reason he can understand and accept? Wouldn't he respond as follows, 'For me my pleasure is important; for them their pleasure is important. For whom should it be important that there is more pleasure in the world?' Trying to convince the one in this way would be, in Taurek's words (1977: 299) 'comical if it were not so outrageous'.

The failure of such a justification has nothing to do with the implau-sible narrowness of hedonism. Add to pleasure the pursuit of valuable projects which are said to provide our lives with meaning and signifi-cance. What sort of projects? Not everyone is involved in finding a cure for cancer or in rocket science. People want to get better at cooking or chess; they might want to appreciate the high arts, maybe philosophy as well, learn a language and things like that. The fact that more such projects will be pursued will be as bad a justification as the hedonistic one. The one will say, 'Are you serious? You don't save me because if you did, fewer nice meals would be cooked and fewer people would struggle with foreign languages and high mountains?'

Taurek captures his view in a slogan: it's not the loss *of* the individual but the loss *to* the person which counts.

My concern for what happens to them is grounded chiefly in the realization that each of them is, as I would be in his place, terribly concerned about what happens to him. It is not my way to think of them as each having a certain objective value, determined however it is we determine the objective value of things, and then to make some estimate of the combined value of the five against the one. If it were not for the fact that these objects were creatures much like me, for whom what happens to them is of great importance, I doubt that I would take much interest in their preservation. As merely intact objects they would mean very little to me, being, as such, nearly as common as toadstools. The loss of an arm of the *Pietà* means something to me not because the *Pietà* will miss it. But the loss of an arm of a creature like me means something to me only because I know he will miss it, just as I would miss mine. It is the loss *to this person* that I focus on. (Taurek 1977: 306–7)

Grief has two sides. There is the loss of a friend; this matters to us because of what it deprives us. There is the loss to the friend, what he has been deprived of, which matters to us because he matters to us. Our reaction to the loss of an object, in contrast, is one-sided. It is our loss that we regret. If we think about what we lose in terms of its goodness, we stay, in a sense, 'outside'. If empathy is important for moral thought—and it certainly is, just think of the role of developing empathy in moral education—moral thought is not guided by goodness but rather by empathic engagement with goodness-for: we have to look at the loss 'from the inside', so to speak.

This inside/outside metaphor is of crucial importance in understanding the goodness-for approach. The following objection will help us to get this point into better focus. To say that moral thought needs goodness-for is a triviality.[5] Everyone agrees. In fact, for the utilitarian goodness-for is all we need to build a moral theory. How can Taurek's emphasis on goodness-for have any critical force in the assessment of utilitarianism?

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[5] Kraut (2011) tries to argue for a goodness-for theory but fails to realize that talk about well-being is insufficient to establish such a theory. I explain this point in more detail in a review of Kraut (2011) in the Oct. 2013 issue of *Mind*.

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Consider Mill's 'proof' that general happiness is the highest good. Everyone, Mill argues, aspires to happiness. Does this show that general happiness is the 'good to the aggregate of all persons'? If my being happy is my good and your being happy is yours, is your happiness also my good insofar as I am part of the aggregate of you and me? We hardly know each other. So, why speak of an aggregate of you and me which has its own highest good? And even if there is, what concern is it for me that something is, in this sense, good for us? Mill answers these worries as follows: 'when I said that the general happiness is a good to the aggregate of all persons I did not mean that every human being's happiness is a good to every other human being. . . I merely meant to argue that since A's happiness is a good, B's a good, C's a good etc, the sum of all these goods must be a good'(Mill, letter 1257, to Henry Jones).

A person's well-being is morally important—in this the goodness-for theorist (Taurek) and the goodness theorist (Mill) agree. The difference between them is not a difference regarding *what* is important, it is a difference about *the way* something is important. According to Mill and according to contemporary welfarists, well-being is important because well-being is a good thing. A's being happy is not only good for A; there is more to be said: A's happiness is good. In calling it 'good' we put it in a space where aggregation becomes possible. Once its possibility has been assured, there is hardly a way of escaping it. If one thing is really better than something else what reason could we have not to bring it about? The feature of goodness which underwrites aggregation is that more goodness has to be better than less. If we are guided by this claim (as we would be if we saved the bigger number for this reason) we are guided from the outside. We are treating people as if they were objects; valuable objects, no doubt, but objects nevertheless. Goodness, thus understood, hinders moral reflection. When it comes to considering how things affect a person's well-being, one has to step 'inside' via empathic engagement. Once we see the situation from the inside, aggregation does not make sense: there is no significant subject, no aggregate of all people, for whom it would be better to save the bigger number. Neither would it be better 'for the world'. People are not rare; the world is not affected one way or the other.

I have used the metaphor 'looking at what matters from the inside' to describe Taurek's point. Thinking about hedonistic utilitarianism, the question might arise as to how much more focused could one be on

the 'inside' if one already restricts one's attention to a person's feelings? This question shows that what I just argued for has not been absorbed. The goodness-for theorist and the goodness theorist do not disagree about what matters morally; they disagree about how it matters. The inside/outside metaphor tries to capture how things matter. It is not the loss of pleasure that counts but the loss of pleasure to the person. Things matter exclusively in terms of goodness-for. If we think they matter in terms of goodness, we have moved to an outside perspective, independently of our views about what matters.

I have tried to support what to some will look like a peculiar and uncommon scepticism about goodness with a normative view, namely with Taurek's number scepticism, which also might look peculiar and uncommon. If only the peculiar can be mustered in support of the peculiar, no one, it seems, needs to worry.

