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## Normative Pragmatic Selfhood: A Pragmatist Conception of Value for Marginal Cases

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Normative Pragmatic Selfhood:  
A Pragmatist Conception of Value for Marginal Cases

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy in Philosophy

by

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## ABSTRACT

I develop a theory of personal ontology called normative pragmatic selfhood (NPS) to explain what persons are and how they are morally valuable. I also demonstrate the applicability of NPS theory by using it to assess the moral status of marginal cases in bioethical dilemmas. I begin by discussing the concept of intrinsic value and why it is problematic when it comes to persons. I then draw upon John Dewey's theory of value, specifically the concept of growth, and Kant's concept of humanity to show that persons are objectively yet extrinsically valuable. Next, I discuss and argue how the psychological and narrative theories of identity are unable to justify the value of persons and how NPS theory succeeds in doing so. I conclude by showing how the application of NPS theory to marginal cases offers one way of thinking through these difficult bioethical issues.

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## INTRODUCTION

One issue regarding personhood in ethics is whether persons have dignity and moral worth, as seen in debates on applied ethics issues such as abortion and euthanasia. Philosophers often approach these issues by proposing lists of necessary criteria an entity would have to satisfy to be a person. The question of what a person is becomes especially difficult to answer when discussing the problem of marginal cases. “Marginal case” is a philosophical term of art and refers to an entity whose moral status is uncertain or controversial. An entity’s moral status determines the circumstances under which it is permissible to treat that entity in certain ways, and the determination is made on the basis of whether the entity possesses a morally relevant property or set of properties.

Much of the controversy surrounding marginal cases stems from disagreement over which properties are thought to be morally relevant. While some philosophers, for instance, hold the morally relevant property to be the capacity to experience pain and pleasure, others hold it to be the possession of a certain degree of rationality and self-awareness. The most frequently discussed examples of marginal cases include fetuses, the severely cognitively impaired, and comatose individuals. Determining which, if any, of these entities are moral patients requires an account of personhood. Developing such an account is the focus of my dissertation.

I propose and defend a novel conception of personhood that I call normative pragmatic selfhood (hereafter NPS). NPS theory is a theory of personal ontology which defines a person as a temporally extended entity capable of forming ends-in-views. NPS theory is grounded in a pragmatist conception of value that I develop, and it draws primarily on what John Dewey and Kant say about value. According to NPS theory, the morally relevant property for determining an entity’s moral status is that the entity is valued as an end-in-itself. If an entity values itself as

an end-in-itself, then there is what I call an “end duty” against killing that entity or allowing it to die. I focus on the concept of value because the biomedical issues I discuss include abortion and euthanasia, and many people argue against these practices by claiming that the value of human life is intrinsic. I relate NPS theory to the problem of marginal cases to show one approach in thinking about these types of biomedical issues and how they might be resolved.

My goal in this dissertation is to defend NPS theory. I do not, however, seek to give a “proof” for my theory in the sense of building my theory up from a set of ground principles. I instead justify NPS theory by way of establishing a reflective equilibrium. Reflective equilibrium is a method of justifying a theory by striking a balance, or coherence, among a set of particular beliefs through a process of mutual adjustment between those beliefs and general principles. In this dissertation, the set of particular beliefs are verdicts about the permissibility of certain ethical practices (e.g. abortion, euthanasia, and killing). These beliefs are offset against points taken from the philosophies of Dewey and Kant. This is why, especially in chapter three, I often justify claims essential to NPS theory by appealing to claims that these philosophers have made. One will see that the verdicts I draw about the permissibility of particular cases are widely accepted, and that my use of reflective equilibrium is therefore appropriate.

CHAPTER ONE:  
INTRINSIC VALUE

1.0 THE INTRINSIC/EXTRINSIC DISTINCTION

I begin this dissertation with a discussion of intrinsic value for two reasons. The first is that many bioethical debates involving marginal cases often rest on the assumption that the value of human life is intrinsic. This is particularly true of arguments against abortion and euthanasia, and one goal of this dissertation is to determine under which, if any, circumstances these practices are permissible. The second reason is that according to NPS theory the value of persons is *extrinsic*, not intrinsic. It would therefore be helpful to explain the underlying concepts of this claim before discussing the claim itself later in chapter three. I begin by introducing the concepts of intrinsic value and of value in general. I then set the stage for later arguing that persons are extrinsically valuable by presenting two arguments showing that the concept of intrinsic value is problematic.

In some anti-abortion and anti-euthanasia arguments, the assumption that life is intrinsically valuable is directly acknowledged as a premise. Consider, for example, the following passage from a newsletter issued by Josh Brahm, a member of the anti-abortion and anti-euthanasia activist group Georgia Right to Life:

The problem in our culture today lies in that human life once was considered to have intrinsic value. Now we are being reduced to having instrumental value. You hear this every time someone argues for assisted suicide to preserve the “quality of life” of a person. Instead of human beings being valuable in themselves, the only truly valuable things are experiences or states of living that human beings can have. For example, making a contribution to society, being happy, and having a meaningful life are the states of existence that our culture

views as inherently valuable. This is the type of thinking that naturally leads to euthanasia.<sup>1</sup>

In the context of anti-abortion and anti-euthanasia rhetoric, the term “intrinsic value” is sometimes used interchangeably with the phrase “the sanctity of life.” Leon R. Kass, a conservative bioethicist, presents a case in point:

What exactly is meant by the sanctity of life? This turns out to be difficult to say. In the strictest sense, sanctity of life would mean that life is *in itself* something holy or sacred, transcendent, set apart – like God himself. Or, again, to begin with our responses to the sacred, it would mean that life is something before which we stand (or should stand) with reverence, awe and grave respect – because it is beyond us and unfathomable. In more modest but also more practical terms, to regard life as sacred means that it should be protected, defended, and preserved. Despite their differences, these various formulations agree in this: that “sacredness”, whatever it is, inheres in life itself, and that life, *by its very being*, calls forth an appropriate human response, whether of veneration or restraint. To say that sacredness is something that can be conferred or ascribed – or removed – by solely human agreement or decision is to miss the point entirely (original emphasis).<sup>2</sup>

Although the concept of “intrinsic value” is frequently used in advancing arguments against abortion and euthanasia, it is not as straightforward as these arguments suggest. I will show that both Brahm and Kass’s usage of the concept is in fact confused. With that said, I now discuss the concept of intrinsic value.

According to Christine Korsgaard, the term intrinsic refers to a way in which something possesses its value. Intrinsic value is value that is non-relational: if a thing is intrinsically valuable, then it possesses its value by virtue of the thing’s intrinsic, or non-relational properties. Shelly Kagan writes that this can be understood to mean that the thing would continue to possess its value even if it were the only existing thing in the universe:

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<sup>1</sup> Josh Brahm, *The Value of Human Life: Intrinsic, or Instrumental?*, <http://www.grtl.org/docs/intrinsicorinstrumental.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Leon R. Kass, *Life Liberty and the Defense of Dignity: The Challenge for Bioethics* (San Francisco: Encounter Books, 2002), 234-235.

On the one hand, we have the notion that of the value that an object has “in itself”. Philosophers sometimes try to get at this kind of value by suggesting that it is the value that an object would have even if it were the only thing existing in the universe. Although this particular suggestion is not without its own difficulties, it points us toward the basic idea that value of this sort must depend solely upon the intrinsic – that is, roughly, nonrelational – properties of the object.<sup>3 4</sup>

According to Korsgaard, “intrinsic” is a category that is one half of a distinction pertaining to how things are valuable. The other half is the category “extrinsic”, and it is the value something has due to the thing’s relational properties. In addition to the intrinsic/extrinsic distinction, there is a distinction between instrumental goods and final goods. An instrumental good is something that is valued as a means to an end, while a final good is something that is valued as an end in itself. So, whereas the intrinsic/extrinsic distinction tracks how things *have* value, the instrumental good/final good distinction tracks how things *are* valued. There are thus two distinctions in goodness. As Korsgaard describes them,

One is the distinction between things valued for their sakes and things valued for the sake of something else – between ends and means, or final and instrumental goods. The other is the distinction between things which have their value in themselves and things which derive their value from some other source: intrinsically good things versus extrinsically good things. Intrinsic and instrumental good should not be treated as correlatives, because they belong to two different distinctions.<sup>5</sup>

In light of this discussion, it is clear that Brahm and Kass are confused about the concept of intrinsic value. Brahm explicitly contrasts intrinsic value to instrumental value and fails to keep Korsgaard’s two distinctions separate. Although Kass seems to understand intrinsic value to

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<sup>3</sup> Shelly Kagan, “Rethinking Intrinsic Value,” in *Recent Work on Intrinsic Value*, ed. Toni Rønnow-Rasmussen and Michael J. Zimmerman (Dordrecht: Springer, 2005), 98.

<sup>4</sup> Kagan proceeds in this same paper to reject this conception of intrinsic value. I too reject it for reasons I discuss much later. I quote him here only to show how intrinsic value has been traditionally conceptualized.

mean something that rests on non-relational properties (“Despite their differences, these formulations agree in this: that ‘sacredness’, whatever it is, inheres in life itself...”)⁶, he also takes the concept to mean valuing something for its own sake (“In more modest but also more practical terms, to regard life as sacred means that it should be protected, defended, and preserved”).⁷ Brahm and Kass illustrate that the concept of intrinsic value is sometimes misused. Intrinsic value pertains to how a thing possesses value, not to how agents value it. Intrinsic value is value that a thing possesses by virtue of its intrinsic, or non-relational, properties. It is this concept of intrinsic value that it is problematic, as I will show next.

### 1.1 INTRINSIC VALUE ACCORDING TO MOORE

By intrinsic value, I mean the conception of intrinsic value to which G.E. Moore was committed. According to Ben Bradley, this conception is grounded in the following principles:

SUP: “Intrinsic value is a kind of value that when it is possessed by something, it is possessed by it solely in virtue of its intrinsic properties.”⁸

ISO: “Intrinsic value is a kind of value such that when had by something, that thing would continue to have it even if it were alone in the universe.”⁹

BET: “Adding something with intrinsic value to the world makes the world, or a life, or an outcome, better (other things being equal).”¹⁰

PRO: “When something is intrinsically good, someone has a reason to try to promote it, or preserve it, or make it true, or bring it into existence.”¹¹

FGE: “The bearers of intrinsic value are fine-grained entities, like states of affairs, propositions, or facts.”¹²

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⁶ Christine Korsgaard, “Two Distinctions in Goodness,” in *Recent Work on Intrinsic Value*, ed. Toni Rønnow-Rasmussen and Michael J. Zimmerman (Dordrecht: Springer, 2005), 78.

⁷ Kass, *Life Liberty and the Defense of Dignity*, 234.

⁸ Ben Bradley, “Two Concepts of Intrinsic Value,” *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice* 9, no. 2 (2006): 112.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 113.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 119.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 120.

¹² *Ibid.*, 115.

Let us briefly examine these principles individually. The intrinsic properties referenced in SUP are properties that are non-relational. Recall from Kagan that these are the properties a thing would have if it existed in complete isolation. Thus, since SUP states that a thing's intrinsic value is value that the thing possesses by virtue of those properties, an intrinsically valuable thing would continue to have that value in isolation because it would continue to have those properties in isolation. SUP, in other words, implies ISO. This is why Bradley writes, "If something's intrinsic properties are the properties it has in isolation, then ISO follows from SUP."<sup>13</sup> Of course, neither Bradley nor Kagan was the first philosopher to conceptualize an intrinsic property in this way. They are merely reiterating an idea that G. E. Moore developed over a century ago, the so-called "isolation test" for determining what, if anything, possesses intrinsic value. According to Moore, that which is intrinsically good is good even if it were to exist in complete isolation as the only existing thing in the universe. BET states that a world where something exists that is intrinsically valuable is "better" than a world where that thing does not exist.

PRO states that if something is intrinsically valuable, then there are reasons to "promote or preserve" it that stem directly from the fact that the thing possesses intrinsic value. Robert Audi captures the gist of this idea in the following passage:

The most important single point is that whatever one may consider intrinsically good or intrinsically bad, one is committed to taking it to provide a reason for action, specifically, some positive consideration that is normative at least in the wide sense that it counts toward the rationality of the action in question. For instance, if we believe that pain is intrinsically bad, we are committed to taking it

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<sup>13</sup> Bradley, "Two Concepts of Intrinsic Value," 113.

to provide (negative) reasons for action, thus to regarding the fact that doing something causes pain as a reason to avoid doing it.<sup>14</sup>

The idea then behind PRO is that the intrinsic value of a thing determines which actions involving that thing are either permissible or impermissible.

Finally, FGE states that the types of things that are intrinsically valuable are things like states of affairs, propositions, and facts. As Noah Lemos points out, these things are abstract:

At this point, I wish to turn from consideration of abstract objects such as properties, facts, and states of affairs and discuss whether certain concrete, particular things are also bearers of value. The concrete particulars I wish to consider are individual things such as human beings, dogs, apples, and cars. These things are not abstract objects; they are not properties, facts, or states of affairs. I argue that such concrete particulars are not bearers of intrinsic value.<sup>15</sup>

States of affairs, propositions, and facts are abstract objects, and are therefore to be distinguished from concrete particulars like dogs, iPhones, and raindrops. Bradley observes that “Versions of this view have been held by many Mooreans.”<sup>16</sup> It also seems that Moore himself was committed to FGE. He writes,

I have myself urged...that the mere existence of what is beautiful does appear to have some intrinsic value; ...that such mere existence of what is beautiful has value, so small as to be negligible, in comparison with that which attaches to the consciousness of beauty...That it is only for the sake of these things...these complex wholes themselves, and not any constituent or characteristic of them – that form the rational ultimate end of human action and the sole criterion of social progress: these appear to be truths which have been overlooked.<sup>17</sup>

In other words, intrinsically valuable things are “complex wholes” formed by states of consciousness and objects of art and beauty. The concept of intrinsic value is thus grounded in

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<sup>14</sup> Robert Audi, *The Good in the Right: A Theory of Intuition and Intrinsic Value* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 2004), 130.

<sup>15</sup> Noah Lemos, *Intrinsic Value: Concept and Warrant* (Cambridge [England]; New York, NY, USA: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 26.

<sup>16</sup> Bradley, “Two Concepts of Intrinsic Value,” 6.

<sup>17</sup> G. E. Moore, *Principia Ethica* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1960), 188-189.

the principles SUP, ISO, BET, PRO, and FGE. The strategy behind my arguments against intrinsic value is to show how some of these principles conflict.

## 1.2 PROBLEMS WITH INTRINSC VALUE

One argument against intrinsic value works by showing that ISO and FGE are incompatible, meaning that they cannot both be true. Recall these two principles:

ISO: “Intrinsic value is a kind of value such that when had by something, that thing would continue to have it even if it were alone in the universe.”<sup>18</sup>

FGE: “The bearers of intrinsic value are fine-grained entities, like states of affairs, propositions, or facts.”<sup>19</sup>

States of affairs, propositions, and facts are abstract entities. As such, they do not occupy places in time and space, as do concrete things. The reason ISO and FGE are incompatible is that facts cannot exist by themselves. As Torbjörn Tännsjö comments, “A fact cannot exist in isolation, however.”<sup>20</sup> In other words, a fact has to be a fact *of* something, namely a concrete particular.

Noah Lemos articulates this in the following passage:

In general, if someone’s having property *F* is intrinsically good, it does not follow that either (1) that person who has *F* or (2) the property of *F* itself is intrinsically good. On the other hand it does not seem reasonable to hold that if some concrete, individual *A* were intrinsically good, then the fact that *A* exists *would be* intrinsically good. (original emphasis)<sup>21</sup>

Lemos’s passage also shows that even though abstract entities, unlike concrete ones, do not occupy places in time and space, it does not follow that they can exist independently of concretely existing entities. It implies that the fact of a thing’s existence is good only if the thing itself is good, and that thing exists concretely. Now one might say that there is something that

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<sup>18</sup> Bradley, “Two Concepts of Intrinsic Value,” 113.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 115.

<sup>20</sup> Torbjörn Tännsjö, “A Concrete View of Intrinsic Value,” in *Recent Work on Intrinsic Value*, ed. Toni Rønnow-Rasmussen and Michael J. Zimmerman (Dordrecht: Springer, 2005), 209.

<sup>21</sup> Lemos, *Intrinsic Value: Concept and Warrant*, 27.

can instantiate the fact of nothingness, and that is nothingness itself. But what is nothingness? How can nothingness be defined other than the absence of everything? Nothingness is...nothing! A world with nothing in it is one in which no concrete entities exist. Thus, because states of affairs, propositions, and facts are cannot exist apart from entities that are concrete, it follows that they cannot exist in absolute isolation. Therefore, because ISO states that an intrinsically valuable thing can exist in absolute isolation, and because states of affairs, propositions, and facts cannot exist by themselves, it follows that ISO and FGE are incompatible.

Lemos advances a criticism that focuses on Moore's isolation test. Lemos refers to the idea designated by ISO as ontological isolationism, which he says is problematic because there are some things that are intrinsically good but cannot exist in absolute isolation. He writes,

This sort of ontological isolationism is not very helpful since there are certain sorts of things that are intrinsically good but simply could not be the only things that exist. Consider the fact of Smith's being happy and let's suppose that it is intrinsically good. If there are certain abstract entities such as numbers or properties or states of affairs that necessarily exist, it would be impossible for Smith's being happy to be the only thing that exists. More important, though, is the fact that Smith's being happy could not exist without Smith existing...Since it is necessarily false that Smith's being happy could be the only existing thing, this sort of ontological isolationism is not very clear or very helpful.<sup>22</sup>

Lemos states here that if ontological isolationism is true, and there is something that does possess intrinsic value, then it would be impossible for certain abstract entities, like numbers, to exist in a world that contains only a certain state of affairs, like happiness. Lemos also states that if ontological isolationism is true, then this would seem to exclude certain intrinsically good things from existing if their existence requires the existence of other things. Lemos's conclusion implies that ISO and Moore's isolation test are flawed methods for identifying things that are intrinsically valuable.

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 10-11.

Lemos's rejection of the isolation test is unjustified. He says that Smith's being happy is intrinsically valuable if Smith's being happy is the only existing thing in the universe. This formulation of the isolation test is correct. However, Lemos then goes on to reject the isolation test on the basis that the antecedent (If Smith's being happy is the only existing thing in the universe) cannot obtain. Lemos fails to realize that conditional statement is evaluated by assuming the truth of its antecedent, and that a false antecedent is therefore irrelevant to the evaluation of a conditional. The isolation test, therefore, cannot be rejected on the basis that Smith's being happy is the only existing thing in the universe is a state of affairs that cannot obtain. Lemos's argument fails. This does not mean, however, that the test, and Moore's conception of intrinsic value more generally, are without problems.

There is the issue of how knowledge of intrinsic value is possible. Moore thinks the only evidence required for determining whether something possesses intrinsic value is intuition, as he demonstrates in the following passage:

Let us imagine one world exceedingly beautiful. Imagine it as beautiful as you can; put into it whatever on this earth you most admire – mountains, rivers, the sea; trees, and sunsets, stars and moon...And then imagine the ugliest world you can possibly conceive. Imagine it simply one heap of filth, containing everything that is most disgusting to us, for whatever reason, and the whole, as far as may be, without one redeeming feature. The only thing we are not entitled to imagine is that any human being ever has or ever, by any possibility, can, live in either, can ever see and enjoy the beauty of the one or hate the foulness of the other. Well, even so, supposing them quite apart from any possible contemplation by human beings; still, is it irrational to hold that it is better that the beautiful world should exist than the one which is ugly? Would it not be well, in any case, to do what we could to produce it rather than the other? Certainly I cannot help thinking that it would; and I hope that some may agree with me in this extreme instance.<sup>23</sup>

Moore seems to be saying here that one can know which things are intrinsically valuable simply by relying on one's intuition. Tara Smith points out a problem with Moore's reliance on

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<sup>23</sup> Moore, *Principia Ethica*, 83-84.

intuition. She says that different agents can have different intuitions about what is intrinsically valuable: “If we fail to elicit someone else’s endorsement of the same things as intrinsically valuable, our only recourse is to look harder. This hardly confirms the independent existence of non-relational value.”<sup>24</sup> To prove Smith’s point, suppose there is a race of intelligent beings that evolved from a type of dung beetle. These beings possess the same level of rationality as humans and are therefore able to engage in Moore’s isolation test. Because of their evolutionary heritage, these beings would think that it is the filthy world, not the world that Moore thinks is beautiful, that is intrinsically valuable. This illustrates the problem, then, with relying solely on intuition to determine what is intrinsically valuable.

Moore’s passage about the intrinsic value of beauty points to an interesting observation about Moore and Bradley. Recall from Bradley that the Moorean conception of value is committed to the principle of BET, whereby “adding something with intrinsic value to the world makes the world, or a life, or an outcome, better (other things being equal).”<sup>25</sup> Now a world that is beautiful would make someone’s life in that world better. Moore says that if a life includes the contemplation of that beauty, then an intrinsically valuable thing like beauty makes a life better. But when Moore tells us to imagine a world that is beyond contemplation, he is saying that such a world is one whose beauty is beyond aesthetic appreciation. There is confusion then as to how a beautiful world can be beneficial to anyone if no one can appreciate it. If Bradley’s BET is correct in claiming that a beautiful world makes a life better, then such a world would have to make life better through some way other than that of agents contemplating the world.

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<sup>24</sup> Tara Smith, “Intrinsic Value: Look-Say Ethics,” *The Journal of Value Inquiry* 32 (2006): 544.

<sup>25</sup> Ben Bradley, “Two Concepts of Intrinsic Value,” 119.

There is, however, a more serious concern with BET. Recall that the Moorean conception of intrinsic value is committed to FGE, which states that the bearers of intrinsic value are like states of affairs. Moore refers to these states of affairs as complex wholes in the following passage, which I have repeated here from earlier in section 1.1:

I have myself urged...that the mere existence of what is beautiful does appear to have some intrinsic value; ...that such mere existence of what is beautiful has value, so small as to be negligible, in comparison with that which attaches to the consciousness of beauty...That it is only for the sake of these things...these complex wholes themselves, and not any constituent or characteristic of them – that form the rational ultimate end of human action and the sole criterion of social progress: these appear to be truths which have been overlooked.<sup>26</sup>

As I noted in section 1.1, an intrinsically valuable object is a complex whole formed by states of consciousness and objects of art and beauty. For Moore, a complex whole is the sum of (a) the value of a state of consciousness, (b) the value of an object of consciousness, and (c) the value of what he calls the organic unity of (a) and (b).<sup>27</sup> Moore refers to the organic unity by the expression “as a whole” and the complex whole by the expression “on a whole” when he writes,

...the value which a thing possesses *on the whole* may be said to be equivalent to the sum of the value which it possesses *as a whole, together with* the intrinsic values which may belong to any of its parts (original emphasis).<sup>28</sup>

Accordingly, as Thomas Hurka explains,

A whole’s intrinsic value as a whole is its intrinsic value just as a combination of parts and independently of any values in those parts. Its intrinsic value on the whole is its intrinsic value on balance or all things considered, that is, the value that results from adding its intrinsic value as a whole to any values in its parts.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> G. E. Moore, *Principia Ethica* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1960), 188-189.

<sup>27</sup> For Moore’s discussion on the relationship between organic unities and complex wholes, see pp. 27-31 of *Principia Ethica*.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 214.

<sup>29</sup> Thomas Hurka, “Two Kinds of Organic Unity,” *The Journal of Ethics* 2, no.4 (1998): 301.

Hurka here says that a thing's intrinsic value on the whole is the value a thing has, all things considered. This is consistent with Moore's position that all final value is intrinsic value, and this in turn is consistent with his claim that it is only for the sake of complex wholes that "the rational ultimate end of human action"<sup>30</sup> is formed. What this implies is that these complex wholes are the bearers of intrinsic value that are subject to the isolation test. They are also the things to which Bradley refers to in BET, which states that "Adding something with intrinsic value to the world makes the world, or a life, or an outcome, better (other things equal)."<sup>31</sup> A more stringent statement of BET is that if something x has intrinsic value, and if x is added to the world, then that world would be better than one to which x was not added. We have seen that Moore thinks that the bearer of an intrinsic value is a complex whole. It is a sum of the value of an organic unity and the value of each of the unity's parts. It is important to realize that Moore thought that the value of an organic unity is not the sum of the value of each of the unity's parts, as noted by his principle of organic unity: "The value of a whole must not be assumed to be the same as the sum of its parts."<sup>32</sup> The principle allows for the value of an organic unity to be greater than the value of each of the unity's parts. Suppose then that there is a complex whole consisting in part of someone's taking pleasure in torturing others. This complex whole would be the sum of the value of someone's pleasure, the value of someone else's being tortured, and the value of an organic unity of someone's pleasure and someone else's being tortured. Suppose that the value of the organic unity is sufficiently large so as to assign a positive value to the complex whole of which the unity is a part. This would make the complex whole intrinsically good. If so, it would follow from BET that this complex whole would make the world better.

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<sup>30</sup> Moore, *Principia Ethica*, 189.

<sup>31</sup> Bradley, "Two Concepts of Intrinsic Value," 119.

<sup>32</sup> Moore, *Principia Ethica*, 28.

This, however, is problematic because it suggests that a world in which someone is tortured is better than one in which that person is not tortured. This result is implausible and points to a conflict between Bradley's BET and Moore's conception of intrinsic value.

A similar concern can be seen with ISO and Moore's isolation test in that there is the potential for identifying intrinsically valuable states of affairs that are not unconditionally good.

Darlei Dall'AgnoI writes about pleasure as one such example:

Can we consider, for instance, Peter experiencing pleasure good in isolation? Apparently, this is a good state of affairs, but it may happen in circumstances which it cannot be said that it is unconditionally good. Suppose that Peter is a pirate killing an innocent and enjoying it. It seems clear that the isolation test can lead to an error of evaluation if it is applied in this radical or absolute way.<sup>33</sup>

That ISO carries with it the potential for identifying intrinsically valuable states of affairs that are not unconditionally valuable presents a problem to Moore's isolation test because Moore thinks that all intrinsic value is final value.

### 1.3 RECAP

In this chapter, I discussed the concept of intrinsic value as conceived by Moore and the difficulties surrounding Bradley's principles. This lays the foundation for NPS theory to argue that persons are extrinsically valuable. However, since NPS theory relies heavily on the moral philosophy of John Dewey, the American pragmatist philosopher, I will first provide an overview of Dewey's theory of value. That is the purpose of the next chapter.

