nonevidential reasons (such as D2 desires) for adapting one's commitments to convenience or expediency. Yet the committed agent should entertain rational critique of her commitments since her respect for their grounds implies that she does not want them to be based on falsehoods.

7. **Strength of Will:** Commitment to some X implies the ability to act for X's sake and some significant level of success in doing so (whether or not X is attained), which is incompatible with a high degree of *akrasia*.[105] Thus commitment is a phenomenon of *volitional effort*, liking "trying," but concerned with setting and sustaining ends rather than merely attempting to enact intentions once formed. This effort of will is not just in response to adversity, for exceptionally resolute persons have little difficulty in acting on their commitments;[106] that is because they have already made the effort to bring other motivations into line, and active effort to maintain their end or goal is now a lasting disposition of their will.

One advantage of this conception is the way it makes sense of our intuition that "strength of will" is enhanced by firm commitment. Following Ronald Milo, Blustein suggests that an irresolute person "does not make a sufficient effort to preserve strength of resolve even though this could have successfully been done had the person exercised powers of self-control."[107] It should be apparent now that the "resolve" lacking in such cases is a projective effort of self-motivation.

In conclusion, this chapter shows that several concepts playing central roles in late-twentieth-century ethical theory and moral psychology cannot adequately be explained without the existential conception of striving will. In particular, the key concepts of care, volitional love, identity-conferring commitments, and integrity are clarified by the existential approach to personhood. It remains to be shown that this approach is compatible with an objective conception of the values worth caring about, as suggested by Blustein's rich analysis and the concept of respect to which I have appealed. That is the task of the next chapter.

14

An Existential Objectivist Account of What Is Worth Caring About

Overview. This chapter develops the idea introduced in chapters 12 and 13 that an existential conception of the will as an end-setting and motivation-sustaining capacity is compatible with moderate objectivism about the values that give us reasons to set ends, initiate new projects, and form deep commitments. The chapter begins with a review of the importance of this question about the nature of good lives for contemporary political philosophy, and then develops an existential response to Harry Frankfurt's subjectivist interpretation of the worth of what we care about. The analysis does not try to establish the metaphysical status of values but it does have normative implications (in particular in the concluding taxonomy of grounds for caring).

Introduction

This chapter concludes the argument for the book's first main thesis by showing that the existential conception of the will is compatible with an objective account of practical reasons for willing and so escapes charges of arbitrariness or irrationalism. Against Harry Frankfurt's subjectivist account of practical normativity, I argue that when caring is understood in terms of projective commitment, it always depends on objective (and even, in a weak sense, "universalizable") grounding value-judgments. Nor are these reasons for caring entirely derivative from already-existing cares or loves. There must always be grounds for the projection of any goals, yet these grounds do not necessitate action and need not themselves constitute prepurposive motivation.[1]

Consistent with the account of aretaic commitment in the last chapter, I also maintain that the grounds for caring about something X are not generally exhausted by the product-values involved in realizing X or bringing about X's good; for there are often other goods related to the process of pursuing X that can (without self-defeat) provide at least *part* of the basis for devotion to X. Moreover, some grounds for caring about X may be accessible or salient only to particular agents, depending on contingent features of their personal history, including past choices and standing projects or relationships. This chapter concludes with a preliminary taxonomy of grounds for projective willing, which plays the same role in an existential virtue ethics that a list of basic goods plays in "new" natural-law theories of practical reason.[2]

I. Existential Objectivism

In chapter 13, we saw that the existential account of caring and volitional love explains and supports Frankfurt's theory on all but these two points: the existential conception of the striving will does not require that the core of the self be constituted by "volitional necessities" that, in turn, are determined by contingencies beyond the agent's control; nor does it imply that the agent's ultimate grounds for caring are *inscrutably* personal or subjective. My goal in this chapter is to show that an existential theory of the will does not imply that the volitional constitution of our life goals or ground projects is ultimately arbitrary or without interpersonal justification. By contrast, in explaining the structure of projective motivation (chap. 9, secs. 4 and 5), I introduced the Grounding thesis, which says that goals and ends are projected upon objective grounds. This implies what I call *existential objectivism* (EO):

> EO: The goal-setting and goal-pursuing activity of the striving will (projecting new final ends, modifying existing motives, and consolidating or focusing the motivation behind intended purposes already decided on by the agent) is always performed *in light of* values or goods that (appear to the agent to) *ground* or at least partially justify the motives formed by volitional commitment and resolve, independently of any relation between these goods and the agent's existing D1-D3 desires. In general, these values have the *broadly ethical* character of tending to provide *intersubjectively accessible* reasons for ways of life, modes of caring, or different types of personal ethos.

This kind of existential view clearly rejects Sartre's signature thesis that my practical orientation toward goals, relationships, and concerns that inform my actions is an "original projection of myself . . . which causes the existence of values, appeals, expectations, and in general a world" of practical significance to exist for me.[3] Whether or not we exercise libertarian control over projective motivation in my sense, it does not experience itself as utterly unjustified or anguished due to lacking any foundation for its purposes. Rather, existential objectivism is analogous to the old eudaimonist formula that the will always aims at some good; but it is liberated from the idea that the first-order good(s) at which the will aims must be part of the agent's own eudaimonia or even the collective eudaimonia of the agent's community.

Despite its sharp departure from Sartre's early theory of values,[4] EO has a well-established place in the tradition behind my existential conception of the will. We have seen that Scotus and Kant are objectivists about specifically moral values as overriding grounds for projective motivation (chap. 11) and that Frankl is an objectivist about a much broader range of potential "meanings" to be found in potential causes, purposes, or undertakings (chap. 12). This is unsurprising, because at the *normative* level, quite apart from metaethical questions about value-realism, there are several reasons to think that the proper functioning of the human will presupposes objective values (of multiple kinds) and requires volitional agents to be at least moderately able to recognize and track such goods, taking them to be realities *independent of* their own subjective states, including especially their desires.

Today, an interesting array of figures in both analytic and Continental thought provide support for this view. In recent moral psychology, perhaps the most impressive is Jeffrey Blustein, who argues that "not all care is, all things considered, *good* care or equally good care."[5] He presses this point in order to show that one cannot build an ethic solely on the formal structure of the caring attitude, as Nel Noddings once suggested.[6] Some personal projects are immoral, and others are "excessive," focusing obsessively on one cause or principle while ignoring others to which the agent ought to attend.[7] Cares can be criticized not only according to deontic standards but also according to other broadly ethical standards about what anyone ought to care about: "Plausible candidates are things that can be identified as fundamental and important human goods: knowledge, life, play, aesthetic experience, practical reasonableness (including morality), and sociability (love and friendship)."[8]

Blustein's list focuses on human goods, whereas EO recognizes grounds for projective motivation beyond the human realm, for example, in natural values like the flourishing of nonhuman species and ecosystems, good essences (among ersatz entities), and possibly divine being. But Blustein agrees that such objective values provide a key part of the evaluative framework in which we can undertake "critical scrutiny of our fundamental carings and core commitments," which in turn is crucial for "autonomy" in our deepest identity.[9]

As we will see, such an objectivist approach has to be qualified in several ways to stand up to Frankfurt's arguments for the opposite position, which we might call *existential subjectivism* (ES). Since Frankfurt draws together several antiobjectivist and antirationalist arguments from other thinkers, focusing on Frankfurt will help to show how EO can be made sufficiently flexible to capture the features of human psychology on which subjectivists focus, without abandoning key aspects of objectivism that reflect ordinary prephilosophical intuitions about the relationship of cares and values. In the next section, I put this project in historical context by arguing that recent political philosophy reveals the need to find some acceptably objectivist understanding of norms concerning good lives.

2. Caring and the Good in Recent Political Philosophy

As I suggested in chapter 2 (sec. 4), the question of whether there are objective ways of understanding goods that can inform individual and group decisions about how to live was raised in the twentieth century by communitarian and Aristotelian responses to neo-Kantian political theories. The revival of virtue ethics reopened questions about good character and good lives that were underemphasized in moral theories aiming primarily to provide criteria for justice in liberal societies. As we see most clearly in John Rawls's *Political Liberalism*, these theories aimed to define justice in a way that would be neutral between many (although certainly not all) rival comprehensive conceptions of happiness for individuals and communities.

The hope of both pragmatist and more rationalist versions of the neo-Kantian project is to show that there are grounds (either in the nature of practical reason and agency itself or at least in personhood as conceived in some political traditions) for principles of duty, justice, and individual rights that are largely *independent* of other values we may pursue in life. Hence without threatening the objectivity of morality and the foundation of political justice, citizens can disagree not only about *what* other values should regulate our long-term goals or highest ends but also about whether these values are entirely subjective (defined only in reference to agents' brute preferences) or objectively based in human psychology, sociology, religion, or in some other dimension of reality. It is, of course, this sought independence from any comprehensive doctrine of "the good" that makes "morality" in the neo-Kantian sense narrower than "ethics" in the broad, classical sense of a practical inquiry into what goals are worth pursuing for their own sake and what ways of life are superior.[10]

Yet several twentieth-century authors, such as Elizabeth Anscombe, Alasdair MacIntyre, Bernard Williams, and Michael Sandel, have made different criticisms of this neo-Kantian project, both as a goal for moral theory

per se and as a way of grounding political philosophy. In every case, their criticisms are driven by a desire to refocus attention on the question of how we can argue for the superiority of some forms of shared life and some kinds of personal goals over others. The principles required for such a broad, ethical evaluation of political institutions and social life (the state, civil society, and the personal endeavors they support) unavoidably involve "thicker" conceptions of the good than a neo-Kantian conception of justice can provide. Thus an adequate political ethics cannot abstract entirely from the values that guide the selection of individual and group life goals.

But belief that this question needs a systematic answer, part of which may include an account of the virtues or perfections of character that make possible the pursuit and perhaps attainment of the best form(s) of life, is, interestingly, *not exclusive* to those who reject the possibility of moral principles that are neutral between at least a large range of comprehensive accounts of the good. In recent years, a significant number of other authors who are not as pessimistic about the neo-Kantian project of finding an ethos-independent basis for political philosophy have suggested that we also need substantive conceptions of "the good" and have looked for values that can ground ways of life or justify personal devotions. In addition to Blustein, authors as diverse as Owen Flanagan, Joel Kupperman, Thomas Hurka, Stephen Darwall, and others have asked whether we have any objective criteria for what is worth caring about. Their work in moral psychology intersects with a growing feminist literature that attempts to base normative ethics on an account of caring. Some of the authors in this tradition see their project as complementary with neo-Kantian accounts of justice, and others do not. Moreover, similar themes have for decades concerned Continental philosophers writing on ethics, such as Buber, Sartre, Jaspers, Arendt, Levinas, and Ricoeur.

The main problem with all these recent attempts to revive ethics in its broader sense is that they lack a conception of the will adequate to the task. As far back as 1960, Elizabeth Anscombe told us that before significant progress could be made in ethics, we would need to address several more basic problems in moral psychology.[11] Since then, following her lead, philosophers have devoted much attention to explaining the notions of intention, action, decision, and practical reason as well as to clarifying the differences between consequentialist and nonconsequentialist moral theories. Yet, as we saw in chapter 3, these developments led to a conception of "will" that covers only decision or the formation of intentions—which at most is conceived as a special kind of agent-causal process that occurs in selecting among multiple options.

Thus twentieth-century moral psychology failed to reach the heart of the problem that Anscombe recognized. Without a sufficient understanding

of the will's unique motivational function, proponents of the broad ethical approach could not adequately explain how human persons form and sustain long-term commitments, identity-defining cares, or governing personal goals, the pursuit of which gives life not only its narrative shape but also a large part of its personal meaning or practical significance for the agent living that life. That is the lacuna I have tried to fill.

My existential conception of the will supports the recent idea that a value-objectivist response to this question of "practical normativity"[12] can be compatible with holding that a neo-Kantian analysis of the Right is a better basis than comprehensive conceptions of the Good for understanding the basic requirements of social justice and legitimate constitutional structures. It is possible to favor a deontological conception of basic duties and political rights without holding that the plurality of "comprehensive conceptions" of the good in contemporary societies shows that objective ethics at this level is impossible. One could simply hold that the concept of the Right is the *primary* criterion for evaluating the basic structure of society, with rival theories of the Good playing at most a secondary role in justifying a given society's public conception of political justice (it is the common point of reference in constitutional debate).

If this is correct, then fundamental principles for political justice are determined by ideals that are definable and defendable largely in abstraction from the values that inform concrete life goals or existential projects, although these might play a secondary role by justifying some differences between just constitutional schemes across different societies. One can hold this, as Kant clearly did, *without* thinking that the question of the best life or what goods we should value is merely subjective, or without taking a relativist view of the Good. As a result, one can accept that at least the formal structure of the Right is analyzable largely in independence from the Good, without accepting the implausible further claim that the particular content of political rights and democratic lawmaking can be understood *wholly* without reference to our substantive views about what human beings need and what ends and goals are worth pursuing for mature moral agents. For it is difficult to interpret the scope of rights and to justify even the weakest types of legal paternalism (such as state support for the arts or prohibitions on polygamy) without reference to thick goods.

Such a combination of political deontologism and ethical objectivism contrasts sharply with two theses recently defended by Jürgen Habermas (but also present in Rawls and other neo-Kantians): (1) that substantive accounts of the goods to be valued in human life always depend on some form of "metaphysics" that illegitimately presupposes appeals to religious faith or to discredited essentialism in a theory of human nature; and (2) that "philosophy no longer has the right to intervene" in debates about

substantive goods, since the "legitimate pluralism of worldviews . . . prohibits any form of paternalism in the area of genuinely ethical advice."[13] In my view, these theses are both profoundly mistaken. The first is refuted by the plain fact, proven again and again in creative philosophical and literary work, that philosophers (along with novelists, playwrights, and screenplay writers) *are* capable of a descriptive phenomenology of different goods worth being valued and pursued, along with a critique of such values and their social conditions, without recourse to anything more "metaphysical" than reflection on human experience, critical psychology, sociology, and history—though they sometimes appeal to faith.[14] Disagreements about thick goods within literature and film are really analogous in philosophical status to disagreements about what is politically just: they are articulated with relevant examples in search of reflective rational consensus.