Such an impression would be misleading. I have expressed my sympathy for Taurek's negative point, i.e. for his polemic against utilitarianism, which is an attack on aggregation and, as I tried to explain, on moral thinking from the outside. Taurek makes us realize that our unease with aggregation is general. It is not restricted to cases like the hanging of the innocent. It spreads out to the numbers case, a case in which, at least initially, utilitarianism seems at its most plausible. Taurek's critical stance towards aggregation is far from being an isolated curiosity. It taps into strong common-sense commitments and, at his time, can be found in Rawls, Nozick, and Nagel who all express similar anti-aggregationist views.[6]

I have linked an anti-utilitarian outlook and its anti-aggregationism with scepticism towards an account of moral thought for which

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[6] In *The Possibility of Altruism* Nagel (1970: 138) writes, 'The conditions of choice corresponding to this [the utilitarian] principle are that the chooser should treat the competing claims arising from distinct individuals as though they all arose from the interests of a single individual, himself. He is to choose on the assumption that all these lives are to be amalgamated into one life, his own. But this situation is unimaginable, and in so far as it is not, it completely distorts the nature of the competing claims, for it ignores the distinction between persons, as we have observed before. To sacrifice one individual life for another, or one individual's happiness for another's is very different from sacrificing one gratification for another within a single life.' See also Rawls (1971: 27). In their critique of Taurek, both Kavka (1979) and Parfit (1978) appeal to aggregation within lives as an argument for aggregation across lives. However, the goodness-for view defended here allows for intrapersonal aggregation whilst denying interpersonal aggregation.

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goodness is the central notion. Have I made this connection by perhaps naively subscribing to a teleological account of goodness according to which the only reasonable response to goodness-facts is promotion? Such an account, though supported by consequentialists like Pettit, has been questioned by Scanlon. Scanlon (1998: 87) says that 'the idea that to be good is simply "to be promoted" can seem extremely natural, even inescapably so'. Looking at the values of friendship and scientific curiosity, Scanlon finds, however, that the way we value these things is not well captured in its complexity by the simple idea that these are things to be promoted.[7] When I said that introducing goodness opens up the conceptual space for aggregation I was relying on a formal feature of goodness. I said that the more good there is the better it is. This conceptual claim, which does not appeal to any normative notions like ought or reason, is hard to deny. If this is right, how does Scanlon stay away from aggregation whilst being wedded to the view that ideas of the good and of what is of value are important constituents of moral thought?

Scanlon (1998: 106) concludes his reflections on value by considering what is crucial in number cases: the value of human life. 'Respecting the value of human (rational) life requires us to treat rational creatures only in ways that would be allowed by principles that they could not reasonably reject.' Human life has value in the sense that we should treat humans in morally correct ways.

When I introduced Taurek's utilitarian opponent I had him say that life, as we all agree, is *valuable*. I did not have him say that human life is a *good thing*. Had he said that, he would be committed to saying that more lives are better than fewer lives. In its generality, this offends the deeply held asymmetry of our attitudes to creation and destruction of human life: destruction is forbidden; creation is not obligatory. Life is a good thing is, thus, not a plausible starting point. In contrast to 'goodness', 'being valuable' can be read deontically. To be valuable is to be such that one ought to value it. Scanlon's understanding of the value of human life is explained in purely deontic terms. It means nothing but

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[7] 'Once one recognizes the variety of things that can be valuable and the variety of reasons that their value calls for, it becomes highly implausible that there could be a systematic "theory of value." Understanding the value of something is not just a matter of knowing how valuable it is, but rather a matter of knowing how to value it—knowing what kinds of actions and attitudes are called for' (Scanlon 1998: 99).

that we ought to treat humans decently. A deontic understanding of
'being valuable' will, however, be available to any moral theory, includ-
ing the goodness-for theory. According to such a theory, goodness-for
facts are the starting point of moral deliberation. This constrains moral
thought but does not determine its ultimate form. A complete moral
theory, construed on the basis of goodness-for facts, will tell us, for
example, how to behave in number cases. Whatever its recommenda-
tion, we can always mirror these deontic results in evaluative terms.
If bestness is simply a mirror of oughtness, there can be no objection
on behalf of the goodness-for theory to calling what one ought to do
'the best thing to do'. Thus, Scanlon's understanding of the value of
human life is in no way opposed to Taurek's criticism of the notion
of goodness. Taurek rejects a substantial notion of simple goodness in
the sense that goodness-facts would do real work in moral thought.
Applying such a notion, Taurek tells us, would lead us astray. For a
goodness-theory, Scanlon saves appearances only. Talk of goodness
is absorbed into talk of values, and values are understood in deontic
terms, as demanding a variety of responses. These deontic demands,
however, are not explained by any evaluative features of whatever it is
that places them on us.[8]

So far my main point is a negative one. Reliance on a substantial
notion of goodness misdirects moral thought. Why? Because introduc-
ing goodness invites aggregation: the more good there is the better it is.
Unease with the utilitarian view of number cases has been presupposed
rather than argued for. On the positive side I have claimed that moral
and political thought as well as evaluative thought in general needs a
notion of goodness-for. I have not said much about how moral thought
is supposed to proceed from this starting point. Scanlon's contractual-
ism provides an example of such a theory. We should treat others in
accordance with principles no one can reasonably reject. There is no
appeal to goodness amongst the reasons for rejecting principles and
we may assume that rejectability of principles depends on how people

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[8] Dworkin says that we value human life intrinsically but not incrementally (Dworkin
1993: 73). This is an accurate reflection of our attitude towards human life. Dworkin, how-
ever, sees our valuing as an indication of life's intrinsic but non-incremental value. What
could the axiological basis be for the idea that intrinsic value accumulates in some but not
in other instances?

would be affected by these principles. In this way, goodness-for facts are the basis from which to construct a moral theory.

My task in this chapter is to defend the view that goodness-for is the basic notion and, this illustration aside, I won't engage with the issue of how to build from there. There is, however, one positive point which arises from the preceding discussion.