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<sup>33</sup> Darlei Dall'AgnoI "Intrinsic Value: Analyzing Moore's Aristotelian Approach," *Florianopolis* 2, no. 1 (2003): 63.

CHAPTER TWO:  
DEWEY'S THEORY OF VALUE

## 2.0 INSTRUMENTALISM

Dewey's thoughts about the nature of value are complex and difficult to explain in a linear fashion, leading James Gouinlock, a noted Dewey scholar, to comment, "To enter upon an analysis of Dewey's philosophy of value is certainly one of the most formidable tasks one can undertake in connection with his thought."<sup>34</sup> Much of the difficulty, however, is removed once we recognize what Dewey thought the proper goal of ethical theory should be. Traditional ethical theory aims at the formulation of principles that aim at the identification of right actions and morally valuable ends, but Dewey eschews this goal in favor of something else. According to Elizabeth Anderson, "Dewey's ethics replaces the goal of identifying an ultimate end or supreme ethical principle with the goal of identifying a method for improving our value judgments."<sup>35</sup> This point is echoed by Robert E. Dewey<sup>36</sup>, who states,

[In a similar way], Dewey rejects the assumption that it is the task of ethics to find some ultimate and supreme moral standard. Empirically, every moral situation is unique. To hope that a single moral law might anticipate and provide guidance for every moral case is to overlook the variety, the changes, and the individuality which characterize actual moral situations. Instead of a single, oral standard,

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<sup>34</sup> James Gouinlock, *John Dewey's Philosophy of Value* (New York: Humanities Press, 1972), 124.

<sup>35</sup> Elizabeth Anderson, "Dewey's Moral Philosophy," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2018 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2018/entries/dewey-moral/>

<sup>36</sup> To avoid confusion, Robert E. Dewey will be referred to as RE Dewey, and where simply Dewey is written, it is to be understood as referring to John Dewey.

there are many moral rules. These rules are generalizations embodying the past experience of men in solving their problems.<sup>37</sup>

Dewey thought that in a world as messy and complicated as ours, the assumption that a handful of principles is sufficient to guide an agent to right action in any given situation was too naïve to grant. Moral principles, insisted Dewey, do not carry the justificatory weight that philosophers such as Kant and Mill think they do.<sup>38</sup> This affinity to particularism will become clearer after discussing Dewey's ideas on the nature of value judgments. As it will be seen, Dewey thinks the task of moral theory is to resolve problematic situations. As he puts it,

Moral theory cannot emerge when there is positive belief as to what is right and what is wrong, for then there is no occasion for reflection...For what is called moral theory is but a more conscious and systematic raising of the question which occupies the mind of any one who in the face of moral conflict and doubt seeks a way out through reflection.<sup>39</sup>

To grasp what this conception of moral theory entails, one must first examine Dewey's thoughts on the logic of value judgments. He rejects the idea that the truth content of a value judgment is determined on the basis of whether the judgement corresponds to an existing state of affairs. One cornerstone of his philosophy is that value judgements are not primarily descriptive. He does not think, in other words, that the statement "X is good" endeavors primarily to describe something, X, as possessing the property of goodness. So what does Dewey think value judgments are if they are not primarily descriptive? The answer is suggested by his commitment to what RE Dewey calls the instrumentalist theory of knowledge which, though long, is so apt that it deserves to be given in full:

According to this view [the instrumentalist theory of knowledge], knowledge is not embodied in ideas descriptive of a reality which exists antecedently to, and

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<sup>37</sup> Robert E. Dewey, *The philosophy of John Dewey: A Critical Exposition of His Method, Metaphysics, and Theory of Knowledge* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1977), 11-12.

<sup>38</sup> Much later, however, I will point out some striking similarities between Dewey and Kant.

<sup>39</sup> John Dewey, *Theory of the Moral Life* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston., 1908), 5.

independent of, the knowing subject. To the contrary, the activities of both thinking and knowing occur when an organism experiences conflict within a specific situation. Thus occasioned, these activities function to resolve the conflict by seeking ways of reorganizing the situation to re-establish an (sic) harmonious interaction of the organism and its environment. Put in other terms, both thinking and knowing have the practical aim of solving problems concerning what ought to be done. Conceived in this way, ideas are essentially plans of action functioning as instruments for the achievement of better practice.

Accordingly, the test of their worth is their actual success as instruments in bringing about a future solution of the problem which occasioned reflection at the beginning. *The test is not the faithfulness of the ideas in recording some real world as it is, was or shall be. Ideas are instruments, not mirrors; and their worth [i.e., their truth or value as knowledge] is to be judged as one judges the worth of any instrument by use in practice.* (my emphasis)<sup>40</sup>

Conceptualizing knowledge instrumentally thus involves understanding beliefs as tools that agents use when they encounter problematic situations. According to a *non-instrumentalist* theory of knowledge<sup>41</sup>, the main function of value judgments is to help agents secure knowledge of the world outside of themselves. This is not to suggest that, according to non-instrumentalist theories of knowledge, value judgments have no bearing on justifying actions. Rather, it is to think that value judgments, despite their function of enabling agents to perform actions, are not themselves judgments about what to do. The underlying assumption behind non-instrumentalist theories of knowledge is that practical judgments and theoretical judgments are two distinct categories of belief, and that value judgments fall squarely within the latter. Although Dewey concedes that value judgments have a descriptive form, this does not detract from his claim that value judgments are essentially tools that we as agents use to guide our conduct and manage our practical engagement with the world when problematic situations arise. As Dewey himself

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<sup>40</sup> Robert E. Dewey, *The philosophy of John Dewey: A Critical Exposition of His Method, Metaphysics, and Theory of Knowledge*, 8.

<sup>41</sup> Some commentators use “spectator theory of knowing” as an umbrella term to refer to the traditional, non-instrumental epistemologies to which Dewey is opposed. One example is Putnam in *Cambridge companion to Dewey*.

declares, “My theme is that a judgment of value is simply a case of practical judgment, a judgment about the doing of something.”<sup>42</sup> Anderson notes,

Value judgments are tools for enabling the satisfactory redirection of conduct when habit no longer suffices to direct it. As tools, they can be evaluated instrumentally, in terms of their success in guiding conduct. We test our value judgments by putting them into practice and seeing whether the results are satisfactory — whether they solve the problems they were designed to solve, whether we find their consequences acceptable, whether they enable successful responses to novel problems, whether living in accordance with alternative value judgments yields more satisfactory results.<sup>43</sup>

In other words, Anderson says that Dewey regards value judgments essentially as tools the agent uses to render their situation unproblematic and resume their activity or conduct.

Dewey’s instrumentalist understanding of value judgments stems from what may be called his instrumentalist view understanding of human beings. According to Dewey, human beings are essentially *practical*. They are constantly engaged in practical activity:

In truth man acts anyway, he can’t help acting. In every fundamental sense it is false that a man requires a motive to make him do something. To a healthy man inaction is the greatest of woes. Anyone who observes children know that while periods of rest are natural, laziness is an acquired vice – or virtue. While a man is awake he will do something, if only to build castles in the air.<sup>44</sup>

To claim that human beings are essentially practical is to say that they are first and foremost problem-solving entities. RE Dewey writes,

According to Dewey, man is first and foremost a future-oriented, problem-solving animal whose characteristics and activities evolved from, but remain continuous with, processes taking place on the so-called lower levels of life. Like other

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<sup>42</sup> John Dewey, *Essays in Experimental Logic* (New York: Dover Publications Inc., 1916), 358.

<sup>43</sup> Anderson, "Dewey's Moral Philosophy"

<sup>44</sup> John Dewey, *Human Nature and Conduct: An Introduction to Social Psychology* (First Modern Library Edition. New York: The Modern Library, 1930), 118-119.

organisms, man is concerned to find a satisfactory adjustment to the environment.<sup>45</sup>

It follows from Dewey's view of human beings as fundamentally active, problem-solving, practically engaged creatures that the concepts required for the formation of value judgments function as tools for action. RE Dewey continues,

Man's moral life is simply one aspect of man's life as a problem-solving animal. When the interactions of men with their environment are proceeding smoothly, questions do not arise concerning what they ought to do. It is only when trouble develops in a specific situation that men are led to ask what they should do. Moral ideals then arise to function as projected plans of action which might solve the particular difficulty confronted.<sup>46</sup>

So the instrumentalist nature of value judgments is due to the instrumentalist, practical orientation nature of human beings. Value judgments are practical because activity provides the impetus for them. It is only *because* agents are practically engaged with the world around them (i.e., that they are engaged in activities), that it becomes possible to formulate goals or ends in the first place. Dewey writes, "There is no inquiry which does not involve judgments of practice"<sup>47</sup>, to which Todd Lekan remarks, "We do not make value judgments in a vacuum. Norm-users are always already participating in a variety of activities and practices that embody and promote a variety of goods."<sup>48</sup> Our nature as active creatures ensures that all our thoughts function as tools used to achieve the ends of our actions. People tend to assume that purposeful activity consists of first deciding upon a goal (an end) and then deciding upon a course of action (the means) in order to achieve it. For example, it is only after Susan has decided to become a

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<sup>45</sup> Robert E. Dewey, *The philosophy of John Dewey: A Critical Exposition of His Method, Metaphysics, and Theory of Knowledge*, 44.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 49.

<sup>47</sup> John Dewey, *Logic: The Theory of Inquiry* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1938), 174.

<sup>48</sup> Todd Lekan, *Making Morality: Pragmatist Reconstruction in Ethical Theory* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2003), 68.

doctor that she must then decide *how* to become one. This includes achieving high test exam scores, graduating from medical school, and completing a term of residency. This model of purposeful activity is built on the assumption that the ends are formed *apart* or *independently* from the means, and it is precisely due to this assumption that Dewey rejects the model.

According to him, the ends of action are *not* formed apart from the means of action. Instead,

Ends arise and function *within* action. They are not, as current theories too often imply, things lying beyond activity at which that latter is directed. They are not strictly speaking ends or termini of action at all. They are terminals of deliberation, and so turning point inactivity.<sup>49</sup>

In other words, what an agent designates as the end of their activity is really just the point when their old activity becomes redirected into a new one. Activity does not cease just because its designated end has been reached. Once again, this is because human beings, by virtue of the sort of creatures they are, are continuously engaged in activity. There is no vantage point from which agents disengage themselves from what they are doing in order to formulate the ends of their actions. Because we cannot help but be constantly engaged in action, says Dewey, our ends must be formed and evaluated *in medias res*. We form ends-in-view when whatever action we happen to be engaged in is set back by a problematic situation, and the ends-in-view are evaluated on the basis of how efficiently they serve to eliminate that problem.<sup>50</sup> This raises questions about what Dewey thought about the nature of value.

To those who understand value theory as essentially a branch of metaphysics that Moore kick started in the early the twentieth century, it might seem that Dewey approaches the topic of value more from the standpoint of a psychologist than a philosopher, in that much of his work on

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<sup>49</sup> John Dewey, *Human Nature and Conduct: An Introduction to Social Psychology* (First Modern Library Edition. New York: The Modern Library, 1930), 223.

<sup>50</sup> I discuss the topic of ends-in-view later in this chapter.

value focuses on how people form value judgments, rather than clarifying the nature of value.

But if it seems that what Dewey has to say about the nature of value is perfunctory, it may be due to the fact that Dewey's views don't fit neatly within any of the traditions of the most familiar debates in twentieth century metaethics. Jennifer Welchman demonstrates the difficulty in trying to pigeonhole Dewey's metaethical views:

Dewey, like Hume, was an ethical naturalist who believed that moral phenomena are natural phenomena. But unlike Hume and his twentieth-century successors, such as the emotivists Charles L. Stevenson and A.J. Ayer, Dewey was not a non-cognitivist. He did not accept the view that moral claims such as "Her character is exemplary" or "His conduct was vicious" are pseudo-propositions that express speakers' subjective attitudes or tastes rather than verifiable assertions about their own or others' conduct or character. Consequently, he also rejected the view that values, unlike facts, are neither responsive to reason nor empirically verifiable.<sup>51</sup>

And as she continues,

In contrast, Dewey holds that value judgments, moral and non-moral, make assertions about things, acts, and persons that can be true or false in a pragmatic sense. But unlike many cognitivist naturalists, Dewey does not take his naturalism to entail moral realism: the position that there are specifically "moral" facts, properties, or relations to which moral propositions and principles refer.<sup>52</sup>

This difficulty of categorization also applies more specifically to Dewey's thoughts about the nature of value. As Gouinlock notes below, Dewey was neither an objectivist nor a subjectivist about value as those terms are usually understood:

Value is neither an isolated entity, nor a phantom of subjective mind, nor a transcendent form; But it is an eventual function in nature, produced with the contrivance of intelligence and activity ... that function of experience and nature which Dewey designates by the term "value" is the consummatory phase of a situation, which is initially problematic.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Jennifer Welchman, "Dewey's Moral Philosophy," in *The Cambridge Companion to Dewey*, edited by Molly Cochran (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 166.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 166-167.

<sup>53</sup> Gouinlock, *John Dewey's Philosophy of Value*, 125.

So unlike Moore, Dewey rejects the idea that value itself (i.e. “goodness”) is a mind-independent entity, but at the same time he also rejects the idea that value is subjective, that what is good is defined simply as what one values to be good. For Dewey, value is a function of value judgments, which he regards as primarily practical judgements about how to act. What this means is that for Dewey, values do not exist antecedently to but through the formation of value judgments. He writes,

A practical judgment has been defined as a judgment of what to do, or what is to be done: a judgment respecting the future termination of an incomplete and in so far indeterminate situation. To say that judgments of value fall within this field is to say two things: one, that the judgment of value is never complete in itself, but always in behalf of determining what is to be done; the other, that judgments of value (as distinct from the direct experience of something as good) *imply that value is not anything previously given, but is something to be given by future action.* (my emphasis)<sup>54</sup>

And also,

It does follow...that valuation is not simply a *recognition* of the force or efficiency of a means with respect to continuing a process. For unless there is a question about its continuation, about its termination, valuation will not occur. And there is no *question* save where activity is hesitant in direction because of conflict within it... I do not believe that valuations occur and values are brought into being save in a continuing situation where things have potency for carrying forward processes. (original emphasis)<sup>55</sup>

Philosophers have traditionally assumed that values exist prior or antecedent to the formulation of value judgments. Dewey’s rejection of this assumption is clear in these two passages: ideas are not first and foremost descriptions of reality but are tools that effectuate changes in the agent’s practical standpoint. Values do not exist prior to valuations. Values rather come to exist only through the formation of valuations. An understanding of how Dewey thought this works

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<sup>54</sup> John Dewey, *Essays in Experimental Logic* (New York: Dover Publications Inc., 1916), 361-362.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 366-367.

begins by examining the distinction he draws between valuing something and judging something to be valuable.

## 2.1 ESTEEMING/PRIZING AND ESTIMATING/APPRAISING

Dewey often refers to valuing something as esteeming or “prizing.” Judging something to be valuable is called estimating or “appraising.” These processes are to be understood as separate and distinct from each other:

There is a difference which must be noted between valuations as judgment (which involves thought in placing the thing judged in its relations and bearings) and valuing as a direct emotional and practical act. There is a difference between esteem and estimation, between prizing and appraising. To esteem is to prize, hold dear, admire, approve; to estimate is to measure in intellectual fashion. One is direct, spontaneous; the other is reflex, reflective.<sup>56</sup>

In contrasting the spontaneous character of esteeming/prizing with the reflective character of estimating/appraising, we are to think that esteeming/prizing is then non-reflective. This is, in fact, exactly how Dewey wants esteeming/prizing to be understood:

The distinction between direct valuing, in the sense of prizing and being absorbed in an object or person, and valuation as reflective judgment, based upon consideration of a comprehensive scheme, has an important bearing upon the controversy as to the intuitive character of moral judgments. Our immediate responses of approval and reprobation may well be termed intuitive. They are not based upon any thought-out reason or ground.<sup>57</sup>

As seen here, Dewey frequently uses the term “immediate” to capture the spontaneous character of esteeming/prizing, hence his comments that “Value as such, even things having value, cannot in their immediate existence be reflected upon; they either are or are not; are or are not enjoyed”<sup>58</sup> and “Values are values, things immediately having certain intrinsic qualities. Of

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<sup>56</sup> Dewey, *Theory of the Moral Life*, 122-123.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 124.

<sup>58</sup> John Dewey, *Experience and Nature* (La Salle: Open Court, 1925b), 322.

them as value accordingly nothing to be said; they are what they are.”<sup>59</sup> The idea that immediate value (the object of one’s esteeming/prizing) possesses intrinsic qualities that make value unanalyzable may sound similar to Moore, who famously argued that goodness is a primitive concept. The differences between Dewey and Moore cannot be starker though. Not only was Dewey an ethical naturalist, as was mentioned earlier, he also took immediate value to be devoid of normative content, saying, “Taken in and of themselves, intuitions or immediate feeling of what is good and bad are of psychological rather than moral import”.<sup>60</sup> What is immediately valuable is the object what one happens to be esteeming/prizing, which consists of liking or approving something on the basis of immediate experience instead of reflective judgment. The absence of reflection means objects are esteemed/prized as they are immediately experienced. There is no opportunity to reflect upon objects before they are esteemed/prized, and what an agent esteems/prizes is therefore not necessarily something that they should value at all. But there is more to esteeming/prizing than simply having a set of pre-reflective attitudes. It is also accompanied by action. According to Dewey,

Even when I speak of a direct experience of a good or bad, one is only too likely to read in traits characterizing a thing which is found in consequence of thinking to be good; one has to use language simply to stimulate a recourse to a direct experiencing in which language is not depended upon. If one is willing to make such an imaginative excursion – no one can be compelled – he will note that *finding* (original emphasis) a thing good apart from reflective judgment *means simply treating the thing in a certain way, hanging on to it, dwelling upon it, welcoming it and acting to perpetuate its presence, taking delight in it. It is a way of behaving toward it, a mode of organic reaction.* (my emphasis)<sup>61</sup>

In other words, to esteem/prize a thing is to make a behavioral display of approving or liking it solely on the basis of its being immediately experienced. Dewey makes no distinction between

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 321.

<sup>60</sup> Dewey, *Theory of the Moral Life*, 126.

<sup>61</sup> Dewey, *Essays in Experimental Logic*, 353.

valuing something and acting as if that something is valuable. An object of immediate value is *ipso facto* something to which the valuer is disposed to act or behave in a certain manner.

Anderson writes that one way of interpreting Dewey's idea of esteeming/prizing something is to perform actions that are driven largely by impulse and habit:

At the most primitive level, valuings are tendencies to move toward, acquire, or ingest certain things, or, on the negative side, to avoid, reject, spew out other things. One need not have any idea of what one is valuing in order to value it. In the first instance, then, valuings simply denote impulses toward or away from objects, as when an infant turns toward human voices, or swats away a fly. Valuings of objects as useful can also be immediate – that is, not mediated by cognition or awareness of what one is doing. One simply uses a fork to pick up food, without thinking about it. Habits, then, are also a species of valuing.<sup>62</sup>

Anderson here describes valuing as a behavioral disposition. Her understanding of Dewey's idea of esteeming/prizing is shared by other Dewey scholars like Scott R. Stroud, who says about immediate value,

Such a value is shown when one takes delight in something directly, as when one hears a favorite song or reads a poem that accords with his or her preferences. One does not need to establish that such things are good or valued; they just are valued or experienced as good. After the fact one may label the enjoyment or prizing a "value", but that does not motivate the actual experience of the object or situation in question. Take an individual who walks about on the street and avoids mud puddles. Dewey would say that even though the individual has not gone through an elaborate and reflective process justifying such behavior, the person immediately *acts as if* he or she valued staying dry. (original emphasis)<sup>63</sup>

Stroud's last sentence suggests, again, the point that there is more involved in esteeming/prizing a thing than simply liking or approving it. To esteem/prize something is to act toward it.

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<sup>62</sup> Anderson, "Dewey's Moral Philosophy".

<sup>63</sup> Scott Stroud, *John Dewey and the Artful Life: Pragmatism, Aesthetics, and Morality* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2011), 42-43.

Recapping then, the picture is as follows: Dewey recognizes a difference between valuing something and judging something to be valuable. He calls the object of the former “immediate value” and refers to the act of valuing by the terms “esteeming” and “prizing”. The agent esteems/prizes a thing by liking or approving it. Moreover, the agent does not esteem/prize a thing because they feel like approving it after having thought about what it is. They esteem/prize a thing because approval is the first impulse they have when they experience it. Accordingly, because there is no conscious thought involved about in esteeming/valuing a thing, it does not involve judging it as something that is worth valuing or as something that should be valued. This is what makes esteeming/prizing non-normative. Although esteeming/prizing is pre-reflective, the agent must esteem/prize in order to estimate/appraise. Estimating/appraising is defined as the process whereby the agent forms valuations, and this is why Dewey considers it to be reflective, unlike esteeming/prizing. Understanding how this works requires taking a closer look at the valuations themselves.

## 2.2 VALUATIONS

Recall that according to the instrumentalist theory of knowledge, ideas do not endeavor to describe antecedently existing states of affairs. They are instead primarily practical judgments that an agent makes about which action to perform. Accordingly, the truth content of a valuation is determined by the consequences that actually follow from performing the designated action.

As Anna Putnam puts it,

Dewey holds that any factual proposition that is made the basis of an inference becomes thereby a hypothetical proposition: that is, open to verification or falsification by the occurrence or non-occurrence of the consequences it predicts. Dewey concludes, that, therefore, the truth or falsehood of a practical judgment is

constituted by the outcome of intelligent action in accordance with it. In other words, for judgments of practice truth is verification.<sup>64</sup>

Anderson makes the same point by comparing valuations to scientific hypotheses:

It is uncontroversial that instrumental judgments are subject to empirical testing and confirmation, since they involve empirical claims about causation. We test scientific hypotheses by bringing about their antecedents and seeing if the results are as they predicted. Similarly, we test value judgments by acting on them and seeing if we value the consequences in the way the judgment predicted. Acting on our value judgments — putting them into practice — supplies the data for confirming or disconfirming them. Roughly speaking, a value judgment hypothesizes “try it, you’ll like it” — a statement easily subject to empirical verification and refutation.<sup>65</sup>

Despite the fact that a valuation has a descriptive form (e.g., *x* is good), an initially formed valuation is not a value judgment that is true or false. This is because a judgment of any kind is either true or false; what makes a valuation true or false depends on what happens after the agent successfully executes the action suggested by his valuation. In other words, the valuation does not become a value judgment that is true or false until the end of the valuation is realized.

Accordingly, until the agent who has formed a valuation actually executes the corresponding action, the valuation is neither true nor false. As Dewey himself says,

The bearing of this remark upon the nature of the truth of practical judgments [including the judgment of what is given] is obvious. Their truth or falsity is constituted by the issue. The determination of end-means [constituting the terms and relations of the practical proposition] is hypothetical until the course of action indicated has been tried. The event or issue of such action *is* the truth or falsity of the judgment.<sup>66</sup>

This raises the question, then, as to what happens upon the execution of an action that determines whether the corresponding valuation is either true or false. Answering this question requires

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<sup>64</sup> Anna Ruth Putnam, “Dewey’s Epistemology,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Dewey*, edited by Molly Cochran (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 51.

<sup>65</sup> Anderson, “Dewey’s Moral Philosophy”.

<sup>66</sup> Dewey, *Essays in Experimental Logic*, 364.

examining what exactly Dewey thinks the subject term of a valuation is. In other words, what is the agent describing as good when he makes a valuation.

For Dewey, the subject term of a valuation is what he calls the “end-in-view.” The end-in-view is what the agent describes as good when he makes a valuation. It is whatever the  $x$  may be in “ $x$  is good”. An end-in-view is an outcome that the agent projects as the goal of a plan of action. Dewey writes,

Behavior has ends in the sense of results which put an end to that particular activity, while an end-in-view arises when a particular consequence is foreseen and being foreseen is consciously adopted by desire and deliberately made the directive purpose of action.<sup>67</sup>

Dewey is saying here that the end-in-view is a not yet existing state of affairs that the agent wants to exist and that he predicts will, in fact, exist if he executes a certain action. The basis on which the agent forms an end-in-view is the set of circumstances that make up their present practical standpoint: they form an end-in-view only when they become enveloped in a problematic situation, i.e., when something has happened that is preventing them from continuing to engage in a current activity. The end-in-view is what the agent proposes to themselves as a solution to the problem. Accordingly, if there is no problem, then there is no occasion for the agent to form an end-in-view:

When we inquire into the actual emergence of desire and its object and the value-property ascribed to the latter [instead of merely manipulating dialectically the general concept of desire], it is plain as anything can be that desires arise only when “there is something the matter,” when there is some “trouble” in an existing situation. When analyzed, this “something the matter” is found to spring from the fact that there is something lacking, wanting, in the existing situation as it stands, an absence which produces conflict in the elements that do exist. When things are going completely smoothly, desires do not arise, and there is no occasion to project ends-in-view, for “going smoothly” signifies that there is no need for effort and struggle. It suffices to let things take their “natural” course. There is

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<sup>67</sup> Dewey, *Theory of the Moral Life*, 31.

no occasion to investigate what it would be better to have happen in the future, and hence no projection of an end-object.<sup>68</sup>

Gouinlock gives an example of how this works:

Suppose a cook is happily engaged in the preparation of a stew. He runs out of salt. Thus there is a problematic situation, and he has to find a way to resume his activities. In this case, his end-in-view would be to acquire in some way some salt. Possession of the salt would not itself be a value, but it is a necessary condition for creating a value – creating a reunified situation.<sup>69</sup>

The message of these two passages is clear: the agent forms an end-in-view only when they encounter a problematic situation, which Dewey understands as a set of circumstances that is preventing the agent from continuing to engage in activity. Since the end-in-view is the object of a valuation and is defined as the idea of an end of an action that the agent believes *will* resolve the problem at hand, it follows that the end-in-view is an idea that does not refer to anything that presently exists. This clarifies Dewey's belief that an initially formed valuation is not a judgement that is either true or false. It is neither true nor false because the subject term of the valuation is a representation of something that is brought into existence through future action and is therefore something that does not exist when the valuation was initially formed. As Dewey illustrates,

When a man is ill and after deliberation concludes that it be well to see a doctor, the doctor doubtless exists antecedently. But it is not the doctor who is judged to be the good of the situation, but the *seeing* of the doctor: a thing which, by description, exists only because of an act dependent on a judgment. Nor is the health the man antecedently possessed (or which somebody has) the thing which he judges to be a value; the thing judged to be a value is the restoring of health – something by description not yet existing. The results flowing from his past health will doubtless influence him in reaching his judgment that it will be a good to have restored health, but they do not constitute the good which forms the subject-matter and object of his judgment. He may judge that they *were* good without judging that they are now good, for to be judged now good means to be

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<sup>68</sup> John Dewey, *The Collected Works of John Dewey, 1882-1953*, 220.