Habermas's second thesis commits a fallacy of misplaced neutrality, for the idea that persons must to some extent be free to form and pursue goods as they conceive them is itself a *substantive* deliverance of a theory of the Right—as is any position concerning what issues the state should leave up to individual choice (and thus also to market forces). Moreover, philosophical analysis can at times even give direct advice about the goods that inform life plans and ways of life without violating political freedoms. The liberal approach to political justice cannot reject this, because neo-Kantian theories of justice obviously depend on a conception of the person as a willing agent who values goods and pursues life projects in their light. This metaphysical conception implies that the problem of *what* to will, or what values we should commit ourselves to pursuing, is in principle at least partially answerable in terms other than sheer personal preference (or D2 desire), arbitrary selection on a whim, or blind acceptance of some traditional authority. As Joel Kupperman has convincingly argued, the liberal idea that persons should be free to pursue their own subjectively preferred values and goals, as long as this violates no moral requirements, *does not* entail that we cannot or should not judge, condemn, reproach, or praise their choices and activities or argue with them about their priorities in terms external to their own "system of desires." In fact:

> Such extreme reluctance to judge, from the outside, the lives of others (apart from those small areas that are subject to moral judgment) lends itself to a sense of one's own life as having no relation to standards of excellence. From this it is a short step to a sense of one's own life as essentially meaningless.[15]

This is correct and it can also be defended from the opposite direction. Imagine a person who explains to a friend or relative the long-term goals upon which she has resolved or the highest values to which she has devoted

years of her life and unquantifiable amounts of blood, sweat, and tears. Now consider the effect when her interlocutor responds with no more than "well, whatever turns you on," or "that's nice, I suppose," or "if that's what you wanted, I'm glad you were free to pursue it." Such empty responses constitute only the most hollow form of "recognition"; they implicitly dismiss the agent's strivings as no more than an expression of her brute private preferences, which cannot have any further significance beyond her own subjective enjoyment of her projects—though that is certainly not why she thought them worth so much effort. In short, the concerns and priorities around which our agent has built her life are implied by her interlocutor here to be *no concern of his at all*, as if the fact that they mattered so much to her couldn't be any evidence that he should consider their importance as well.

But if his view is justified, then what was their point for her? What her interlocutor implies is far worse than if he had criticized her goals or questioned the wisdom or adequacy of her projects. At least then they would be recognized as having some universal human significance, however inadequate it might be, in his judgment. This would be a far more reassuring recognition of her agency. By comparison, pure toleration based on the implication that the question is a matter of mere personal taste is necessarily offensive when the question concerns the core of one's practical identity. The meaning our identities have for us requires them to matter in the broadly ethical sense and to be subject to broadly ethical judgment or be based on objective grounds.

3. Three Initial Reasons for Objectivism

When Frankfurt first tried to explain the importance of caring in human life, he seemed to recognize some of the reasons sketched above for an objectivist analysis, yet he also insisted that in many cases, the only "importance" that our cared-for object or goal has is that which we *give* it by caring about it. Although the latter theme has come to dominate his recent treatments of caring, in his 1982 essay Frankfurt aids the objectivist by noting that, given the centrality of cares to our character and our concern about the value of our character, "a person may care about what he cares about"—a question naturally related to "evaluation and justification."[16] At the very least, he thought that it makes sense to *ask* "what ends to set for ourselves and what sort of character to strive for," and thus to *look* for a "genuinely objective sort of reasoning by which a person can establish or validate his ends."[17]

3.1. *Caring about the Worth of Our Cares*

Indeed, the force of this point is far stronger than Frankfurt lets on: although some measures of character may be primarily reflexive (like integrity or loyalty to one's own projects), most measures refer to standards that are thought to be widely held or in principle even universally shareable, such as moral, aesthetic, or broadly ethical norms and ideals. If it makes sense to worry about *how worthy* our character is in these senses, this could only be because we believe that, in principle, we have access to some objective standards for the worthiness of our character. To the extent that this question of merit is a function of *how worthwhile* our cares and loves are, it suggests that there must be objective grounds for or against caring about certain objects or caring in certain ways. So higher-order caring about one's volitional character, or reflexive concern to understand and approve of what one cares about, is most naturally construed in objectivist fashion as caring that one's first-order cares are well grounded or sufficiently guided by the real values there are in the world, which are not created by one's own will.[18] In other words, it is caring$_2$ about the axiological adequacy of one's cares$_1$.

In *Saving Private Ryan*, this is what the elderly Ryan means when he asks, at the Normandy graveside of Captain John Miller, "Have I lived a good life?"[19] This question is intensely personal, and admittedly the standards for judging it are difficult, complex, and, as his case makes unusually clear, historically conditioned in unrepeatable or individually unique ways.[20] Nevertheless, Ryan's question is interpersonally intelligible, and his wife understands that it means more than "Have I cared deeply about something or someone, no matter what or who?" For it includes, among other things, the question: Were my cares adequate responses to the sacrifices to which I am indebted?—which in turn involves: Were the objects of my care the sort of things that it is good to care about, given the individual sacrifices made so that I had a chance to live and had material conditions necessary for caring about things beyond myself? No advanced philosophical education is required to understand what Ryan means when he asks his own less abstract, more existential, version of Socrates' eternal question, "How should one live?" The audience understands immediately and intuitively that Ryan could have done better or worse, and the movie reinforces the natural presumption that this objective difference *matters*—not just for Ryan but for anyone (especially in reference to the past sacrifices of others).

This example illustrates why some kind of axiological objectivism is required to capture in philosophical theory the intuitive prephilosophical outlook of most persons on the relationship of caring to values. If people naturally look for values that can ground, explain, or justify their cares, and

this is what they ordinarily take themselves to be attending to in $caring_2$ about whether their $cares_1$ are good, adequate, or responsible, then the burden is clearly on the subjectivist to explain how $caring_1$ can make sense or be meaningful to its agent without such objective grounds. Frankfurt seems to recognize this when he admits:

> The fact that what a person cares about is a personal matter does not entail that *anything* goes. It may still be possible to distinguish between things that are worth caring about to one degree or another, and things that are not. Accordingly, it may be useful to inquire into what makes something worth caring about—that is, what conditions must be satisfied if something is to be suitable or worthy as an ideal or as an object of love—and into how a person is to decide, from among the various things worth caring about, which to care about. Although people may justifiably care about different things, or care differently about the same things, this surely does not mean that their loves and their ideals are entirely unsusceptible to significant criticism of any sort or that no general analytical principles of discrimination can be found.[21]

In this crucial passage, Frankfurt originally acknowledged that even if there is wide latitude in the scope of cares that could be reasonable for a person, given her circumstances, that is compatible with some objective limits. For example, he recognizes here that it is not worth caring about "avoiding stepping on cracks in the pavement,"[22] and that "there is a well-established and valuable usage" according to which the preference of Hume's man who prefers the destruction of the world to some minor damage to his finger is not only unreasonable but even "crazy."[23] Frankfurt suggests that this man's "defect is volitional,"[24] but he does not clarify that the volitional error in this case consists in caring too little about something of enormous importance and too much about something of infinitesimal importance by comparison. Such a person's cares seem to be so unguided by real value that we might question whether he meets the cognitive conditions required for moral responsibility. Or if he does recognize these value-differences but simply ignores them, then we might well ask whether he meets the motivational conditions for moral sanity.

In sum, then, the first reason for existential objectivism about the broad range of values relevant to personal projects, relationships, and goals concerns the widely held conviction that *one sense* in which a final end or object of care can be "important" is what we might call the *normative worth* sense (NW): some things are *worth* caring about in such a way as to justify normative judgments of cares as *worthy*. NW importance, in other words, functions as the truth-maker for a certain kind of evaluative judgment that, even

in the age of abstraction from comprehensive conceptions of the good, still plays a vital role in interpersonal, broadly ethical assessments of characters and lives.

3.2. *The Intersubjective Intelligibility and Criticizability of Cares*

In the crucial passage quoted above, Frankfurt accepts another point in favor of objectivism: we generally presume that people's cares, loves, and ideals are intersubjectively evaluable, and even if we reject particular evaluations of our life goals and projects, we cannot intelligibly reject the very possibility of such critique. As Charles Taylor has persuasively argued, following Hegel, "No one acquires the languages needed for self-definition on their own."[25] Precisely because our volitional "identity" (consisting centrally of our cares and long-term devotions) is so important, "We define this always in dialogue with, sometimes in struggle against, the identities our significant others want to recognize in us."[26] Even in dialogue with ourselves, we have to understand our practical identity as "the background against which our tastes and desires and opinions and aspirations make sense."[27] And to make sense to us, they must, at least *in principle*, be capable of making sense to others as well; hence to "define ourselves" through personal commitments or cares, "we have to take as background some sense of what is significant,"[28] or what values have sufficient intrinsic importance to merit attention from any relevantly situated human agent.

Thus in Taylor's view, as Joel Anderson explains, "There are grounds for disputing one's sense of what is personally important that go beyond the experience of internal conflict," or subjectivist norms of "internal coherence."[29] We must articulate any robust self-conception in a "vocabulary of values" that cannot be a private language game.[30] Without such a vocabulary, as Taylor says, we could not even ask "what constitutes a rich, meaningful life—as against one concerned with secondary matters or trivia."[31] Moreover, the importance of many pursuits cannot be described without invoking the kind of aretaic values and contrasts (between noble and base) that Taylor terms "strong evaluation."[32]

Thus our practical identities can be significant to us only within a horizon of intersubjectively intelligible values. If this were not the case, then the normative worth of our endeavors, relationships, and life goals could not form the basis of what Taylor calls our personal "dignity" or "our sense of ourselves as commanding (attitudinal) respect."[33] Although Taylor is surely right that popular views about what activities are worthwhile or command respect have changed radically since the warrior culture of Homeric Greece and now emphasize possibilities available in "ordinary life" much more than in earlier times, our pride in our activities and purposes still

depends on interpersonal evaluations in public space. "The notion is never that *whatever* we do is acceptable. This would be unintelligible as the basis for a notion of dignity."[34] (See the related discussion of self-esteem in chap. 12, sec. 7.)

3.3. *Goods Internal to Practices Are Worth Caring About*

A third important argument for existential objectivism comes from the analysis of the practices already given in chapter 8. The goods at which a practitioner must aim for their own sake to count as engaging in the practices are objective social goods that are important for the flourishing of human individuals, communities, and other living beings.[35] Although different individuals will differentiate their attention to and enjoyment of these social goods, this hardly requires them to deny that (for example) public health, different types of scientific knowledge, and the various types of beauty created by fine arts and crafts are objectively good (even if their goodness is incommensurable or impossible to compare on a single scale). Moreover, the various nonmoral types of excellence and standards for great products of the practices can also count noncontroversially as objective goods.

These excellences that arise in the process of pursuing the objective goods definitive of the practices are usually related to various kinds of *difficulty* resulting from the concrete conditions of human life. The existential account of projective motivation as the primary function of willing explains these material conditions as objective (process-based) grounds for striving for ends that are hard to attain, because they constitute *challenges* that can help make life interesting and meaningful. If full and rich human lives involve some level of devotion to goods internal to practices that are not easy to master (as well as other kinds of interpersonal relationships that demand sustained effort from us), then a meaningful life depends on projecting goals in part because they are challenging. Sport practices are distinctive in that they are specifically designed around this thin reason for taking up a goal that can test and hone human talents (even if the goal is contrived or has no terminal value outside the game-context).

The value of challenge is also evident in the familiar notion of a "dream" or a personal aspiration that can require our greatest talents and efforts. Thus in her famous song in *The Sound of Music*, the Abbess of Salzburg tells Maria to choose a way in life that will draw on her great capacity to love: "A dream that will need all the love you can give, every day of your life, for as long as you live!"[36] This advice is based on objective considerations that ought to be important to the projective will. Although the development of talent or full use of distinctive personal qualities is a relatively thin ground for projecting a purpose, it remains interpersonally intelligible and does not depend on the romantic faith that if we search our hearts, we will discover what we already care most deeply about. Maria cares about the abbey, the mountains, music, Captain von Trapp, and his children; she cannot make her decision by simply introspecting her emotional response to each. But, as the Abbess gets her to see, a life with the von Trapp family is clearly the better "fit" for her; the family needs more of what she can give best.[37] To care in the volitional sense about something is always to challenge ourselves in some important way, and thus the possibility of caring depends on the same background conditions of human finitude as do practices with their own internal goods. As Margaret Tate has insightfully argued, developing Frankfurt's analysis, "It is a necessary condition of things that we value highly and about which we care deeply that those things are scarce, fragile, and ephemeral. This is true of both animate and inanimate objects of caring, as well as activities about which we care."[38] I would add that some objects of our care, such as individual persons, are not merely rare and precious but irreplaceable.

In the case of activities, Tate adds that activities to which we devote ourselves would be of no interest "if everyone could do everything perfectly that he/she desired with no effort or no danger or no fear of failure."[39] The point is not that we can care about or invest ourselves *only* in achievements that will distinguish us comparatively from others—although the possibility of distinguishing oneself is another thin process-focused ground for projecting certain ends. Rather, the point is that the difficulty of realizing an end or the scarcity or uniqueness of some valuable object provides opportunities to *give ourselves* challenges where none necessarily existed from prior desires. It is not always wise to do so, but we can make virtually any limitation the occasion for motivation by positing an end that is only realizable with struggle against this limitation.

For example, Christopher Reeve's heroic efforts to maintain his muscle tone and recover some bodily control despite his quadriplegia surely went far beyond anything attributable to natural desire for these goods. In an AP interview not long before he died, Reeve said "I refuse to allow a disability to determine how I live my life. I don't mean to be reckless, but *setting a goal* that seems a bit daunting actually is very helpful toward recovery."[40] Likewise, we surely do not *need* to reach the top of some high mountain; even if we have an appetite for a good view, or pleasant air at the top, or the exercise that climbing will involve, it may be the difficulty of the ascent that we have in view in willing ourselves to make it to the summit. The goals definitive of sport practices, like many hobbies, typically have their difficulty for an average or unapprenticed person among the process-focused reasons for projecting them.

Of course, the scarcity of other things that we do need for survival, such as food and water, or the scarcity of social objects that form generic means for other ends, such as money and professional degrees, may also heighten our (direct D1 or derived D2) prepurposive desires for these things. But their objective importance to us, both individually and communally, can also be a reason for making them the goals of various practices. Thus a practice like gourmet cooking starts with the objective need for food as its most basic ground but increases the difficulty of the goal by adding other kinds of gustatory values to nourishment as a basic good.