Taurek's case of whom to save is difficult because goodness-for points in different directions. Saving the one is good for the one and bad for each of the five. Could the potential rescuer rescue all of them, he would. The Pareto Principle spells out this commitment. If one situation S1 is better for some and worse for no one than another situation S2, then S1 is better than S2. The Pareto Principle illustrates how the goodness-for theorist sees the relation between goodness and goodness-for. There is a comparative notion of unqualified overall betterness, but its application is explained in terms of goodness-for. You create a better situation by making things better for some (and not worse for anyone).[9] Goodness-for has explanatory priority.

Goodness Claims and the Goodness-For Theory

Suppose that, contrary to what I am arguing for, goodness does play a central role in moral thought. We'd start moral philosophy with a list of things which are good. Here is the list we find in Ross's *The Right and the Good* (1930: 135–41): virtuous disposition and action, pleasure, the apportionment of pleasure and pain to the virtuous and the vicious, respectively, and knowledge. I am sceptical about goodness-facts as an input to moral theory; I am not sceptical about morality. Thus my thesis does not concern a notion of moral goodness as an output of moral

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[9] The Pareto Principle in its evaluative form, i.e. as a principle of betterness, is a substantial principle. After all, most people affected might be indifferent to a switch from S1 to S2. Just because one person's situation is improved makes S2 better than S1. Furthermore, it is a substantial step to go from the evaluative Pareto Principle to a claim about what ought to be done. Although everyone's situation might be improved by a move from S1 to S2, deontic restrictions of e.g. fairness or equality, might oppose a move towards S2. These restrictions on the deontic Pareto Principle might also affect its evaluative form as Sen (1979) has argued. As goodness-for need not be the only source of what we ought to do—my point is that an independent notion of goodness is no such source—my position is compatible with accepting Sen's criticism of the Pareto Principle. With this caveat however, it exemplifies how a goodness-for theorist can introduce substantial principles of betterness. The betterness captured by Pareto is explained by goodness-for facts. I will suggest another betterness-principle which shares the same explanatory priority of goodness-for later on.

theorizing.[10] Leaving virtue and justice (the right apportionment of the good and the bad to the virtues and the vicious) aside, Ross claims that pleasure and knowledge are good. The good-for theorist will understand the central claim made by 'pleasure is good' as a generalization of goodness-for claims. A's pleasure is good for A; B's pleasure is good for B, and so on. Thereby common-sense talk about the good things in life can be adequately captured. Having friends, a family, and a job one likes—these are good things. My having such a job is good for me and your having such a job is good for you. Unqualified goodness statements are captured within the goodness-for theory as (quasi)generalizations of goodness-for claims. I am not putting this claim forward as conceptual analysis. Philosophers like Ross mean more than these generalizations. They mean that having a job is good and, if pressed to explain what more there is, they'd say that anything good is good in virtue of exemplifying a non-relational (and non-natural) property. Such a claim, however, is a philosopher's claim and, absent convincing philosophical argument, the goodness-for theorist will not be moved.

The goodness-for theory is not a revisionary linguistic thesis. It allows for attributive goodness, it has room for moral goodness, and for lists of good things, whereby their goodness is understood as generalizations of goodness-for claims.[11]

The Nature and Normativity of Goodness-For

'Goodness-for' signifies a relation, often we can call it the benefitting relation. Water is good for plants. Oiling is good for engines. Exercise is good for humans. When something is good for a plant, an engine, or a human being, then it maintains or furthers the proper functioning of the thing in question or it prevents it from malfunctioning, deteriorating, or, if it is a living thing, from dying, or from ceasing to exist.

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[10] I am not objecting to an evaluative notion of goodness *simpliciter* (or its comparative) which simply mirrors deontic notions.

[11] Compare Scanlon (1998: 88), who says, 'It seems overblown to say that what is important about friendship is that it increases the value of the state of the universe in which it occurs. But there is nothing odd about saying that it increases the quality of life.' I agree: having friends is good for those who have friends. Do we have to go beyond this point? For example, is my having friends not only good for me but good for you as well? As long as I function normally and I am no danger to you, it does not matter to you whether I have friends or not. We hardly know each other, so I can see no reason why it should matter to you.

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If we understand these examples, we understand the relation I mean. There will be Xs and Ys such that we don't know whether X is good for Y. Not knowing whether the relation holds in particular cases doesn't show that we don't know what the relation is. In many cases we apply the concept 'good-for' with ease and confidence. In my view, no further analysis is needed. If I am wrong and we do need further analysis, I would go with Zimmerman (2009: 432). After considering various analyses of goodness-for, he endorses his 6(b): 'X is good for P =df. X is to P's benefit'.[12]

Talk of benefitting is most appropriate when we consider what is good for humans or other living things. (Would we say that I benefit my car by having it repaired or serviced? I do what improves its condition or maintains it in proper working order. It is certainly bad for the car not to be properly maintained.) What takes the place of 'Y' in 'X is good for Y' is not restricted to objects. One can do what is good for the advancement of science or for the proliferation of one's religion. If one doesn't take the necessary precaution one might well do what is good for the spreading of a disease. Sometimes we are reluctant to talk about being good for X when X itself is something harmful. However, 'A gun is good for stopping people running towards you' is true. Enrolling in further education is often good for advancing one's career. These examples show a strong relation between the beneficial and the useful. It is no coincidence that when we talk about the beneficial and the useful we use good-for constructions in both cases. What is good for something (which exists) usually contributes towards its flourishing or proper functioning or, simply, towards its continued existence. What is good for a purpose (which isn't yet fully realized) contributes towards its coming about. The useful and the beneficial are inter-definable.

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[12] I do not mean to deny that the question what is good for a human being is sometimes difficult. I doubt, though, that disputes between different accounts of well-being are to be solved via an analysis of the being-good-for relation. Darwall (2002: 8) says that 'what it is for something to be good for someone just is for it to be something one should desire for him for his own sake'. The question whether good things can happen to someone after death—to take one contentious issue—is not made any easier when we rephrase it in accordance with Darwall's suggestion. Can I really want his posthumous fame for his sake? Furthermore, it seems that when I desire something for his sake then what I want to happen to him, e.g. that he brushes his teeth every evening, is explained by my concern for his well-being. It could not be explained, it seems to me, by my concern for what one should want for him for his own sake.