<sup>69</sup> Gouinlock, *John Dewey's Philosophy of Value*, 132.

judged to be the object of a course of action still to be undertaken (original emphasis).<sup>70</sup>

Thus, since values do not exist apart from ends that the agent has in view, and these ends do not exist at the time when he makes a valuation, it follows that the values themselves do not exist at the time when the agent makes a valuation. They result from achieving future ends of future action. Dewey give another example: “The end-*in-view* of the man who sees an automobile approaching him is *getting to* a place of safety, not safety itself.” (original emphasis)<sup>71</sup> This illustrates the fact that the end-in-view is not an object, but a situation consisting of the agent who made the valuation and the agent’s environment. Gouinlock confirms this:

It would be seriously misleading to regard the end-in-view as an object in itself. Rather, it is a particular way of interacting with selected features of the environment. End-in-view, then, as a purpose or aim, is a proposed interaction in which *both* the agent and his surroundings would be necessarily and intimately involved. (my emphasis)<sup>72</sup>

It is important to note that ends-in-view are *not* the same as the actual ends themselves. The actual end does not exist when the agent makes a valuation. The end-in-view, however, does exist when the valuation is made because making a valuation is the act whereby an end-in-view is formed. Ends-in-view and the actual ends that the ends-in-view describe are separate. As Dewey explains,

The end-in-view of desire is that object which were it present would link into an organized whole activities which are now partial and competing. It is no more like the actual end of desire or the resulting state attained, than the coupling of cars which have been separated is like an ongoing single train. Yet the train cannot go without the coupling.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Dewey, *Essays in Experimental Logic*, 368-369.

<sup>71</sup> John Dewey, *Logic: The Theory of Inquiry* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1938), 166.

<sup>72</sup> Gouinlock, *John Dewey’s Philosophy of Value*, 131.

<sup>73</sup> Dewey, *Human Nature and Conduct: An Introduction to Social Psychology*, 250.

Just as a train cannot exist without the coupling of cars, the end of an action cannot exist if the agent does not have an idea of that end, that is, if he does not have an end-in-view. An end-in-view is no more the end of an action than an individual train car is a train.

So far we have discussed three main components of Dewey's theory of value: the valuation, the end-in-view, and the end of an action. A valuation is a value judgment that is true or false only if the agent realizes his end-in-view. An end-in-view is the object of valuation and is an idea or representation of the end of an action that the agent desires to achieve. The end of an action is the actual consequence of the action represented by the agent's end-in-view, which means it does not exist until the agent completes that action. It is by completing the action represented by the agent's end-in-view that value is either created or not, and their valuation is made either true or false. This brings us finally to the topic of what Dewey thinks values are in themselves.

### 2.3 VALUE IN ITSELF

The term "value in itself" is highly suggestive of ethical non-naturalism in general and Moore in particular. Recall that Moore distinguishes between things that are good and goodness itself, and he held that the latter exists independently of any entity that falls into the category of the former. Dewey rejects this picture in its entirety. Referring to the earlier illustration of the cook preparing a stew, Gouinlock said acquiring salt is the cook's end-in-view and the possession of the salt is the end of the action. The possession of the salt is not the value itself that is created. Gouinlock instead refers to a reunified situation as the moment when the agent's problematic situation is eliminated by the achievement of the end that was represented by his end-in-view. This reunified situation exemplifies what Dewey commonly calls a consummatory

situation which Gouinlock earlier referred to as a “function of experience and nature.”<sup>74</sup> And as Dewey himself writes,

*Being true, beautiful, or good, is recognized as a common character of subject-matters in spite of great differences in their actual constituents. They have, however, no meaning save as they indicate that certain subject-matters are outstanding consummatory completions of certain types of previously indeterminate situations by means of the execution of appropriate operations.*<sup>75</sup>

So Dewey’s term for value in itself is consummatory situation, which refers not to the agent’s realization of his end-in-view, but to a certain effect caused by the realization of that end. The consummatory situation is the situation in which the agent, upon realizing the end that was represented by his end-in-view, has his problematic situation resolved. This puts the roles of esteeming/prizing and estimating/appraising into focus.

As noted earlier, esteeming/prizing is impulsive and non-reflective. In contrast, estimating/appraising is reflective because it is the act of making a valuation. An agent estimates/appraises only when they encounter a problematic situation. Until then, they feel no need to consciously think that what they are doing is good, and so they do not estimate/appraise.

Dewey makes this point with the following example:

Now if anybody will condescend to a concrete experience he will perceive how often a man eats *without* thinking...An onlooker or anyone who reflects is justified in saying that he *acts as if* he judged the material to be food. He is not justified in saying that any judgment or intellectual determination has entered in. He has acted; he has behaved toward something as food: that is only to say that he has put it in his mouth and swallowed it instead of spewing it forth. The object may then be called food. But this does not mean either that it *is* food (namely, digestible and nourishing material) or that the eater judged it to be food and so formed a proposition which is true or false. The proposition would arise only in case he is in some doubt, or if he reflects that in spite of his immediate attitude of aversion the thing is wholesome and his system needs recuperation, etc. Or later,

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<sup>74</sup> Gouinlock, *John Dewey’s Philosophy of Value*, 125.

<sup>75</sup> Dewey, *Logic: The Theory of Inquiry* 177.

if the man is ill, a physician may inquire what he ate, and pronounce that something not food at all, but poison. (original emphasis)<sup>76</sup>

Although we typically know that what we eat is food, we usually eat it without consciously thinking of the fact that it is food. Most of the time, eating is a non-conscious activity. This exemplifies esteeming/prizing. Most of the time we value things without thinking about valuing. Sometimes, however, we do stop and to think about what we are eating, such as when we discover after taking a bite of something that it tastes bad. It is during such moments of discontent when we are interrupted that we look to do what we think will restore the equilibrium that was lost (e.g. by eating something else or taking medicine), and this involves making provisional judgments (what is food and what isn't) so that we can inform ourselves as to what course of action should be taken. We make provisional judgments regarding what is valuable only when something causes us to cease valuing.

It is important to note that the end-in-view is only the end that the agent thinks will resume their state of esteeming/prizing. Whether it actually does resume upon achieving the end is by no means guaranteed. It is entirely possible that, upon achieving the end of their end-in-view, the agent's state of esteeming/prizing will not resume. Dewey writes,

Value may be ascribed or imputed, just as a particular substance may be taken into the system for food. And the ascription or imputation may in both cases consist in a manner of behavior, of treatment, rather than in any reasoned-out process. But since the existence of value depends upon the outcome – the fulfilling or institution of a determinate change of relationship – the thing may not after all *be* a value. (original emphasis)<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> Dewey, *Essays in Experimental Logic*, 355-356.

<sup>77</sup> John Dewey, "Value, Objective Reference and Criticism," *The Philosophical Review* 34, no.4 (1925): 324.

In the instance that the agent's state of esteeming/prizing does not resume, the agent does not value the end of their end-in-view, value is not created, and the agent does not end up accepting the corresponding valuation as true.

Putting it together then, Dewey thinks any given thing is made valuable by acting on the belief that it is valuable. This belief is called a valuation, and it is formed through the process called estimating/appraising. The agent estimates/appraises only when something prevents them from continuing to esteem/prize, that is, when they encounter a problematic situation. In estimating/appraising, the agent forms an idea of an action whose end the agent thinks will restore their state of esteeming/prizing. This idea is called the end-in-view, and it is the subject term of the agent's valuation. The agent then acts upon their end-in-view; they strive to realize the end their end-in-view describes. If, upon realizing that end, the agent's state of esteeming/appraising fails to resume, then a consummatory situation is not created, and the agent's valuation is made into a false value judgment. If their state of esteeming/prizing does, in fact, resume upon achieving the end described by the end-in-view, then a consummatory situation is created, and the agent's valuation is made into a true value judgment.

## 2.4 OBJECTIVE VALUE

Dewey is an objectivist about value. He thinks there is at least one thing in the world that is good regardless of whether it is thought to be good. Raising this point is important because I've said that Dewey claims valuations create values by denoting ends that agents desire to pursue, and this might easily lead to the conclusion that Dewey is a subjectivist who defines the good in terms of what is desired. The following passage reveals that although Dewey thinks desire is essential to value, he is not a subjectivist:

It is true, of course, that it would be foolish to set up anything as the end of desire, or as desirable, which is not actually desired or capable of being desired. But it

would be equally stupid to assume that what *should* be desired can be determined by a mere examination of what men do desire, until a critical examination of the *reasonableness* of things desired has taken place. So there is a distinction between the *enjoyed* and the *enjoyable*. (original emphasis)<sup>78</sup>

What Dewey means here is that it is only by understanding how a situation is problematic that an agent can form the end-in-view most suitable for resolving that situation. The agent's situation reflects features of their surrounding environment and is therefore mind-independent. Thus, because a consummatory situation arises from the resolution of a situation that is constituted by mind-independent features of reality, the consummatory situation itself is mind-independent as well, and this explains why Dewey an objectivist about value. Accordingly, the task of deciding which outcome will serve as one's end-in-view is accomplished by examining one's outward surroundings:

An end, aim, or purpose as a *mental* state is independent of the biological and physical means by which it can be realized. The want, lack, or privation which exists wherever there is desire is then interpreted as a mere state of "mind" instead of as something lacking or absent *in the situation* – something that must be supplied if the empirical situation is to be complete. In its latter sense, the needful or required is that which is *existentially necessary* if an end-in-view is to be brought into actual existence. *What* is needed cannot in this case be told by examination of a state of mind but only by examination of actual conditions. (original emphasis)<sup>79</sup>

So Dewey is not a subjectivist about value because consummatory situations are resolutions of situations that are mind-independent, and this makes consummatory situations mind-independent as well.

Although Dewey thinks values originate from the interactions agents have with a mind-independent reality whenever they pursue ends, this does not answer the question as to what he

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<sup>78</sup> Dewey, *Theory of the Moral Life*, 38.

<sup>79</sup> John Dewey, *The Collected Works of John Dewey, 1882-1953*, 223.

thought were the ends that agents should pursue. What are the values, in other words, that Dewey holds to be objectively good?

In contrast to certain philosophical traditions such as natural law theory, Dewey does not identify what should be valued with what has absolute value, or what is always valuable regardless of context. Indeed, he rejects the idea of absolute value as incoherent. He writes,

The business of reflection in determining the true good cannot be done once for all, as, for instance, making out a table of values arranged in a hierarchical order of higher and lower. It needs to be done, and done over and over and over again, in terms of the conditions of concrete situations as they arise. In short, the need for reflection and insight is perpetually recurring.<sup>80</sup>

A thing's value, in other words, is always contextual to the problematic situation at hand. This point is also expressed in the following passage where Dewey writes,

If the need and deficiencies of a specific situation indicate improvement of health as the end and good, then for that situation health is the ultimate and supreme good. It is no means to something else. It is a final and intrinsic value.<sup>81</sup>

Since Dewey thinks consummatory situations are contextual to problematic situations, the content of an agent's value judgment may change. This point is clarified by comparing valuations to scientific hypotheses. Recall Anderson's earlier comment that value judgments are tested by acting on them and then confirming or discarding them after examining the consequences. Science, of course, cannot be practiced without forming and testing hypotheses. A hypothesis may be accurately described as a *provisional* truth. It is a prediction that the scientist treats it *as if* it were true so that they can decide which experiments to conduct and how to go about conducting them. If even after repeated attempts the results of their experiments do not match their predictions perfectly, in which case their hypothesis would be re-classified as a

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<sup>80</sup> John Dewey and James H. Tufts, *Ethics*. Revised Edition (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1932), 230.

<sup>81</sup> John Dewey, *Reconstruction in Philosophy* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1957), 175.

theory, they are still required to continue treating the judgment as a provisional truth. This is because no matter how firmly established a scientific theory may be, it is always subject to possible revision in the light of newly discovered evidence. For Dewey, valuations work according to the same logic. A valuation is a prediction that becomes a true value judgment only when acting upon the valuation and realizing its end-in-view produces the result that was predicted by the agent who performs the action. And since the agent will always encounter new situations and challenges as they go through life, there will always be opportunities for them to revise those valuations that have become value judgments. Hence Dewey's comment:

In quality, the good is never twice alike. It never copies itself. It is new every morning, fresh every evening. For it marks the resolution of a distinctive complication of competing habits and impulses which can never repeat itself.<sup>82</sup>

This is one way in which Dewey expresses the point that any value judgement the agent makes is eligible for revision. Just as new evidence may falsify a theory and require the scientist to revise judgments they accepted true in the past, new experiences may prove that what was valuable to an agent in the past may no longer be valuable in the present. Thus, any true value judgment an agent accepts as true is only true provisionally. Since valuations are made to resolve problematic situations, and new problematic situations may not be resolved by valuations that were accepted as true in the past, any valuation that was previously transformed into a true value judgment may later become false. There is thus no such thing as a "final end" in the sense of an end that is always good regardless of context and which an agent should always strive to achieve no matter the cost. As Dewey says,

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<sup>82</sup> Dewey, *Human Nature and Conduct: An Introduction to Social Psychology*, 211.

Ends are, in fact, literally endless, forever coming into existence as new activities occasion new consequences. "Endless ends" is a way of saying that there are no ends—that is no fixed self-enclosed finalities.<sup>83</sup>

And also,

In reference to those ends which are the consummatory events in nature, it is likewise true, of course, that they too are at the same time both endings and beginnings. More concretely, whenever an end is achieved, this condition does not mark the completion or termination of all activity. It is, of course, intrinsically valuable; but it is also transitional to further endeavors and consummations.<sup>84</sup>

## 2.5 THE VALUE OF GROWTH

Although Dewey rejects the idea of final ends as goods that warrant the termination of all action, he does hold that there is one end that is final in the sense that all agents should pursue it as an end-in-itself. He repeatedly refers to this end in his writings by the term “growth”, as seen in the passage below, for example,

... the process of growth, of improvement and progress, rather than the static outcome and result, becomes the significant thing. Not health as an end fixed once and for all, but the needed improvement in health – a continual process – is the end and good. The end is no longer a terminus or limit to be reached. It is the active process of transforming the existent situation. Not perfection as a final goal, but ever-enduing process of perfecting, maturing, refining is the aim in living. Honesty, industry, temperance, justice, like health, wealth and learning, are not goods to be possessed as they would be if they expressed fixed ends to be attained. They are directions of change in the quality of experience. Growth itself is the only moral end.<sup>85</sup>

Thus there is room in Dewey’s theory of value for at least one final end: growth. The concept of growth is one of the most important in Dewey’s philosophy. Although he does not explicitly

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<sup>83</sup> Ibid., 232.

<sup>84</sup> Gouinlock, *John Dewey’s Philosophy of Value*, 145.

<sup>85</sup> Dewey, *Reconstruction in Philosophy*, 177.

define the concept of growth, several key features are easily discernable from his writings.

Consider the following passage for instance:

Except as the outcome of arrested development, there is no such thing as a fixed, ready-made, finished self. Every living self causes acts and is itself caused in return by what it does. All voluntary action is a remaking of self, since it creates new desires, instigates to new modes of endeavor, brings to light new conditions which institute new ends. Our personal identity is found in the thread of continuous development which binds together these changes. In the strictest sense, it is impossible for the self to stand still; it is becoming, and becoming for the better or the worse. It is in the *quality* of becoming that virtue resides. We set up this and that end to be reached, but *the* end is growth itself. To make an end a final goal is but to arrest growth. Many a person gets morally discouraged because he has not attained the object upon which he set his resolution, but in fact his moral status is determined by his movement in that direction, not by his possession. (original emphasis).<sup>86</sup>

In any context, the term “growth” signifies a change in something that exists, whether it be trees or fortunes. A helpful analogy is the growth of a tree. A tree becomes bigger and taller when its roots absorb nutrients from the soil and its leaves catch the rain and sunlight required for photosynthesis. Because of its surrounding environment the tree develops into a flourishing specimen. Likewise, the growing agent is the agent who undergoes changes that result from maintaining a certain relationship with their environment. Dewey writes,

Human nature exists and operates in an environment. And it is not “in” that environment as coins are in a box, but as a plant is in the sunlight and soil. It is of them, continuous with their energies, dependent upon their support, capable of increase only as it utilizes them...<sup>87</sup>

So, as with trees, agents are also inextricably intertwined with their surroundings, and this makes growth possible. Unlike trees though, the kind of growth Dewey has in mind for agents is not biological:

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<sup>86</sup> Dewey and Tufts, *Ethics*, 340-341.

<sup>87</sup> Dewey, *Human Nature and Conduct: An Introduction to Social Psychology*, 296.

The growing, enlarging, liberated self, on the other hand, *goes forth to meet new demands and occasions, and readapts and remakes itself in the process*. It welcomes untried situations...Indeed, we may say that the good person is precisely the one who is most conscious of the alternative, and is the most concerned to find openings for the newly forming or growing self; since no matter how “good” he has been, he becomes “bad” (even though acting upon a relatively high plane of attainment) as soon as he fails to respond to the demand for growth. Any other basis for judging the moral status of the self is conventional. In reality, direction of movement, not the plane of attainment and rest, determines moral quality. (my emphasis)<sup>88</sup>

It is implied here that agents grow by responding to their problematic situations. The relevant sense of growth pertains not to biology, but to practical reasoning and morality. Gouinlock also describes the Deweyan concept of growth:

This notion of growth can be given a more concrete sense by consideration of the nature of the self. The self is not a substance; it is a dynamic organization of habits, which are demands for certain kinds of activity. The self, in other words, is a set of functions with the environment. Thus when the self “grows”, it is not like a balloon swelling with air. It is, rather, that the structure of habits – functional cooperations of organism and environment – becomes more extensive and more meaningful and it fulfills more diverse and effectual functions in behavior; and at the same time human energies find fuller and more effective engagement with their surroundings.<sup>89</sup>

The point made by these passages is that an agent grows by striving to overcome problematic situations to re-establish their mode of valuing/prizing. The activities of pursuing and realizing ends-in-view constitute the process by which this is done. The agent grows when they realize an end-in-view, and the realization of ends-in-view is the definition of growth. If, for whatever reason, the agent does not realize the end-in-view they have formed, then they do not undergo growth, and they are not acting in accordance with their nature as a problem solver. As RE Dewey puts it, “Whatever else may be involved in growth, the growing self is an experimenter –

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<sup>88</sup> Dewey and Tufts, *Ethics*, 341-342.

<sup>89</sup> Gouinlock, *John Dewey's Philosophy of Value*, 239.

a person who observes new situations, tries new lines of conduct, and readjusts himself on the basis of what he learns.”<sup>90</sup> Growth occurs only upon the realization of an end-in-view. With that said, does Dewey believe that in order for an agent to grow their realization of an end-in-view must produce a consummatory situation? In other words, if an agent’s situation remains problematic upon realizing an end-in-view, does the agent fail to grow? The answer to this question is no. Dewey believes that growth occurs irrespective of what happens upon the realization of an end-in-view. Even if the situation remains problematic and fails to be consummatory, the agent grows because they have realized an end-in-view. Remember Dewey’s comment that making an end a final goal arrests growth, but movement toward that direction is growth. Although not every realization of an end-in-view will produce a consummatory situation, no consummatory situation can be produced without the realization of an end-in-view. Dewey equates growth with movement – the agent who realizes an end-in-view is “moving in the direction” of a consummatory situation and is thereby growing. In short, upon realizing an end-in-view the agent can experience growth even when their situation fails to become consummatory. This is because, says Dewey, the experience of failing to restore the mode of valuing/prizing upon realizing a particular end-in-view can teach an agent to form different ends-in-view that are more efficient:

Since desire and valuation of objects proposed as ends are inherently connected, and since desire and ends-in-view need to be appraised as means to ends (an appraisal made on the basis of warranted physical generalizations) the valuation of ends-in-view is tested by consequences that actually ensue. It is verified to the degree in which there is agreement upon results. *Failure to agree, in case deviations are carefully observed, is not mere failure but provides the means for improving the formation of later desires and ends-in-view.* (my emphasis)<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> Robert E. Dewey, *The Philosophy of John Dewey: A Critical Exposition of His Method, Metaphysics, and Theory of Knowledge*, 14.

<sup>91</sup> John Dewey, *The Collected Works of John Dewey, 1882-1953*, 238.

And also,

Mistakes are no longer either mere unavoidable accidents to be mourned or moral sins to be expiated and forgiven. They are lessons in wrong methods of using intelligence and instructions as to a better course in the future. They are indications of the need of revision, development, readjustment. Ends grow, standards of judgment are improved.<sup>92</sup>

Thus, the agent grows even when their situation fails to become consummatory because they learn from their mistakes to form alternative ends-in-view. On the flip side, Dewey says growth can fail to occur even if a situation does become consummatory. This happens when the agent refuses to revise a past valuation even though new experiences require that they do so:

Positive attainment, actual enrichment of meaning and powers opens new vistas and sets new tasks, creates new aims and stimulates new efforts. The facts are not such as to yield unthinking optimism and consolation; for they render it impossible to rest upon attained goods. New struggles and failures are inevitable.<sup>93</sup>

In summary, growth occurs irrespective of what happens upon the realization of an end-in-view. If a consummatory situation is produced, growth occurs. If the agent's situation remains problematic, growth still occurs. All that matters for the occurrence of growth is that realization itself occurs, for consummatory situations can be produced only through realizations.

## 2.6 THE PROBLEM OF HAPPINESS

I argue in this section that happiness is not the value of growth. This is contrary to Dewey's view that the agent should value growth as an end in itself because undergoing growth involves experiencing happiness: "If such a person would set his thought and desire upon the

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<sup>92</sup> Dewey, *Reconstruction in Philosophy*, 175.

<sup>93</sup> Dewey, *Human Nature and Conduct: An Introduction to Social Psychology*, 288.

*process* of evolution instead of upon some ulterior goal, he would find a new freedom and happiness (original emphasis).<sup>94</sup>

Before proceeding to my argument, however, we need to examine what Dewey means by happiness. For Dewey, it is the freedom from uncertainty. This happiness is not to be found exclusively in the realization of any particular end-in-view because, as one recalls, Dewey thinks that the continuous encountering of new difficulties and problems means that ends are transient; what an agent accepted as good in the past may be rejected as bad in the future. It would be ludicrous then for an agent to invest their happiness on the attainment of something that may later cease to be meaningful to them. Dewey expresses this point below:

What is agreeable at one time disagrees at another...there is something accidental in the merely agreeable or gratifying. They *happen* to us...Happiness, on the contrary, is a stable condition, because it is dependent not upon what happens to us but upon the standing disposition of the self. One may find happiness in the midst of annoyances; be contented and cheerful in spite of a succession of disagreeable experiences... Happiness is a matter of the disposition we actively bring with us to meet situations, the qualities of mind and heart with which we greet and interpret situations. Even so it is not directly an *end* of desire and effort, in the sense of an end-in-view purposely sought for, but is rather an end-product, a necessary accompaniment... (original emphasis)<sup>95</sup>

Dewey points out here that not only should an agent avoid thinking that happiness is something to be found exclusively in the realization of any particular end-in-view, the agent should avoid treating happiness itself as an end-in-view to pursue. This is because, in addition to being transient, ends-in-view are also uncertain. They are outcomes an agent predicts will happen upon completing an action, and because the agent cannot predict the future with complete certainty, the future is simply outside of the agent's control:

Control of the future is indeed precious in exact proportion to its difficulty, its moderate degree of attainability. Anything that actually tends to make that

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<sup>94</sup> Dewey and Tufts, *Ethics*, 340-341.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, 213-214.

control less than it now is would be a movement backward into sloth and triviality. But there is a difference between future improvement as a result and as a direct aim. To make it an aim is to throw away the surest means of attaining it, namely attention to the full use of present resources in the present situation.<sup>96</sup>

According to this passage, the surest way of attaining happiness is not to treat it as an aim or end-in-view, but to focus one's attention on the present problematic situation. Dewey writes,

The *amount* of control which will come into existence in the future is not within control. But such an amount as turns out to be practicable accrues only in consequence of the best possible management of present means and obstacles. (original emphasis)<sup>97</sup>

The final message is that the agent cannot be happy worrying about what the future may have in store because future events are ultimately out of the agent's control. It would be self-defeating to set growth as an end-in-view because no end-in-view is certain to be realized. To do so would be stunt growth and perpetuate the very anxiety that one seeks to avoid.

All of this points to the fact that, in order to experience happiness, there is a proper way for one to pursue growth as *an end in itself*. Pursuing growth as an end in itself, says Dewey, involves turning away from the future and focusing on the situation at hand: "To *reach* an end we must take our mind off from it and attend to the act which is next to be performed. We must make that the end." (original emphasis)<sup>98</sup> Pursuing growth as an end in itself involves recognizing that one's ends-in-view are means to current action. Remember from Gouinlock's cook illustration that the cook would not have made having salt his end-in-view, indeed would not have bothered to form any end-in-view at all, if his preparation of the stew unfolded smoothly and according to plan. It is only because it didn't that the cook formed an end-in-view on the basis of what he thought would be the course of action most likely to resolve his problem

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<sup>96</sup> Dewey, *Human Nature and Conduct: An Introduction to Social Psychology*, 266.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, 267.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, 34.

and restore his activity. Thus, since an agent makes a valuation only if they are currently facing a problem, it follows that the object of that valuation (the end-in-view) functions as a means for changing a current situation, even though the end-in-view is a projection that relates to an end that does not exist at the time of the problem. This makes an end-in-view a future means to present action. Dewey elaborates:

Forecast of future conditions, scientific study of past and present in order that the forecast may be intelligent, are indeed necessities. Concentration of intellectual concern upon the future, solicitude for scope and precision of estimate characteristic of any well conducted affair, naturally give the impression that their animating purpose is control of the future. But thought about future happenings is the only way we can judge the present; it is the only way to appraise its significance. *Without such projection, there can be no projects, no plans for administering present energies, overcoming present obstacles.* Deliberately to subordinate the present to the future is to subject the comparatively secure to the precarious, exchange resources for liabilities, surrender what is under control to what is, relatively, incapable of control. (my emphasis)<sup>99</sup>

This passage begins with the assertion that ends-in-view are projections of future ends that must be recognized as such in order to fulfill their function as means to present action. But Dewey then goes on to say that in recognizing ends-in-view as projections, the agent often mistakes ends-in-view as ends to which present action is a mere means. In other words, the agent frequently and erroneously switches the roles of ends-in-view and present action: instead of serving as the means, the end-in-view is treated as the end, and instead of serving as the end, present action is treated as the means. Dewey concludes by stating that when this happens, the agent ends up treating their present standpoint exclusively as a means to whatever may happen in the future. Since the agent is unable to predict the future with a degree of certainty that leaves them feeling completely reassured, they instead feel precarious. Pursuing growth as an end-in-

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<sup>99</sup> Ibid., 266-267.

itself and experiencing happiness involves concentrating on the present moment and treating one's ends-in-view as a means to present action. It does not involve treating happiness itself as an end-in-view, for to do so would be to forfeit happiness.