4. Frankfurtian Arguments for Subjectivism and Objectivist Rebuttals

4.1. Two Kinds of Importance

In considering Frankfurt's arguments for subjectivism, it is helpful to begin with the distinction he draws between (a) something's being important in what I called the sense of having "normative worth," or *deserving* consideration whether or not the agent already has any motivated interest in it; and (b) something's being important to a particular agent because he cares about it, in which case, as Frankfurt says, "caring about something makes that thing important to the person who cares about it."[41] The (b) sense is *agent-relative*, whereas the (a) sense is *agent-neutral* in its basic content (though it may have agent-relative specifications, as we'll see). The existential objectivist should certainly accept Frankfurt's point that there is a kind of "importance" that *derives from* caring rather than operating as a prior ground for caring. We might call this *personal importance* (PI) to signal that it arises from the attention that the agent directs toward her object or goal or from her *personal appropriation* of some possible task or relationship as her own.

Blustein describes this "personal value" as the "value that we give to the objects of our care by caring about them."[42] In this sense, following my earlier example, Maria made it personally important to her that Captain von Trapp's children gain the liberation they need to flourish. It is also personally valuable or important to Maria to be a loving wife to the captain once she has wholeheartedly embraced that goal (having overcome her earlier volitional ambiguity about erotic love).

According to existential objectivism, the agent-neutral (normative) sense of importance and the agent-relative (personal) sense of importance are always related as follows: the agent projectively devotes herself to some goal, ideal, or relationship because she believes that this possible final end *deserves* her care or is worth caring about and thus she makes it personally important to her. In other words, "personal" value derives from the volitional uptake of impersonal value.[43] This view can accommodate Frankfurt's claim that for the person who cares about not stepping on cracks in the sidewalk, this goal is really important to him: "his error consists in caring about, and thereby imbuing with genuine importance, something which is not worth caring about."[44]

This way of putting the matter is fine, as long as we clearly distinguish the two senses of importance involved: avoiding the cracks may be *personally* important to this neurotic agent, but it is not (in the agent-neutral or normative sense) *worthy* of attention. Hence when Frankfurt insists that an object's importance to an agent can be "fully genuine" although it depends on his already caring about it,[45] this observation proves no more than that personal importance is a real phenomenon distinct from objective value. It tells us nothing about the possible bases of personal importance and thus it does not count in favor of subjectivism; for objectivism is refuted only if agents can, by their own will, make something personally important to them without any thought whatsoever about its worthiness to be an object of care or any judgment concerning the normative worth of caring about it.

One cannot easily get such an example out of everyday cases in which agents devote excessive attention to unimportant trivialities, because the objectivist will respond that either the agent mistakenly sees normative worth in his goal (when there is none), or he just perversely desires this goal rather than caring about it in the distinctively volitional sense (which is compatible with EO).[46] On the other hand, the subjectivist faces the objection that her agent seems to care quite arbitrarily or on a mere whim, which in turn would seem to undermine the seriousness of the agent's care or the authenticity of his devotion. If he is brought to see his project as the result of a compulsive disorder or a mere delusion, his resolve will be undermined. As Blustein says, if someone or something "is deeply important to me, I must believe that it matters, that my devotion is to something that is worthy of it."[47]

For example, irrespective of any concern for future sales, it must matter to a budding novel writer what an intelligent reader in her target audience thinks of her story draft. It must matter to a scientist that his project has some basis in existing science and potential for new discovery. A young couple deciding to have children cannot think that they are doing nothing but adding to the world's population problems. This tether to objective value is also necessary to the experience of volitional dilemma. Blustein cites Loren Lomasky's example that a woman's struggle to balance raising her children with pursuing her career would be trivialized "unless she supposed that some value inheres in her childrearing and her career ambitions that is independent of the fact that she cares about her children and a career."[48] Finally, Blustein notes that when people do come to believe that pursuits to which they have devoted much time and energy were pointless or unworthy, their sense of misjudgment about the grounds for caring may render

them "unable to summon up enough conviction or interest to care deeply about anything at all."[49]

These points all support the essential role of objective values as grounds for the projective motivation in caring. Many of the common tensions involved in caring about concrete particulars would not exist if the only experience of value essential to caring was the kind that is bootstrapped into being by caring. Yet Frankfurt sometimes implies that the very existence of personal importance and its difference from agent-neutral importance or normative worth are sufficient to show that caring is a process of creating new value that transcends any possible guidance by rational deliberation about values independent of the will. For example, although he accepts that moral obligations are *objectively* important in the NW sense (they are *worth* caring about), Frankfurt suggests that in cases of personal dedication to an ideal with moral content, the agent is "probably not being moved most immediately by objective moral considerations"; rather, he is moved by his own "commitment" to this ideal, or his giving it special emphasis in the structure of his life.[50]

My projective analysis of caring clarifies the error here: Frankfurt is confusing *personal appropriation* of some moral value (which is the willed response to it) with the *ground or basis* for this movement of the striving will. Frankfurt means to deny that pure reason simply causes a desire to act morally and means to hold instead that caring about morality transcends such prepurposive desire. But a moral obligation need not function as a prepurposive *motive* in order for it to serve as the justifying reason in light of which the agent commits himself to live by an ideal embodying or expressing this moral value. In doing so, he may go beyond what it requires universally of all agents, but the moral value still grounds such a supererogatory response to it. As I have argued in explaining Kierkegaard's notion of the existential choice, the objective ethical force of some value or norm must be distinguished from the personal act of *embracing* that value or norm, making it the basis for one's goal-setting and intention-defining volitional activity.[51] Even if caring is a distinctively resolute mode of such personal response to perceived values or norms, this could hardly entail that the agent does not have these values or norms in mind (reflectively or tacitly) as justifying reasons in so strongly taking them to heart.

That Frankfurt does not understand agent-neutral normative importance and agent-relative personal importance as *interdependent* in this way is clear when he writes that either kind of importance can function as the agent's ground for caring about something:

> He might claim that the thing is independently important to him and that it is worth caring about for this reason. Or he might maintain, without supposing that the thing is antecedently important to him at all, that he is justified in caring about it because caring about it is itself something which is important to him.[52]

This last clause is ambiguous, but Frankfurt explains it by saying that when the object or goal's importance derives *only* from caring, "the only way to justify doing this is in terms of the importance of the activity of caring as such," which "serves to connect us actively to our lives in ways which are creative of ourselves."[53] In other words, Frankfurt holds that, in some cases at least,[54] caring for some particular X needs no justification beyond the value that the process of *caring about anything* in general has for the agent because it lets him engage in meaningful willing that gives narrative shape or "thematic continuity" to his life. This is what Frankfurt means when he writes that

> the significance to us of caring is thus more basic than the importance to us of what we care about. Needless to say, it is better for us to care about what is truly worth caring about. . . . However, the value to us of the fact that we care about various things does not derive simply from the value or suitability of the objects about which we care. Caring is important to us for its own sake, insofar as it is the indispensably foundational activity through which we provide continuity and coherence to our volitional lives.[55]

This is correct, because the *process* of caring involves a personal appropriation of values by the will which takes them as grounds for its projective endeavors; in doing this, the will is performing its natural function, or realizing its *existential telos*, in a deeper way than it does in making superficial decisions: it is helping to shape the agent's volitional character and thus his practical identity. This "good" of engaging willpower transcends the product-value of the ends projected, to be sure, but it also relates itself to these and other objective values as grounds for its activity rather than simply bootstrapping value into its activity or serving as its own ground. Thus the idea that a rich, autonomous personal ethos as the by-product existential value of caring in general could serve as the primary ground for whatever cares the agent discovers in himself (see chap. 12, sec. 6) was really developed to provide a generic agent-relative ground for caring when objective grounds are either absent or insufficient. Frankfurt thinks there are such cases, as we will see.

4.2. *The Nygrenian Fallacy*

Frankfurt's idea that loving or caring can be its own ground seems remarkably similar to Anders Nygren's conception of divine agapē as a love that

is unmotivated by any possible value in the persons or things it loves. As I suggest in chapter 9, Nygren errs by arguing that:

(i) if any objective value in the object X explains or grounds love of X, then
(ii) this value in X must cause that love by attracting the lover, in which case
(iii) his love is erosiac rather than agapic (or, more generally, projective) in structure. Hence
(iv) if a love is agapic (or non-erosiac), then it has no objective grounds [i, iii, contraposition].

As we saw, (ii) is an erroneous premise: values can inform the will in ways other than appetitive attraction or prepurposive motivation of any kind. Yet Frankfurt seems to make an error identical to Nygren's: he treats erosiac motivation or appetite-love and self-justifying love/care as *dichotomous* alternatives:

> The loving activity of the passive [erosiac] lover is motivated essentially by a self-regarding interest in sustaining or enhancing the likelihood that the object of his love will be useful to him. In active [projective] love, the lover is not motivated by any interest of this sort in the utility to him of his beloved. Rather he is motivated by *an interest in loving itself*.[56]

This dichotomy suggests that the "active" nature of loves—their independence from prior desires, including self-interested appetites—entails their independence from all objective grounds, or their self-justifying status. This is just Nygren's fallacy. Thus it is especially noteworthy that Frankfurt footnotes Nygren's *Eros and Agape* at the conclusion of his first essay on caring:

> According to one theological doctrine, divine love is in fact bestowed without regard to the character or antecedent value of its objects. It is God's nature to love, on this view, and He therefore loves everything regardless of any considerations extrinsic to Himself. His love is entirely arbitrary and unmotivated—absolutely sovereign. . . . When a person makes something important to himself, accordingly, the situation resembles an instance of divine agape at least in a certain respect. The person does not care about the object because its worthiness commands that he do so. [Rather] the worthiness of the activity of caring commands that he choose an object which he will be able to care about.[57]

This crucial but rarely noticed passage reveals how Nygren's failure to understand the real structure of projective motivation in analyzing divine agapē provided a key inspiration for Frankfurt's subjectivism. He takes from Nygren the idea that absolute autonomy is determination solely by what is intrinsic to the agent, which entails lack of prior motivation, which entails unresponsiveness to values that exist prior to the agent's willing. In his most recent book, Frankfurt pushes this conception of divine agapē to its most Spinozistic extreme: "God loves everything, regardless of its character or its consequences." Thus divine love is totally unconcerned about merit or any other kind of objective criterion.[58] Echoes of this description of divine agapē are clearly heard in his emphatic summary of the existential subjectivist view:

> It is true that the beloved invariably is, indeed, valuable to the lover. However, perceiving that value is not at all an indispensable *formative* or *grounding* condition of the love. . . . The truly essential relationship between love and the value of the beloved goes in the opposite direction. It is not necessarily as a result of recognizing their value and of being captivated by it that we love things. Rather, what we love necessarily *acquires* value for us because we love it.[59]

I conclude that Frankfurt is led into this position by a misunderstanding of what makes love volitionally active or autonomous—a misunderstanding that derives from a highly influential misconstrual of agapē in the counter-eudaimonist tradition. The result is an ES theory of willing according to which our fundamental cares are 'brute" motives, just like brute D2 preferences, with no strong evaluative content: "[T]he fact that a person cares about something . . . need not derive from or depend on any evaluations or judgments that the person makes or accepts. . . . It may simply be a brute fact, which is not derived from any assessment or appreciation whatsoever."[60] But, thus far, Frankfurt's arguments for this view are preempted by the existential analysis of willing as projective motivation.

4.3. *The Rejection of Strict Proportionalism: Wolf's Analysis*

Existential objectivism is compatible with different metaethical views about the status of objective values. For example, EO does not require an extreme realist view that something has objective value only "if it would be a good thing for it to exist even in a world without conscious, desiring beings, even if it were never experienced by anyone." EO can conceive objective value instead as "interpersonal or intersubjective value."[61] Nor does EO require that my carings are arranged in a hierarchy that exactly mirrors "their ranking in some impersonal scale of values I accept."[62] The values to which the striving will responds need not be conceived as rigidly ordered; they can be open to legitimately different ways of taking them up and embracing them

as personal values. For EO includes a moderate version of the idea that what Blustein and Nagel call "the personal point of view" is vital to human agency and must be respected by any viable moral theory or conception of good lives.

This insight is central to Susan Wolf's critique of Frankfurt. She correctly notes that his reliance on the existential import of caring in general recommends that "we care about whatever it will be most fulfilling, rewarding, and satisfying to us to care about."[63] Yet this implication reintroduces a formal egoism seemingly at odds with Frankfurt's insistence on the disinterestedness of volitional caring; it also allows anything we may enjoy caring about, however immoral. However, Wolf also presents another putative argument for subjectivism that we can find suggested in Frankfurt's writings. This argument works by rejecting a strict proportionalist view that "one's love of a person or object or activity should be proportional to its value or worthiness to be loved. One should love most that which is most deserving."[64] That it involves such a strict desert criterion is a familiar objection against Aristotle's account of noble friendship, and Wolf rightly rejects such a criterion as "pompous, stiff, self-righteous, or naive, foolish."[65] Even if there are objective differences in the (moral and nonmoral) merits of different individuals, loving devotion to them should not be keyed precisely to such measures: "Just imagine the parent who loves one child more than another because one is better (smarter, perhaps . . .)."[66]

Parental love serves as a paradigm case in subjectivist arguments: Frankfurt points out that we love our children before we have "any relevant information about their personal characteristics or their particular merits and virtues,"[67] and he argues that this is "the species of caring that comes closest to offering recognizably pure instances of love."[68] I take up this example again below, but my initial response is that important evaluative judgments *do* play a crucial role in "unconditional" love; one is the negative judgment that with close friends, and even more in the case of our children, certain kinds of objective criteria of merit *ought not* to guide our caring. The right attitude involves what MacIntyre calls "a *systematic* refusal to treat the child in a way that is proportional to its qualities and aptitudes," and a determination instead to provide them with unconditional love.[69] As MacIntyre argues, this attitude can be systematic because there are objective social grounds for this egalitarian attitude; without it, the practice of parenting is hindered in realizing those social goods of nurturance and cultivation of ego security in the child that only the childrearing art can provide.

Thus the rejection of strict proportionalism is a *principled* rejection of one possible kind of ground for love in a certain context, not a determination that practical reason should play *no* role in guiding the will in forming cares.

If it were the latter, then it would validate a parent who loved only one of his two children and entirely ignored the other, *not* because the first scored higher on objective talent or performance scales of any sort but just as a totally *brute fact*. Imagine a father who said, "I just find in myself a deep love of Tim, but no love at all for Jeff. I don't know why, but after all, I have to follow my heart!" Anyone who would try to use the valid objections to proportionalism as a basis for defending this parent would quickly see how limited those objections are; he would be immediately suspect to anyone with even a moderate degree of parental virtue. For obviously, this putative defense entirely misunderstands the reasons why proportionate regard is out of place in this context and substitutes totally arbitrary whim for the values that govern parental love. Of course, it can also happen that a parent who wills equal love for all his children finds himself unable to come near to the mark, and not for lack of volitional effort on his part, either. But when this is not due to *akrasia* or other vices, we consider it a tragedy, not a psychological fact that determines who he ought to love.