The useful is beneficial for the coming about of what it is useful for. The beneficial is useful in contributing to the flourishing/proper functioning/continued existence of what it benefits (or in preventing what would have contrary effects).

Debates about the relation between goodness and goodness-for are often conducted as debates about the relation between egoism (as a goodness-for theory) and utilitarianism (as a goodness theory). In such a debate the normativity of goodness-for-the-agent is simply assumed and the problem is to combine it with the utilitarian doctrine to maximize overall or impersonal goodness. The general account of the benefitting relation which I have outlined does not justify such an assumption. The variety of things which can be put into the place of 'X' in the expression 'being good for X' shows the absurdity of attributing any general normative significance to such claims. The normativity of any instance of 'being good for X' needs to be earned.

According to the priority thesis, goodness claims need to be explained in terms of goodness-for. If such claims—like that pain is bad—are normatively significant, their normativity will also be grounded in the normativity of goodness-for. Goodness-for claims are not by default normatively significant. How do they become normative?

There are at least the following two approaches.[13] One is a kind of subjectivism we find, for example, in Harry Frankfurt's work. It tells us that we ought to benefit those things we care (or ought to care) about. Reasons arise for us because we care about things. We care about ourselves and so what is good for us becomes normatively significant. We love our children and their well-being guides us. If we didn't care about anything nothing would (or could) be important to us.

The most basic and essential question for a person to raise concerning the conduct of his life cannot be the normative question of how he should live. That question can sensibly be asked only on the basis of a prior answer to the factual question of what he cares about. If he cares about nothing, he cannot even begin to inquire methodically into how he should live; for his caring about nothing entails that there is nothing that can count with him as a reason in favor of living in one way rather than in another. (Frankfurt 2004:26)

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[13] Mark LeBar (2004) argues that there is a third approach which he calls Aristotelian constructivism.

The other approach is a kind of objectivism we find for example in the work of Joseph Raz. It tells us that we ought to benefit the good things. Our own well-being and that of our children is normatively significant because we are good things.

What makes the well-being of people worth pursuing, to the extent that it is, what provides reasons for those same people and for others to protect and promote it, is that people are valuable in themselves. (Raz 2006: 400)[14]

Subjectivism is well suited to account for agent-relative concerns. I care more about my children than about my neighbour's and, thus, I have more reason to benefit my own children than I have reason to benefit my neighbour's. I don't think that my children are in themselves 'more valuable' than my neighbour's. I would not even know what it would mean to think such a thought. My children are more important to me than my neighbour's children. That's just how it is.

The fact that people ordinarily do not hesitate in their commitments to the constitution of their lives, and to the well-being of their children, does not derive from any actual considerations by them of reasons; nor does it depend even upon the assumption that good reasons could be found. These commitments are innate to us. They are not based upon deliberation. They are not responses to any commands of rationality. (Frankfurt 2004:29)

Think about a situation in which I can either benefit myself (by eating a can of tuna) or I can benefit my cat (by giving the tuna to the cat). Neither of us is starving but we are both hungry. If I care more about myself than my cat and we both are able to deal with being hungry equally well, I will feed myself rather than my cat. According to subjectivism—what one ought to do depends on what one cares about—this is just fine. Objectivists will agree for very different reasons. They will say that my cat is a good thing but I am even more of a good thing. I am more 'valuable in myself' than my cat is in itself. I am a being of more intrinsic value. I am considerably better than my cat. Presented in such terms, objectivism

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[14] We find the same view in Rosati (2008: 343). She writes: 'Whereas the good theorist's good is intrinsic value, the good-for theorist's good for, although just as normative, is a kind of extrinsic value; the good for gives anyone a reason to act, but the source of the "good-for-value" of any item that is good for a person is its relation to a being with value.'

looks like a piece of nonsense. What could one mean in saying, 'I am better than my cat'? Better in what?

My concern is whether we need goodness as an input to moral theory. We have come to the question whether goodness can explain when goodness-for is normative. I don't think it can. In order to give it any sense, we need to understand 'I am better than my cat' in deontic terms, i.e. as 'I ought to be favoured when the same kind of benefit can either come to me or to my cat'. This is the only plausible way to understand objectivism. If this is correct, however, than we do not need goodness. Objectivism (about the normativity of goodness-for) does not make sense unless understood in deontic terms (as what we have reason to do). If this is right, objectivism cannot explain why we have such reasons by appeal to an independent notion of goodness.

We can call the view I have developed here a mixed theory. It has a factual (or objective) and an attitude component. It is a factual question whether X is good for Y. If, for example, you simply want radios to be turned on, there is a fact of the matter whether this will or won't do you any good.[15] You care about yourself and if, let us assume, turning radios on won't be good for you, then this desire doesn't give you any reason to turn radios on and it doesn't give me any reason to help you, if I care about you. Suppose you really care about turning radios on. Given that you also care about yourself and your caring for turning radios on prevents you from engaging in more useful activities, activities that it would be better for you to engage in, you ought not to care about turning radios on. The attitudes which make some goodness-for facts normative are one step removed from the desires which objectivists about well-being rightly think are not reason-providing.[16]

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[15] The view offered here combines objectivism about what is good for someone with subjectivism about when and how goodness-for facts become normative. The latter but not the former will depend on a person's reasonable attitudes.

[16] Some philosophers have doubted whether the view defended here makes sense at all. Hurka (1993:194n.17) writes, 'Could there be an objective or perfectionist account of well-being, which characterizes well-being not in terms of desires, but in terms of developing human nature? I do not believe there is conceptual room for such an account, for I do not believe that well-being has any meaning independent both of particular accounts of well-being and of the moral predicate "good".' Similarly, Tennenbaum (2010: 228) writes, 'In my understanding of the conceptual landscape, [objective list theories of well being] are actually theories about what is, in fact, good *simpliciter*, but theories that claim that what is, in fact, good *simpliciter*, are agent-relative.'