The pursuit of growth as a moral end has been understood here as the task of working toward the resolution of present problems. This understanding of what it means to pursue growth as a moral end is consistent with the point, raised earlier, that an agent will grow as long as they realize their ends-in-view even if their situation fails to become consummatory as a result of doing so. If this point was false and the experience of a consummatory situation was required for the agent to grow, then pursuing growth as a moral end would amount to the agent worrying whether their situation will in fact become consummatory. They would then not gain the sort of happiness supposedly gained by pursuing growth as a moral end, i.e., the happiness of ceasing to worry that they have little control over future events. In short, the fact that growth occurs regardless of the outcome that follows from realizing an end-in-view explains why the pursuit of growth as a moral end should be understood as the process of working toward the resolution of present problems. If growth were to depend on the production of a certain outcome (i.e. a consummatory situation), the agent would then focus on producing that outcome instead of the problematic situation already at hand. They would be led to regard present action as the means to achieving their end-in-view instead of vice-versa, fail to grow, and therefore squander their best chance at securing happiness.

To recap the discussion so far, growth has been defined as the realization of ends-in-view, and it occurs regardless of the outcome that follows from realizing an end-in-view. According to Dewey, happiness, in the sense of ceasing to worry about controlling future events, is acquired by pursuing growth as an end-in-itself, and accounts for why growth should be

pursued as such. What follows is an argument showing that growth, contrary to Dewey's claim, is not objectively good because it produces happiness. It shows that there are, in fact, instances where growth can result in great sorrow.

Suppose Jack is in a loving relationship with his wife, Ada. The happiness he experiences from their relationship leaves no doubt in his mind that the relationship is good, and he is uncompelled to stand back and consciously judge whether it is good or not. Now suppose Ada is suddenly stricken with a fatal disease, and Jack becomes afraid that he might lose her. It is on this occasion that he reflects about what their relationship has meant to him, and he judges that it is worth trying to save. To this end, Jack thinks about how he can help his wife regain her health. He invests a considerable amount of time and financial resources consulting doctors and researching treatment options. Unfortunately, it is to no avail, as Ada eventually succumbs to her illness. Jack feels his life has been irreparably destroyed. He is convinced he will never again experience the level of emotional fulfillment that Ada provided. I believe Dewey would say that Ada's death does not make Jack's life cease to have moral value even though Ada's death marks the failure of Jack's esteeming/prizing to resume. Let us re-examine the scenario using the terms and concepts that have been covered thus far.

Jack was esteeming/prizing his relationship with Ada before she became ill. Esteeming/prizing, as one recalls, is pre-cognitive. To esteem/prize is not to make a valuation. Valuations are made by estimating/appraising in order to consciously form a judgment (a valuation) in the effort to restore one's mode of esteeming/prizing. When Ada became ill Jack began to reflect on their relationship, and became consciously aware of just how closely connected his happiness was to her health, and this made him afraid that he could lose her. Jack thus entered into a problematic situation. His esteeming/prizing ceased and he began

estimating/appraising. He proceeded to act upon this valuation by forming various ends-in-view he thinks will save Ada, and thus their relationship. These ends-in-view include medical consultation and researching different treatment options. Reaching these ends-in-view means that Jack will actually consult doctors and research treatment options. Reaching these ends-in-view successfully means that Ada will recover her health, the relationship will be reestablished, and Jack's mode of esteeming/prizing will resume. However, since Ada died, Jack's mode of esteeming/prizing failed to resume. His situation remained problematic and failed to become consummatory. This points to a problem with Dewey's theory of value.

Since Jack obviously does not experience happiness by realizing his ends-in-view, it would follow that growth cannot be justified as a moral end on the grounds that pursuing it leads the agent to happiness. If growth is a moral end, then it is a moral end for a different reason. The reason is that without growth, the agent would not have the capacity to make valuations, and this capacity is something that the agent values *because* they are an agent. The argument for this claim parallels Immanuel Kant's argument for the intrinsic worth of rational agency in book two of his *Groundwork of the Metaphysic of Morals*. This is the topic of the next chapter.

## 2.7. ENDS-IN-VIEW AND THE CAPACITY FOR GROWTH

There is one more thing I need to discuss before I conclude my exposition of Dewey's theory of value. It is important to note that, according to Dewey, an agent is able to form ends-in-view only if it is possible for that agent to undergo growth.

Dewey says that desires, like ends-in-view, arise only in the context of facing a problematic situation:

When we inquire into the actual emergence of desire and its object and the value-property ascribed to the latter (instead of merely manipulating dialectically the general concept of desire), it is plain as anything can be that desires arise only

when “there is something the matter,” when there is some “trouble” in an existing situation. When analyzed, this “something the matter” is found to spring from the fact that there is something lacking, wanting, in the existing situation as it stands, an absence which produces conflict in the elements that do exist. When things are going completely smoothly, desires do not arise, and there is no occasion to project ends-in-view, for “going smoothly” signifies that there is no need for effort and struggle.<sup>100</sup>

The term “effort” in the last sentence is significant because it indicates how the agent has a desire. According to Dewey, to have a desire is to expend *effort*:

Effort, instead of being something that comes after desire, is seen to be of the very essence of the tension involved in desire. For the latter, instead of being merely personal, is an active relation of the organism to the environment [as is obvious in the case of hunger], a factor that makes the difference between genuine desire and mere wish and fantasy.<sup>101</sup>

So if an agent believes that a certain end will resolve a problem but they do not act to realize the end, then that end is not the object of a desire. The idea they have of the end is not an end-in-view, but a mere wish instead. Although a person may not currently be forming ends-in-view, they still possess the capacity to form ends-in-view. I will return to discuss the capacity to form ends-in-view in chapter five. The expenditure of effort is not the only condition that must be satisfied for the agent to acquire the capacity for forming ends-in-view. As Dewey explains below, the agent’s problematic situation must also be resolvable:

Because valuations in the sense of prizing and caring for occur only when it is necessary to bring something into existence which is lacking, or to conserve in existence something which is menaced by outside conditions, valuation *involves* desiring (original emphasis). The latter is to be distinguished from mere wishing in the sense in which wishes occur in the absence of effort. “If wishes were horses, beggars would ride.” There is something lacking, and it would be gratifying if it were present, but there is either no energy expended to being what

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<sup>100</sup> John Dewey, *The Collected Works of John Dewey, 1882-1953*, 220.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, 205.

is absent into existence or else, *under the given conditions, no expenditure of effort would bring it into existence...*(my emphasis)<sup>102</sup>

If no amount of effort can resolve the agent's problem, then the problem cannot be resolved, and the agent's idea that a certain end might resolve their problem is a wish instead of an end-in-view. Thus, according to Dewey, an agent is able to form ends-in-view only if it is possible for that agent to undergo growth. The importance of this point will become apparent in the next chapter and more so in chapter five.

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<sup>102</sup> Ibid., 204.

CHAPTER THREE:  
NPS THEORY AND THE MORAL VALUE OF PERSONS

### 3.0 PRELIMINARY REMARKS

The previous chapter established the conceptual background required for understanding NPS theory. This chapter marks the beginning of discussing NPS theory itself. There is both a descriptive part and a prescriptive part to the theory. NPS theory is descriptive because it endeavors to construct a personal ontology. That is, it seeks to describe at the metaphysical level what persons are. I focus on this part later in chapter four. Chapter three focuses on the prescriptive part of NPS theory. It is prescriptive because it advances a conception of moral value, explains how persons possess this value, and uncovers the normative implications that follow from their possession of it.

I show that the prescriptive force of NPS theory is derived from a combination of theoretical moves present in Dewey and Kant's theories of value. Much of the discussion in this chapter revolves around the humanity-as-an-end formulation of Kant's categorical imperative. According to NPS theory, the Deweyan concept of growth shares several roles with the Kantian concept of humanity, including accounting for the moral value of persons, justifying duties against killing persons, and enabling persons to engage in practical reasoning. NPS theory recognizes, however, that these concepts are not identical. In contrast to Kant, NPS theory holds that the value of persons is not intrinsic, but extrinsic.

I begin the chapter with an explanation of Kant's formula of humanity, identifying the meanings of the terms "end-in-itself" and "humanity". I will then explain why, according to NPS theory, the value of growth is extrinsic and objective by drawing on Korsgaard's discussion of intrinsic value. Next, I show that the extrinsic and objective value of growth implies that the

value of persons is also extrinsic and objective. Finally, I will show how NPS theory justifies duties against suicide and the killing of others.

### 3.1 KANT AND THE VALUE OF HUMANITY

One of Kant's formulations of the categorical imperative is the formula of humanity (FH), which is stated as follows:

Act in such a way that you treat humanity, whether in your person or in any other person, always at the same time as an end, never merely as a means.<sup>103</sup>

Although FH states that humanity should be treated as an end-in-itself, it is far from obvious as to what this is supposed to mean. What does it mean, for instance, to treat something as an end-in-itself? And what does Kant mean by "humanity"? FH needs to be thoroughly unpacked, and I will begin by first explaining what an end is. I then discuss what an end-in-itself is and what Kant means by the term "humanity."

For Kant, an end is the goal of an action and constitutes the reason why an action is performed:

An end is an object of free choice, the representation of which determines it to an action (by which the object is brought about). Every action, therefore, has its end...<sup>104</sup>

Allen Wood expands on this statement by writing that an end is what prompts an individual agent to act, and that to set an end is at the same time to form a value judgment:

In the broadest sense, however, an end is anything *for the sake of which* we act (or refrain from acting). Or, what I think amounts to the same thing, an end is that whose value provides an (at least relative) terminus in a chain of reasons for an action. This fits the usual case of an object or end to be affected, since when we build a house, our building activities are done for the sake of bringing the house

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<sup>103</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*, ed. Thomas E. Hill, and Arnulf Zweig (New York; Oxford; Oxford University Press, 2002), 230.

<sup>104</sup> Kant, *The Metaphysics of Morals*, 102.

into being, and the house's value to us is the reason why we build. (original emphasis)<sup>105</sup>

So the end an agent sets for themselves accounts for their choice to act, and the value of the action is derived from the value they place on the end. I choose to build a house because the end of building a house is valuable to me. Wood's illustration is an example of a *conditionally* valuable end. That is, it is an example of an end the agent sets for themselves to achieve only if they want to achieve it. If the agent does not want to achieve it, then they do not set it up as an end to be achieved, and they do not strive to achieve it. If I do not want to build a house, then I do not set for myself the end of building one, and I do not engage in the activity of house building. Conditionally valuable ends are contrasted with ends that are unconditionally valuable. According to Korsgaard, an unconditionally good thing is a thing that is always good. She calls this sort of thing an "end-in-itself":

A thing is unconditionally good if it is good under any and all conditions, it is good no matter what the context. In order to be unconditionally good, a thing must obviously carry its own value with it – have goodness in itself (be an end in itself).<sup>106</sup>

So an unconditionally good thing, an end-in-itself, is a thing that is always good under all circumstances. Being an end-in-itself means more than just this, however. In addition to being unconditionally good, an end-in-itself is an end that confers value on all other ends. Korsgaard notes, "...something that is unconditionally good and so can serve as a sufficient condition of their goodness."<sup>107</sup> David Cummiskey also explains this idea, writing that an end-in-itself is the , "unconditioned condition" of all value:

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<sup>105</sup> Allen Wood, *Kant's Ethical Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 116.

<sup>106</sup> Korsgaard, "Two Distinctions in Goodness," 84.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, 86.

An end-*in-itself* is an end whose value is not conditioned by anything else; it is a self-sufficient end that provides the unconditioned condition of the value of all other ends. (original emphasis)<sup>108</sup>

An end-in-itself, in other words, is an end that is always good and confers its goodness to all other good ends as well. Korsgaard refers to unconditional value and conditional value as intrinsic value and extrinsic value, respectively, and she says that a conditionally valuable end is an end that is good only sometimes:

If unconditional value is intrinsic value, conditional value is extrinsic value. Now a thing is conditionally valuable if it is good only when certain conditions are met; if it is good sometimes and not others.<sup>109</sup>

Recall from chapter one that Korsgaard uses the term intrinsic to refer to the way in which something possesses its value, and intrinsic value is value that is non-relational. If a thing is intrinsically valuable, then it possesses its value by virtue of the thing's intrinsic, or non-relational properties.

The question arises as to what the unconditional good, or end-in-itself, is that confers value on all other ends. Following Kant, Korsgaard says it is humanity, as I will now discuss. "Humanity", as Kant uses the term, does not refer to the species *Homo sapiens*. By "humanity", Kant means the capacity an agent has to set ends for themselves to achieve. If I can set ends for myself to achieve, then I possess humanity. It is evident in Kant's writings that this is what he means by "humanity". He writes, for instance, that "The capacity to set oneself an end – any end whatsoever – is what characterizes humanity."<sup>110</sup> and also:

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<sup>108</sup> David Cummiskey, *Kantian Consequentialism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 65.

<sup>109</sup> Korsgaard, "Two Distinctions in Goodness," 84.

<sup>110</sup> Immanuel Kant, *The Metaphysics of Morals*, ed. Mary J. Gregor (Cambridge; New York; Cambridge University Press, 1996), 154.

A human being has a duty to raise himself from the crude state of his nature, from his animality (*quoad actum*), more and more toward humanity, by which he alone is capable of setting himself ends. (original emphasis)<sup>111</sup>

Humanity, according to Kant, is something that human beings can possess. It refers to a being's capacity to set ends for itself to achieve. But does Kant think all human beings possess this capacity? The answer is no. Kant holds that it is possessed only by beings that are rational. Thomas E. Hill writes that humanity, in the Kantian sense, is interchangeable with "rational nature":

Kant says both that *persons* are end in themselves and that *humanity in persons* is an end in itself. What he calls humanity is 'rational nature', or perhaps the rational nature of human beings. (original emphasis)<sup>112</sup>

Expanding on an earlier quote from Korsgaard, we see that she confirms the idea that humanity, or the ability to set ends, is equivalent to rationality:

In order for there to be any objectively good ends, however, there must be something that is unconditionally good and so can serve as a sufficient condition of their goodness. Kant considers what this might be: it cannot be an object of inclination, for those have only a conditional worth... It cannot be the inclinations themselves because a rational being would rather be free from them. Nor can it be external things, which serve only as means. *So, Kant asserts, the unconditionally valuable thing must be "humanity" or "rational nature," which he defines as the capacity to set an end.* (my emphasis)<sup>113</sup>

So "humanity" is Kant's term for an agent's capacity to create ends, and this capacity is limited to rational beings, whom he refers to as "persons":

Beings whose existence depends not on our will but on nature still have only a relative value as means and are therefore called *things*, if they lack reason. Rational beings, on the other hand, are called *persons* because, their nature already marks them out as ends in themselves – that is, as something which ought not to be used *merely* as a means – and consequently imposes restrictions on all choice making (and is an object of respect). Persons, therefore, are not merely subjective ends whose existence as an effect of our actions has a value *for us*.

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<sup>111</sup> Ibid., 151.

<sup>112</sup> Kant, *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*, 77.

<sup>113</sup> Korsgaard "Two Distinctions in Goodness", 86.

They are *objective ends* – that is, things whose existence is in itself an end, and indeed an end such that no other end can be substituted for it, no end to which they should serve merely as a means. (original emphasis)<sup>114</sup>

Kant here says that because persons possess the rational capacity to set ends for themselves, persons are therefore objectively valuable. This points to Kant's conclusion that all persons are valuable as ends-in-themselves: because humanity is valuable as an end-in-itself, and a person is defined as a being that possesses humanity, it follows that all persons are valuable as ends-in-themselves and should therefore be treated as such. As Kant puts it:

If, then, there is supposed to be a supreme practical principle, and in regard to the human will a categorical imperative, then it must be such from the representation of that which, being necessarily an end for everyone, because it is an *end in itself*, constitutes an *objective* principle of the will, hence can serve as a universal practical law. The ground of this principle is: *Rational nature exists as end in itself*. The human being necessarily represents his own existence in this way thus to that extent it is a *subjective* principle of human actions. *But every other rational being also represents his existence in this way as consequent on the same rational ground as is valid for me;*(my emphasis) thus it is at the same time an *objective* principle, from which, as a supreme practical ground, all laws of the will must be able to be derived. The practical imperative will thus be the following: *Act so that you use humanity as much in your own person as in the person of every other, always at the same time as end and never merely as means.* (original emphasis)<sup>115</sup>

Kant, in other words, holds that persons are intrinsically valuable because humanity is intrinsically valuable, and a person is defined as a being that possesses humanity. But why does Kant think humanity is intrinsically valuable? The intrinsic value of humanity is tied to its role in practical agency, that is, to the agent's ability to reason about how to achieve the ends they have set for themselves to achieve. As Andrews Reath writes,

An end in itself is a necessary end that limits all subjective or relative ends. But an end can be necessary only if it is internally related to practical reasoning – if it is an end that one has or values simply in so far as one engages in practical

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<sup>114</sup> Kant, *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*, 229.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, 229-230.

reasoning. The obvious candidate for such an end is rational nature: in so far as one engages in practical reasoning, one in some way values that capacity...<sup>116</sup>

The idea here is that since humanity is the capacity to set ends, one cannot set an end without presupposing that capacity as good. Put another way, since the possession of humanity is a necessary condition for valuing any given end, it follows that a person must value humanity as an end-in-itself in order for them to value anything at all. Humanity is thus the one end that is valuable to every person, and this is why Kant says that humanity is intrinsically valuable, or valuable as an end-in-itself. This in turn implies duties to treat all persons as ends-in-themselves.

As Reath puts it,

On one standard reading, it amounts to the claim that a commitment to valuing persons as rational agents is built into the nature of practical reasoning. In so far as one responds to reasons and to what one takes to be of value or sets ends for oneself, one values one's rational capacities, which are capacities essential to one's person. Moreover, one values these capacities on general grounds that commit one to valuing them wherever they are found. That is to say that one is committed to valuing persons as rational agents.<sup>117</sup>

To summarize, Kant holds that humanity is the capacity to form ends and that humanity is unconditionally valuable. Further, every agent must value humanity as an end-in-itself in order to value anything else or to set any end at all. For Kant, this implies that it is wrong to kill any agent, including yourself. Suicide is one instance. In the following passage, Kant sees suicide to be morally impermissible because he understands the act as something that involves treating oneself as a mere means:

First, as regards the concept of necessary duty to oneself, the man how contemplates suicide will ask himself whether his action could be compatible with the idea of humanity as an end in itself. If he damages himself in order to escape from a painful situation, he is making use of a person merely as a means to

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<sup>116</sup> Andrews Reath, "Kant's Moral Philosophy," in *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Ethics*, ed. Roger Crisp (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 451.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*

maintain a tolerable state of affairs till the end of his life. But a human being is not a thing – not something to be used merely as a means: he must always in all his actions be regarded as an end in himself. Hence I cannot dispose of a human being in my own person, by maiming, corrupting, or killing him. (original emphasis)<sup>118</sup>

The impermissibility of suicide, for Kant, is grounded in the possession of humanity. Humanity is intrinsically valuable since every person who sets ends for himself must value humanity, which is the capacity to set any end whatsoever. Suicide is impermissible because achieving your own death as an end you set for yourself means you aimed at destroying something you also valued as an end in itself: your own humanity. Kant says this is wrong because endeavoring to destroy oneself is endeavoring to destroy morality as far as one is able, and morality is itself intrinsically valuable:

To annihilate the subject of morality in one's own person is to root out the existence of morality itself from the world, as far as one can, even though morality is an end in itself. Consequently, disposing of oneself as a mere means to some discretionary end is debasing humanity in one's person (*homo noumenon*), to which man (*homo phaenomenon*) was nevertheless entrusted for preservation. (original emphasis)<sup>119</sup>

The next section is a discussion of NPS theory that will show that suicide is prohibited for similar reasons.

### 3.2. NPS THEORY – VALUING GROWTH AS AN END-IN-ITSELF

The role of growth in NPS theory is similar to that of humanity plays in Kant's theory of value. I noted earlier that Kant holds that humanity functions to enable agents to engage in practical reasoning by serving as their capacity to form ends. The same function is assigned to growth in NPS theory. In section 2.7, I showed how Dewey holds that the idea an agent has of

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<sup>118</sup> Ibid., 230.

<sup>119</sup> Kant, *The Metaphysics of Morals*, 177.

an end is an end-in-view only if the agent's problematic situation is resolvable. If it is not resolvable, then it is not possible for the agent to undergo growth, and the agent cannot form ends-in-view. The function of growth then is to enable agents to engage in practical reasoning by affording them the ability to develop ends-in-view.

The ability to engage in practical reasoning does not represent the only conceptual similarity between humanity and growth. Previously I discussed that for Kant, all agents are committed to valuing humanity as an end-in-itself, and that this serves as a foundation for justifying the formula of humanity. The goal of this section is to reveal a similar dynamic behind the Deweyan concept of growth. Subsequent sections will show how this provides the foundation for justifying duties against inhibiting the growth of any agent that possesses the capacity to form ends-in-view.

Not every end-in-view an agent forms represents an end that they value as an end-in-itself. Some of the ends represented by their ends-in-view are ones that they value only instrumentally. That is, they are valued only as a means to an end. Recall from chapter two Gouinlock's example of the cook preparing the stew. Even though adding salt to the stew was an end represented by the cook's end-in-view, the cook did not value that end as an end in itself. Rather, he only instrumentally valued adding the salt because it was represented by an end-in-view formed only in response to a specific problematic situation, which was that the stew needed to be improved. If the stew was fine the way it was, then adding salt would not have been an end represented by the cook's end-in-view. Because the cook formed the end-in-view of adding the salt *only* because the stew just happened to require salt, we can say then that the end of adding salt to the stew is not an end that he would *always* value. More generally, we can say that if an agent only instrumentally values an end, then it is not an end that they always value. This points

to why an agent values their own growth as an end-in-itself. As long as an agent forms ends-in-view, growth is an end that they *always* value, rather than an end that is valued as a specific end-in-view in response to a specific situation. Put differently, the agent values their own growth as an end-in-itself because they value growth whenever they form any end-in-view whatsoever.

This requires explanation.

Recall from earlier in this section that to form an end-in-view is to be motivated to act upon it, and that any end represented by an end-in-view is one an agent thinks they ought to realize. In forming the end-in-view of adding salt to the stew, the cook thinks he ought to add salt, and he undergoes growth in doing so because adding salt means realizing his end-in-view. Thus, the cook values his own growth by thinking that he ought to add salt to the stew. Now, even though the cook values his growth if he thinks he ought to add salt, it is *not* the case that he values his own growth *only if* he thinks he ought to add salt to the stew. That is, valuing his growth is not contingent on thinking he ought to add salt to the stew, such that if he had not formed that end-in-view he would not have valued his own growth. Because an agent undergoes growth whenever they realize *any* end of an end-in-view he has formed and because an agent thinks they ought to realize the end of any end-in-view he forms, it follows that the agent values their own growth whenever they form *any* end-in-view. In other words, the agent cannot form an end-in-view without thinking that their own growth is valuable, thus making growth an end that the agent *always* values. This is why it is not the case that cook values his own growth *only if* he thinks he ought to add salt to the stew. He would still value his own growth because he would have formed a different end-in-view.

How does the fact that an agent values their own growth whenever they form an end-in-view imply that they value own growth as an end in itself, rather than only instrumentally?

Because the agent's own growth is an end that the agent *always* values, this indicates that the agent values his own growth not only instrumentally, but also as an end in itself. Thus, every agent is committed to valuing growth as an end-in-itself by forming ends-in-view because no agent can form any end-in-view without growth.

### 3.3. NPS THEORY – VALUING AGENTS AS ENDS-IN-THEMSELVES

So far I have shown that every agent is, through the formation and pursuit of ends-in-view, committed to valuing as an end-in-itself. This section examines how this implies that every agent must value himself as an end-in-itself.

Recall from the discussion in chapter two that Dewey rejects the strict separation between ends and means because he holds that the ends of action are *not* formed apart from the means of action. Dewey implies that ends and means are inseparable:

It is self-contradictory to suppose that when a fulfillment possesses immediate value, its means of attainment do not. The person to whom the cessation of a tooth-ache has value, by that very fact finds value in going to a dentist, or in whatever else is a means of fulfillment. For fulfillment is as relative to means as means are to realization. Means-consequences constitute a single undivided situation.<sup>120</sup>

For Dewey, then, the means by which an agent realizes their end is also part of the end. Dewey comments on what this implies about the value agents place on means that are essential to the realization of certain ends. According to Dewey, if a certain means is indispensable to the realization of an end, and the agent values that end as an end in itself, then the agent also values the means as an end in itself:

...contributory values, or utilities, may also exist as final, or immediate values. What is referred to here is not the stock cases of the miser and his gold. That is the case where a means finally usurps the place of an end. What is meant is a case in which means are more than *mere* means, where they are *indispensable*

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<sup>120</sup> Dewey, *Human Nature and Conduct: An Introduction to Social Psychology*, 322.

means. In such cases, any fixed distinction between means and end breaks down. The two fuse. The means is *such* a means that it is ‘liked’ for its own sake, as an integral part of the total end... (original emphasis)<sup>121</sup>

Since growth is defined as the realization of ends-in-view, it follows that an agent cannot grow if they do not possess the capacity to form ends-in-view; this makes the agent’s capacity to form ends-in-view an indispensable means to undergo growth. Because an agent values growth as an end in itself, it follows that the agent values their capacity to form ends-in-view as an end in itself. One’s capacity to form ends-in-view serves as an indispensable means to undergo growth, and this is why the agent values their capacity to form ends-in-view as an end when they value their own growth. And since it is impossible to possess the capacity to form ends-in-view if one is not alive, one’s state of being alive serves as an indispensable means for possessing the capacity to form ends-in-view. Hence, due to the fact that the agent values their capacity to form ends-in-view as an end in itself, it follows that the agent values their state of being alive as an end in itself.