This is sufficient to show that the inappropriateness of merits as a ground for strictly proportional care responses in many contexts does not entail existential subjectivism (quite the contrary, since this inappropriateness itself has objective grounds). Wolf's response to Frankfurt is more modest: she suggests that "the role worth plays in determining what to care about is to set a minimal condition" or threshold of value beneath which an object or end cannot fall if it makes sense to care about it.[70] Yet she does not simply say that above this threshold all options are equal. The grounds for caring may not call for maximizing product-value or for fine-tuning the level of our attention to degrees of merit, but they include different kinds of *excellence*. Thus Wolf notes the relevance of the familiar advice, "You can do better." This does not mean, for example, that only the *very best* partner, job, hobby etc. is worthy of devotion,[71] but rather that "as long as one has or is in a position to cultivate having more options, there is something to be said for aiming higher for a more interesting or virtuous or appealing partner, or a more challenging or responsible or socially useful job."[72]

Wolf also rightly notes that a rich diversity of interests is a criterion for caring, especially for those optional pursuits and hobbies that ought not to be the primary focus of someone's attention: "Being a fan of a sports team, a bridge player, a lover of musical comedies, adds interest and variety to life. . . . Interests like these are good and healthy—but they can take more time, and demand more sacrifice than they are worth."[73] We would presumably not say this about causes of great moral importance (such as devoting part of one's life to working for Doctors Without Borders) or relationships of love in families and a few other cases in which we think single-minded

devotion to the exclusion of almost everything else can be justified (at least for a time).

In addition to such agent-neutral criteria for care objects and ways of caring, Wolf identifies a very important type of agent-relative consideration that begins to explain how agents may choose between different care options that all fall within the acceptable range on agent-neutral criteria. This is what she calls the agent's "affinity" for a particular care object. I suggest that we understand affinity as including the fit between a potential project, goal, or object of care and a person's talents, emotional dispositions, and less central aspects of his personality. The importance of affinity, as Wolf says, explains why "the fact that one activity, object, or person is not objectively as good or better than any number of others may pale in importance before enthusiasm for that particular one."[74] For example, we saw that in *The Sound of Music*, Maria has more affinity for the von Trapp family than for the abbey, though she loves both. One may simply find oneself drawn to one kind of practice more than to competing options, even if the latter involve social roles that one's family, friends, or significant others expect one to play.

The tension between personal affinity and social expectation is a familiar theme in literature and film. A useful illustration is provided by the movie *Bend It Like Beckham*, in which Jess Bhamra, a British girl of Indian ethnicity and Sikh faith, finds herself powerfully drawn to soccer; her aptitude and affinity for this sport, along with the opportunity to play it professionally, provide ample grounds for projecting her serious engagement in soccer as a practice—even though it conflicts with the traditional ideal of a marriageable young woman in her culture.[75] However, it is crucial to recognize that although affinity itself is always agent-relative, the *importance* of affinity as a valid ground for volitional devotion is universally applicable and so objective in authority. The importance of this criterion for authentic willing relative to other cultural considerations is precisely what Jess's father has to learn in *Bend It Like Beckham*, and its function as a valid ground for the will has significant ethical and political implications. Affinity may include D2 desires and related emotional tendencies, but for the will, it functions not as brute attraction but, rather, as an interpersonally recognizable and (within limits) defensible reason for projecting purposive motives that go well beyond any preexisting appetites and emotions that are part of the individual agent's prior personality.

This is not to say that culture-based expectations of significant others regarding the roles we should play are of no relevance or have no objective weight for the will. For example, any child of an Old Order Amish family starts life with a weighty reason for cultivating an appreciation of those

values that the life of the Amish realizes in distinctive ways. But the judgment that considerations of this kind are generally less important or weighty than (often competing) considerations of personal affinity is a distinguishing mark of modern as opposed to strongly traditional culture. To assert the objective superiority of this aspect of modern culture is therefore to judge that it better reflects the *true relation* between the values of personal fit versus fit with rigid or highly specified cultural prescription regarding what roles and relationships are appropriate to whom.

I regard it as a theoretical advantage of EO that it makes such intercultural comparisons possible and perhaps even requires broadly ethical assessment of cultures. For it does not seem that our access to values that ground caring is entirely determined by a cultural frame that we can never critique or assess. We can assess cultural attitudes both with respect to how well they promote and sustain the central elements in human flourishing and whether they make possible fully meaningful lives for individuals. Both these approaches must pay special attention to how a given cultural outlook or worldview either clarifies or obscures the grounds for caring or volitional devotion that there are in the world and their relative weight or significance. We should want a conception of practical normativity that makes it possible, for example, to support Bill Cosby's often-repeated argument that a culture that privileges machismo, violent self-assertion on the model of the gangster, disdain for learning and courtesy, and conspicuous consumption is a corrupt culture that destroys many of its members and radically levels off their ability to appreciate much of what is most worth caring about in human life. It is difficult to see how an axiological subjectivist like Frankfurt could support such a critique of the life idolized by gangsta rap or of the wider American culture of crass materialism and status-seeking out of which this highly influential subculture grows.

4.4. *Does Optionality Entail Subjectivity?*

The importance of personal affinity brings us to another major argument that Frankfurt offers for ES: namely, that it follows from the *rational optionality* of many cares or loves. By this I do not mean that Frankfurt thinks we can form cares or loves "at will"; he clearly rejects this as implausible. But he does argue that "Caring about something differs not only from wanting it" but also "from taking it to be intrinsically valuable. Even if a person believes that something has considerable intrinsic value, he may not regard it as important to himself."[76] I agree with this distinction, for we can think of many cases in which someone recognizes intrinsic value in some possible goal, relationship, or activity yet does not make it *her own* end. In *The Sound of Music*, the Abbess tells Maria that married life is also sanctified, but she

hardly takes this judgment to require that she give up her own cloistered life and go find a husband. I may recognize that golf is an interesting game requiring difficult skills and that it tends to give its players physical exercise, social interaction, and relaxation in the midst of peaceful (if rather sculpted) greenery—all good reasons to play golf. Yet I may focus on tennis, or skiing, or biking instead. Hence, as Frankfurt says, recognizing significant intrinsic value in something does not rationally require that someone cares about it. At most, "it commits him to recognizing that it *qualifies* to be *desired for its own sake,* and to be *pursued as a final end.*"[77]

In other words, some end E can have significant intrinsic value while remaining *rationally optional.* Any X is rationally optional in the sense I mean if it is true *both* that it is rational for agents (meeting certain background conditions C) to pursue X for its own sake, giving it a certain priority (P) in their lives, *and* that it can also be rational for agents meeting conditions C not to devote any attention to X, or at least to give it a priority lower than P. Clearly many of the pursuits, causes, activities, and relationships that people typically care about fall into this category. Frankfurt considers the success of a basketball team to be an optional object of caring attention in this sense: neither fans nor those with no interest in the team are guilty of any error in practical reasoning or choice here.[78] Rational optionality will be evident whenever we care deeply about something or someone but do not believe that this entails that *everyone else* (meeting the same background conditions) ought to care about it as well (or care as much as we do). The fact that I love my best friend very dearly ought not (and usually does not) involve any evaluative judgment to the effect that anyone in circumstances roughly like mine ought to love this person as I do. Thus Frankfurt concludes that, unlike universal principles of reason, love is personal in the sense that the agent "does not thereby commit himself to supposing that anyone who fails to love what he does has somehow gone wrong."[79]

From this, we can start to see how someone might try to construct an argument from rational optionality to ES. The general idea is that since it would not be *unreasonable* for a given individual *not* to care about X, if he does come to care about it, this cannot be explained by or grounded in any objective value that X may have. This argument could be formalized as follows:

1. If A's caring for X were justified by *universalizable* values V associated with X itself and/or with the process of caring about X, then V would require any agent (situated similarly to A) to care about X.
2. But caring about X is optional: for some agents (situated like A) it is reasonable not to care about X. In other words, V does not require all agents (situated like A) to care about X.

3. Therefore, since the consequent of 1 is false, the antecedent is false [by *modus tollens*]: A's caring about X is not justified by universalizable values.

The argument is valid; so, given that premise 2 is true in many cases of caring, if 1 were a conceptual truth, 3 would follow, at least for those cases. However, premise 1 falsely assumes that a value cannot *justify* caring about X unless it universally *requires* of all similarly situated agents that they care about X. This narrows the concept of justification or grounding to its strongest form. Values and practical considerations can rationally *support* caring about something or someone without universally *requiring* that all relevantly similar agents do likewise, on pain of irrationality if they do not. Hence 1 is false, and the argument is unsound. Frankfurt is correct that recognizing inherent value in some goal does not entail "that anyone has an obligation to pursue it as a final end."[80] But this does not support ES; it is compatible with EO.

Another way to see the subjectivist's error here is to recognize that caring about X can involve or commit the agent to a validity claim that is significantly *weaker* than the demand that everyone similarly situated care about X as much (or in the same way) as he does. Suppose, as the existential objectivist maintains, that caring about X necessarily involves an evaluative judgment J concerning the significant intrinsic value of X, or the significant intrinsic value of the process of caring about X, or both. Then, as Frankfurt himself suggested, the claim that these values exist (objectively, for all) may commit the agent to no more than the judgment that anyone (similarly situated) *rationally could* care about X. This is still an important evaluative judgment: it says that a person will have *good grounds* for caring about X, if she chooses to do so. Minimally, this means that X does not fall below the acceptable threshold; one would not be wasting one's time on X.

Beyond this, personal affinity may make all the difference. More robustly, the judgment could extend to the claim that persons relevantly situated ought to consider X carefully, or *pay serious attention* to X as a viable candidate for their concern, even if they pass it up for other options. For example, at a time when the nation lacks sufficient numbers of highly qualified teachers, a talented college student with an affinity for children has the imperative to consider teaching in our public schools as a valuable calling to which he ought to give serious consideration. This leaves the personal devotion required for such a career quite optional, but it says *more* than simply that a person who devotes his or her life to teaching in public schools has not wasted their potential. As Wolf sees, the objectivist can content herself with this kind of an objective validity claim in cases of rational optionality. The values that an agent caring about X cites as her

grounds are indeed universally relevant, even if not taken up by all persons. Sometimes (as in the case of a career, political activity, or friendship), the judgment may be that X is one instance of *a type* of which it is rational to have at least one in our life. Frankfurt recognizes an analogous phenomenon when he explains the possibility of disjunctive needs, no one of which is indispensable to us, although we must have at least one of the disjuncts.[81] In other cases (as with a sport or a hobby), the judgment may be weaker than that: one should strongly consider playing *some* sport or having at least one hobby, although it may not be irrational entirely to exclude such pursuits if other callings demand all one's attention.

Frankfurt seems to resist this view when he argues that "We can think of many things that might well be worth having or worth doing for their own sakes, but with regard to which we consider it entirely acceptable that *no one* is especially drawn to them and that they are never actually pursued."[82] He suggests a life devoted to meditation or to "courageous feats of knight errantry" as examples. Yet normally, it seems that in recognizing something X as having volitionally optional intrinsic value, we judge that although it is not unreasonable for any single individual to pass it up for the sake of other cares, still (a) caring about X would be more reasonable than caring about nothing at all or being wanton; and (b) it would be a shame if no one in the world devoted significant time to X, even in the past. Surely the human race would be collectively poorer (in a nonmoral but broadly ethical sense) if King Arthur's knights had never ridden across old Britain on their noble quests—at least in story? History would also be less interesting without persons of great meditative devotion (as the fascination with such characters in popular film and literature shows). In any case, there may be some level of intrinsic value that we can recognize as significantly supporting some endeavor or undertaking, without judging that our community is poorer if it does not include even one person who cares about it. This would still constitute an objective value judgment in favor of such a care, should anyone decide to take it up.

Thus EO only requires a *loose* fit between cares and the objective value of what is cared about. It does not demand caring strictly proportional to merit, and it is compatible with multiple rational options. As Blustein writes:

> Actual caring should align to some extent with what ought to be cared about by anyone. . . . Conversely, there is much that people care about of which it cannot plausibly be said that anyone ought to care about it. . . . But if this caring generates personal value that is sufficient to support a sense of meaning and that implicates one's integrity, the one who cares cannot see the value of what he or she cares about as emanating simply from within.[83]

My account explains these observations by saying that the values that are personally appropriated by the striving will as its reasons for projecting goals have normative significance for the agent, but in many cases, she may be committed only to the claims that they are important candidates for agents like her to consider and that others should recognize that her devotions have a basis beyond her own brute preferences. Others may disagree with her, but they are then disagreeing about substantive axiological judgments relevant for willing.

Moreover, EO includes a *complexity caveat*: some objective grounds for caring about something may be relevant only if the agent does or does not already have certain *other* cares. For example, having children may be rationally optional, but for a person who has embraced the value of raising children and has taken up this task, the individual value of each child is not rationally optional: he ought to care about each of his children (and in a way not proportional to merit alone, as we saw). Similarly, Wolf's criteria of greater interest, appeal, or challenge may not be (as) relevant to someone once they are committed to a particular partner, career, and so on. But the fact that some criteria for caring take on new importance while others become less relevant as we change our cares (or alter what is personally important to us) does not mean that these criteria are merely subjective or derive all their authority from the agent's existing motivational set. On the contrary, they come with certain volitional territories or narrative environments (and not others), whether the agent likes it or not. Such practical worlds are generally self-sustaining but not totally self-enclosed; they may include values that give the agent good grounds for forming new cares, some of which would take her into *different* axiological territories or narrative spaces. This reflexive relation between the rational grounds for caring and the current state of our will is part of any sufficiently complex existential objectivism.