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However, even if I care about someone, my son let's say, what is good for him need not trump what is good for something else. Suppose my son is on hunger strike. He wants to end the injustice and this is his last resort. Remaining on hunger strike is not good for him; it has serious effects on his health. Loving him, I will make (some of) his ends my own. I support him in doing what he takes to be most important even at the cost of its being bad for him.

Scanlon contrasts friendship with fanship. He writes, 'According to the account of value I am suggesting, to hold that fanship is not valuable is just to hold that these reasons (arising from fanship) are not good reasons, or at least that a person who gave them great weight in shaping his life would be making a mistake' (Scanlon 1998: 89). Is subjectivism able to capture Scanlon's thought? First, a generally negative attitude towards fanship is not justified. There are kinds of fanship which enrich one's life. Any football supporter knows what I am talking about. This kind of fanship is more than compatible with friendship—it enriches friendships by uniting the friends in a common sphere. A critical attitude to fanship would be in place if someone can only be a fan but never a friend. Being involved in the reciprocity of friendship is, given that you have the concerns typical of a human being, good for you. The subjectivist will point to this goodness-for fact when explaining what is right about Scanlon's remark.

The Priority of Goodness-for and Buck-Passing

My scepticism about goodness is scepticism about the normative force of goodness. Goodness, according to the Priority Thesis defended here,

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D. Regan (2004: 211–12) poses the following dilemma for the goodness-for theorist. 'Hence the dilemma: any understanding of "good for" which distinguishes it clearly from "good, occurring in the life of" also undercuts the possibility that one individual's "good for" should make a claim on any other individual. In effect, the problem is "What does the 'for' in 'good for' mean?". If "for" means "occurring in the life of", this gives us an *empirical* relativisation to the agent, but the normativity involved is still the universal normativity of "good". We need some other understanding of the "for" to give us a concept of "good for" that is distinct from "good, occurring in the life of", and independent of "good". The relativisation signaled by the "for" must be a relativisation of the *normativity*. But that is precisely the move that undercuts the possibility of Abel's "good for" making a claim on Cain.' The view defended here sits firmly on one side of the dilemma. Goodness-for does not participate in the normativity of goodness; goodness-for facts are not by themselves normative. This doesn't exclude the possibility, however, that, given one's general concerns, one either does or one ought to care about one's brother.

has no independent normative force. If it has normative significance it will be borrowed from goodness-for facts (which, as I said, will need to be made normative).

Buck-passers, like Scanlon, hold that attributions of goodness indicate the presence of features which are normatively significant. To avoid double-counting they deny that goodness itself is normative. Goodness is degraded from a source to a sign of normativity. On such a view, knowing what is good (and what is bad) plays, nevertheless, an important role in moral and practical thought. Whether we are looking for goodness or for those properties that make things good, we are, in both cases, guided by our conception of the good. In the latter case, this guidance function is simply one step removed. Consider the following. 'Why do you go to Agadir?' 'It's good to go there—always nice weather.' The climate is normatively significant because it is a good-making feature of going to Agadir. In this way one is guided by goodness even if such guidance comes from good-makers, like the pleasant climate.

Thus, buck-passing holds on to a role for goodness which, according to the idea that goodness-for is prior, will need to be undermined. The purely structural account of buck-passing outlined here is, it seems to me, unavoidable. In this sense, no one would deny that guidance by goodness is, as I put it, one step removed. One would not deny it even if one thought that goodness is a simple non-natural quality. In his essay on 'Intrinsic Value', G. E. Moore insists that, although intrinsic value is determined by intrinsic properties, it is not itself an intrinsic property. If this were not so, there would be no reason why the property of goodness could not combine with any other properties in whatever varying fashion. But, according to Moore, it is a conceptual truth about goodness that if it occurs in one setting of descriptive properties it will have to occur in any other setting of the same descriptive properties. Unlike yellowness, goodness cannot freely attach itself; its applicability is fixed by the intrinsic properties of things. Accordingly, even for Moore reference to good-making properties will be unavoidable. There will always be an explanation of why we ought to do what we ought to do which goes beyond goodness to good-making properties. This is guaranteed by the supervenience of the evaluative.

How does the thesis that goodness-for is normatively prior to goodness, compare with the buck-passing account? On the one hand the priority view will be a kind of buck-passing approach. But I have tried

to show that this won't capture its essence, as any approach will be a buck-passing approach in this sense. On the other hand I illustrated buck-passing with an example. You go to Agadir because it's nice and warm there and that, we said, makes it good to go there. I also said that this shows how, on the buck-passing account, one would still be guided by the good. It is the fact that it is good to go there that plays a crucial role in why one should do so. Such explanatory ambition requires a more substantial account of the good than would be provided by a notion that merely mirrors deontic facts. This is the point at which the priority of goodness-for view comes in. It offers some substance to what guides one in cases like going to Agadir. According to this view, we are not guided by any substantial notion of goodness. Rather you should go there because it is good for you. Goodness-for and not goodness explains the deontic fact.

2. DEFENDING THE PRIORITY OF GOODNESS-FOR

In the first part of this chapter, I developed a view according to which goodness-for is the basic notion in moral thought. We ought to assist those who need help because it is good for those assisted; we ought not to harm others because doing so would be bad for them. Obviously, moral justification on the basis of goodness-for facts can take more complex forms; it does so in Scanlon's contractualism. I supported Frankfurt's subjectivism as an account of why and when (objective) goodness-for is normatively relevant for an agent. In this part of the chapter I will defend this view against three objections. I will call them the semantic, the metaphysical/epistemological, and the normative objection.