Here is the picture of NPS theory so far. Growth enables agents to engage in practical reasoning by giving them the capacity to form ends-in-view. Because every agent must value their own growth in order to make any end-in-view, it follows that every agent must value their own growth as an end-in-itself. Finally, because an agent’s capacity to form ends-in-view, and therefore the agent’s own state of being alive, is indispensable for the agent to undergo growth, it follows that every agent, in valuing their own growth as an end-in-itself, is also committed to valuing themselves as an end-in-itself.

What remains to be shown is why the value of each agent’s growth is objective. That is, it needs to be shown as to why each agent, in forming ends-in-view, is not only committed to

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<sup>121</sup> John Dewey, “Valuation and Experimental Knowledge,” *The Philosophical Review* 31, no.4 (1922): 325-351, 328.

valuing their own growth as an end-in-itself, but is also committed to valuing every other agent's growth as an end-in-itself. This is the goal of the next section, where I continue the comparison between the conception of value advanced by Kant, with that advanced by NPS theory, and I explain why NPS theory considers the value of growth to be extrinsic as well as objective.

### 3.4. NPS THEORY – THE EXTRINSIC YET OBJECTIVE VALUE OF GROWTH AND OF AGENTS

Even though growth and humanity share the same conceptual role of accounting for how agents can engage in practical reasoning, they are not valuable in the same respect. For Kant, the value of humanity is intrinsic because its goodness is unconditional. Korsgaard supports Kant's reasoning and writes,

The early passages of the *Foundations* emphasize the independence of the value of the good will from all surrounding circumstances as well as from its results. It is good in the world or even beyond it...(original emphasis)<sup>122</sup>

So Kant's reason that humanity is intrinsically valuable is that its value is unconditional. This means that it is good apart from the world, apart from all existing circumstances. According to NPS theory, however, the value of growth is extrinsic.

Growth is extrinsically valuable because, according to Dewey, human beings are *part* of the world, and they cannot be understood without grasping the relations that obtain between them and their surrounding environments. Recall Dewey's plant and soil illustration from chapter two where he likened human nature to a plant in an environment that enables it to grow into a flourishing organism. Likewise, although he uses the term "growth" as a description of something that happens to subjects, Dewey thinks growth is a process in which *both* subjects and their environments play active roles. A subject is said to grow when its relationship with the

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<sup>122</sup> Korsgaard, "Two Distinctions in Goodness", 84.

environment undergoes a change that enables the subject to set and achieve ends more efficiently. Growth, in other words, is a process whereby factors in the subject's environment allow the subject to more completely fulfill its nature as a practical subject. As James Gouinlock writes that "the self is not a substance"<sup>123</sup> but "a set of functions with the environment".<sup>124</sup> He goes on to say that when the self undergoes growth it "becomes more extensive and more meaningful and it fulfills more diverse and effectual functions in behavior; and at the same time human energies find fuller and more effective engagement with their surroundings".<sup>125</sup> So, whether the agent's problematic situation will, in fact, be resolved upon the moment when they undergo growth depends on the world, that is, on external states of affairs. This means the value of growth is conditional, and therefore extrinsic.

In addition to being extrinsic, the value of growth is objective. Each agent's growth is objectively valuable because there are no fundamental differences between one agent's capacity to form ends-in-view and another's. Every agent's capacity to form ends-in-view is equal in moral worth to every other agent's capacity to form ends-in-view, and there is thus no basis on which an agent can hold their capacity to form ends-in-view to be of greater moral worth than another agent's capacity. It is wrong to judge that one person's capacity to form ends-in-view is of greater moral worth than another. This justifies the wrongness of killing: Since my killing a person entails destroying their capacity to form ends-in-view, and since I do not desire to destroy things that I hold to be valuable, making it my end-in-view to kill someone entails that I am judging that my capacity to form ends-in-view is more valuable than the capacity of the person I have made it my end-in-view to kill. This judgement does not require me to have an occurrent

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<sup>123</sup> Gouinlock, *John Dewey's Philosophy of Value*, 239.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid.

belief that my capacity to form ends-in-view is more valuable. The mere fact that I have made it my end-in-view to kill someone is sufficient proof that I have made the judgment. As Dewey writes,

In empirical fact, the measure of the value a person attaches to a given end is not what he *says* about its preciousness but the care he devotes to obtaining and using the *means* without which it cannot be attained. (original emphasis)<sup>126</sup>

So because I must use my own capacity to form ends-in-view as the means by which I accomplish my end of destroying another person's capacity, my judgment that my capacity is more valuable than the capacity of the person I have resolved to kill does not need to be an occurrent belief. If I have made it my end-in-view to kill someone, then I have thereby also judged that my capacity to form ends-in-view is more valuable than theirs.

Now I am justified in judging my capacity to be more valuable only if my capacity is in fact more valuable. For my capacity to be more valuable, there must be something about it that makes it different from the capacity that belongs to the person whose death I have made it my end to accomplish, aside from the fact that are capacities are numerically distinct. But there is no such difference to be had. This is because the capacity to form ends-in-view is defined as just that – the capacity to form ends-in-view – and this is something that I and my intended victim, call him Bob, both possess. Now it might be thought that there is a difference between our capacities, and that this difference is found by comparing the ends we each have realized. Suppose the ends I have realized have led me to become a billionaire philanthropist, and suppose the ends that Bob has realized have led him to become a drunken vagrant. Does this make my capacity to form ends-in-view more valuable than Bob's? The answer is no. This is because although the ends I have realized have made me more praiseworthy than Bob, my *capacity* to

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<sup>126</sup> John Dewey, *The Collected Works of John Dewey, 1882-1953*, 215.

form ends-in-view is not more valuable because it is not contingent on my having realized them. The fact is that I would still possess the capacity to form ends-in-view even if I did not realize the ends that led to becoming a billionaire philanthropist. Likewise, Bob would still possess the capacity to form ends-in-view even if he did not realize the ends that led to becoming a drunken vagrant. The realization of my ends-in-view led me to become a more praiseworthy person, but it was not necessary for me to form them in order to possess my capacity. This implies that one's capacity to form ends-in-view cannot be evaluated on the basis of the ends one has already realized.

This means that one's moral status is not contingent on the specific ends-in-view one has already formed, but on one's capacity to form ends-in-view. And since there is no fundamental difference in this regard between the capacities of different agents, there is no basis on which one agent is justified in believing that his or her capacity is of greater worth than that of another agent. Each and every agent's growth is objective because no agent is justified in prioritizing their growth over that of another agent's, and every agent is committed to valuing their own growth as an end-in-itself.

### 3.5 END DUTIES AND THE PRINCIPLE OF GROWTH

I have shown that persons are objectively valuable according to NPS theory. The value of persons is objective because no person can form ends-in-view without valuing themselves as an end in themselves. The objective value of persons justifies obligations toward them that I call end-duties. An end duty is a duty to treat persons as ends-in-themselves, which entails not inhibiting their growth. Recall Kant's formula of humanity, which states that all persons possess humanity and should therefore be treated as ends-in-themselves:

Act so that you use humanity as much in your own person as in the person of every other, always at the same time as end and never merely as means.<sup>127</sup>

For Kant, the formula of humanity is one formulation of the categorical imperative, which he used to justify the duty to respect persons as ends-in-themselves. According to NPS theory, end duties are justified by what I call the principle of growth, which I define as follows: act so as to not inhibit the growth of any agent, including yourself. The principle of growth is a categorical imperative that is justified by the objective value of each agent's growth, which I discussed this in the previous section.

To inhibit x is to do something that prevents x from occurring. That much is relatively certain. The task now is to understand what this means in the context of Deweyan growth. What does it mean to inhibit an agent's growth? Recall from chapter two that growth is defined as the realization of ends-in-view. An agent undergoes growth by realizing an end-in-view they developed in response to having encountered a problematic situation. Also recall from chapter two that the realization of an end in view is either successful or unsuccessful depending on whether the realization eliminates the problem that motivated the agent to develop that end in view in the first place. It is not necessarily the case, then, that one inhibits the growth of another agent by doing something that makes the agent's realization of an end-in-view unsuccessful.

Suppose, for instance, that you and I are competing for a job position. I have formed an end-in-view, which is to submit a job application and resume, in response to a problematic situation, which is being unemployed. However, you get the job instead. It is true that your decision to apply for the position prevented me from being hired, but it is not the case that your decision prevented me from undergoing growth; I still sent in the application, and sending in the application was the end-in-view I originally developed and sought to realize. Thus, while you

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<sup>127</sup> Kant, *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*, 229-230.

prevented me from successfully realizing an end-in-view, you did not inhibit my growth. Dewey says this is because the experience of failing to resume their activity upon realizing a particular end-in-view can teach an agent to form different ends-in-view that are more efficient. This is why Dewey says “Mistakes are no longer either mere unavoidable accidents to be mourned or moral sins to be expiated and forgiven... Ends grow, standards of judgment are improved.”<sup>128</sup> The possibility of learning from one’s failure to develop better ends in view in the future ensures that growth takes place even when one fails to realize an end in view successfully.

That the unsuccessful realization of an end-in-view results in growth presupposes that the agent may continue to form ends-in-view in the future. This points to what it means according to the principle of growth for one agent to inhibit the growth of another agent. To inhibit an agent’s growth is to do something that results in the elimination of the possibility for that agent to subsequently form ends-in-view. The inhibition of growth can occur in one of two ways. The first way to inhibit an agent’s growth is to kill the that agent. The second way is to do something, such as inflicting grievous injury, that causes the agent to experience a problematic situation that is irresolvable. Facing an irresolvable problematic situation results in the loss of the capacity to form ends-in-view because, as one recalls from section 2.7, it is only when an agent is faced with a problematic situation that can be resolved that any idea the agent has of an idea of an end counts as an end-in-view. This explains why you did not inhibit my growth by getting the job that I wanted. Even though you contributed to my unsuccessful realization of my end-in-view, this does not mean that my problematic situation cannot ever be resolved. Your contribution to my failure does not mean that you have violated your end duty to not inhibit my growth. The principle of growth remains upheld.

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<sup>128</sup> Dewey, *Reconstruction in Philosophy*, 175.

That every agent with the capacity to form ends-in-view is obligated under an end duty to not inhibit any agent's growth also means that every agent is obligated under an end duty to not inhibit their own growth as well. Let us return to the Jack and Ada scenario introduced in section 2.6 to illustrate this point.

Suppose that Ada's death leaves Jack feeling like he will never again find that sense of happiness and fulfillment he had with Ada. He plunges into despair and resolves to end his own life because to cease existing is to cease experiencing pain. Jack thus thinks that suicide is the solution to his problem. Because Ada has died, Jack continues to experience the same problem that he initially encountered when Ada became ill: lack of emotional intimacy. Although Ada's death makes it impossible for Jack to have a relationship with her, it does not make it impossible for him to have a relationship with someone else and rediscover his happiness in a new source of intimacy. This is not at all unreasonable to imagine, and it is not uncommon for people whose spouses have died to remarry and experience love once again. Because Jack could follow suit, his problem is not unresolvable. Remembering that an end-in-view is an idea an agent forms only if the agent's problem is resolvable, it is clear that Jack's problem is resolvable despite Ada's death. This, in addition to the fact that he saw killing himself as a solution to his current misery, means that he formed the idea of killing himself as an end-in-view. I noted earlier that because no person can set an end for himself to achieve without believing that it should be realized, and because the person is necessarily instrumental to the achievement of that end, it follows that no agent can form an end-in-view without also valuing themselves as an end-in-itself. This points to why it is impermissible for Jack to kill himself. According to NPS theory, it is impermissible for Jack to commit suicide because he values himself as an end in itself, and he is bound by an end duty to not kill himself. It should be noted, however, that this is the case

only if the person's idea that a certain end will resolve their problematic situation is an end-in-view, in which case the agent's problematic situation must be resolvable. Accordingly, if a problematic situation is unresolvable, then a person's idea of their own destruction would not qualify as an end-in-view, and they would not be bound by an end duty against killing themselves. I discuss these kinds of occurrences in chapter five.

Before I conclude this chapter, I wish to briefly discuss one advantage that the principle of growth presents over Kant's categorical imperative. The categorical imperative is notorious for being inflexible in its application. According to Kant, it is never permissible to commit any action which results in treating a person merely instrumentally. This means one should never, among other things, lie to or steal from someone else. The categorical imperative also entails that it is impermissible to kill or even harm any person under any circumstance, including situations that call for self-defense. Like the categorical imperative, the principle of growth forbids killing because to kill a person is to eliminate the possibility for that person to form ends-in-view. This means that actions taken in self-defense are permissible under NPS theory if and only if they do not kill assailants or permanently deprive them of the capacity to form ends-in-view. NPS theory thus advocates pacifism as a matter of principle. It follows from NPS theory that it is impermissible to kill a person under any circumstance whatsoever. Although pacifism constitutes a minority view, it is not without precedent. Kant's categorical imperative, for instance, promotes it. The advantage of NPS theory over Kant's categorical imperative, however, is that NPS theory renders it permissible to harm others in self-defense.

### 3.6 RECAP

Having examined the theories of value espoused by Dewey and Kant, I have shown in this chapter how NPS theory holds that persons are objectively valuable and that each and every person is morally obligated to avoid inhibiting the growth of others. I have discussed that a person's state of being alive is an indispensable means to that person's growth. Because growth is valued as an end in itself, it follows that a person's state of being alive is also valued as an end in itself. The objective value of growth, in other words, is what justifies the objective value of persons. The objective value of growth also justifies each person's moral obligation to avoid killing another person. This means each person has a duty to not kill any agent or cause any agent to experience an irresolvable problematic situation. Although I've argued the value of persons, I haven't made any claims as to what persons are ontologically. That is the crux of NPS theory and the topic of chapter four.

## CHAPTER FOUR:

### PERSONS AS TEMPORALLY EXTENDED SERIES OF EVENTS

#### 4.0 THE ONTOLOGY OF NORMATIVE PRAGMATIC SELFHOOD

The claim that persons are intrinsically valuable cannot be argued for without presupposing an account as to what persons are. The purpose of this chapter is to more closely examine the theory of normative pragmatic selfhood (NPS theory) which holds that a person is a temporally extended series of events. It is worth noting that NPS theory is a theory of personal ontology, not personal identity. The topic of personal identity is concerned primarily with the question of what makes a person the same person over time, in other words, *who* a person is. The questions surrounding personal ontology, in contrast, are more metaphysical in orientation and are concerned primarily with the topic of *what* a person is, metaphysically. I am not concerned in my dissertation with developing a theory of personal identity. However, since personal identity is a topic that inspires discussion about personal ontology, I open this chapter with an exploration of two popular theories of personal identity, the psychological theory and the narrative theory. I show that both theories are committed to an ontological framework that ensures their inability to justify the intrinsic value of persons and which underscores the need for an alternative theory of personal ontology that justifies the intrinsic value of persons. The chapter concludes by showing how NPS theory satisfies this demand.

#### 4.1 PSYCHOLOGICAL THEORY OF PERSONAL IDENTITY

The psychological theory originated with the seventeenth-century philosopher John Locke, who is widely credited for giving personal identity its due as a philosophical topic. In Book II, chapter 27 of his *An Essay on Human Understanding*, Locke defines a person as “a thinking intelligent Being, that has reason and reflection, and can consider itself as itself, the

same thinking thing in different times and places; which it does only by that consciousness, which is inseparable from thinking, and as it seems to me essential to it.”<sup>129</sup> Locke states that the question of a person’s identity is not primarily a question about whether that person is a particular kind of substance. It is instead a question about how persons can remain identical to themselves over periods of time. What justifies the claim, for instance, that I was once a five-year-old boy even though I am now a thirty-year-old man? Locke held that a person remains identical to themselves over a period of time by virtue of their memories. As Locke puts it,

For, since consciousness always accompanies thinking, and it is that which makes everyone to be what he calls self, and thereby distinguishes himself from all other thinking things: in this alone consists personal identity, i.e., the sameness of a rational being; and as far as this consciousness can be extended backwards to any past action or thought, so far reaches the identity of that person.<sup>130</sup>

So Locke would say that I was the same person as a five-year-old boy if and only if I remember an experience that that five-year-old had. A formal description of Locke’s theory of personal identity is as follows: a person at  $t^1$  is the same person at  $t^2$  if and only if the person at  $t^2$  is capable of recalling an episodic experience they had at  $t^1$ . Accordingly, if the person at  $t^2$  is incapable of remembering any experience they had at  $t^1$ , then the person at  $t^2$  is numerically distinct from the person at  $t^1$ .

Philosophers have pointed out a number of problems with the memory theory, as Locke’s theory has since become known. First, the memory theory fails to respect the fact that identity relations are transitive (i.e.  $a=b$ ,  $b=c$ , then  $a=c$ ). This is problematic because it implies the contradiction that a person is both identical and not identical to himself. This problem was first noted by the eighteenth century Scottish philosopher Thomas Reid, who famously illustrated it

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<sup>129</sup> John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, ed. P. H. Nidditch (Oxford: Clarendon Press. 335.

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*, 335.

with the brave officer case. Suppose a ten-year-old boy steals an apple from a neighbor's orchard. The boy grows up and forty years later is a brave cavalry officer who remembers stealing the apple when he was a boy. Later, as a seventy-year-old general, he remembers his experiences as an officer but no longer remembers stealing the apple when he was ten. Because identity relations are transitive, it follows on Locke's account that the general is both identical to the boy (because the general remembers himself as an officer, who in turn remembered himself stealing the apple) and is not identical to the boy (because the general has no direct memory of stealing the apple). This is a contradiction. As Reid presents the scenario,

Suppose a brave officer to have been flogged when a boy at school for robbing an orchard, to have taken a standard from the enemy in his first campaign, and to have been made a general in advanced life; suppose, also, which must be admitted to be possible, that, when he took the standard, he was conscious of his having been flogged at school, and that, when made a general, he was conscious of his taking the standard, but had absolutely lost the consciousness of his flogging.<sup>131</sup>

Reid goes on to say that this results in a contradiction:

These things being supposed, it follows, from Mr. Locke's doctrine, that he who was flogged at school is the same person who took the standard, and that he who took the standard is the same person who was made the general. Whence it follows, if there be any truth in logic, that the general is the same person with him who was flogged at school. But the general's consciousness does not reach so far back as his flogging: therefore, according to Mr. Locke's doctrine, he is not the person who was flogged. Therefore the general is, and at the same time is not, the same person with him who was flogged at school.<sup>132</sup>

A different problem with the memory theory was pointed out by one of Reid's contemporaries, the Anglican bishop Joseph Butler. Butler argued that memory relations cannot, as Locke supposed, constitute personal identity because such relations in fact *presuppose* identity:

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<sup>131</sup> Thomas Reid, "Of Mr. Locke's Account of Our Personal Identity," in *Personal Identity*, ed. John Perry (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981), 114.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*, 114-115.

But though consciousness of what is past does thus ascertain our personal identity to ourselves, yet, to say that it makes personal identity, or is necessary to our being the same persons, is to say, that a person has not existed a single moment, nor done one action, but what he can remember; indeed none but what he reflects upon. And one should really think it self-evident, that consciousness of personal identity presupposes, and therefore cannot constitute, personal identity, any more than knowledge, in any other case, can constitute truth, which it presupposes.<sup>133</sup>

Butler argued that because any experience a person remembers seems to them to be theirs, the only way they can know that it is in fact theirs is to already know that they are the person who actually had it. Memory relations, in other words, reveal to a person that they are identical to a past experiencer, but they do not reveal to them that they and the past experiencer are the same person. According to Butler, this shows that memory relations do not constitute personal identity and that Locke's theory is invalid.

What philosophers have done to avoid the first problem is to define personal identity in terms of overlapping psychological connections rather than only in terms of direct memory relations. Thus, since the general remembers being the officer, he is the same person as the officer. Since the officer remembers being the boy, he is the same person as the boy. This makes the general the same person as the boy, not because the general remembers being the boy, but because he remembers being the person (i.e. the soldier) who at that time of being an officer could still remember being the boy. This reworking of Locke's psychological identity theory where identity is redefined in terms of overlapping psychological connections instead of direct memory relations exclusively has become known as the psychological continuity theory of personhood: "X at  $t^1$  is the same person as Y at  $t^2$  if and only if X is uniquely psychologically

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<sup>133</sup> Joseph Butler, "Of Personal Identity," in *Personal Identity*, ed. John Perry (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981), 100.

continuous with Y.”<sup>134</sup> The psychological continuity theory also has a response to Butler’s objection that memory relations presuppose identity relations: persons can have quasi-memories of events whereby a person has a memory of something that may or may not be their past experience. For example, I can have a quasi-memory of visiting Paris even though I’ve never actually been there. For me to have a quasi-memory, it is necessary that someone actually had that certain experience, that I have a memory of the experience, and that memory is causally dependent on another person’s having an experience. Thus, my quasi-memory of Paris is a first-person perspective memory, but not the memory of me actually being in Paris.<sup>135</sup> Butler’s objection against Locke was that Locke used memories to explain identity, even though memories presuppose identity because a person only has memories of the experiences that he actually had. But according to the psychological continuity theory, diachronic identity, or what makes an entity identical over time, is preserved via relations of quasi-memory, which means that the person with the quasi-memory of the experience does not have to be the same person who actually had the experience in order for those two persons to be numerically identical.

One problem with the psychological continuity theory is that it cannot adequately account for what makes persons morally valuable. As we will see with the narrative theory of identity, this problem is not unique to the psychological continuity theory. The problem stems, in fact, from a topic discussed earlier in chapter one, the naturalistic fallacy. I mentioned in chapter one

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<sup>134</sup> David Shoemaker, "Personal Identity and Ethics," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2016 Edition), ed. Edward N. Zalta  
<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2016/entries/identity-ethics>

<sup>135</sup> How quasi-memories are thought to be possible is not a topic for discussion here other than to illustrate a problem with the psychological theory of identity. For more on quasi-memory, see Shoemaker footnote number 134.

that it is fallacious to think that statements about what we ought to do are logically deducible on the basis of descriptive facts. How NPS theory solves this will be seen.

Although the psychological theory is a theory of personal identity, not of personal ontology, it still presupposes a particular understanding of how persons exist. Endurantism and perdurantism are theories about how concrete entities persist through time and which I characterize as supporting the following theses:

Thesis of personal endurance (TPE): Persons persist by enduring through time.

Thesis of personal perdurance (TPP): Persons persist by perduring through time.

The psychological theory of personal identity presupposes that TPE is true and that TPP is false.

Endurantism holds that entities lack temporal parts; although the endurantist believes entities exist in and persist through time, they does not think this means they are spread out or extended through time. According to endurantism, an entity exists at time  $t^1$  by being wholly present at  $t^1$ .

For an entity X to be wholly present at a moment  $t^1$  is for X to have all of its parts exist at  $t^1$ .

This understanding of what it means for an entity to exist at a single moment underlies the notion of diachronic identity to which the psychological theory is committed. Locke believed that if a person who exists at  $t^2$  remembers having an experience at  $t^1$ , then the person at  $t^2$  is the same person as the person who existed and had the experience at  $t^1$ . The idea that a person can be numerically identical to themselves across a period of time is not feasible apart from the assumption that each person is not wholly present at the time they exist. This is because if a person is not wholly present at the time they exist, it would be impossible for them to be identical to any person that existed at a past time. This is integral to the psychological theory of personal identity. As Locke writes,

This being premised to find wherein personal identity consists, we must consider what Person stands for; which, I think, is a thinking intelligent Being, that has reason and reflection, and can consider it self as it self, the same thinking thing in

different times and places; which it does only by that consciousness, which is inseparable from thinking, and as it seems to me essential to it: It being impossible for any one to perceive, without perceiving, that he does perceive.<sup>136</sup>

Thus, the notion of diachronic identity, and thus the psychological theory of personal identity, are therefore intelligible only on the assumption that endurantism with respect to persons is true. Note Locke's remark that a person can consider itself at different times and places "only by that consciousness."<sup>137</sup> In other words, who a person is at the present moment depends on what that person remembers at that time. Accordingly, if a presently existing person does not remember any past experiences, then that person is not identical to anyone. This shows that for the psychological theory, the present moment is the focal point of a person's identity: who I am *now* depends on what I remember *now*. This is consistent with the idea that a person persists through time by being wholly present at each time of that person's existence, as well as with the broader idea that whatever exists does so only at the present moment. This idea is called presentism, and according to Michael J. Loux, endurantism is committed to it:

Typical endurantists are what we might call *presentists*. They believe that the use of the tenses is ontologically significant. As they see it, only what exists in the present really exists and only what is going on in the present is really going on. Endurantists deny that things that have already passed out of existence or things that have not yet begun to exist are real or exist in any way.<sup>138</sup>

Loux states that the present moment plays a special role in the endurantist's description of what exists because the endurantist believes the present moment is the only moment that is real. This is in stark contrast to perdurantism. According to perdurantism, entities have temporal parts, which means that entities persist through time by being extended through time. This leads the perdurantist to reject presentism and to deny that entities persist through time by being wholly

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<sup>136</sup> Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, 335.

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>138</sup> Michael J. Loux, *Metaphysics: A Contemporary Introduction* (London: Routledge, 1998), 207.

present at each moment of their existence, holding instead that all times are equally real. As

Loux writes,

Perdurantists, by contrast, deny that there is anything ontologically distinctive about the time I happen to call “now” or “the present,” and they deny that there is anything metaphysically privileged about the use of the present tense. They take all times and their contents to have the same ontological status. All times, all the things existing at those times, and all the things that happen at those times are equally real; and they insist that the ‘are’ here is a tenseless form of the verb... Using tenseless language, we can say that both Bill Clinton and George Washington exist. Each exists, to be sure, in his own time, but each fully exists.<sup>139</sup>

A different way of expressing the same point is that perdurantism is committed to a view called four-dimensionalism. Michael C. Rea describes four-dimensionalism below:

Four-dimensionalism... is a view about the ontological status of non-present objects. Presentists say that only present objects exist. There are no dinosaurs, though there were such things; there are no cities on Mars, though perhaps there will be such things. Four-dimensionalists, on the other hand, say that there are past or future objects (or both); and in saying this, they mean to put such things ontologically on a par with present objects. According to the four-dimensionalist, non-present objects are spatially distant objects: they exist, just not here, where we are.<sup>140</sup>

So the perdurantist thinks that entities are temporally extended, and that all times are equally real. To hold that a person perdures is to hold that a person’s present state of existence is only a single part of what that person is: an event that extends into the past and encompasses all the events when that person was alive. This implies that a person continues to exist after they die because the moment of their death is but a single temporal part of themselves. I will elaborate upon this idea later. Because the psychological theory is committed to the thesis of personal endurance (TPE), it denies that persons exist beyond death. The psychological theory is

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<sup>139</sup> Ibid., 207-208.