4.5. Does Essential Particularity Entail Subjectivity? Raz's Analysis

It might be suggested that individual friends, close family members, or loved ones are an exception to the objectivist account I have sketched for rationally optional cares. Sometimes a romantic will go to the extreme of pretending that the lover need not care in the least whether anyone else in the world sees the slightest bit of value in his beloved. As Tracey Ullmann sings in her (one) hit song, "I tell the others 'don't bother me,' 'cause when they look at you, they don't see what I see!"[84] While it is sometimes quite admirable to ignore the opinions of certain other people, taken to an extreme this view becomes a fiction, for it generally does tend to undermine what Frankfurt calls our "confidence" in our love to recognize that *everyone*

whose judgment we respect thinks we are crazy. Thus, we generally *do* want others (especially significant others whose character we value) to recognize at least some of the values in our friend or lover that would make loving them intelligible; that is, we want these people to see at least *some* of what we see, even if we know that they could not see it all without actually loving this person just as we do.[85] Otherwise put, we do not mind mysteries of value that are revealed only to us, once we have already volitionally embraced more basic values; but we still believe that some *part* of these values should be intelligible to wise, value-sensitive persons who are not initiated into our personal mysteries. When even those whose advice we respect completely deny that our love has any rational basis, we have to be quite sure that they are wrong—that we *do* have solid objective grounds for our care—to strengthen our will against the resulting doubts.[86]

Nevertheless, the argument for subjectivism with the widest appeal today is based on our familiar experience of what has come to be called "essentially particularistic love." Michael Stocker introduced this idea into contemporary moral psychology by arguing that utilitarian and deontological accounts do not call us to love a particular person in his uniqueness but only to consider his instrumentally or intrinsically valuable properties (such as happiness or rational freedom):

> What is lacking in these theories is . . . the person. For love, friendship, affection, fellow feeling, and community all require that the other person be an essential part of what is valued. The person—not merely the person's general values nor even the person-*qua*-producer-or-possessor-of-general-values—must be valued.[87]

Stocker's insight has been taken up by Bernard Williams, who argues that moral theory never provides reasons for loving particular individuals as unique, but only gets in the way. Nel Noddings draws similar antitheoretical conclusions from her even stronger claim that the basic form of care is essentially particularistic. Given "the uniqueness of human encounters," she rejects any universalizable principles, since these "function to separate us from one another."[88] She conceives caring for unique persons as "essentially nonrational,"[89] which makes it impossible to conceive of universal caring, except as a readiness to care for "whoever crosses our path."[90]

Here again, Noddings converges with Frankfurt, who argues that volitional love of an individual person is not "a response to the perceived worth of the beloved."[91] In the case of children and friends, he argues, our love is unlike "impersonal" benevolence directed at categories or types of needy persons.[92] Rather, the agent (volitionally) loves the particular individual as *irreplaceable*: "There can be no equivalent substitute for his beloved." That is because the person as a unique individual is loved, and she cannot be unique

in virtue of possessing multiply instantiable properties. Thus "[t]he significance to the lover of what he loves is not that his beloved is an instance or an exemplar" of various valuable properties: "Its importance to him is not generic; it is ineluctably particular."[93]

I accept that such essentially particularistic love occurs—and although Frankfurt considers it basically nonmoral in significance, I would suggest that some conceptions of agapē make it a moral requirement to cultivate precisely this kind of focus on the person as properly named or as absolutely individual.[94] The problem is whether we should think of all essentially particularistic love, agapic or otherwise, as arbitrary generosity. As Barbara Herman notes with respect to Frankfurt's view, "in loving, the support for reasons is not any value inherent in the loved person or the loving relationship. The welfare of the loved other is reason-giving for me because, and only because, I care about him."[95] According to ES, the unconditional authority to me of considerations related to my beloved's well-being derives *completely* from a subjective condition of my psyche. As in other internalist theories, "the value of what we care about does no work in the generations of reasons" that move us;[96] it is not the object's own value, but rather our *valuing* this object that gives the normative status of reasons to the considerations that move us.[97]

This implies a radical *asymmetry* in caring relationships: all essentially personalistic love becomes a blind gift that is entirely unmerited by the beloved. But this is just as offensive as reducing a person to iterable properties. Suppose one answered Stocker's question by explaining to one's friend in the hospital: "Honestly, nothing about your personality or character gave me any reason to care about you; it is just my nature to care about you, though I have no independent reason to do so." Would the friend be any happier about this explanation than a Kantian or utilitarian one?

To avoid both extremes, we need some way of grounding essentially particularistic love in the *beloved's* real value, but without reducing this value to a mere *instantiation* of some pattern or participation in some ersatz form. If objective value could consist only of repeatable properties that would require us to love equally anything exemplifying the same properties, then this subjectivist argument would succeed; the particularistic caring that exists in our life would have to be entirely ungrounded. But this is not the case, as several philosophers in the study of normative particularism have recently argued. Among them, I will focus briefly on Joseph Raz's insightful analysis, which makes possible an objectivist account of essentially particularistic love.[98]

Raz begins by endorsing rational optionality in the sense that I have already explained: a legitimate diversity of ends arises from "the partiality of people to some people or goals which are all valuable, but to which some

people are attracted and committed, whereas others are indifferent."[99] Raz has also developed at length the point that rational optionality makes sense as long as we do not conceive practical reason as an exclusively *maximizing* enterprise that could never ground more than one option in any choice circumstance. My account differs only in that I do not take "attraction" to be what motivates personal commitment or caring itself. What I call the broadly ethical importance of having rational grounds for one's cares, Raz calls practical respect for value: "partiality is permissible so long as it does not conflict with respect for what is valuable."[100]

Raz also defends the distinction between personal "attachment" to objects of love or devotion and the objective criteria of "suitability" that make such attachments worthwhile. "Attachment" here refers to what I (following Kierkegaard) call *personal appropriation*; as Frankfurt argues, this implies a kind of value that is essentially agent-relative or particular because *it derives* from the agent's attachment, caring, or volitional appropriation itself. Raz calls this special kind of value "personal meaning:" "Meaning is invested in the world by our attachments."[101] In my view, the will has the power of creating this special kind of value, which "depends on the person's attitude to the object or objective of the attachment."[102] But the values that give us reason to attach ourselves to goals in this way are not similarly derivative. People can form attachments based solely on personal affinity, but "these are highly unusual cases"; normally we believe that "the people we love are suitable objects of our love. Otherwise the love is demeaning to us," and its autonomy is undermined.[103] The normal relation is that "our attachments appropriate (impersonal) value, and make it meaningful for us."[104]

This is also what the projective model of the will implies: an agent responds to a range of worthwhile values by devotion to some of them or some instances of them, thus taking them up in to the personal fabric of her life. My existential theory differs from Raz's in emphasizing that the impersonal values can be appropriated by volitional resolve without these values having to link up with any natural appetites for the agent's own well-being. Yet the idea of projective motivation is implicit in Raz's language: "By assuming duties, we create attachments," thus generating a "meaningful life."[105] Thus, as Frankl also argues (see chap. 12, sec. 5), Raz maintains that "The personal meaning of objects, causes, and pursuits depends on their impersonal [agent-transcending] value, and is conditional on it. But things of value have to be appropriated by us to endow our lives with meaning."[106] This formula captures the two conditions for existential meaning according to EO: the first sentence expresses the objective condition, and the second sentence expresses the existential condition (requiring volitional incorporation through projective motivation).[107]

Within this framework, particularistic love can be grounded on the basis of an agent-relative criterion that differs importantly from personal affinity, which was defined relative to non-volitional features of the agent's personality. The new criterion is backward-looking: it consists in a complex set of *historical relationships*, including the agent's past involvement with the potential object of care and relations with other persons who have cared about this or related ends or who have cared about goals or activities contrary to this object's interests, and so on. Sometimes these relationships in themselves have powerful ethical implications: I suggested that Private James Ryan has a historically unique relationship with Captain John Miller that could not be repeated without the two agents *being* the same temporally developing persons. We are all caught up in a web of debts to the past that we did not voluntarily choose, which often create backward-looking reasons for focusing on an irreplaceable object of care or devotion specified in a way that is unique to our shared history.[108]

Raz focuses on the beautiful case of Saint-Exupéry's Little Prince, who is mortified to discover that the single rose whose looks so charmed him is not unique in appearance at all. But the Little Prince refuses to conceive maturation in Diotimian fashion as *only* a movement from the particular to the universal form that it instantiates:

> He believes in the importance of uniqueness. He believes that uniqueness is of the nature of love, which is for him the paradigm of all special attachments to people and to objects. He believes that both meaning and understanding, misery and happiness, arise out of one's special, particular, non-universal attachments.[109]

Clearly this is what Stocker and Frankfurt believe too (maybe they read *Le Petit Prince*). But when the Little Prince devotes himself in a new way to his rose, he bases his love on "their common history," which itself originated from aesthetic attraction.[110] The Little Prince sees his rose as unique because of the efforts he has already made at cultivating her.[111] Thus agent-relative historical considerations help explain why (as noted in chap. 13), appetitive motivation can sometimes transmute into projective motivation; in some cases, actions in the past that were motivated by ordinary desires establish a historical sense of involvement or investment that the agent can then take as grounds for projective devotion.[112] As MacIntyre says, this also happens with the practices: "Someone may become a physicist or a physician or a baseball player" merely for money or out of altruistic desires; but once involved, he starts to see the importance of the profession's unique type of excellence and to care about meeting these standards. Similarly, according to the complexity caveat (above), standing commitments to impersonal ends may happen to bring us closer to particular individuals, giving singular importance to their unique personality and interests.

Raz actually argues that individuals who are the object of essentially particularistic love can become "irreplaceable" in two ways: the first is "de facto" uniqueness due to certain aspects or features that *happen* not to occur in this combination in others (often because of their complexity); the second is "logical uniqueness . . . and a common history is the only way to ensure it."[113] This factor can explain parents' particularistic love for a child who is temporally unique, even if its clone were born at a later time.[114] Likewise, presumably Stocker's friend in the hospital would *not* be offended if, on asking Stocker why he cared enough to visit, Stocker reminded him that they had grown up as next-door neighbors, had shared good and bad times, and developed a friendship like none other in their lives. Historical contingencies that generate such agent-relative reasons are not problematic; rather, they are a familiar indicator of what Heidegger called the essentially temporal nature of human caring.

Similarly, though less exclusively, many grounds for attachment to a particular heritage or traditional way of life are temporally contingent and apply only to certain individuals.[115] It may be the intersection of such shared traditions with other factors, such as career interests, hobbies, political or religious ideals, and other causes of emotional affinity that singles out a given individual as uniquely important for us to care about (prior to our particularistic devotion to her). Alternatively, we could think of the uniqueness as located in the agent X's *access* to the value of another individual Y: although Y's worth is in principle accessible to others, in fact only X knows Y well enough to see it. This idea is familiar in popular culture; for example, Cindy Lauper sings: "I see your true colors; that's why I love you."[116]

Whether the grounds for such attachments are historically unique in themselves or unique in their accessibility, they may not at first glance seem to be universal in normative force since they will be salient to only a few or maybe just one agent in certain circumstances. Indeed, the gestalt complex of reasons that individual X has for loving individual Y, as opposed to anyone else, may be relevant only to X because he shares a certain metaphysically unique trajectory through the web of historical relationships with Y (which include individuated grounds for caring about Y).

But Raz points out that if we move up one level of abstraction from these particulars, we recognize them as token instances of *types* of considerations or grounds that are universally important to all agents and that serve as legitimate reasons for anyone to form particularistic cares (within moral limits). Thus "recognition of the value of unique attachments meets the condition of universalizability" as a requirement on values, and indeed "public recognition of personal attachments can be impartial."[117] For we can each recognize the relevance to others of many particularistic grounds

for projective motivation that apply to them as a result of the historical facts of their lives, including their own previous actions, the actions of others to whom the agent is related, and their consequences.[118] Thus we can judge, for instance, that Chief of Staff Marshall is not being unfair to other soldiers in risking so much to save Private Ryan, because of his unusual situation. Likewise, we judge that the child we mothered, fathered, or adopted is bound to us in an intimate reciprocity that grows from the date of his or her arrival, distinguishing the child as uniquely precious in our life.

Thus the love of persons as unique individuals—as that which we signify by their proper names rather than definite descriptions of their features—fits within a sufficiently nuanced version of existential objectivism that recognizes backward-looking, historically conditioned grounds for caring. An essential feature of personhood is the capacity to will another person's good on such a basis. Without this, the kind of singular encounter with another person as *Du* or "Thou," which Martin Buber calls the "I-Thou" relationship, would be impossible.[119] More generally, Raz's analysis seems to answer Joel Anderson's question for Charles Taylor, namely, how is a "pluralistic notion of something having special value for me (and not for you) to be squared with the general prescriptive and motivating character that Taylor attributes to the good?"[120] The general perspective is individualized by *volitional uptake* and the historical development of selective involvement with some projects and persons (rather than others) occasioned by such personal appropriation of general values.[121]

4.6. *Do Objectivist Values Lack Noncircular Grounds?*

At this point, we can return to cases that are easier for the objectivist to handle. Although "the realm of values is both complex and pocketed with indeterminacies,"[122] Wolf suggests that the objective importance of values such as truth should be obvious: "we do not want to be deluded about the things that we love and care about," even when the truth is painful.[123] Although some people do prefer delusion, the normative value of truth has also been supported by Nozick's Experience-Machine argument and the related theme in the *Matrix* movies.[124] Frankfurt's own critique of "bullshit" as an attitude that harms communicative practices through wantonness toward truth values also supports this point.[125] Similar remarks, it seems, would apply to beauty, basic components of human welfare (much discussed in new natural-law theories), and also environmental goods: persons who are entirely numb to such values seem even more deficient than those who recognize these values but neglect them for material gain or pleasure.

These likely candidates may explain why, at various points in his career, Frankfurt was more optimistic about identifying universalizable grounds for caring. In addition to moral values, Frankfurt suggested that "imperatives of tradition, of style, of intellect" (which would surely include knowledge) "or of some other mode of ambition" (perhaps types of excellence) would make sense as "ideals."[126] This search for grounds is important, even though we do not exercise immediate executive control over our cares, because "From the fact that what binds us to our ideals is love, it does not follow that our relationship to them is wholly noncognitive. There is considerable room for reason and argument in the clarification of ideals and in the evaluation of their worthiness."[127] And even though I can love someone as an unrepeatable particular without thinking "that anyone who does not do the same is making a mistake," it does not follow that our loves are mere givens, "brute facts with respect to which deliberation and rational critique have no place."[128] This is surely right if our will is not entirely blind to reason or entirely lost in fanaticism. We can change our cares, and do so in light of reasons intelligible to others. Why, then, does Frankfurt finally reach the conclusion that our identity-defining loves are inscrutable givens, and the practical question of how one should live "is inescapably self-referential and leads us into an endless circle"?[129] I suggest that this error has three main causes.