The Semantic Objection

Plato said that the idea of the good explains the notions of the useful and of the beneficial. In this section we understand such priority of the good semantically. 'X is good for Y' means, according to the semantic objection, that X is good and that Y has X. If we needed to appeal to goodness *simpliciter* in order to explain goodness-for claims, goodness-for could not be the basic notion. Famously, G. E. Moore endorses the semantic objection to the priority thesis.

In what sense can a thing be good *for me*? It is obvious, if we reflect, that the only thing which can belong to me, which can be mine, is something which is good, and not the fact that it is good. When, therefore, I talk of anything I get as 'my own good,' I must mean either that the thing I get is good, or that my possessing it is good. In both cases it is only the thing or the possession of it which is *mine*, and not *the goodness* of that thing or that possession. (Moore 1903: 99)

Moore offers two options to understand goodness-for claims. 'X is good for Y' means either 'X is good and Y has it', or it means 'Y's having X is good'. In both cases, goodness *simpliciter* explains goodness-for. Is this a plausible view?

Water is a good thing. On this I agree with Moore. I understand it as follows. Water is a good thing because it is good for plants, for animals, and for humans alike. Apart from its being good for us, it is unclear what its goodness could signify. Not washing your hands is good for the spread of bacteria. Washing your hands is good for the people you shake hands with. Is washing your hands and not washing them both good?

The purpose of Moore's analysis is to show that egoism is contradictory. The egoist wanted to say that for each of us our own good is the highest good for us, i.e. A's good is the highest good for A, B's good for B, and so on. If his analysis is right, then the qualification 'for us' drops out and becomes a fact about ownership. However, it cannot be right that A's good is the highest good and B's good as well and so on. 'What Egoism holds, therefore, is that each man's being happy is the sole good—that a number of different things are each of them the only good thing there is—an absolute contradiction!' (Moore 1903: 99).

Suppose if I turn to the left I save A; if I turn to the right I save B. Neither I, nor anyone else, can save both A and B. My turning to the left is good for A, he will be saved, and bad for B, he will suffer harm. These are facts we simply have to account for. According to Moore's analysis, my turning to the left seems to be both good and bad. My turning to the left is good and it fails to be good—an absolute contradiction. Furthermore, the ownership relation, which is supposed to explain the relational character of goodness-for claims, does not seem to make sense in this case. It does not make sense to say that my turning

to the left is good and A has it. Nor does it make sense to say that A's 'having of my turning left' would be good.

What would a Moorean response be? Nothing can be good and bad in itself—this would indeed be a contradiction. However, there is a notion of instrumental goodness, i.e. of being productive of good, and things can have various causal consequences; some of which might be good in themselves like A's being saved and others which might be bad in themselves like B's not being saved. Your turning left is intrinsically neither good nor bad—it has two consequences, one good one bad. Your turning right is instrumentally good for A and instrumentally bad for B.

I don't think that the intrinsic/instrumental distinction within goodness-for has any significance. We can benefit people more or less directly. As long as they are benefitted the degree of directness is irrelevant. If the benefit is approximately equal, it does not matter whether I drive you to school or buy you a bus ticket. Is paying for my child's tennis lessons providing her with something that is intrinsically or instrumentally good for her? I can't see an issue to which this should matter or whether there is a clear distinction to be made. Parfit (2011: 39) says that 'something is intrinsically or in itself good for us if it is one of the features of our lives in which our well-being consists. . . something is instrumentally good for us if it has effects that are intrinsically good for us'. Let me change the example slightly. By turning left I express my love for A. Being loved would, I suppose, count as being intrinsically good for A on Parfit's distinction. The problem of avoiding contradictions on a Moorean account remains.

In a competitive context, there is an event E which constitutes your winning and constitutes my losing. 'The prize goes to. . . you' is your winning and my losing. E is good for you and bad for me. I'd say that this event E stands in different relations to you and to me: it benefits you and fails to benefit me. Where I see two parts (two different relations), Moore would say that there is a whole. There is a whole of you and me and E which has a good part (a winning) and a bad part (a losing). Metaphysically this move seems acceptable. It leads to a stalemate. There are two competing descriptions that carve up the world differently. Normatively, however, Moore's move is less plausible. Either your winning is good, and everyone (including me) would have to aim at it, or winning is good, something everyone ought to

aim at and you have managed to achieve. According to this later alternative, in aiming at winning we both aim at something good. This aim, however, is that a winning takes place, i.e. that someone wins, and thus does not describe the aim of someone in a competitive context. I aim at my winning the prize and you aim at your winning it. If we both aimed at there being a winning we only had to ensure that the prize is handed out which is a very different objective from that which we naturally aim at in a competition. It should not be a surprise that Moore cannot correctly describe a competitive context. If only goodness *simpliciter* counted, it would not matter 'where' the good is realized. Moore's claim that winning is a good thing sounds plausible only if we read it as a generalization of goodness-for claims. My winning would be good for me and your winning would be good for you. [17]

The Metaphysical/Epistemological Objection

How do I find out what is good for me? According to the objection we are now considering, I can only find out what is good for me by finding out what is good *simpliciter*. The epistemology tracks the metaphysics: only good things can be good for me.

Joseph Raz (1999: 254–5) distinguishes between relational and non-relational goods in the following way. 'Let me stipulate that a good is relational if and only if it is good solely because it is good for someone. . . By contrast I will call a good or a value non-relational if what makes it good is (or depends in part on) something other than that it is good for someone.' He argues that there is a relation of reciprocity between relational and non-relational goods. On the one hand non-relational

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[17] Sergio Tenenbaum has suggested a variation on Moore's proposal. According to Tenenbaum (2010: 217), goodness-for claims are claims about value appearances. Being good for Jack is looking good to Jack. '"Good for" marks the things that will seem good from the perspective of the agent, and "good" marks what is, in fact, good.' Tenenbaum uses this account to explain the phenomenology of making sacrifices for moral reasons. Although we see the sacrifice as morally required and thus good, the fact that it is a sacrifice leads to a recalcitrant illusion of goodness on the other side namely when we consider not making the sacrifice and act to our own advantage. This account faces two problems. First, what is good for me, e.g. eating broccoli or quitting smoking, need not appear good to me. Secondly, it is unclear how Tenenbaum's account handles the conflict cases described. Not only do I know that saving A will appear good to A, I also know that it will be good for A. This, however, leaves it open whether saving A is morally good. Whether it is or not will depend on how the reasons to save A compare with the reasons to save B.