<sup>140</sup> Michael C. Rea, “Four-Dimensionalism,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Metaphysics*, ed. Michael J. Loux and Dean W. Zimmerman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 46.

committed to TPE because it presupposes the possibility of diachronic identity, and it grounds diachronic identity in psychological relations that connect past and present states of a person's existence. Thus, since one's death entails the destruction of one's psychology, it follows that persons, according to the psychological theory, cease to exist upon the moment of death. And since the thesis of personal perdurance (TPP) entails that persons continue to exist beyond death, it follows that the psychological theory is incompatible with TPP.

In summary, the psychological theory of personal identity is committed to TPE. The importance of this point will become apparent in section 4.3 when I discuss how a commitment to endurantism renders the psychological theory unable to account for the intrinsic value of persons and how NPS theory's commitment to TPP contributes to its ability to account for the intrinsic value of persons. For now, however, let us discuss the narrative theory of personhood to see why it too is committed to TPE.

#### 4.2 NARRATIVE THEORY OF PERSONAL IDENTITY

Marya Schechtman notes that the psychological continuity theory is an attempt to provide an answer to what she refers to as the "reidentification question"<sup>141</sup>, which asks what the conditions are where a person at one moment of time was the same person at a different moment of time. It asks, in other words, how I am the same person that I was in the past. The reidentification question is concerned with diachronic identity, the matter of how two existing things at two different moments of time are numerically identical. Schechtman writes,

The problem of personal identity is thus generally described as the problem of determining what relation must hold between two "person-stages" [or "person time slices" – I use the terms interchangeably] to make them stages or slices of the same person. This statement of the question is common, but there is

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<sup>141</sup> Marya Schechtman, *The Constitution of Selves* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996), 7.

disagreement worth discussing about exactly how time-slices are to be conceived.<sup>142</sup>

This disagreement about understanding the concept of a time slice is problematic for any account of personal identity, such as the psychological continuity theory, that relies on the idea of person slices, or persons as they exist at an instantaneous moment of time. According to Schechtman, time slices are instantaneous moments of time, and the various psychological states that the psychological continuity theory considers relevant to personal identity are not instantaneous in their duration:

Beliefs, values, desires, intentions, actions, and characteristics are things that cannot take place in an instant. A literal instant is not even long enough to experience something as basic as pleasure or pain; it is not long enough to see an afterimage, or hear a tone – let alone be loyal, have doubts about one's religion, or be moody or consistent... To do *any* of the things that are recognizable as the activities of persons, a person-stage must endure for at least several seconds. To have some rich enough complement of characteristics to be anything like a "person identified at a time," a *person* time-slice probably has to last at least several minutes, perhaps even much longer. If, then, we want to build a criterion of identity over time by identifying distinct temporal stages as stages of the same person, these stages have to endure long enough for them to be person-like in their characteristics.<sup>143</sup>

Schechtman's point here is that since the relevant psychological attributes such as beliefs are not instantaneous, they cannot be appealed to in order to account for a person's identity at a single instant of time. This suggests that a successful account of personal identity must be able to answer the question of what a person's identity is at a single instant of time. According to Schechtman, the psychological continuity theory cannot answer this question, but the narrative theory of personhood can.

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<sup>142</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid., 9.

According to the narrative theory of personal identity, a person's identity at a given moment in time is a story the person tells about themselves up until that moment. The narrative theory of personhood holds that in order to be a person, an entity must not only possess psychological states such as beliefs and memories of experiences, but it must also be aware that it possesses these states in order for them to be meaningful, i.e., to make its life a coherent story. The theory claims this is possible only if the entity's awareness takes the form of a self-narrated story, and it is this story that constitutes the entity's identity as a person. David Shoemaker explains,

Narrative identity is thus really about a kind of psychological unity, but not just an artless or random unity. Imagine, for instance, a subject of experiences to whom various experiences merely happened over time. The events would be unified in a purely passive respect, simply as the experiences contained within the life of that subject of experiences. But for that subject to be a *person*, a genuine moral agent, those experiences must be actively unified, must be gathered together into the life of one narrative ego by virtue of a story the subject tells that *weaves* them together, giving them a kind of coherence and intelligibility they wouldn't otherwise have had. This is how the various experiences and events come to have any real meaning at all — rather than being merely isolated events — by being part of a larger story that relates them to one another within the context of one life...(original emphasis)<sup>144</sup>

Shoemaker points out that narrative theory is grounded in the capacity for conscious thought, but it is problematic to make that a requirement for personhood. It is counterintuitive to claim, for example, that I was never a six-month-old infant simply because I do not remember being six months old and am therefore unable to incorporate my experiences as a six-month-old infant into a story. This shows the narrative theory to be an even less plausible account of personhood than the psychological theory, which at least allows the possibility for one's identity to not depend solely on direct memory relations.

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<sup>144</sup> Shoemaker, "Personal Identity and Ethics".

Perhaps the most well-known objection to the narrative theory is that it is simply not necessary to think of oneself as a character in an ongoing narrative in order to find one's beliefs and experiences meaningful. Galen Strawson addresses this objection in "Against Narrativity." According to Strawson, the narrative theory entails a commitment to what he calls the psychological narrativity thesis, which holds that "one sees or lives or experiences one's life as a narrative or story of some sort, or at least as a collection of stories."<sup>145</sup> Strawson says the psychological narrativity thesis "is a straightforwardly descriptive, empirical thesis about the way ordinary, normal human beings experience their lives. This is how we are, it says, this is our nature".<sup>146</sup> So the psychological narrativity thesis is a descriptive thesis about human psychology. Accordingly, if there are persons who do not actually experience their lives as narratives, then the psychological narrativity thesis is false, which implies that the narrative theory of personhood is false as well.

This is, in fact, how Strawson argues against the narrative theory of personhood. Strawson says that there are "diachronics"<sup>147</sup> and "episodics"<sup>148</sup>. A diachronic is a person who sees his life as an unfolding narrative and who thereby conforms to the psychological narrativity thesis. The diachronic sees himself as a consistent character that plays throughout his life, or as Strawson puts it, as "something that was there is in the (further) past and will be there in the (further) future."<sup>149</sup> An episodic, on the other hand, is someone who does not experience his life as a story. The episodic is aware of the fact that he has a past and future, but he does not think of

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<sup>145</sup> Galen Strawson, *Real Materialism and Other Essays* (New York; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2008), 189.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid.

<sup>148</sup> Ibid.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid., 190.

himself as a consistent character in a story, as does the diachronic. Strawson considers himself to be an episodic, and uses himself as an example in the following passage to describe how episodics think of themselves:

I need to say more about the Episodic (sic) life, and since I find myself to be relatively Episodic, I'll use myself as an example. I have a past, like any human being, and I know perfectly well that I have a past. I have a respectable amount of factual knowledge about it, and I also remember some of my past experiences 'from the inside', as philosophers say. And yet I have absolutely no sense of my life as a narrative with form, or indeed as a narrative without form. Absolutely none. Nor do I have any great or special interest in my past. Nor do I have a great deal of concern for my future.<sup>150</sup>

Strawson makes the point here that one can consistently be aware of the fact that one has a past without thinking of one's life as a narrative. He goes on to suggest that just because episodics do not understand their lives as narratives does not mean that their pasts are irrelevant to their present identities:

Faced with sceptical Diachronics, who insist that Episodics are (essentially) dysfunctional in the way that they relate to their own past, Episodics will reply that the past can be present or alive in the present without being present or alive *as* the past. The past can be alive – arguably more genuinely alive – in the present simply in so far as it has helped to shape the way one is in the present, just as musicians' playing can incorporate and body forth their past practice without being mediated by any explicit memory of it. (original emphasis)<sup>151</sup>

What Strawson is saying here is that a person's identity is inextricably tied to past events, regardless of whether that person is a diachronic or an episodic. NPS theory also holds that a person's past does not need to be narrated in order for it to make an impact on that person's present identity. Who I am now remains an outcome of past events even if I do not remember what those events were and am therefore unable to organize them into the form of a narrative. I

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<sup>150</sup> Ibid., 194.

<sup>151</sup> Ibid., 193.

take this to be what Strawson means when he says that the past, for a person, can be alive in the present without being alive in the past. NPS theory builds on this idea, as we will see in section 4.3.

As noted earlier, narrative theory, like the psychological theory, is committed to the thesis of personal perdurance, although one might think otherwise because of the tendency of some writers to discuss the narrative self as a temporally extended entity. For instance, take Shoemaker's remark that a person, according to the narrative theory, is an "extended narrative ego"<sup>152</sup>:

This view purports to account for our practical concerns in a far more adequate way than the previous accounts of numerical identity. So it makes sense for me to rationally anticipate some future experiences only if they will be mine, where what makes them mine is that they will fit coherently and accurately into my own ongoing self-told story. What explains my special sort of concern for myself is that I'm in fact an extended narrative ego — not some present time-slice concerned about the well-being of some different future time-slice.<sup>153</sup>

And take Schechtman's comment that consciousness, according to the narrative theory, is extended through time:

We acknowledge that the depth of connection between psychical elements that are synchronously co-conscious is such that they are not properly thought of as a number of separate elements that are somehow all together in the same container — a "consciousness" — but rather as having interacted in such a way as to fuse into a unified whole that includes some version of each, modified by its context... What the narrative self-constitution view suggests is that something similar happens for elements spread out over time that are part of the same narrative. The moments of conscious awareness in a person's life are not distinct entities that are somehow strung together, but rather a dynamic interactive system that integrates to produce a subjectivity that extends over time.<sup>154</sup>

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<sup>152</sup> Shoemaker, "Personal Identity and Ethics"

<sup>153</sup> Ibid.

<sup>154</sup> Schechtman, *The Constitution of Selves*, 143.

Such comments are misleading because the narrative theory, like the psychological theory, is built on the possibility of diachronic identity: any element of the story that a person tells about their life is an experience they remember having, which implies that the person who had that past experience is numerically identical to the person who is now remembering it. As I pointed out in my discussion of the psychological theory, this is possible only if each person is wholly present at each moment of their existence. Thus, narrative theory is committed to TPE. It is committed to TPE because it is built on the possibility of diachronic identity, which entails a commitment to presentism, the idea that an entity is wholly present at each moment of its existence. This makes the narrative theory incompatible with TPP.

#### 4.3 NORMATIVE PRAGMATIC SELFHOOD AND THE THESIS OF PERSONAL PERDURANCE

In the previous section, I showed how the psychological theory and the narrative theory are each committed to the thesis of personal endurance. I now turn to NPS theory and its commitment to the thesis personal perdurance. I will also discuss how this commitment factors into the moral status of persons. NPS theory is committed to TPP because it holds that persons are temporally extended events: each person is what we may call that person's "life", and the lives of persons are temporally extended. Tara Smith illustrates this with an analogy that captures precisely the concept of a person's life that NPS theory advances:

Life is not something that a person possesses alongside the living that she does. Rather, life is living. A person's life consists of an ongoing series of events – the actions she takes and the experiences she undergoes [including those unconscious physiological operations]. Just as the sixth game of the 1986 World Series refers to a particular set of activities – the nine innings played by those two teams in that stadium on that night, encompassing all the pitches, foul balls, hits, time-outs, arguments, player substitutions, etc., therein – so "Valerie's life" refers to all the activities that make up every day she has breathed, from the moment she was born through the present and into the future, until her death. Life is nothing but the stream of activities that constitute some individual's experience. Birth initiates this self-generated, self-sustaining activity; death marks its cessation. As Hans

Jonas has stated, an “organism has to keep going, because to be going is its very existence.” Activity is the essence of life.<sup>155</sup>

Smith here states that a person’s life consists of all the experiences and actions that that person has gone through since the time they were born. These things of course exist in the past. So to claim that persons are their lives is to claim that persons are temporally extended, and that TPP is true. Put differently, NPS theory holds that a person is their life history. It is interesting to note that Dewey himself seemed to have held a view like this:

Except as the outcome of arrested development, there is no such thing as a fixed, ready-made, finished self. Every living self causes acts and is itself caused in return by what it does. All voluntary action is a remaking of self, since it creates new desires, instigates to new modes of endeavor, brings to light new conditions which institute new ends. Our personal identity is found in the thread of continuous development which binds together these changes.<sup>156</sup>

Without a doubt, Dewey is at the core of my dissertation, and this passage affirms that NPS theory is consistent with Dewey’s thoughts about the nature of personhood.

A baseball game is an example of a temporally extended entity. Although it is true that the ninth inning would not have occurred if the first inning had not, the mere fact that the ninth stands in a causal relation to the first is merely a necessary condition for the ninth and first innings to exist as parts of the one and the same game. It is not the only condition – the first inning would not have occurred if the Big Bang had not happened, but that does not make the Big Bang part of the game. The ninth and the first are parts of the same game because, among other reasons, they each involve activities identified with the game of baseball (e.g. hitting a ball with a bat, running to bases, etc.). The Big Bang is not a part of the baseball game because it doesn’t involve any baseball activities. Thus, it is in part that the innings share a common trait

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<sup>155</sup> Tara Smith, *Moral Rights and Political Freedom* (Lanham, Md: Rowman & Littlefield, 1995), 187-188.

<sup>156</sup> Dewey and Tufts, *Ethics*, 340-341.

(the occurrence of baseball-related activities) that makes them part of one and the same entity, the baseball game.

Accordingly, if a person is a temporally-extended event, then a smaller event is a part of that person if it stands in an immediate causal relation to another event, and each event indexes something that exemplifies a concept that is essential to the concept of a person. These are the conceptual guidelines that NPS theory uses to individuate persons. Since NPS theory presupposes TPP, I cannot begin to argue that NPS theory is the correct account of personal ontology without first providing reasons as to why it should be thought that TPP is true.

TPP states that persons exist as temporally extended events. One reason for thinking TPP is true is that it justifies our everyday intuitions about how we think about persons. For instance, we often judge persons as being either good or bad, and whether a person is good or bad cannot be established independently of the events that have made up that person's life. "Life" is to be understood here in the biographical sense, not in the biological sense of the state of being alive (SOBA). Chapter five will show that it is this biographical sense of life that possesses extrinsic objective value. Mother Theresa is a good person because her life was a life spent helping those in need when she was alive. Ted Bundy is a bad person because his life was spent raping and killing women when he was alive. Our descriptions of persons, therefore, are really descriptions of the lives of those persons. Since lives are temporally extended, our descriptions of persons are descriptions of temporally extended events.

Another reason for thinking that TPP is true is that it solves the problem of posthumous reference, which is the problem of referring to posthumous, and therefore non-existent, things. The problem is enough of an issue to motivate some philosophers to accept not only TPP, but four-dimensionalism in general. Take the following passage from W.V.O. Quine, for instance:

There are overwhelming reasons for treating time on a par with space; reasons of clarity and convenience, having nothing to do with Einstein's relativity theory. We say Elsa Lanchester is the widow of Charles Laughton; but there is no Charles Laughton for her to be the widow of, and there never was any, either, as long as she was his widow. We say that Charles Laughton married Elsa Lanchester, moreover, and yet we refuse to conclude that he married his own widow. We say there have been fifty-five kings of England, though there never once were more than three people who had been kings of England or ever would be. The simplest way of putting all this mess in order is by viewing people and other physical objects as deployed in four-dimensional space-time and all as coexisting in an eternal or timeless sense of the word. Temporal segments or stages of physical objects are physical objects in turn, temporally shorter ones. Elsa Lanchester's widow-hood is a part of her, the later part. . . . In these terms my little anomalies are easily straightened out....<sup>157</sup>

This passage is an argument for four-dimensionalism in general, not TPP. Can one consistently hold a commitment to TPP while also rejecting four-dimensionalism with regard to everything else? Answering this question is beyond the scope of this dissertation, although I see no reason for immediately thinking that the answer is no. One can of course argue for TPP by arguing for four-dimensionalism, but such arguments are also beyond the scope of my dissertation. I mention the problem of posthumous reference because it forms the basis of an argument that shows how NPS theory supports the intrinsic value of persons, as will be seen later in this chapter.

Recall that TPP is the thesis that persons perdure, or exist as temporally extended events. NPS theory is committed to TPP due to the fact that NPS theory holds that persons are events that are temporally extended into the past because a person is the history of an entity, a history that begins when that entity began to have desires. The idea of a person as a history of an entity is consistent with Dewey's views about personal ontology. He writes, for instance,

The individual whose life history is told, be it Socrates or Nero, St. Francis or Abraham Lincoln, is an extensive event; or, if you prefer, it is a course of events

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<sup>157</sup> Harry S. Silverstein, "The Evil of Death," in *The Journal of Philosophy* 77 no. 7 (1980): 418.

each of which take up into itself something of what went before and leads on to that which comes after. The skill, the art, of the biographer is displayed in his ability to discover and portray the subtle ways, hidden often from the individual himself, in which one event grows out of those which preceded and enters into those which follow. The human individual is himself a history, a career, and for this reason his biography can be related only as a temporal event.<sup>158</sup>

Gerard E. Mozur also comments,

There is, of course, the man, Lincoln, i.e. the physical organism, but Lincoln, the individual, is the total career and history involving the interaction of Lincoln with the environmental conditions of his time.<sup>159</sup>

These passages reflect Dewey's belief that there is an ontological difference between an organism, an entity, and the history of that entity, which is a person. Briefly stated then, the reason NPS theory is committed to TPP is that the theory holds that a person is the history of an organism, and histories are events that are temporally extended into the past.

NPS theory holds that a person is the history of an entity that has desires, desire being understood here in the Deweyan sense of the term, as was discussed in the previous chapter. Remember that in the Deweyan sense to desire is to make plans and to pursue goals. Confronted with a problematic situation, a person desires an end of an action by forming an end-in-view that if acted upon will resolve the problem that motivated them to form the idea in the first place. Thus, since NPS theory defines a person as an entity that has had desires, the theory in effect defines a person as an entity that has had ends-in-view. This explain why persons are temporally extended events: persons are temporally extended events because they possess ends-in-view, and the possession of an end-in-view is itself temporally extended.

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<sup>158</sup> John Dewey, *On Experience, Nature, and Freedom* (New York: New York: Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1940), 229.

<sup>159</sup> Gerald Mozur, "Dewey on Time and Individuality," in *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society* 27 no. 3: (1991), 323.

To understand how the possession of an end-in-view is a temporally extended event, keep in mind that an end-in-view is a goal. In pursuing a goal, there is the sense that one's goals extend into the past because one cannot succeed in pursuing any goal without remembering what one is trying to achieve. Thus the activity of pursuing a goal is a temporally-extended event, a duration that encompasses the past, present, and future. This is why Charles Sherover describes the activity of pursuing a goal as a "spread of time":

I invoke memory for precedents to guide me in the evaluation of this possibility and its attainment. But my evaluation of my present situation, which calls me to act, is in terms of what ought to be in it that could be in it which I can place into it. That aspect of my past experience which I call into the present is precisely that memory selection which seems pertinent to the task lying ahead of me. I then see this situation as my own involvement in terms of a future which is not-yet, but which I bring into the present, and a past which is no-longer, but which I bring into the present. The present situation is, then, no point on a line of before-and-after sequences. It is not the click of a full second, the "specious present" of some ten or twelve seconds. It is a spread of time, as I perceive and understand it, which takes my perspective of future and selected recall of the relevant past into constituting what I take to be present situation.<sup>160</sup>

Sherover's description of the phenomenological experience of pursuing a goal aptly describes the phenomenological experience of having an end-in-view. To have an end-in-view is to not simply have an idea of an end. An end-in-view is an idea of an end that one is motivated to act upon and does indeed act upon. Remember from chapter three that desire, for Dewey, involves effort: if a person believes a certain end will transform his problematic situation into a consummatory one, but does not act upon it, then the end is not the object of their desire. Their idea of the end is not an end-in-view, but is instead what Dewey calls a wish or fantasy. In short, to have an end-in-view is to engage in goal-directed action. This is why Sherover's description of experience of pursuing a goal is a fitting description of the phenomenology of

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<sup>160</sup> Charles M. Sherover, *Are We in Time? And Other Essays on Time and Temporality* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2003), 64.

having an end-in-view. Activity is essential to both concepts. Although the following passage is from Dewey, it could just as well have been written by Sherover:

“Present” activity is not a sharp narrow knife-blade in time. The present is complex, containing within itself a multitude of habits and impulses. It is enduring, a course of action, a process including memory, observation and foresight, a pressure forward, a glance backward and a look outward.<sup>161</sup>

This confirms Sherover’s point that pursuit of a goal is temporally extended. To further illustrate the idea of present activity as a complex element, Dewey gives the example of building a house:

Building a house is a typical instance of an intelligent activity. It is an activity directed by a plan, a design. The plan is itself based upon a foresight of future uses. This foresight is in turn dependent upon an organized survey of past experiences and of present conditions, a recollection of former experiences of living in houses and an acquaintance with present materials, prices, resources, etc. Now if a legitimate case of subordination of present to regulation of the future may anywhere be found, it is in such a case as this. For a man usually builds a house for the sake of the comfort and security, the “control”, thereby afforded to future living rather than just for the fun – or the trouble – of building. If in such a case inspection shows that, after all, intellectual concern with the past and future is for the sake of directing present activity and giving it meaning, the conclusion may be accepted for other cases.<sup>162</sup>

The experience of having an end-in-view, then, is the experience of pursuing a goal. This is because, once again, ends-in-view are goals. Accordingly, since ends-in-views are goals, it seems phenomenologically that one’s possession of an end-in-view is a temporally extended event.

There is a difference, of course, between something that seems to be the case and something that is the case, and NPS theory’s holding that one’s possession of an end-in-view not only seems to be temporally extended, but it is in fact temporally extended. Just because I now have an idea of a certain end that I could not have had without remembering certain things in the

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<sup>161</sup> Dewey, *Human Nature and Conduct: An Introduction to Social Psychology*, 281.

<sup>162</sup> *Ibid.*, 268.

past does not mean that the idea itself is extended into the past. Rather, it is the possession of the idea that is extended into the past because the end-in-view is formed in response to a problematic situation.

If a person does not face a problematic situation, then they do not form an end-in-view. It is on the basis of examining their problematic situation and of understanding it as a product of a past series of causes and effects that the person knows what end-in-view is appropriate to form. This is the point that Dewey makes in the passage below, where he writes about how a mere idea becomes an end-in-view:

A fancy becomes an aim, in short, when some past sequence of known cause-and-effect is projected into the future, and when by assembling its causal conditions we strive to generate a like result. We have to fall back upon what has already happened naturally without design, and study *how* it happened, which is what is meant by causation. (original emphasis)<sup>163</sup>

So a problematic situation is an event in a sequence of causes and effects, and an idea becomes an end-in-view only if one examines events that actually happened and that led to the creation of the problematic situation that one now faces. Thus, since the content of an end-in-view is determined by events that occurred before the end-in-view itself was formed, the content of one's end in view is intrinsically tied to events that happened in the past, and this makes one's possession of an end-in-view a temporally extended event. Put differently, one's possession of an end-in-view is temporally extended because the series of events that caused a problematic situation is essential to the specific end that is now in one's view. The possession is an event that extends from the specific end-in-view now being pursued back to what caused the problematic situation that led one to develop that end-in-view. That is why Dewey describes having and

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<sup>163</sup> Ibid., 235.

pursuing an end-in-view as a “career”, which suggests that the possession of an end-in-view is an event that is not wholly present:

Empirically, all reflection sets out from the problematic and confused. Its aim is to clarify and ascertain. When thinking is successful, its career closes in transforming the disordered into the orderly, the mixed-up into the distinguished or placed, the unclear and ambiguous into the defined and unequivocal, the disconnected into the systematized.<sup>164</sup>

Dewey articulates this point in the following passage, where he suggests that while an end-in-view is an idea and therefore lacks temporal extension in itself, it does not exist apart from the disposition of the person to actively pursue it.

In truth, attitudes, dispositions and their kin, while capable of being distinguished and made concrete intellectual objects, are never separate existences. They are always *of, from, toward*, situations and things...The things with which they are concerned may for purposes of inquiry be represented by a blank, a symbol to be specifically filled in as occasion demands. But except as ways of seeking, turning from, appropriating, treating things, they have no existence nor significance. (original emphasis)<sup>165</sup>

Dewey states in this passage that holding an end-in-view is intrinsically connected to the events leading up to its formation and cannot exist separately from those events. Thus, since to possess an end-in-view is to be disposed to act upon an idea, Dewey’s claim that the disposition of holding an end-in-view is not separable from past events is consistent with the thesis that one’s possession of an end-in-view is an event that is temporally extended into the past.

I stated at the beginning of this section that NPS theory is committed to TPP and that a person is temporally extended into the past because a person is the history of an entity that has begun to have desires. I have since pointed out that to have a desire is to possess an end-in-view.

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<sup>164</sup> Dewey, *Experience and Nature*, 57.

<sup>165</sup> *Ibid.*, 195.

This is consistent with Dewey's comments about how persons begin to exist only when entities have begun to have desires:

Return for a moment to the human individual. It is impossible to think of the historical career, which is the special individuality constituting Abraham Lincoln, apart from the particular conditions in which he lived...*The career which is his unique individuality is the series of interactions in which he was created to be what he was by the ways in which he responded to the occasions with which he was presented* (my emphasis).<sup>166</sup>

The last sentence is a description of what is involved in possessing an end-in-view: it affords the person with a way of responding to a problematic situation. This means that one's existence as a person is *constituted* by possessing one's ends-in-view – it is by possessing an end-in-view that one creates oneself as a person. To possess an end-in-view, in other words, is to engage in self-creation. Hence Dewey's comments:

Lincoln as an individual is a history; any particular event cut off from that history ceases to be a part of his life as an individual. As Lincoln is a particular development in time, so is every other human individual. Individuality is the uniqueness of the history, of the career, not something given once and for all at the beginning which then proceeds to unroll as a ball of yarn may be unwound. Lincoln made history. But it is just as true that he made himself as an individual in the history he made.<sup>167</sup>

And also,

In committing oneself to a particular course, a person gives a lasting set to his own being. Consequently, it is proper to say that in choosing this object rather than that, one is in reality choosing what kind of person or self one is going to be.<sup>168</sup>

Taken together, these passages imply that a person begins to exist only when an entity has begun to have desires because to have a desire is to possess an end-in-view, and to possess an end-in-view is to engage in the activity of self-creation. A person exists only when an entity has begun

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<sup>166</sup> Dewey, *On Experience, Nature, and Freedom*, 239.