The first is that when he considers possible criteria for judging ends worth caring about, Frankfurt tends to focus on putative goods that are agent-relative, or conceivably part of the agent's eudaimonia. In order for someone to judge between ways of life,

> it must be clear to him how to evaluate the fact that a certain way of living leads more than others (or less than others) to personal satisfaction, to pleasure, to power, to glory, to creativity, to spiritual depth, to harmonious relationship with the precepts of religion, to conformity with the requirements of morality, and so on.[130]

Without reliance on a metaphysical account of the human telos, any justification of such agent-relative values might seem to assume existing concern or desire for them. Of course, Frankfurt recognizes that the value we find in our cares transcends the agent-relative value of their goals. As he wrote in 1982:

> The varieties of being concerned or dedicated, and of loving, are important to us quite apart from any antecedent *capacities for affecting us* which what we care about may have. This is not particularly because caring makes us susceptible to certain additional gratifications and disappointments. It is primarily because it serves to connect us actively to our lives in ways which are creative of ourselves and which expose us to distinctive possibilities for necessity and freedom.[131]

The problem with this is the implicit dichotomy: agent-relative benefits (such as emotional fulfillment) and existential by-product goods (such as developing one's practical identity) exhaust the alternatives. The possibility of agent-transcending goods in the end-product to be sought seems to be excluded from the start. Yet it is in such values that many of Frankfurt's contemporaries have looked for meaning. For example, Robert Nozick says:

> The particular things or causes people find make their life feel meaningful all take them beyond their own narrow limits and connect them up with something else. Children, relationships with other persons, helping others, advancing justice, continuing and transmitting a tradition, pursuing truth, beauty, world betterment—these and the rest link you to something wider than yourself. The more intensely you are involved, the more you transcend your limits.[132]

Thus Frankfurt looked in the wrong place for objective criteria of normative worth.

The second problem is the demand for *procedural and contrastive* justification. In 1993, Frankfurt wrote that more philosophical attention is needed to what features our ideals must have and to explaining "the basis on which a person can reasonably make a choice from among various worthy ideals."[133] This way of posing the question asks for too decontextualized a reason for caring: It supposes that having *any rational ground* for positing some worthwhile activity or social cause as an end or for motivating oneself to pursue some ideal or the welfare of some particular person requires having a contrastive justification for spending time on this one goal to the exclusion of all other possible candidates. On this view, there cannot be objective values that ground caring unless they provide an agent volitionally engaged in a given ethos "reasons good enough to justify him in living that way" as *opposed* to any other possible ways.[134]

This is an old fallacy frequently featured in critiques of libertarian accounts of moral freedom; it insists that choice is irrational or arbitrary if it is not made by some algorithmic method or decision procedure that determines a single best outcome, or at least on the basis of reasons that single out one option as the exclusive best.[135] This demand for a sufficient contrastive explanation leads to the conclusion that nothing is an objective ground for caring if it cannot explain, in terms free of all singular references, why the agent cared about one ground project rather than another or why she devoted loving attention to one unique individual as opposed to others

who rank the same or even higher on ahistorical criteria. On this view, even Platonic ideals such as social justice, beauty, or truth, whose importance is apt to seem most evidently objective or universally applicable, lose their objective status, for "it is not generally considerations of value that account for the fact that a person comes to be selflessly devoted to one ideal or value rather than to some other."[136] This is misleading, for personal affinity and historical relationships cannot do all the work of grounding our cares and life projects on their own.

Third, Frankfurt's subjectivism reveals Bernard Williams's influence, for it amounts to the thesis that every proposed reason for caring about anything is implicitly hypothetical or has to appeal to some care that is *already* in our "internal set." One cannot in advance identify "criteria on the basis of which" the question of what to care about can be answered without affirming definite answers to the question.[137] Yet this circularity should be troubling only if we start from the radically antitheoretical assumption that *rational* justification of values (including those that give normative worth to our cares) has to have a *procedural* structure, like Rawls's theory of justice, in which we first isolate a method for deciding the question that is in reflective equilibrium with our considered convictions then apply this criterion to uncontroversial instances, refine it, apply it to harder cases, and so on. The question of grounding values may be too fundamental to be answered in that way, but this would not make it "systematically inchoate" or inscrutable; this is the kind of circle, untroubling to phenomenologists, that we always encounter when we can do little more than describe our experience of basic values and try to make clear the natural properties on which they seem to rest.

For instance, in his famous diary of wilderness experiences, the American naturalist (and father of ecocentric ethics) Aldo Leopold writes the following about his communion with a crane marsh:

> Our ability to perceive quality in nature begins, as in art, with the pretty. It expands through successive stages of the beautiful to values yet uncaptured in language. The quality of the cranes lies, I think, in this higher gamut, as yet beyond the reach of words. This much, though, can be said: our appreciation of the crane grows with the slow unraveling of earthly history. . . . When we hear his call we hear no mere bird. We hear the trumpet in the orchestra of evolution. He is the symbol of our untameable past.[138]

This may seem closer to poetry than philosophy, and indeed, the study of philosophical theory is hardly the primary route to an appreciation of basic values.[139] One may need to experience the crane marsh firsthand (in combination with many related experiences). One may also need a certain

amount of biological understanding to "see" in the cranes the value-gestalts that Leopold perceives. It may also be true, as the *Symposium* teaches, that higher value-gestalts in different domains worth caring about become more apparent to us only after we have *started* to care about the lower ones. For example, a child who had already acquired at least a moderate love of charismatic mammal species (especially domesticated ones like dogs or cats) might find it easier to follow Leopold on the journey toward an appreciation of intrinsic values in wild animals, entire species, wilderness ecosystems as organic wholes, and so on.

5. The Reciprocal Relation between Value Insight and Volitional Resolve

To escape from Frankfurt's circle, we have to remember the medieval insight that there is a reciprocal relation between the development of volitional and of cognitive aspects of one's personality. In this chapter, I frequently portray this relation in its simplest form as an unconditioned value insight grounding a volitional response. The actual relation is usually more complex, because beyond early childhood, the agent has almost always projectively willed some ends and acquired rudimentary cares. In the narrative process of human lives, such prior volitional activity (whether recognized or not) always, to some extent, affects and colors how various possible grounds for further projective willing appear to us; sometimes it even limits the range of grounds that we can consider.

But this stagewise dynamic in what we might call "broadly ethical education of human sentiments" hardly implies that all reasons for caring about anything new to us must be agent-relative or derive all their (potential) motivational force and direction from what we already care about. Frankfurt has offered no compelling reasons to accept his conclusion that it is impossible "for a person who does not already care at least about *something* to discover reasons to care about anything. Nobody can pull himself up by his own bootstraps."[140] Surely people sometimes do change from leading relatively "wanton" lives with no serious volitional cares or aretaic commitments to anything (even to their own pleasure).[141] If young children count as "wanton," then this transition from wantonness to passionate devotion through the formation of ground projects is probably even part of the normal course of human development; as Kierkegaard's famous transition from naïve "aestheticism" to "ethical" seriousness also suggests, people can pass from uncaring disengagement or superficial busyness to deep engagement through volitional caring.

Are we to conclude that the agent's sensitivity to objective values—or his practical reason in its most extended sense—cannot guide this process

at all, that it is entirely blind or only a matter of discovering proto-cares already given within the proto-self? These alternatives are far less plausible than the straightforward explanation that in response to an awareness of values that she did not create (however reflectively this awareness is articulated), the agent projects *new* final ends for herself? "Bootstrapping" cares into being is not problematic; it is the will's natural function. By contrast, the idea that all *values* are bootstrapped into being by self-defining cares is highly counterintuitive since it is a radical revision to the ordinary practical standpoint of nonphilosophical agents. So the intelligibility of "bootstrapping" depends entirely on what boots are being pulled up by what straps.

To put the matter another way, existential objectivists will agree that most people already care about something (even if only halfheartedly) that can be appealed to in getting them to care about something else. For example, if they care about their shiny new Yamaha sports bike, then they will care about reducing motorcycle theft in their neighborhood, and no new projective motivation is needed to explain the latter; it is simply instrumental to preserving the initial object of their concern. But it is quite different when an existing care for X encourages, facilitates, or leads to a new care for Y that is motivationally independent of the first care. It can do this if caring for X *opens* the agent to see logically independent grounds for caring about Y or makes these grounds more salient, better understood, or appreciated. This is a common experience, which I have already mentioned in connection with friendship (see chap. 8, sec. 4): love of some person P is likely to get us to pay more attention to what P cares about and to think about what the grounds for those cares might be. But taking up my friend's interests or practices need not be (only) instrumentally motivated for the sake of the friendship; these interests or practices can become important to me in their own right. Likewise, two people who both care about the same goals or ideals may start to care about each other directly rather than merely as cooperators in a joint quest. This newly formed love may be able to survive the lapsing of some or perhaps even all of the cares that led to it.

Relations between one kind of care and grounds for others in its "practical vicinity" are complex. Suppose that I already enjoy nature photography and have taken it up as a hobby—I visit exhibits focusing on wilderness photographs, read articles about new ultra-high-density mountain shots, and print my own pictures of rivers and streams. Let us further suppose that I got into this hobby from the classroom rather than the field: my grounds for taking it up came from studying aesthetic theories in a photography class, which helped me appreciate the aesthetic values of fine composition and use of natural light in nature photography. I was never really a nature lover; I was more a lover of formal aesthetic theory and the art of

photo composition. Still it would be entirely unsurprising, almost predictable in fact, that once I had pursued this hobby for a couple years, the experience of being in settings of awesome natural beauty would *awaken* me to natural values that are related but not identical to aesthetic values in human expressive artifacts or artworks. The objective values of pristine deserts, jagged mountains, and prairie landscapes might have been accessible to me before taking up nature photography, but they become more salient or evident to me as a by-product of my creative pursuit of photography based on an appreciation of aesthetic values realized in photos.

Suppose I respond to these natural values so strongly that I eventually drop nature photography altogether and spend my spare time as a naturalist in the field or as a lobbyist for environmental preservation. This development in my will would be anything but arbitrary; it would make narrative sense in my life story. Yet it could not be explained according to Williams's conception of internal reasons nor according to Frankfurt's similar model of reasons that depend on my existing cares, because it involves the generation of a new final end that transcends my present motivational set.

This kind of "leap" from one care, aretaic commitment, or ground project to another is a very familiar feature in human biographies. Sometimes the emotional dispositions involved in the first care alter the agent's sensitivity to values that are relevant to the normative worth of other cares. For example, suppose that a nurse's devotion to very sick children in a pediatric cancer ward has generated a strong emotional reaction to children's suffering. This in turn leads her to read about issues concerning child welfare and eventually to switch to a career as a social worker with the Division of Children and Youth or as an advocate with a foundation that works to reduce child abuse. Here the connection is obvious enough. But the links between earlier and later cares can involve all kinds of twists and indirect connections that no general theory could reduce to a short list of motifs. Suppose our nurse instead becomes a facilitator for parents struggling to care for children with disabilities; somehow her sympathy for children with cancer has made her more aware of obstacles faced by parents whose children have a different kind of problem. Maybe the explanation would involve a particular family that she got to know in her first line of work.

Given such *narrative complexity*, we can only say that in each case, activities involved in devotion to present goals and relationships have by-product effects on the agent's broadly ethical sensibilities. That is because cares are like peaks in a figurative landscape of practical interest and motivation. In this topological analogy, imagine the horizontal x-y directions as value variables and the vertical z direction as the volitional variable. Our natural desires and learned tastes can move us horizontally along the valleys, and even from there we can see a few mountains worth climbing. But we have

to work ourselves up the slopes (against volitional inertia and natural lassitude) to get a better view. Hence the paradox that agents who care sincerely about something worthwhile are better able to discern many other things that would be worth caring about, while agents who care about little can discern few reasons to care about anything. From our present peak, we can get a good view of surrounding peaks and the grounds on which they stand. Thus to educate the will, one starts by getting children to care about something whose value they can already appreciate, however humble, and then one helps them to recognize the new value vistas that their initial effort opens up for them.

But this metaphor fails in one respect: in volitional life, one does not necessarily have to move through a valley to get to another peak. One can sometimes leap from the top of one mountain to the slopes of another. The topological metaphor also fails to capture the fact that intensive cares or loves can sometimes occlude the importance of other potential objects of care, even when contingencies of history and affinity would suggest them. Some volitional peaks are shrouded in clouds of different colors that filter our ethical vision. Caring passionately about something can obscure from our view personally relevant universalizable considerations in favor of caring about something else. For example, years of work prosecuting sex offenders might diminish a person's ability to appreciate the value of the erotic, even to such an extent that it creates relationship problems. Or years of work as a prison guard looking after violent criminals might make it harder for a person to appreciate the importance of mentoring, better opportunities, and second chances for adolescents headed in the wrong direction. Note that it would be oversimplistic to assume that such a person just lacked an "affinity" for caring about impoverished youth; he might have been emotionally and temperamentally well suited for this role, but, given the devotion he put into his corrections work, the reasons for projecting a mentoring role might have become almost invisible to him.[142] This is one of several reasons why our nonmoral endeavors and relationships need to remain nested within a more fundamental devotion to ethical wisdom and virtue ideals that keeps our *phronetic* capacities attuned to values from which our personal projects might otherwise cut us off.