goods are also relational goods. 'Whatever is good *simpliciter* is at least potentially good for some valuer' (Raz 1999: 263). From the perspective of the goodness-for theory this is a concessive move. All values, he says (Raz 2004: 274), are personal values: 'anything which is of value *can* be good for someone'. Raz raises an objection to the priority of goodness-for because he thinks that relational goods presuppose non-relational ones. This dependency is manifest in '(a) understanding the concept of a relational good requires understanding the notion of non-relational goods, (b) there are no relational goods unless there are also non-relational goods, and (c) if anything is intrinsically good for a valuer. . . then it is also good *simpliciter'* (Raz 1999: 263).

Playing the piano, Raz claims, is good for Johnny because it is a good thing and Johnny is able to learn and appreciate piano playing.

In other words in justifying that anything is good for any agent we show (a) that the thing is good, and (b) that the agent has the ability and opportunity to have the good. I can think of no other way to account for why what is intrinsically good for some person or other. . . is good for them.[18]

Raz is right. When I recommend a book to you, I can say that you'll enjoy it but I can as well recommend it by saying that it is a good book or that it is good for you to read this book. I might even add that it is good for you to read this book because it is good to read it. Does such an explanation show that we need to refer to non-relational goods in order to explain the presence of relational goods? I do not think

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[18] The same point is made by Darwall (2002: 75). 'My normative claim will be that the best life for human beings is one of significant engagement in activities through which we come into appreciative rapport with agent-neutral values, such as aesthetic beauty, knowledge and understanding, and the worth of living beings. An important aspect of a rational care meta-ethics of welfare is its thesis that welfare's normativity is not agent-relative, but rather agent-neutral, from the perspective of one caring. But if what is good for someone is what it makes sense to want for her for her sake, from the agent-neutral perspective of one caring, then it should not be surprising that whether an activity makes a contribution to her welfare can partly depend on its relation to agent-neutral values.' Raz goes on to consider what for him is the only alternative, namely to explain what is good for someone in terms of what this person desires. This, however, is not a promising line to take. On my understanding of goodness-for it is perfectly possible to want what is or will turn out to be bad for one. Hurka's thinking at this point (see n. 16) is similar. He also focuses on a desire theory as the main alternative to his goodness approach.

that it does and offer the following alternative explanation. This is a good book because everyone (like you) will enjoy it. I explain why you will enjoy it by showing that you fall under a general claim. This explanation is similar to answering the small child's question 'Why do I have two legs?' by saying that everyone (normally) has two legs. It is an acceptable (deductive) explanation.

As I pointed out when I considered the relation between the goodness-for theory and buck-passing, there will be features that explain why something will benefit someone. In the book case one such feature might be that it keeps you guessing until the end. For me this fact explains why you will enjoy reading the book (and thus why it will be good for you to do so) on the basis of a more general fact, namely that people like you will enjoy books with this feature. Because non-relational goods are also relational goods, Raz might not object to what I have said. However, for him there is a further property, goodness *simpliciter*, which is also explained by the relevant feature that it keeps one guessing until the end. I see no need for positing the existence of such a property. Furthermore, it is hard to understand the nature of this property. A good is non-relational, Raz told us, 'if what makes it good is (or depends in part on) something other than that it is good for someone'. There will be a feature—keeps you guessing until the end—that makes it generally good for someone like you. I don't think that on Raz's view there is a different feature that would make it good. If goodness-for has the same basis in the book's features as goodness, I cannot see how goodness can be distinct enough from goodness-for for the former to explain the latter.

Compare the following case. Why does the tomato stand in the looking-red relation to me? We can answer 'It looks red to you because it is red' as long as we have an independent account of what it is to be red, e.g. that tomatoes have the surface reflectance property R. An explanation of why a book stands in the benefitting relation to me would need to satisfy an analogous constraint. We'd need an independent account of what goodness is supposed to be (and of what makes it good). As long as there is no such account, the deductive explanation I offered is the only one which accommodates the fact we started with. We explain what is good for you by saying it is good, thereby claiming

that you are not special, you fall under the general category of people *for whom* it is good.[19]

The Normative Objection

Moral theory cannot do without interpersonal comparisons of well-being. This problem is often restricted to discussion of utilitarianism. However, even on Rawls theory we need comparability of welfare levels in order to determine which group is the worst-off.[20] Richard Arneson defends the importance of a concept of goodness (or betterness) *simpliciter* along such lines.

The concept of intrinsic value is not merely a building block in consequentialist theories, and if this concept (or the best revisions we can construct) is found wanting, the loss would have wide reverberations. More is at stake than the status of consequentialism. I suspect any plausible non-consequentialist morality would include as a component a principle of beneficence. In a consequentialist theory some beneficence principle is the sole fundamental principle; in a non-consequentialist theory beneficence would be one principle amongst others. Whatever its exact contours, a beneficence principle to fill its role must rank some states of the world as better or worse, and direct us to bring about the better ones within the limits imposed by other principles that introduce moral constrains and moral options. We need some commensurability, a measureable notion of good. We need the idea of what is good simpliciter. (Arneson 2010: 741)

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[19] The metaphysical/epistemological objection can take other forms as well. For example, we are not focused on ourselves but on the relevant features of things when we consider where to go or what to do. The goodness-for theory can explain the world-directedness of practical deliberation. It will be a feature of wherever we go which makes it good or bad for us. Furthermore, goodness-for the agent spells out a concern that seems narrow. This is right. In order to get things that are good for us we need other independent concerns. That is why we try to develop interest in our children which go beyond a natural interest in their own well-being. See Frankfurt's 'On the Usefulness of Final Ends' (Frankfurt 1992) for an account of the rational pressure to broaden the realm of what one cares about that is friendly to the goodness-for theory developed here.