<sup>167</sup> *Ibid.*, 230.

<sup>168</sup> Dewey and Tufts, *Ethics*, 317.

to possess ends-in-view, in other words, because it is only through the possession of ends-in-view that a person is created.

This raises the question as to the significance of possessing an end-in-view that makes a person exist as an event that is temporally extended into the past. Recall that the possession of an end-in-view is temporally extended because an end-in-view is an idea that a person forms by thinking about events that actually happened in the past. This makes possession of an end-in-view in the present contingent on non-present events and therefore temporally extended. The reason a person is temporally extended into the past is because the possession of an end-in-view is extended into the past, and it is only through the possession of an end-in-view that a person emerges as a thing that exists. That is why Dewey states,

Personality, selfhood, subjectivity are *eventual functions* that emerge with complexly organized interactions, organic and social. Personal individuality has its basis and conditions in simpler events. (my emphasis)<sup>169</sup>

The “simpler events” Dewey refers to are events pertaining to the interaction of an organism with its wider environment. Thus persons are generated through the interaction of organisms with their environment and by organisms possessing ends-in-view in reaction to problematic situations. A person is therefore the organism’s history of forming and possessing ends-in-view, which is why a person begins to exist only when an organism has begun to have desires. This is how NPS theory accounts for the temporal extension of persons, and thus for its commitment to TPP.

#### 4.4 ADVANTAGES OF NORMATIVE PRAGMATIC THEORY

NPS theory presents a number of advantages over the psychological and narrative theories of personhood. It was discussed that one problem with the psychological theory and its

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<sup>169</sup> Dewey, *Experience and Nature*, 171.

variant, the psychological continuity theory, is their failure to account for the persistence of one's identity through memory loss. According to the original psychological theory, proposed by Locke, a presently existing person is not identical to a person in the past if the former fails to remember an experience that the latter had. The more recent version of the psychological theory, the psychological continuity theory, suffers from the same problem as well, since it is possible for a person to fail to quasi-remember a past experience. Another problem with that affects both versions of the psychological theory was pointed out by Schechtman. Both versions rely on the concept of the time-slice to account for diachronic identity. As Schechtman explained, since both versions hold that diachronic identity is grounded in psychological relations between past and present states of being, a time-slice serves as an inadequate model of a person's momentary existence because psychological states, too, cannot be understood as time-slices.

Schechtman proposed the narrative theory of personhood as an alternative. But although the narrative theory rejects the idea of persons as time-slices, the theory was still shown to rely on psychological relations to ground diachronic identity, revealing it to be just as susceptible as the psychological theory to the memory loss problem. In addition, since there are persons that do not understand themselves in autobiographical terms, as Strawson pointed out, the narrative theory falls short on inclusivity: episodics are not persons.

NPS theory avoids all the problems that were shown to affect the psychological and narrative theories. NPS theory holds that a person is a temporally extended series of actions. Therefore, unlike the psychological and narrative theories, a person's identity according to NPS theory is not constituted by connecting psychological relations. It is instead constituted by a causally continuous sequence of action that extends from the person's first formation of an end-in-view to that person's present state of existence. That a present person does not remember

forming and acting upon a particular end-in-view in the past does not mean that the present person is not identical to the person who formed and acted upon the end-in-view. The two persons are identical according to NPS theory because they are connected by a temporally extended series of events, the causally continuous sequence of actions. Even if the present person does not remember having formed and acted upon a particular end-in-view, they are still identical to the person who formed and acted upon it because it was through the formation of and acting upon that end-in-view that the present person came to exist in the present. So one chief advantage that NPS theory has over the psychological and narrative theories is that, because a person's identity is not constituted by psychological relations, the theory is able to account for the persistence of a person's identity through the occurrence of memory loss. One advantage that NPS theory has over the narrative theory in particular is that NPS theory provides a conception of persons as temporally extended entities without requiring persons to engage in narrative construction.

Perhaps the greatest advantage NPS theory has over the psychological and narrative theories is that it appeals to the nature of personhood to justify the wrongness of killing persons. This is something that neither the psychological theory nor the narrative theory can provide. According to chapter three, killing a person is wrong because to do so would be to assume that one person's capacity to form ends-in-view is more valuable than another person's. This assumption is wrong because, due to the fact that each and every person's capacity to form ends-in-view stems from the mere fact that they exist as a person, the moral value of each and every person's capacity to form ends-in-view is justified on the same basis, which implies that there is no basis on which one person can hold their capacity to be more valuable than another's. The wrongness of killing persons, then, is justified on the same basis as that which accounts for the

existence of persons as temporally extended entities: the capacity to form ends-in-view. NPS theory is thus able to justify the wrongness of killing persons by appealing to the nature of personhood.

A related advantage held by NPS theory is that it avoids at least one argument against the claim that death is not harmful to persons. According to this argument, if death harms a person who dies, then there must be a subject that is harmed by death. However, if a person ceases to exist at the moment of their death, then there is no subject to be harmed, and a person's death therefore cannot be harmful to himself.<sup>170</sup> Call this argument the unharmed-death argument. The unharmed-death argument poses a problem only under the assumption that TPE is true. Let us examine why.

Because TPE holds that a person is an entity that exists wholly at each moment of its existence, it follows from TPE that person would cease to exist at the moment of their death. This is because if an entity exists wholly at each moment of its existence, then the present is the only moment when an existing entity does exist. If that entity does not exist in the present, then there is no moment at which it does exist, and so it follows that it does not exist at all. Accordingly, if a person were this sort of entity, then a person would cease to exist when they die, and their death would not be harmful to themselves because they would no longer be a subject that can incur harm. So, if a person were to exist wholly at each moment of their existence, then that person cannot be harmed by their own death. This is how the unharmed-death argument poses a problem for TPE.

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<sup>170</sup> This argument goes back at least as far as Epicurus (341-270 BCE). It is clearly stated in his *Letter to Menoeceus*.

NPS theory avoids the unharmed-death argument because NPS theory is committed to TPP. TPP, as one recalls, holds that persons do not exist wholly at each moment of their existences. A person is instead a temporally extended entity composed of parts that are dispersed across the past. Because these parts extend into the past, they are unaffected by what happens in the present, and they would therefore continue to exist even when the person to whom they belong dies. The moment of a person's death, according to TPP, is just one of many temporal parts that compose that person. Thus, because the moment of a person's death is only one of that person's temporal parts, and the rest of the person's parts remain unchanged upon the person's death, it follows that these parts would continue to exist after a person dies. The person continues to exist beyond their own death. Since persons exist beyond their deaths, there are subjects then for whom death would be harmful to themselves. The unharmed-death argument thus poses no problem to TPP because TPP denies that persons cease to exist when they die. Therefore, the argument poses no problem to NPS theory either.

It is often said that the past cannot be undone. There is nothing happening now or in the future that can change the fact that what has happened has happened. The fact that Bill is now dead at eighty-years-old, for example, does not make the experiences he had when he was a nine-year-old boy somehow less real than they were when Bill was thirty. His experiences as a nine-year-old boy belonged to the past when he was thirty, and they belong to the past now, when Bill is no longer alive. This implies that if a person is constituted by their past experiences, it is inconsistent to deny that they persist beyond their death while accepting that they were persons while they were still living. This is because a person's past experiences are a part of the past regardless of whether the person is dead or alive. In other words, since a living person is

constituted by past experiences, and that person's death does not change the fact that they had those experiences, it follows that that person's death does not cause them to cease existing.

It should be noted that people do often speak and think about the living in ways which suggest that they find it intuitive to understand personal identity as a temporally extended series of events. This suggests that the line of reasoning described above is actually more reasonable than it might initially appear. For instance, we often say of someone who is alive that "they have a good life", as if their life is something that exists wholly in the present, like a table or a chair. We are also aware that a person's life consists of past events, of things that do not presently exist. So since people do not find it strange or counterintuitive to think of a living person's identity as a temporally extended series of events, it should not seem strange to accept that one's identity persists beyond one's death, given that the past cannot be undone, and a person's death does not therefore change the fact of who they was when they were alive. If a person is constituted by their past experiences, then that person survives their death. This is how NPS theory's commitment to the idea that persons are temporally extended justifies the claim that persons persist beyond the moment that they die.

Both the psychological and the narrative theories of personhood are subject to the unharmed-death argument because each is committed to TPE, holding that persons cease to exist when they die. In contrast, NPS theory avoids the unharmed argument by virtue of its commitment to TPP. I show in the next chapter how NPS theory's commitment to TPP bears on bioethical dilemmas involving marginal cases.

## CHAPTER FIVE:

## NORMATIVE PRAGMATIC SELFHOOD AND MARGINAL CASES

## 5.0 WHAT MARGINAL CASES ARE

This chapter demonstrates the applicability of NPS theory to assess the moral status of marginal cases. “Marginal case” is a philosophical term of art that refers to an entity whose moral status is uncertain or controversial. The paradigm of a marginal case is a sentient organism other than a human being of sufficiently mature and unimpaired cognitive ability. Jeff McMahan provides a short list of entities that fit this profile:

Among those beings whose nature arguably entails a moral status inferior to our own are animals, human embryos and fetuses, newborn infants, anencephalic infants, congenitally severely retarded human beings, human beings who have suffered severe brain damage or dementia, and human beings who have become irreversibly comatose. These are all beings that are in one way or another “at the margins.” There are pressing moral questions about the permissibility, in certain circumstances, of killing individuals of these sorts, or of allowing them to die.<sup>171</sup>

So a marginal case is an entity whose moral status is unclear. This presents a problem because, as McMahan notes, an entity’s moral status largely determines the circumstances under which it is permissible to treat that entity in certain ways. Moral status is determined on the basis of whether the entity possesses a morally relevant property or set of properties. Much of the controversy surrounding marginal cases stems from disagreement over which properties are thought to be morally relevant. While some philosophers, for instance, hold the morally relevant property to be the capacity to experience states of pain and pleasure, others consider it to be the possession of a certain degree of self-awareness and rationality.

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<sup>171</sup> Jeff McMahan, *The Ethics of Killing: Problems at the Margins of Life* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), vii.

NPS theory holds that the morally relevant property is being valued as an end in itself. The theory determines which marginal cases are permissible to kill or allow to die by applying the analysis I presented in chapter three. As one recalls from that chapter, NPS theory holds that it is wrong to kill an entity or allow it to die if it is protected by an end duty, and an entity is protected by an end duty if and only if it values itself as an end-in-itself. An entity values itself as an end-in-itself through the formation of ends-in-view. I argued that if an agent forms ends-in-view, then everyone, including the agent themselves, is bound by an end duty to not kill that agent or do anything else that results in the permanent deprivation of that entity's capacity to form ends-in-view.

McMahan claims that animals constitute a class of marginal case, and although I accept this claim, the ethical subjects I am concerned with in this dissertation are human. Dewey himself says virtually nothing directly about non-human animals, but it can be inferred from several of his comments regarding ends-in-view, however, that most animals lack the capacity to form ends-in-view and would therefore not value themselves as ends.<sup>172</sup> By Kant's account, non-human animals are not considered persons because they are irrational and lack self-awareness.<sup>173</sup> As such, they would not value themselves as ends.

I have only slightly more to say about the cognitively impaired entities in McMahan's list of marginal cases. Kant holds that entities possess moral worth only if they possess autonomy, which he understood to involve having the ability to grasp rational principles, such as universality, as well as possessing the capacity for self-awareness. It is only these beings, says Kant, that are persons. Because dementia, Down syndrome, and autism result in reduced

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<sup>172</sup> Dewey, *Human Nature and Conduct: An Introduction to Social Psychology*, 225

<sup>173</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, ed. Hans H. Rudnick (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1996), 9.

cognitive capability, it is doubtful that humans suffering from these conditions would be classed as persons according to Kant's criteria. It is well-known that human beings that present severe cases of autism and dementia often experience a diminished sense of self. McMahan offers a bleak account of this outcome with respect to dementia:

The disease usually presents with a deterioration of memory, which continues relentlessly through the later stages. As the disease progresses, comprehension, reasoning, and judgment are increasingly impaired, elements of character become unstable, linguistic abilities decline, recognition of other people becomes problematic and eventually impossible, and ultimately even self-awareness is lost.<sup>174</sup>

Although self-awareness becomes lost, humans afflicted with dementia or Down syndrome still possess the capacity to engage in meaningful and goal-directed action, albeit in reduced form, that is indicative of the capacity to form ends-in-view. There is therefore no reason to believe that humans afflicted with these and other conditions that result in reduced cognitive capacity, yet preserve the sufferer's ability to engage in the level of practical reasoning required for them to form ends-in-view, cannot value themselves as ends. Their lives are protected by end duties.

If it seems I have shortchanged animals and handicapped humans, it is because the real focus of this chapter lies elsewhere. The goal of the chapter is to examine how NPS theory bears on abortion and euthanasia. These procedures seem to incite more public furor than most other ethical controversies, and so I will devote the bulk of my discussion to them. The marginal cases involved are human fetuses, humans that are comatose, and humans that have requested to be euthanized. I begin by discussing fetuses, after which I turn to comatose humans. I then conclude with a discussion of voluntary euthanasia. This chapter merely demonstrates the

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<sup>174</sup> McMahan, *The Ethics of Killing: Problems at the Margins of Life*, 493.

application of NPS theory to a handful of bioethical issues. By no means do I intend to offer a comprehensive decision procedure for whatever issues may come the bioethicist's way.

### 5.1. FETUSES

The first is that the topic of abortion looms large in politics and provokes great ethical debate as to the moral status of the human fetus. As McMahan puts it, "the moral and metaphysical status of human embryos and fetuses is shrouded in darkness."<sup>175</sup> It is beyond dispute that a human fetus is human organism. It is popularly believed that this clearly establishes the impermissibility of abortion in all contexts, including cases in which abortion is performed to resolve life-threatening pregnancies. But the moral quandaries of abortion are deeper than often supposed. I will now discuss what some of these are in order to motivate the need for NPS theory.

The claim that abortion is wrong simply because the fetus is a human being is problematic. Although most would agree that killing human beings is generally wrong, there are instances in which killing human beings is seen as permissible, such as self-defense and the defense of others. Capital punishment is another, though more controversial, example. I mention these not to argue for their allowance, but to illustrate the widespread belief that killing human beings is not impermissible simply because they are human, and that species membership may therefore constitute a weaker basis for arguing against abortion than is commonly supposed. It is often argued that abortion is impermissible because a human fetus is an *innocent* human being. The idea here is that while convicted felons and enemy combatants may be among those who deserve to die due to their conduct, fetuses are not guilty of doing anything, and so killing them or allowing them to die is unjust. It is true that since fetuses cannot do anything, they

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<sup>175</sup> Ibid., 3.

cannot be guilty of doing something. But it is a mistake to assume that being free of guilt is equivalent to being innocent. Some entities do lack guilt because they are innocent, but others lack guilt because they are not the sort of entities to which the concepts of guilt and innocence apply. A rock is an example of this sort of entity. Rocks possess neither guilt nor innocence. And because fetuses lack not just autonomy, but also the sentience required for them to engage in any level of practical reasoning, it is arguable that they too fall into the same category of being. This does not mean, of course, that the moral status of a fetus is equivalent to that of a rock, and it would be ridiculous to think so. It does suggest that the moral status of human fetuses is, indeed, “shrouded in darkness”<sup>176</sup>, and that a theoretical framework is needed to better illuminate the complexities of the issue. NPS theory offers such a framework. According to NPS theory, there are at least some situations in which abortion is permissible, depending on whether the fetus is protected by an end duty. According to NPS theory, there are at least some situations in which abortion is permissible, depending on whether the fetus is a person and is therefore protected by an end duty. In what follows, I show that the conception of personhood advanced by NPS theory offers a stronger defense of the permissibility of abortion than those proposed by other more well-known and famously defended accounts.

No analysis of the ethics of abortion is complete without a discussion of Judith Jarvis Thomson’s violinist argument where she claims there is at least one circumstance under which abortion is morally permissible even if the fetus is a person. Although Thomson states she has granted the assumption that the fetus is a person for the sake of argument, she herself thinks that the fetus is a person. She says, for instance, that “I am inclined to think also that we shall

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<sup>176</sup> Ibid.

probably have to agree that the fetus has already become a human person well before birth.”<sup>177</sup>

Thomson describes her argument with an analogy wherein someone has been kidnapped and hooked up to a famous violinist for the use of their kidneys over a nine-month period so that the violinist will not die from kidney disease. Being disconnected any earlier means the violinist will die.<sup>178</sup> Thomson argues that while the violinist is a person and therefore has a right to life, this does not imply that he has a right to use your body against your will, even if that is the only way for him to stay alive. In this situation, your right to bodily autonomy outweighs the violinist’s right to life. With the kidnapped victim representing a woman who has become pregnant through being raped and the violinist representing the fetus, the conclusion of Thomson’s argument is that abortion is permissible with regard to pregnancies that are involuntary.

Is Thomson’s argument convincing? There are many who do not think so, as she herself admits. Thomson points out there are people who believe that pregnancy through rape presents no exception to abortion’s impermissibility. Such people typically object to abortion by arguing that the fetus is an innocent human being with a right to life, that directly killing an innocent human being is murder, and that abortion is therefore always wrong. Thomson counters that aborting a fetus does not constitute murder if doing so is the only way to save the mother’s life. She expresses her incredulosity that anyone would deny her on this point: “But it cannot be seriously be thought to be murder if the mother performs an abortion on herself to save her life.”<sup>179</sup> She also writes, “If anything in the world is true, it is that you do not commit murder,

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<sup>177</sup> Judith Jarvis Thomson “A Defense of Abortion,” *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 1, no.1 (1971): 47.

<sup>178</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>179</sup> *Ibid.*, 52.

you do not do what is impermissible, if you reach around to your back and unplug yourself from that violinist to save your life.”<sup>180</sup> Thomson then abruptly ends her discussion of the violinist analogy, as if she feels that what she has just said is self-evidently true and requires no further debate. While I and undoubtedly many others agree with her, it is not implausible for someone to continue to insist that abortion is always impermissible if the fetus is a person that enjoys a right to life. Christopher Kaczor, for example, launches what he calls the “bodily integrity objection” against Thomson’s violinist analogy as described below:

The bodily integrity objection begins with the premise that persons have the right not to have their bodies used by others. This premise is sometimes used as another way to defend abortion...But if we follow Thomson, holding that the unborn child is akin to the violinist, then this premise also entails that the human fetus has a right not to have her body used in order to keep someone else alive (or a fortiori for any lesser purpose). But in abortion, at least as characteristically performed, the bodily integrity of the unborn child is violated...If the “right to control your own body” means anything, it means that no one can dismember a person without that person’s consent.<sup>181</sup>

The argument behind the bodily integrity objection is that it is wrong to kill a person that has a right to life, and because the fetus is a person, it is therefore wrong to abort fetuses. Kaczor rejects Thomson’s intuition that there are instances in which abortion is permissible in spite of the fact that the fetus is a person and has a right to life. His objection illustrates that simply proclaiming that abortion is permissible in cases of rape does not suffice as an argument in support of abortion.

This is where NPS theory presents an advantage over Thomson with regard to producing a successful pro-abortion argument. NPS theory manages to avoid Kaczor’s criticism by

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<sup>180</sup> Ibid.

<sup>181</sup> Kate Greasley and Christopher Kaczor, *Abortion Rights: For and Against* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 150-151.

denying that the fetus is a person, thereby denying that the fetus is a subject of a right-to-life. Recall from earlier in chapter three that the realization of ends-in-view requires an organism to consciously interact with its wider environment in order to encounter problems and seek solutions to these problems. It follows that the fetus, which does not yet exist in an environment where it can consciously experience and seek solutions to problems, is not such an organism. Because a fetus does not form ends-in-view, it does not exist as a temporally extended entity. A fetus is therefore not a person, and is thus not a subject of a right-to-life as Thomson and Kaczor understand it.

NPS theory also holds an advantage over Mary Anne Warren's pro-abortion argument, as I will proceed to show. For Warren, the permissibility of abortion is determined by whether or not fetuses are members of the moral community in which every member carries a moral status that makes killing it morally wrong. To be a member of the moral community is to enjoy a right-to-life. Warren argues that the moral community should not be restricted to human beings, but to persons. She writes,

Can it be established that genetic humanity is sufficient for moral community? I think that there are very good reasons for *not* defining the moral community in this way. I would like to suggest an alternative way of defining the moral community, which I will argue for only to the extent of explaining why it is, or should be, self-evident. The suggestion is simply that the moral community consists of all and *only* people, rather than all and only human beings... (original emphasis).<sup>182</sup>

She then provides a list of psychological criteria for defining personhood, which are as follows:

1. "Consciousness (of objects and events external and/or internal to the being), and in particular the capacity to feel pain;"<sup>183</sup>

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<sup>182</sup> Mary Anne Warren, "On the Moral and Legal Status of Abortion," *The Monist* 57, no.4 (1973): 4.

<sup>183</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

2. “Reasoning (the developed capacity to solve new and relatively complex problems);”<sup>184</sup>
3. “Self-motivated activity (activity which is relatively independent of either or direct external control;”<sup>185</sup>
4. “The capacity to communicate, by whatever means, messages of an indefinite variety of types, that is, not just with an indefinite number of possible contents, but on indefinitely many possible topics;”<sup>186</sup>
5. “The presence of self-concepts, and self-awareness, either individual or racial, or both.”<sup>187</sup>

According to Warren, an entity does not need to exhibit any one attribute or combination of attributes to be considered a person. She does say, however, that an entity that possesses none of these attributes is not a person; “All we need to claim, to demonstrate that a fetus is not a person, is that any being which satisfies none of (1)-(5) is certainly not a person.”<sup>188</sup> Warren goes on to argue that abortion is permissible on the grounds that a human fetus satisfies none of the five criteria.

Don Marquis raises two objections to Warren’s definition of personhood. First, Warren’s account seems to justify the permissibility of killing newborn infants because the psychological differences between a fetus and a newborn infant are so minimal that newborn infants fail to satisfy enough of the criteria to be classified as a person.<sup>189</sup> Marquis acknowledges that Warren addresses this issue in a postscript attached to her original 1973 article wherein she argues that newborn infants, unlike fetuses, can be adopted, and that there are people who would love and

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<sup>184</sup> Ibid.

<sup>185</sup> Ibid.

<sup>186</sup> Ibid.

<sup>187</sup> Ibid.

<sup>188</sup> Ibid.

<sup>189</sup> Don Marquis, “Abortion Revisited,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Bioethics*, ed. Bonnie Steinbock (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 401.

provide for them even if the mother does not do so. Marquis points out though that this seems to suggest that it is impermissible to kill infants only if they are valued by society, and he thinks this is wrong.<sup>190</sup> The infanticide of newborn infants, then, presents a problem for Warren's account. The second objection Marquis has is that since an entity, according to Warren's account, must exhibit at least one psychological attribute, such as being conscious, in order to exist as a person, it follows that temporarily unconscious human beings fail to qualify as persons: "It also seems to entail, because being a person involves exhibiting certain psychological traits, that killing someone who is temporarily unconscious is morally permissible."<sup>191</sup>

Marquis then notes that Warren has two options, neither of which he thinks Warren would find satisfactory. Option one would be to define a person as an entity that has the potential to exhibit the required psychological attributes in the future.<sup>192</sup> Marquis believes Warren would reject this option because while it would protect temporarily unconscious human beings, it would also include fetuses, and this would make abortion impermissible. Option two would be to define a person as an entity that either actually exhibits certain psychological traits or is capable of manifesting these traits in the present.<sup>193</sup> Marquis points out that although this option makes abortion permissible, it also makes the killing of temporarily unconscious humans permissible as well, and it would not be in Warren's interests to embrace this option either. Marquis thus presents Warren with the horns of a dilemma. On one side lies the option of defining personhood in such a way as to make abortion and the killing of temporarily unconscious humans permissible. On the other is the option of defining personhood in such a way as to

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<sup>190</sup> Ibid., 397.

<sup>191</sup> Ibid.

<sup>192</sup> Ibid., 401.

<sup>193</sup> Ibid.

making both abortion and the killing of unconscious persons impermissible. Marquis wants to show that Warren's desired outcome, that of making abortion permissible and the killing of temporarily unconscious humans impermissible, cannot be obtained. While Warren's account of personhood may not be able to obtain this outcome, the conception of personhood advanced by NPS theory can. It can also avoid Marquis's infanticide objection as well.

NPS theory holds that a person is a temporally extended event that begins when an organism forms and pursues ends-in-view. Until an organism forms and pursues ends-in-view, a person does not exist. I noted earlier that an organism forms and pursues ends-in-view only when its interaction with its environment provides it with the opportunity to encounter problematic situations and to reflect upon them in order to seek solutions. I said that this shows that fetuses are not persons, since their pre-natal existence renders them unable to do these things. Newborn infants, however, immediately begin consciously interacting with their environment at birth. The environment a newborn infant is immersed in enables the infant to form ends-in-view and to begin existing as a person. So, while neither fetuses nor newborn infants are persons according to Warren's account, thereby leaving her account vulnerable to Marquis's charge that infanticide of newborn infants is justified, NPS theory holds that fetuses are not persons and newborn infants are. NPS theory is therefore able to justify the permissibility of abortion while avoiding Marquis's infanticide charge. The conception of personhood advanced by NPS theory not only accounts for the impermissibility of killing newborn infants, but also that of temporarily comatose human beings. Humans that fall asleep or become temporarily comatose are persons, according to NPS theory, because they were consciously awake at some point of time in the past. Because they were consciously awake and pursued ends-in-view at some point in the past, they exist as the temporally extended entities that

NPS theory considers as persons. So even though temporarily unconscious humans are not awake and are presently not forming ends-in-view, they are nonetheless still persons. I discuss NPS theory and unconscious humans in section 5.2, but for now it is important to acknowledge the conclusion, namely that NPS theory manages to avoid Marquis's infanticide objection, as well as his dilemma that aimed to show an inconsistency between justifying abortion prohibiting the killing of temporarily unconscious humans. This shows that the conception of personhood advanced by NPS theory more successfully defends abortion than does Warren's account of personhood.