As complex as the effects of the striving will can be on ethical sensitivity to worthwhile values, perhaps in a few areas, an existential version of Diotima's ascent is possible: caring about a more highly specified activity or end awakens us to values of a more general or embracing kind. In such ascents, new values open to us at each stage that transcend the reach of those we already care about. Whether we pursue them or incorporate them personally into our lives depends on our will. Yet these values are not mere fantasies of our will, phantom shadows of our existing motives displayed

on the screen of the world. They could not make personal meaning possible for us if they lacked the *alterity* that Frankl emphasized. This is how Susan Wolf puts the same point:

> In addition to wanting to live in the real world, we want to be connected to it—that is, we want our lives to have some positive relation to things or people or ideas that are valuable independently of us. This, I believe, is at the core of the desire to live a meaningful life.[143]

Thus Wolf, Nozick, Raz, and Blustein all give us similar reasons to favor existential objectivism. If they are right, EO does imply one remarkable conclusion: the willing that is most distinctive of personhood and through which life becomes personally meaningful is possible only because the world we inhabit is already "meaningful," full of domains of value worth caring about.[144] In that sense, human autonomy is also dependent on a world of values it does not create. As Larmore argues in response to Nietzsche, self-determination requires authoritative reasons and hence some values that "exist independent of our will . . . our lives cannot be ones of limitless self-creation. . . . Our lives must instead rest on respect for the claims that the world makes on us."[145]

6. Toward a Taxonomy of Significant Grounds for Caring

In this chapter, I have argued that a sufficiently nuanced objectivist conception of values as grounding cares fits well with the projective explanation of caring supplied by the existential conception of striving will. Of course, this is far from providing a direct defense of objective values themselves. This task would require analyzing a wide-ranging and insightful body of recent literature in the "rebirth" of analytic axiology, such as Chisholm's *Brentano and Intrinsic Value* and Nozick's *Philosophical Explanations*. In different ways, the authors in this broad movement[146] lend support to some version of the objectivist idea that

> in order to explain commitment and in order for an individual's commitment to remain stable over time and to fulfill its roles in the governance of action, enhancement of self-understanding, and constitution of identity, one must assume the truth of moral realism and so make room for the possibility of moral facts.[147]

Although I do not take on the burden of defending a complete objective list theory of values or any metaethical account of value realism, it will be helpful to assemble in systematic form all the different types of values that I have mentioned at various points as possible grounds for projective

motivation, especially in the form of ground projects, self-defining commitments, or cares. Organizing the table according to types of grounds rather than types of ends yields a taxonomy with a much clearer structure and order than the sort of goal hierarchies presented in the best available work on this topic in empirical psychology.[148] This taxonomy serves as a sketch of an existential theory of "basic goods."[149]

Worthwhile Objects of Care and Other Grounds for Commitment

I. Agent-Transcending Product-Focused Reasons. Such reasons are independent of:

- the agent's prior cares, commitments, or desires and emotions in the agent's internal set;
- objective conditions for the agent's individual well-being, flourishing, or happiness (the material elements of the agent's welfare);
- higher-order goods of existential coherence and subjective meaningfulness (process-goods for the agent).

1. The moral worth of an end E (or the moral status of some way W of pursuing E) irrespective of the positive or negative impact of realizing this end on agent's own flourishing:

1a. E or W is required under a formal or deontic standard of universalizability or fairness or justice, given the intrinsic value of each individual (e.g., keeping a promise or protecting innocent persons from lethal threats when possible).
1b. E or W is inherently good according to nonformal ethical standards; for example, W is a virtuous action aimed at E as a species of "the noble" as defined by an authoritative list of virtues of character.
1c. Under such standards, taking an interest in E or caring about E is morally required of any person in the situation in which the agent finds himself or herself.
1d. Devotion to E is itself an inherently worthy state according to nonformal criteria of moral worth, such as the duties of agapē as a universally caring response to neighbors and strangers; for example, E is the goal of showing mercy to a wrongdoer, or forgiving one who has wronged us, or reconciling persons who have been enemies.

2. The broadly aesthetic value of an end E, irrespective of its value for the agent's well-being:

2a. E is an end whose realization would create some kind of made beauty in human works or communicate something important through art—which, in most cases, makes it the object of an *artistic practice.*
2b. E is some form of natural (not made) beauty or harmony in chemical, mineral, or geological phenomena, land forms, or ocean environments that can be destroyed or preserved according to human choices.
2c. E is an end whose realization would develop the conception of beauty or aesthetic value in a tradition or practice in which the agent participates.
2d. E is an end whose realization is difficult or challenging for human beings, which thus presents an opportunity for developing and testing certain talents or capacities. These tend to be ends definitive of *sports* practices.
2e. E is a standard of excellence concerning the way in which difficult or challenging goals are properly pursued, which is internal to some practice.

3. The broadly ethical value of an end E, which is not simply a function of the positive or negative impact of the intended outcome on the agent's well-being:

3a. *Social goods.* Although not an object of justice deontically conceived, E is an important component of the common good of individuals as parts of larger groups or communities—which, in many instances of this type, makes E the end definitive of some practice; for example:

- knowledge or theoretical unification as the goals defining *scientific practice;*
- the dissemination of such knowledge and understanding and the apprenticeship of persons into practices in general, as the goals defining *practices of education;*
- public health and the bodily and psychological health of patients, as the goals defining medicine and counseling;
- wise political decisions regarding the use and administration of public resources.

3b. *Cultural goods.* The devotion of groups of persons to E is part of a living tradition of human activity that fosters a sense of communal identity or creates some other cultural good; for example, preserving one's heritage and the monuments and works that embody it, or connecting persons to shared ethnic roots, or fostering civic fraternity.

3c. *Filial and romantic love.* E is part of the flourishing of a person whose entire personality we apprehend as uniquely valuable or who has some other historically unique relationship to us and who is thus an apt target for essentially particularistic love.

3d. *Parents/guardians.* E is (some part of) the welfare of family members or others who provided the nurturing, upbringing, and parental love that enabled our growth and emotional maturation and to whom we therefore have duties of fidelity.

3e. *Environmental goods.* E is part of the flourishing of some nonhuman form of life, such as particular animals or plants, animal or plant species, biodiversity itself, or environments and ecosystems that sustain species and biodiversity.

4. The religious value of an end E, irrespective of the impact of commitment to it on the agent's well-being:

4a. E is taken to be the authoritative will of a divine being, or part of the good of a divine being.

4b. Pursuit of E is demanded by a sense of religious "calling" or revelation from the divine that goes beyond ordinary requirements of morality or ethical living.

4c. Commitment to E is apprehended as part of one's destiny, fate, or place in a divine order.

4d. E is bound up with a sense of mystery that transcends ordinary life and bears on questions of ultimate meaning (such as the origin and purpose of the universe, the significance of death, or eschatological goods beyond death).

II. Agent-Relative Product-Focused Reasons. Two qualifiers about this category:

- It does not mention considerations that bear directly on the agent's own well-being (since we assume that each agent desires his own happiness and in this case the desire is global enough to provide reason to care about any significant material conditions of his welfare).
- Specific reasons in the subcategories below may not hold as practically reasonable grounds for caring for all persons; the most we could say is that every person will find *some* reason(s) in each of these categories that pertain to them and would provide a reasonable basis for their commitments.

1. Retrospective reasons for caring about E:

1a. Commitment to E responds to something deeply personal in our past, such as a trauma or loss suffered by ourselves or significant others. By commitment to E, we can transcend this experience as simply a harm or meaningless absurdity, bringing to it a new and positive meaning that it did not have initially (thus bringing a complex good out of it).

1b. E is required or suggested as a possible creative response, beyond any strict duty of fidelity, to particular individuals or groups:

(i) to whom we are significantly indebted for technically unrepayable gifts;
(ii) whose wrong actions it is valuable to repudiate by corrective action or other communicative response;
(iii) to whom we, as offenders, may make some kind of significant restitution, apology, or offering of reconciliation (this consideration is related to I.1d above).

2. Prospective reasons for caring about E:

2a. E is effectively pursuable only as a *joint end* with others, who will not commit themselves to it unless we do so as well, on the same terms. (Many social goods that at least partially transcend the good of individual agents, e.g., possibly requiring uncompensated sacrifices from them, are pursuable only as goods to which multiple such agents are jointly committed, each person's commitment being contingent on the others' reciprocation. See chap. 8, sec. 7.)

2b. E is the end of a *possible hobby*, which is like a practice but usually less complex and demanding and produces a good less widely shareable, or with less social or intrinsic significance.

III. Agent-Relative Process-Focused Reasons. Such reasons are not based on the agent's desire for her own eudaimonia or flourishing, but of all the grounds for projective motivation, they come closest to this. These considerations are based instead on the psychological requirements that living a coherently meaningful life, or living autonomously, puts on the process of caring. Concern for these existential "goods," however, cannot accurately be construed simply as concern for one's own happiness. Although well-being in the broadest sense

may involve these goods, in the cases that concern us, the action is not motivated by the prospect of these goods *desired as* part of eudaimonia; rather, the agent does not pursue them directly at all but only sees the pursuit of other possible ends *in light of* these considerations as existential grounds for positing, sustaining, and/or ordering these other ends as final for her. As this analysis suggests, these grounds are not ones that can function entirely on their own; rather, they become relevant only in combination with other considerations relating to the value of the product to be willed as one's final end. That is, they properly arise as qualifying, amending, or reinforcing considerations, not as primary considerations in favor of projecting end E (see chap. 12, sec. 3).

1. Prospective reasons concerning the process of caring about E:

   1a. The stars align: we find ourselves with a fortunate opportunity to pursue E with likely success.[150]

   1b. Structural opportunity: commitment to E is psychologically possible for us, culturally possible, valued and endorsed by significant others in our life, is likely to win cooperation, and so on.

   1c. Replacement: commitment to E provides a sense of purpose and can fit into or enhance a coherent pattern of caring that generates existential meaningfulness in the agent's life.

   1d. Liberal breadth: E is significantly different in kind from our other identity-defining commitments and personal projects, and/or pursuit of E requires activities and draws on talents or capacities that are not as well employed in the pursuit of our other governing life goals—thus promoting the process-good of *intrapersonal practical diversity* in our life.

   1e. Innovation and individualization: the particular instantiations of E that we seek and the activities involved in pursuing them are novel and/or different in interesting ways from those pursuits and goals that shape the distinctive character of significant others in our life—thus promoting the process-good of *individual distinctiveness and originality* in our life.

2. Retrospective reasons concerning the process of caring about E:

   2a. *Stare decisis*: our pursuit of E first developed for other reasons, such as its power to satisfy various desires, and now

this pursuit appears outwardly to be an established part of our character on which others trust and rely. We feel too involved with E to turn back now without feeling disloyal and possibly also directionless.

   2b. Existential coherence: commitment to E is required by, reinforces, or at least fits well with other prior commitments we have made and the shape of our life to date; for example:

   - E is the welfare of the child (by former marriage) of the person we are marrying;
   - E is valued and pursued by friends to whom we have committed ourselves;
   - caring about E is, given the circumstances of human life, practically implied by caring about some other end F to which we are already devoted (for instance, caring about our children's education requires caring that they not be bullied in school).

   2c. Personal affinity: we find that our commitment to E can be wholehearted or unreserved, unifying what were previously conflicting aspects of our will or preserving us against such disunity—thus promoting the process-good of *practical unity* in our volitional life.

   2d. Innate orientation: in our quest for self-discovery, we find that our devotion to E is volitionally necessary for us as a volitional disposition that we cannot will to reject and that we were destined to express, given our personal essence or the unique volitional character that individuates us. This devotion is our individual *ergon*, our "personal function."[151]

The basic goods in this list fall into three out of four quadrants of a simple two-by-two matrix:

Agent-Relative Product-Focused Reasons	Agent-Relative Process-Focused Reasons
Agent-Transcending Product-Focused Reasons	[empty]

I have not listed any agent-transcending process-focused grounds in the fourth quadrant, because second-order goods realized in the process of pursuing first-order goods typically pertain to (or are directly realized in) the agent who is in this volitional process. For example, the coherence of his pursuits and the meaningfulness of his life are agent-relative goods and

hence are related to his history and circumstances in ways that agent-transcending goods are not. So rather than invent practical considerations for the fourth quadrant or force some into it for the sake of artificial architectonic completeness, I have left it empty. By contrast, existential subjectivist accounts can accommodate only some of the considerations included in the top-right quadrant.

Although many grounds for different types of cares are accessible to reflection in human beings with the necessary experience or knowledge by acquaintance, this existential objectivist account certainly does not claim that all the grounds on which our actual cares or ground projects are based are known to each of us or even that with sufficient introspection, they can all be known. Sometimes the status and content of our cares and ground projects themselves are misunderstood by us, and sometimes we are (to an extent) self-deceived about them. The grounds or considerations to which we respond in projecting some end may also not be ones that *really* justify pursuit of this end (as is always the case with radically evil projects but also with some morally neutral or good projects too). The objective grounds for caring included in my list are reasons that agents do consider in projecting final ends and can *take as* sufficient bases for their cares or commitments; but agents are sometimes wrong in this regard. My claim is only that each item on my list can sometimes serve as part of an adequate ground for setting a particular end.

A theory of authenticity is, in part, a systematic normative treatment of these issues. Even when we do understand what our purposes are, and they were formed on the basis of adequate reasons, these reasons may not be entirely known to us. This does not entail that the volitional commitment involved in these purposes is inauthentic. Indeed, the opposite view is advanced in the Emersonian and Marcelian traditions. As Henry Bugbee writes in his mid-century classic:

> It is the essence of authentic commitment that it be grounded behind the intellectual eye and not merely in a demonstrable basis which we can get before us. The ultimate meaning of service lies just here: we cannot gain command of what grounds our action; there can only be an unconditional basis of action in so far as we are at "its" disposal and not our own.[152]

It is for this kind of reason that category I.4 is included in my list; it is surely true that some "callings" are categorized as religious because their grounds are mysterious and not fully knowable to their agent. But Bugbee and Marcel do not restrict their thesis to religious callings, and Levinas would extend it to moral motivation, which he thinks is a response to a value that transcends human cognition (the infinity of the other). Even if

we do not agree that all authentic commitment must be formed on the basis of a "calling" whose ultimate source is hidden from us, it is an interesting question whether some of the more passionate and intense types of human caring or ground projects are generally grounded in this veiled way. Here I will say only that the main elements of existential objectivism as sketched in this chapter do not decide this issue one way or another. Answers to these questions are further refinements or additions to the basic EO framework, which is flexible enough to include a range of views that recognize the alterity of values grounding the self-motivational activity that is human "willing" in its most primordial sense.

Nor is my subdivision of grounds for volitional projection into aesthetic, ethical, moral, and personal reasons meant to be exhaustive; aside from tradition and culture, mere social convention and popular opinion are also sometimes taken as grounds for projective motivation. But this is usually a *mistaken* judgment or perception of normative worth. Aside from the personal grounds mentioned in the list, factors such as religious background, revelations, disturbing events, and many other distinctive experiences not catalogued here, can become the bases for the resolve in which a person steels herself projectively to new ends. My list is also limited to *positive* grounds that can in the right circumstances *validly* support the agent's volitional response to them through care or personal devotion. It does not include those negative grounds that I survey in chapter 10 as reasons-in-view for projecting radically evil ends or any other reasons that it is *always* erroneous to take as grounds for caring. (Many of the considerations in my list *could* be taken as reasons to form projects that would be morally wrong in certain circumstances, but they are distinct from corrupt grounds that the will can *only* take as reasons for forming evil or destructive projects.)