[20] One could try to take an easy route out and postpone any comparability of harms and benefits to the endpoint of moral theorizing. Philippa Foot (1985: 206) has taken such a line in her 'Utilitarianism and the Virtues', when she writes, 'It is not that in "the guise of the best outcome" [maximum welfare] stands outside morality as its foundation and arbiter, but rather that it appears within morality as an end of one of the virtues.' If we are naturalists about goodness-for this line is less attractive.

Arneson is right. We need a notion of betterness which allows us to make welfare comparisons. Some such comparisons are done with ease and confidence. It is better for A to lose his umbrella than for B to lose her arm. This is a comparison in terms of betterness *simpliciter*. The loss of A's umbrella is less bad *simpliciter* than the loss of B's arm. Let us assume that this is a case of conflicting interests. The relevant goodness-for evaluations point in different directions. Obviously it is better for B not to lose her arm than it is for B if A lost his umbrella. But let us also assume that it is better for A that B lost her arm than that he lost his umbrella. According to the priority thesis, goodness-for needs to explain betterness *simpliciter* as it did in case of the Pareto Principle.

Note that our example does not involve any aggregation of harms and benefits. We do not need to aggregate in order to compare. Why do we make the umbrella/arm comparison so easily? Whatever person we are thinking of, it would in general be better for this person to lose her umbrella than to lose her arm. There is a general truth here: for all (normal) people each of their arms is more important to them than any of their umbrellas. A commitment to impartiality takes us from this truth within all (normal) instances of goodness-for-a-person to a comparison across two instances of goodness-for-a-person. Because losses of arms are worse for anyone than losses of umbrellas we think it is better for one to lose his umbrella than for another to lose her arm. This is a substantial moral principle. A crucial role in its explanation, however, is played by the general goodness-for fact. This situation parallels the explanation of the Pareto Principle. It too is a genuine moral principle that is not exhausted by goodness-for claims—S1, the situation in which everyone is better off, is simply better then S2—but goodness-for claims play a central role in explanations of why we accept this principle. The same holds for interpersonal comparisons of well-being.

Within the goodness-for theory we have found some space for welfare comparisons. John Broome in his *Weighing Lives* (2004) pursues a more ambitious project. He suggests the following solution to the problem of interpersonal comparability. (1) How things are for a person I shall call her life. (2) Because a life includes everything that can affect a person's well-being, the person who lives a particular life has exactly the same well-being as any other person would have if she lived that life. (3) The goodness of a life is independent of who lives it. Thus, (4) each

person's individual scale of goodness turns out to be a universal scale, measuring the goodness of lives for everyone.

I said we can compare A's loss with B's because for any P the former loss would be worse for P than the latter loss. Broome's approach is different. We can compare losses because the goodness we find in a life is the same wherever it occurs. This strongly reminds one of Moore's view. Something is good for P if it is good and P has it. Broome denies what is central to my understanding of goodness-for, namely that what is good for me need not be good for you. The facts that are relevant for a good-for-A life need not be the same as the facts relevant for a good-for-B life. Thus, I deny Broome's claim that 'the being who lives a particular life has exactly the same well-being as any other being would have if she lived that life'. What is good in a frog-life (flies, water, and other frogs) will not be good in a human life. I don't know whether my well-being, if I were a frog, would be the same as a frog's. It depends on what it would mean for me to be a frog. Broome's account can only be plausible if P in good-for-P is an empty placeholder. But when we say that playing the piano would be good for P we are talking about a particular person with particular abilities and opportunities. If it is true that it is good for P to play the piano then, on Broome's account, I could as well point to a frog and say that P's piano-playing life would be as good for the frog as it is for P.

We have found a similar difference between the goodness-for theory and Broome as we did in the case of Moore. Moore saw a whole where I saw parts. Broome sees a property where I see relations.

CONCLUSION

I have argued that goodness-for is 'the basic notion' in moral thought and I have argued for 'the priority' of goodness-for over goodness.[21] Looking back we can distinguish different relations between goodness-for and goodness. In the case of attributive goodness, as when we talk about a good book or a good car, the relation to our interests is

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[21] I have not discussed the Non-Identity Problem. For Parfit (and others) it shows a shortcoming of any goodness-for approach. Our concern for future generations is, in my view, a concern for the people who will exist, whoever they are. See Hare (2007) for an answer to the Non-Identity Problem along such lines.

straightforward. A good book is a book that satisfies the interest people usually have when they are interested in books (in respect to this interest). It is no surprise that we evaluate attributively in accordance with our (normal) interests. When we use 'good' attributively we do not try to track any independently given value with our interest. Is pain a bad thing? Yes it is, in the sense that A's pain is bad for A, B's pain bad for B and so on. Is living in a just society, or being virtuous, a good thing? Yes it is. Such evaluations, however, are the output of moral theory. I made a claim about the input into moral theory. Finally, isn't it simply better if everyone is better off? Yes it is. It is better because it is better for everyone.

Putting my view in a slogan, I have argued for an ethics without goodness. To some, to the Mooreans, this will seem outrageous. I've tried to undermine their view. To others it might seem trivial. David Enoch (2011) defends what he calls Robust Meta-ethical Realism. He is not offended by being called a 'Platonist', but, when motivating his project, he does not see any need for a discussion of goodness *simpliciter*. Douglas Portmore (2012) defends consequentialism. For him, as is the case with Enoch, talk about reasons has made talk about goodness superfluous. If neither the Platonist nor the consequentialist needs goodness anymore, it really has gone out of fashion. I am not sure whether I fall on the outrageous or on the trivial side. I fall on both if what is outrageous to some is trivial to others.[22]

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