The conception of personhood held by NPS theory also manages to avoid Marquis's criticisms of Michael Tooley's defense of abortion. Tooley advances a conception of personhood that Marquis refers to as the "desire account."<sup>194</sup> According to the desire account, an entity is a person if and only if that entity possesses a right to life, and an entity possesses a right to life only if it desires to live, which Tooley notes is possible only if the entity has a concept of itself as a continuing subject of experience. As Tooley himself succinctly describes it,

To sum up, my argument has been that having a right to life presupposes that one is capable of desiring to continue existing as a subject of experiences and other mental states. This in turn presupposes both that one has the concept of such a continuing entity and that one believes that one is oneself such an entity. So an entity that lacks such a consciousness of itself as a continuing subject of mental states does not have a right to life.<sup>195</sup>

Tooley then proceeds to argue that since a fetus does not have a conception of itself as a continuing subject of experiences, it does not desire to live and therefore lacks possession of a right to life. Thus, he concludes, abortion is permissible. Marquis points out that if Tooley's desire account is correct, it would be permissible for persons to kill themselves if they no longer

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<sup>194</sup> Ibid.

<sup>195</sup> Michael Tooley "Abortion and Infanticide," *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 2, no.1 (1972): 49.

desired to continue living, and that it would be permissible to kill unconscious humans as well, since they do not desire to go on living:

Consider the case of an individual suffering from depression who says that she wishes she were dead, or, for that matter, who says sincerely that she sees no point in living. Consider the case of someone who is not a self-conscious being because she is temporarily unconscious and therefore not conscious of anything, including her own self. Consider the case of an individual who ‘may permit someone to kill him because he had been convinced that if he allows himself to be sacrificed to the gods he will be gloriously rewarded in a life to come’.

Apparently Tooley’s account of the wrongness of killing implies that it is morally permissible to kill all of the above individuals. It is not. Thus, Tooley’s account, like Warren’s personhood account, permits too much killing.<sup>196</sup>

Marquis notes that Tooley himself thought these problems were sufficiently severe to abandon the desire account altogether: “Tooley’s problem was finding qualifications that rescue the desire account, that do not seem to be merely ad hoc, and that preserve abortion choice. Because of these difficulties Tooley eventually gave up his desire account.”<sup>197</sup>

How NPS theory handles the problem presented by unconscious humans is discussed in section 5.2, as I noted earlier, but as far as the issue of suicide is concerned, I have already shown in chapter three that NPS theory forbids killing oneself. As one recalls the argument from that chapter, any entity that forms ends-in-view values their growth as an end-in-itself. And because an entity’s state of being alive is necessarily instrumental to the realization of any end-in-view, an entity that forms ends-in-view values itself as an end-in-itself as well. This imposes an end duty against killing an entity that forms ends-in-view, a duty that all entities, including those that are contemplating suicide, are bound by.<sup>198</sup>

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<sup>196</sup> Marquis, “Abortion Revisited”, 398.

<sup>197</sup> Ibid.,

<sup>198</sup> NPS theory does hold that suicide is permissible for any entity that cannot form ends-in-view. This is because if an entity cannot form ends-in-view, it cannot obtain growth, and it therefore cannot value itself as an end-in-itself by forming ends-in-view. This point is important for

I have shown thus far that the conception of personhood advanced by NPS theory offers a defense of the permissibility of abortion that overcomes objections to the permissibility arguments of Thomson, Warren, and Tooley. The success of my account stems from denying that human fetuses are persons. A fetus is not a person because it has never valued itself as an end-in-itself because it has never interacted with an environment that provides the opportunity to form ends-in-view in response to problematic situations.

One might object that even though a fetus does not value itself as an end, aborting it is nonetheless prohibited by an end duty due to the fetus's *potential* to possess the capacity to form ends-in-view. Even though there is no end duty against aborting a fetus that is not already valued as an end in itself, can it be argued that its potential to value itself as an end implies that our behavior toward it is constrained as if it is protected by an end duty, and that aborting is prohibited after all? To answer this question, one must first understand what it means for something to have the potential to be something else, and what this implies about the moral status of things. According to McMahan, there are two types of morally relevant potential: identity preserving potential and non-identity preserving potential. He describes the concept of identity-preserving potential as follows:

There is a sense in which X has the potential to become Y only if X and Y would be identical – that is, only if X and Y would be one and the same individual entity. Or, rather, since what an individual has the potential to become is normally a thing of a certain *sort*, perhaps we should say that X has the potential to become a Y in this first sense only if X will continue to exist as a Y. It is in this sense that Prince Charles has the potential to become the king of England, since he would continue to exist as the same individual. I will call this kind of *potential identity-preserving potential*. (original emphasis)<sup>199</sup>

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understanding how NPS theory handles the morality of euthanasia, which I discuss in section 5.3.

<sup>199</sup> Ibid., 304.

McMahan contrasts identity-preserving potential with non-identity potential whereby an entity ceases to exist as the kind of thing it currently is once it realizes its potential to be something else. He writes,

Identity-preserving potential contrasts with what I will call *nonidentity potential*. Nonidentity potential may take a variety of forms, which are unified by two features: first, when X has the nonidentity potential to become Y (or a Y), Y will not, when it exists, be identical with X (or Y will not just be a phase in the history of X); but, second, we nevertheless employ the idiom of “becoming” in describing the transition from X to Y. In the commonest case, when X has the nonidentity potential to become Y, X gives rise to, or causally contributes to the production of Y when its constituent matter is transformed in such a way that, while X itself ceases to exist, a new and different individual, Y, is formed out of that same matter. We say, for example, that the sperm and egg together have the potential to become a zygote. This is a paradigm of nonidentity potential, for when the sperm and egg fuse, they both cease to exist but the zygote is created out of the matter of which they were composed (original emphasis).<sup>200</sup>

McMahan goes on to say that an entity’s potential to become something else gives the entity a certain moral status only if the entity’s potential to be something else preserves the identity of what it is now:

The idea that the potential to become a person confers a special moral status is plausible, if at all, only if the potential is identity-preserving. [It makes little sense to suppose that X’s potential to become a Y confers a special status on X now if X will never actually *be* a Y, and especially if the transition to Y involves X’s ceasing to exist. In these conditions, if X had a high moral status, that might be a reason to *prevent* the realization of its potential, thereby preventing its ceasing to exist.] (original emphasis)<sup>201</sup>

The significance of McMahan’s distinction between identity-preserving and non-identity-preserving potential points to how a fetus lacking the capacity to form ends-in-view cannot transform into something that does possess the capacity and remain a fetus. Even though a fetus

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<sup>200</sup> Ibid.

<sup>201</sup> Ibid., 308-309.

has the potential to exist as a being with the capacity to form ends-in-view and to thereby value itself as an end, this potential is *non-identity preserving*. So while a fetus does have the potential to value itself as an end, this potential to do so is non-identity preserving. This implies that the fetus's potential to value itself as an end is not protected by an end duty. And because the fetus's potential to exist as an entity that values itself as an end is non-identity preserving, prohibiting the fetus's abortion is not justified on the basis that the fetus should be treated as if it values itself as an end. The potentiality idea fails as a strategy for justifying end duties against abortion. Now consider the following scenario as an illustration of the application of NPS theory to the issue of abortion.

Suppose Lisa is pregnant and suffers from a condition that will kill her unless her fetus is removed. Removing the fetus will inexorably result in its death. Lisa's life-threatening pregnancy presents her with a problematic situation. Remember from chapter three that an agent's idea of an end that they think will resolve their problem counts as an end-in-view only if their problem is resolvable. The fact that aborting Lisa's fetus can save her life indicates that Lisa's problematic situation is resolvable, and that her idea of aborting the fetus counts as an end-in-view. It is therefore clear that Lisa does possess the capacity to form ends-in-view. Because Lisa does not want to die, and she feels that securing the life of the fetus, she consents to the abortion. Since Lisa's fetus does not form ends-in-view, it does not value itself as an end-in-itself, and there is no end duty against aborting it. Now suppose that the situation draws the attention of Annie, a co-worker of Lisa's who strongly believes that aborting Lisa's fetus is impermissible. It follows from NPS theory that it is not only permissible for Lisa to abort her fetus, but that it is impermissible to prevent Lisa from doing so. It follows from NPS theory that it would be wrong for Annie to judge that Lisa should not abort her fetus.

One might think that proving this point is unnecessary since Thomson has already argued that it is permissible for a woman to abort her fetus if it threatens her life. As one recalls, however, Kaczor's objection serves to illustrate that someone may continue to insist that abortion is always impermissible if the fetus is a person and enjoys a right to life. It should not be assumed that everyone finds Thomson's argument to be convincing. This is why it is important to further analyze the scenario I have just described. NPS theory holds in this scenario that not only is it permissible to abort Lisa's fetus, but that Annie is not justified in thinking that Lisa's fetus should be kept alive. Here is why: Because Annie knows that Lisa has the capacity to form ends-in-view, she has judged that it is not worth preventing Lisa's capacity to form ends-in-view from being destroyed.

As I argued in chapter three<sup>202</sup>, there is no other basis on which Annie's judgment can be justified because making that judgment entails judging that one's own capacity to form ends-in-view has greater value than someone else's when there is no difference between them. So in believing that Lisa's fetus should be kept alive, Annie has judged that Lisa's capacity to form ends-in-view has less moral worth than an entity that does not even value itself as an end-in-itself. This judgement is inconsistent with holding Lisa to be an entity that is valuable as an end-in-itself. It follows from NPS theory that this judgment is unjustifiable.

One might object that Annie hasn't judged that Lisa's life has less worth because she hasn't consciously thought about the value of Lisa's life, and therefore has not consciously thought that it has less worth. This objection fails because an agent does not have to consciously think that a person's life is not worth saving in order for the agent to make that judgment. Annie did not have to have consciously think that Lisa's capacity to form ends-in-view is not worth

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<sup>202</sup> See section 3.5.

saving in order for her to judge so. By believing that Lisa's fetus should be kept alive, Annie has in fact judged that Lisa's capacity to form ends-in-view is not worth saving. This is because her value judgment can be inferred from her behavior and her beliefs. As Francesco Orsi writes, "It is also important to keep in mind that evaluation need not be articulated via value terms, or indeed be verbally articulated at all. Often we can tell a person's values and commitments from her behavior and emotional reactions much more than from what she says (to others or even to herself)".<sup>203</sup> Accordingly, even though Annie has not consciously thought that Lisa's capacity to form ends-in-view is not worth saving, she has judged that it is not worth saving by believing that Lisa's fetus should be kept alive.

One might object that Annie has not judged that Lisa's capacity to form ends-in-view isn't worth saving because Annie does not want Lisa to die, since Lisa's death is not the intention behind Annie's belief that the fetus should be kept alive. This objection fails as can be seen by the following illustration. Suppose I have bought an expensive rug. My reason for buying the rug was to acquire it, not to spend a lot of money. However, I would not have bought the rug if I did not think it was worth the money I was willing to spend. So even though my intention behind buying the rug was not to spend a lot of money, I have nonetheless judged that the rug was worth the expense. Likewise, even if Annie's only reason for objecting to the abortion is to save Lisa's fetus, she has nonetheless judged that Lisa's life is not worth saving. She has judged that Lisa's capacity to form ends-in-view is not worth saving even though she does not intend for Lisa to die. What if Lisa's pregnancy is not life-threatening, and she still does not value her fetus as an end-in-itself? Lisa's fetus in this scenario, as in the previous one, lacks the capacity to form ends-in-view, and an end duty against aborting it cannot be justified.

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<sup>203</sup> Francesco Orsi, *Value Theory* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2015), 1-2.

## 5.2 HUMANS THAT ARE NOT CONSCIOUSLY AWAKE

In this section I determine how NPS theory assesses the moral status of humans that are not consciously awake, that is, sleeping humans and comatose humans. McMahan does not include sleeping humans in his list of marginal cases, and it might be thought that there is no need for him to do so. After all, isn't it obvious that being asleep does not make it more permissible to be killed? Perhaps. But since NPS theory holds that there is an end duty against killing a human that forms ends-in-view, and since humans do not make ends-in-view while they are asleep, it is interesting to assess the moral status of sleeping persons according to NPS theory.

Recall from chapter four that a person is a temporally extended event that exists when an organism begins to form ends-in-view. This implies that the overwhelming majority of sleeping humans are persons. In fact, the only humans that sleep and are not persons are fetuses, which lack the capacity to form ends-in-view. All other humans that sleep have made ends-in-view in their life histories and are therefore persons. I shall hereafter use the terms "sleeping humans" and "sleeping persons" interchangeably. Now even though sleeping persons are not consciously awake, they easily react to stimuli that brings them to wakefulness. This indicates that sleeping persons do possess the *capacity* to form ends-in-view even though they do not do so while they are asleep. The fact is, however, that because sleeping persons are not awake, they do not form ends-in-view, and they therefore do not value themselves as ends-in-themselves. This suggests that there are no end duties against killing persons that are asleep. The suggestion, however, is false. This is because all persons sleep in order to ensure that their ends-in-view are realized in the future. Because I have planned, for example, to go grocery shopping tomorrow, I know that I need to go to sleep so that I will have enough energy to actually realize my end-in-view of going

grocery shopping. So even though I may not be forming ends-in-view while I am sleeping, the fact that I am asleep does not mean I have not formed an end-in-view whose realization I am still pursuing. It follows from NPS theory, then, that there is no morally relevant difference between killing a person who is asleep and killing a person who is awake and is actively engaged in pursuing the realization of an end-in-view, for each person has formed an end-in-view that they are intending to realize at some point in the future. It does not follow then that sleeping persons lack protection of an end duty simply because they do not form ends-in-view while they are asleep.

Comatose humans are also persons, but they are persons that lack the capacity to form ends-in-view because they are unconscious and cannot be brought to wakefulness by stimuli. The distinction between identity preserving and non-identity preserving potential also explains why, according to NPS theory, it is wrong to deliberately end the state of being alive of persons who are temporarily unconscious. If a coma is known to be temporary, as in the case of a medically induced coma or one with a positive prognosis, there is reason to think that the person will regain consciousness and re-acquire the capacity to form ends-in-view. And because a temporarily comatose person will continue to be a person when they wake up and re-acquire the capacity to form ends-in-view, their potential to be beings that value themselves as an end is identity-preserving. Thus, their state of being alive is accorded the same protection as a person who actually does possess the capacity to form ends-in-view.

Comatose humans are not accorded this protection, however, merely because their potential to be entities that form ends-in-view is identity preserving. Identity preserving potential is a merely necessary, but not sufficient condition, for granting an entity the same kind of moral status as the thing that it has the potential to become. In other words, it is the case that

if x has the same moral status as y, then x's potential to be a y is identity preserving, but it is not the case that if x has the identity preserving potential to be a y, then x has the moral status of y. This can be demonstrated by using McMahan's illustration of Prince Charles, given in 5.1. Prince Charles does not currently enjoy the rights and privileges of being king even though his potential to be king is identity-preserving. This raises the question as to what else is needed, in addition to identity-preserving potential, for x to enjoy the same moral status as y. The answer is that x enjoys the same moral status as y if and only if x's potential to be y is identity-preserving, and that x used to be a y at some point of time in the past. Accordingly, permanently comatose persons lack the protection granted by an end duty unless they are valued as ends-in-themselves by a different party. Although it is true they have formed ends-in-view in the past, permanently comatose persons lack the potential to regain consciousness, and so they lack the identity-preserving potential to value themselves as ends. Euthanizing a permanently comatose person would thus not be prohibited by an end duty if he is not valued as an end by a different party.

### 5.3 VOLUNTARY EUTHANASIA

Before discussing the morality of euthanasia, it needs to be understood what is meant by the term and the context in which it is applied. Tooley gives the following definition of euthanasia *simpliciter*:

Euthanasia may be defined as an action in which a person is intentionally killed or allowed to die because it is believed that the individual would be better off dead than alive – or else, in the case of irreversible coma, at least no worse off.<sup>204</sup>

Note that euthanasia so defined can present itself as an ethical dilemma in contexts unrelated to professional medicine and healthcare. If I encounter someone who is slowly being burned alive

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<sup>204</sup> Michael Tooley, "Euthanasia and Assisted Suicide," in *A Companion to Applied Ethics*, ed. R.G. Frey and Christopher Heath Wellman (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 326.

in a car wreck, for example, then the question arises as to whether it would be right for me to put them out of their misery by ending their life. The setting of this scenario is not a hospital patient's bedside, but in popular imagination the image most closely associated with euthanasia is that of a doctor "pulling the plug" on someone who presents as a case of medical futility. Therefore, I will limit my discussion of euthanasia to the hospital/medical context as the surest way of maximizing its value. After defining euthanasia *simpliciter*, Tooley goes on to describe voluntary euthanasia as euthanasia that "is requested by the person who undergoes it."<sup>205</sup> This is how the concept of voluntary euthanasia will be understood in my discussion. The request to be euthanized is often made by patients because they want to stop experiencing extreme levels of pain, and the permissibility of voluntary euthanasia is determined in part according to the intensity of pain on a case-by-case basis. This is how the permissibility of voluntary euthanasia is determined by NPS theory. The purpose of this section is to discuss the type of pain that qualifies the administration of voluntary euthanasia as a morally permissible course of action.

The sensation of pain can present itself as a problematic situation. The pain of falling down, for example, can prevent the runner from finishing the race, and the pain of a headache can interrupt the writer's thought process. But the runner can bandage himself and eventually resume running, and the writer can take aspirin and resume work on her novel. Wearing bandages and taking aspirin therefore count as ends-in-view because they are responses to problematic situations that are resolvable. By forming their ends-in-view, the runner and the writer value themselves as ends, and this in turn justifies end duties against killing them or letting them die. But the situation is different for someone in a state of UMP. UMP stands for pain that is unbearable and unmanageable, and I will hereafter use the expression "UMP person"

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<sup>205</sup> Ibid.

to refer to someone in a state of UMP. UMP presents an irresolvable problematic situation to the UMP person for two reasons. The first is that UMP is unmanageable. This means the sensation of pain an UMP person experiences cannot be eliminated nor reduced to a less severe level of intensity. In other words, an UMP person will always experience UMP if they are alive. The second reason why UMP presents an irresolvable problem is that UMP is unbearable. I presume that an unmanageable pain can present a resolvable problem to its experiencer if it is bearable and the person experiencing it could thereby become accustomed to its intensity. I would think, however, that this is feasible only if the pain is not overwhelming. However, if the pain's intensity level is overwhelming, as is the case with UMP, then the possibility of a person becoming inured to the pain does not exist. Now since the idea of an end is an end-in-view only if the idea is formed in response to a problematic situation that is resolvable, and since UMP presents an irresolvable problematic situation, it follows that an UMP person lacks the capacity to form ends-in-view.

Does this mean that an UMP person lacks the capacity to form ends-in-view altogether? An UMP person could face a resolvable situation in addition to the irresolvable situation presented by UMP, and it might then be thought that in this instance an UMP person does in fact possess the capacity to form ends-in-view, in which case euthanizing them would be prohibited by an end duty. However, since the experience of UMP is unimaginably painful to an UMP person, it is doubtful that an UMP person would even be aware of any additional problematic situations they might be facing. Hence, it is doubtful that an UMP person can form ends-in-view in response to them. The UMP person's inability to form an end-in-view in response to the problematic situation presented by UMP implies that they lack the inability to form any end-in-view whatsoever, and an UMP person therefore lacks the capacity to form ends-in-view.

Now since UMP persons lack the capacity to form ends-in-view, UMP persons cannot value themselves as ends in themselves. Even if valuing oneself as an end does not require one to form ends-in-view, the unbearable intensity of experiencing UMP makes it doubtful that UMP persons can value themselves as ends because it is likely that they cannot desire anything other than ending their UMP, even if they realize that the only way to do so is to die. Accordingly, if a person in pain expresses a desire that they do not want to die, then that constitutes a sufficient reason to believe that their pain is not of UMP quality, and that they can form ends-in-view. It follows from NPS theory, then, that there is an end duty against killing persons who are in pain but request to not be killed. But what if someone is in terrible pain and has not requested to not be killed? In this situation, killing is impermissible only if the pain is of UMP quality. This is because if a person is in UMP, they cannot form ends-in-view.

Another objection could be raised against the claim that euthanizing an UMP person is not prohibited by an end duty. One might try to argue that the UMP person's request to be euthanized constitutes an end-in-view. If that were to be true, the line of thinking might be that the UMP person would value themselves as an end by making the request, and granting the request would thereby be prohibited by an end duty. It is not difficult to see why one might be enticed to argue that the UMP person's request to be euthanized constitutes an end-in-view. Since one can cease experiencing any type of pain by being euthanized, it might be inferred that the UMP person's experience of UMP presents a resolvable, rather than an irresolvable, problematic situation. This inference would imply that the UMP person's idea of an end is, in fact, an end-in-view. This line of reasoning, however, is incorrect. It is indeed true that euthanizing an UMP person succeeds in eliminating that person's pain. It is not true that euthanizing an UMP person will resolve the problematic situation that the UMP person's

experience of UMP presents. This is because a problematic situation, as one recalls, is resolvable only if it is possible to transform it into a situation that is consummatory. One's problematic situation is transformed into a consummatory situation only if realizing one's end-in-view succeeds in enabling one to resume one's pre-interrupted activity. A euthanized person, however, cannot resume their pre-interrupted activity because a person, once euthanized, is dead. Thus, while an UMP person's request to be euthanized is an idea they have of an end that will eliminate their pain, this idea is not an end-in-view because their problematic situation is irresolvable. Accordingly, the UMP person does not value themselves as an end by requesting to be euthanized, and euthanizing an UMP person is not prohibited by an end duty.

Since one cannot value an UMP person as an end in themselves and believe they should be kept alive, does valuing an UMP person as an end in themselves imply believing that there is an end duty *against* keeping them alive? The honest answer to this question is yes. The answer sounds paradoxical because valuing anything as an end in itself entails adopting an attitude of respect toward that thing. It is typically assumed that respecting a thing involves believing that that thing should not be destroyed and that it should continue to exist. According to NPS theory, however, persons *do* continue to exist after they die because, as I argued in chapter four, NPS theory is committed to the thesis that persons are temporally extended events. As a temporally extended event, a person has parts that are extended across time, and for a person to die is only for a single part of that person to undergo change. The remaining parts stay the same as they were when the person was still alive. This is why a person, according to NPS theory, does not cease to exist upon the moment of their death. Of course, one might object that even if causing a person's death does not destroy them, it is still somehow contrary to treating them with the respect implied in valuing them as an end in themselves. If the belief that one can cause

someone else's death while still respecting them strikes one as counterintuitive, then it is only because the overwhelming majority of persons who are alive do not want to die. I suggested earlier in this section, however, that UMP persons represent an exception: if a person is in a state of UMP, then it is likely that they desire to end their life. And since an UMP person does not value themselves as an end-in-itself, there is no end duty that prohibits ending their life.

#### 5.4 OTHER THOUGHTS

This concludes my discussion about the application of NPS theory and marginal cases. I argued that human fetuses lack the capacity to form ends-in-view and therefore do not value themselves as ends. I also claimed that temporarily comatose humans and humans that are asleep are persons who are protected by end duties. Lastly, I showed that NPS theory supports voluntary euthanasia.

These are of course not the only applications of NPS theory to marginal cases. However, as I noted at the beginning of this chapter, I chose to focus my discussion on how NPS theory bears on abortion and euthanasia because these two particular issues are among the most inflammatory in the debate over the moral status of humans.

## CONCLUSION

The goal of my dissertation has been twofold. The first goal was to develop an account of personhood with an eye toward explaining how persons are morally valuable. This account is called the theory of normative selfhood, or NPS theory. The second goal was to demonstrate the applicability of NPS theory by assessing its impact on ethical controversies involving marginal cases. I accomplished these goals over the course of five chapters.

In chapter one, I argued against the concept of intrinsic value. This prepared the stage for later arguing that the value of persons is extrinsic yet objective. Chapter two expounded on Dewey's concept of value and revealed its connection to his account of practical reasoning.

The purpose of chapter three was to show how this account can be used to argue for the claim that persons are extrinsically yet objectively valuable. The argument here was that persons possess this type of value by possessing the capacity to form ends-in-view: because no person can form an end-in-view without having the intention of realizing it, every person must value the realization of any end-in-view they form as an end in itself. This implies that every person, in order to form any end-in-view, must value their capacity to form ends-in-view as an end in itself. This implies that the value of growth is objective. Accordingly, because every person's state of being alive (SOBA) is necessarily instrumental to their capacity to form ends-in-view, and every person that makes ends-in-view must value their capacity to do so as an end in itself, it follows that every person must value the fact that they exist in SOBA as an end in itself. Therefore, every person, by virtue of possessing the capacity to form ends-in-view, is extrinsically and objectively valuable. I discussed the normative constraints this argument imposes on what

persons may do to themselves and to others. In doing so, I acknowledged my debt to Kant's formula of humanity while describing the ways in which NPS theory departs from it.

Chapter four was devoted to explicating the metaphysical structure of personhood that NPS theory implies. I argued that persons are temporally extended events because they begin to exist by forming ends-in-view. The specific content of an end-in-view is determined by the problematic situation to which it was developed in reaction, and a problematic situation exists objectively as the outcome of a causally continuous sequence of events that extends backwards into the past. I showed that this account of personal ontology conforms well to common-sense intuitions regarding personhood, and that it is also consistent with Dewey's own remarks about personhood.

In the fifth and final chapter I demonstrated the applicability of NPS theory by assessing its impact on ethical controversies centered on marginal cases. I focused mainly on the issues of abortion and euthanasia because these are the issues that provoke more public discussion than most other ethical controversies. I argued that fetuses lack the moral protection that accorded to persons who are valued as ends in themselves because a fetus's potential to be a person is non-identity preserving. Although temporarily comatose humans lack the capacity to form ends-in-view, they merit the level of protection accorded to persons that value themselves as ends-in-themselves because a temporally comatose human has the identity preserving potential to be a person that values themselves as ends in themselves. Because a permanently comatose person lacks any potential to be a person that possesses the capacity to form ends-in-view, they lack the protection accorded to persons who value themselves as ends in themselves. I concluded the chapter by discussing the instances in which NPS theory justifies voluntary euthanasia.

I end this dissertation with the final thought that although NPS theory presents a conception of the value of life to be used in arguments about bioethics, it is not meant to provide definitive answers to the complicated issues regarding marginal cases. Rather, I offer it as a means of contributing to these controversial conversations from an ethical perspective so that conflicting values and moral questions can be identified and discussed.

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