This existential taxonomy of values worth caring about embraces but transcends the insights of the eudaimonist tradition and Frankfurt's alternative. It gives proper place to agent-relative process-focused considerations such as existential coherence and mutually reinforcing relationships among an agent's projects, for example, between friendship and other activities.[153] Concern for process-focused reasons referring to the goods of effectiveness and practical coherence in one's own life is not egoistic, because these goods are required for volitional stability or sustainable devotion to any worthwhile first-order goals. Too much cognitive dissonance or conflict among goals undermines commitment to any of our goals.[154] Likewise, as the psychological study of intrinsic motivation has shown, confidence in a minimum level of control over one's environment and conditions of life is a precondition for strong volitional devotion to anything. Feeling that one is utterly at the mercy of forces beyond one's control is a strong predictor of

depression and general demotivation.[155] A heroic agent may be able to pursue good ends even with little prospect of success, but only if she retains confidence in a *minimum effectiveness* of her agency in the world. My existential account denies that adjusting one's ends in light of such considerations is rooted only in desire for eudaimonia. For such process-focused considerations do not by themselves generally provide sufficient reason for willing a first-order end; their relevance piggybacks on the presence of product-focused reasons for forming or continuing various first-order projects. For example, a significant opportunity for success in a career as an engineer becomes relevant to me only if the goods produced by excellent engineering are already worth willing in themselves.

My tentative summary of the main positive reasons for projective willing is also "pluralist" in the sense defended by both Jeffrey Blustein and John Kekes. As chapter 7 made clear, unlike A-eudaimonism, my existential objectivism does not claim that *every* worthwhile good can be balanced in a unified narrative structure within in a single life. Hence I agree with Blustein that "no particular configuration or ranking of . . . basic human goods follows from the claim that living a life that combines these goods in a coherent, harmonious structure is intrinsically good." There are many different ways of balancing goods worth caring about.[156] Similarly, Kekes writes that "Living a good life requires the achievement of a coherent ordering of plural and [often] conflicting values, but coherent orderings are themselves plural and conflicting."[157]

The incommensurability of many nonmoral values and the fact that only limited combinations of them in different priority ordering are practically compatible fits with several features of EO: (1) It helps explain the existence of rational optionality in judgments concerning what is worth caring about. It also explains the reality of what we might call soft dilemmas, in which we are forced to choose between things we have cared about equally or without relative priority up until now. (2) It fits with the fact that moral reasoning about fairness/justice is not the only source of insight into values worth caring about. (3) It also supports the idea that although reasonable life plans are not instantiations of a single recipe, there are objective limits: "not all possibilities are reasonable."[158] In particular, there are "primary values" that determine what count as harms and benefits for all normal human persons, which are culturally invariant.[159] In my opinion, we should also limit the "conditionality" of nonmoral values[160] by giving overriding significance to strictly moral values (deontic requirements). But a defense of this claim goes beyond the scope of my present analysis.[161]

Conclusion

This chapter shows that the existential conception of striving will fits well with moderate objectivist approaches to the problem of practical normativity within contemporary analytic philosophy. It provides a theoretical basis

for broadening our view of basic goods beyond those recognized by neo-Aristotelian natural-law theory and thus shows how to fill the lacuna in Kantian moral psychology without reverting to eudaimonism. Thus it is possible to develop an explanatorily powerful non-eudaimonist conception of willing without the dangers of irrationalism, subjectivism, and empty formalism. The resulting existential conception of personhood provides a better basis for a substantive ethic of the good life that can live within a broader deontological framework for moral norms.

77. Ibid., 542.
78. Ibid., 544. For this point, Anderson cites Scheffler, "Agent-Centered Restrictions, Rationality, and the Virtues."
79. Ibid., 544.
80. Ibid., 543. This principle was suggested by Nicholas Sturgeon as an alternative formulation of Anderson's own neo-Kantian principle of respect for persons.
81. Ibid., 545.
82. Blustein, *Care and Commitment*, 35.
83. Compare this to Kierkegaard's young lad in *Fear and Trembling*, who has to give up pursuing his princess even though he remains infinitely devoted to her. See my discussion of infinite resignation in "Faith as Eschatological Trust in *Fear and Trembling*."
84. Frankfurt, *The Reasons of Love*, 59. This interpretation helps align Frankfurt's view with the conclusions reached in chap. 12, sec. 6: the agent-related by-product benefits must not initially motivate the kind of care or love that can generate these benefits. As a result, at least up to some point, caring devotion can continue and be expressed in ways that do not happen to generate these benefits to the agent.
85. Blustein, *Care and Commitment*, 27.
86. Ibid., 28.
87. Ibid.
88. Ibid., 30.
89. Ibid., 31.
90. Ibid. One problem with this terminology is that "disinterested" care can suggest aloofness or emotional detachment, but the kind of caring Blustein has in mind can be energetically focused in its concern for the target and is also compatible with caring *for* the target and other types of emotional bond with the target.
91. Ibid., 38.
92. Ibid., 39. But the example that Blustein gives here is a self-interested caring about becoming slim.
93. Ibid., 46.
94. Ibid., 46–47.
95. If what is usually a hobby—e.g., building Lego models or collecting rare coins—becomes a deep commitment central to one's life-narrative, or even a ground project, then it is no longer properly called a hobby. One now builds Lego structures as fine art or makes a profession of coin collecting, etc.
96. Ibid., 49–50.
97. Blustein explores the notions of integration, coherence, and stability at 58–59.
98. Ibid., 70.
99. Ibid., 71.
100. As Blustein recognizes on 77.
101. For example, in her "Two Distinctions in Goodness," Korsgaard limits "intrinsic" value to value that something has in all possible circumstances (170) and holds that some "extrinsic" or context-dependent value is final or valued "as an end" (172). I have been concerned primarily with the difference between final and instrumental value but without conceiving all final value as targetable or as a potential "end" of intention.
102. Blustein, *Care and Commitment*, 94.
103. Ibid., 98.
104. See also ibid., 88.
105. See ibid., 96.
106. See ibid., 102–3.
107. Ibid., 103.

14. An Existential Objectivist Account of What Is Worth Caring About

1. Ordinarily, the cognitive and projective sides may form a whole experience and seem inseparable, although they can be distinguished in philosophical abstraction.
2. There is much discussion of list theories these days. For example, see Derek Parfit, *Reasons and Persons*, 4; Shelly Kagan, "Limits of Well-Being," 170; Nicholas Rescher, *Objectivity*, chap. 11.
3. Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, pt. I, chap. 1, sec. 5, 77.
4. Of course, in his famous essay on "Existentialism and Humanism," Sartre ends up in what is really an unstable position intermediate between objectivism and subjectivism: like Kant, he affirms that we make some kind of universal validity claim in choosing any value as a basis for our decision; but he denies that such an evaluative validity claim has any objective truth-makers. It is no wonder, then, that this essay confuses the brightest undergraduates.
5. Blustein, *Care and Commitment*, 33.
6. Ibid., 40–41.
7. Ibid., 40.
8. Ibid., 24.
9. Ibid., 64–65.
10. See Williams, *Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy*, chap. 10.
11. See Anscombe, "Modern Moral Philosophy."
12. As Alex Voorhoeve calls it in his interview with Harry Frankfurt, "Harry Frankfurt on the Necessity of Love," http://www.ucl.ac.uk/~uctyaev/frankfurt1.pdf.
13. Habermas, "Are There Postmetaphysical Answers to the Question: What Is the 'Correct Life?'" Habermas moderates his phasing somewhat in the published version of the essay included in his book, *The Future of Human Nature*.
14. As a brief sample of such works, consider John Drummond's "Moral Encounters" and "Moral Objectivity: Husserl's Sentiments of the Understanding."
15. Kupperman, *Character*, 117.
16. Frankfurt, "The Importance of What We Care About," 91.
17. Frankfurt, "Comments on MacIntyre," 321. Note that this response was published in the same volume as Frankfurt's essay, "The Importance of What We Care About" and serves as a kind of addendum to that essay.

18. Frankfurt still appears to accept that a person's character can fairly be judged on the basis of what they care about. For he says in *The Reasons of Love* that "What a person loves, or what he does not love, may be counted to his credit. Or it may discredit him: it may be taken to show that he has a bad moral character" (67). Other non-moral forms of praise and blame may surely also apply (as Thomas Hill argues; see chap. 11). Yet Frankfurt seems to think this is compatible with holding that "love need not be grounded in any judgment or perception concerning the value of its object" (67). There is a *prima facie* contradiction here.

19. *Saving Private Ryan*, directed by Steven Spielberg, written by Robert Rodat (Dreamworks, 1998).

20. I have addressed historical conditioning of our duties in four unpublished talks on agapē, "Time and Responsibility."

21. Frankfurt, "The Importance of What We Care About," 91.

22. Ibid., 93.

23. Frankfurt, "Rationality and the Unthinkable," 185.

24. Ibid., 186.

25. C. Taylor, *The Ethics of Authenticity*, 33.

26. Ibid.

27. Ibid., 34.

28. Ibid., 35.

29. J. Anderson, "A Social Conception of Personal Autonomy: Volitional Identity, Strong Evaluation, and Intersubjective Accountability," sec. 4.4, 89. Anderson's dissertation discusses in detail the prospects for an intersubjective approach to norms governing cares and life plans and defends an extension of Habermasian discourse theory to "ethical-existential" evaluation. I regard this project as a close cousin of existential objectivism.

30. Ibid., 91. See also J. Anderson, "The Personal Lives of Strong Evaluators: Identity, Pluralism, and Ontology in Charles Taylor's Value Theory."

31. Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 14.

32. J. Anderson rightly notes, against Flanagan, that Taylor recognizes some broadly aesthetic or non-moral evaluative judgments as strongly evaluative (ibid., 95). Yet strong evaluation is fundamentally anticonsequentialist, since it invokes contrasts between items that are *ordinally* higher or lower and hence not subject to balancing against one another or to trade-off. In that sense, a broadly ethical affirmation of values that cannot be treated in consequentialist fashion is built into the idea of strong evaluation, which is therefore closely tied to what I call aretaic commitment.

33. Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 15.

34. Ibid., 23.

35. Except in the case of sport practices, in which the end is conventional, but its pursuit is challenging in beneficial ways, affording opportunities for the development of excellences.

36. From the song "Climb Every Mountain," by Rodgers and Hammerstein, in *The Sound of Music*, directed by Robert Wise (Twentieth Century Fox, 1965). Of course, in using this example I do not mean to endorse the sexism in this movie.

37. As Taylor says, one criterion for the worth of my life concerns "what kind of life would fulfill the promise implicit in my particular talents, or the demands incumbent on someone with my endowment" (*Sources of the Self*, 14). The criticism that someone has "wasted" his talents or "missed" his calling is usually made in the illocutionary mode of a validity claim about relevant grounds for caring. See the further discussion of "personal fit" in sec. 4.3.

38. Tate and Harris, "Persons, Free Will, and the Problem of Evil," conference manuscript, 12–13.

39. Ibid., 14.

40. Emphasis added. As fate would have it, I wrote this example on October 10, 2004, before learning that Reeve had died that very day.

41. Frankfurt, "The Importance of What We Care About," 92.

42. Blustein, *Care and Commitment*, 43.

43. Ibid.; we "derive personal value from the impersonal pursuit." This is also the view that Blustein finds in Loren Lomasky's work (45).

44. Frankfurt, "The Importance of What We Care About," 93.

45. Ibid., 93.

46. Note that this disjunctive pair of diagnoses leaps to mind for a case such as the person obsessed with not stepping on cracks in the pavement. He is either in the grip of some delusion about the effects or symbolic importance of stepping on a crack or recognizes the unimportance of his goal yet finds himself unable to break the habit.

47. Blustein, *Care and Commitment*, 47, citing Lomasky, 241.

48. Ibid., 47.

49. Ibid., 61. One explanation for this may be that the agent's doubts about his judgments or sensitivities to values worth caring about undermine his trust in any apparent reasons to project new ends. Precisely because earnest conviction about objective grounds for caring is necessary for volitional commitment, self-doubt and value-skepticism sap the will's strength.

50. Frankfurt, "The Importance of What We Care About," 91.

51. See my "The Meaning of Kierkegaard's Choice."

52. Frankfurt, "The Importance of What We Care About," 92–93.

53. Ibid., 93.

54. In his latest book, *The Reasons of Love*, Frankfurt seems to drop the caveat from this claim and assert the stronger thesis that for all genuine cares, the only valid justification is ultimately this process-focused agent-relative existential value of caring itself (23–26).

55. Frankfurt, "On Caring," 162.

56. Frankfurt, "Autonomy, Necessity, and Love," 438. This passage is immediately followed by the analysis of active love as pure of ulterior motives, including even enjoyment of activities involved in loving (see chap. 13, sec. 2.4).

57. Frankfurt, "The Importance of What We Care About," 94, see n. 4. If anyone imagines that this reference to reasonless divine creativity was meant lightheartedly, they should consult Frankfurt's essay "On God's Creation." In this innovative reading of *Genesis*, Frankfurt argues that in His original speech-acts, God

forms Himself by first defining His own volitions without any prior reason for causing order to arise in chaos (136).

58. Frankfurt, *The Reasons of Love*, 63.
59. Ibid., 38.
60. Frankfurt, "Reply to Gary Watson," 161.
61. Blustein, *Care and Commitment*, 44.
62. Ibid., 65.
63. Wolf, "The True, the Good, and the Loveable," 229.
64. Ibid.
65. Ibid., 230. This rejection is obviously linked to Wolf's well-known critique of "moral saints" (which unfortunately caricatures sainthood as involving moral monomania and inflexibility).
66. Ibid., 231. Indeed, everyone is familiar with parents who make this error, often with disastrous results.
67. Frankfurt, *The Reasons of Love*, 39.
68. Ibid., 43. He actually refers here to the love of infants and small children whose personal qualities cannot yet be a very significant criterion.
69. MacIntyre, *Dependent Rational Animals*, 90–91 (emphasis added).
70. Wolf, "The True, the Good, and the Loveable," 231.
71. Thus Wolf's version is more reasonable than Madonna's more assertive conception of self-respect: "Don't go for second-best, baby; put yourself to the test!" from the song "Express Yourself," by Madonna and Stephen Bray, on the album *Like A Prayer* (Sire Records, 1989).
72. Wolf, "The True, the Good, and the Loveable," 232. This is not to be equated with Nietzsche's claim that what makes something worthy of care is the potential for caring about it to give us distinction, greatness in comparison with peers, or ascendance over the puerile masses of the world. There are perhaps contexts in which distinctiveness can be a valid ground for forming some project, but this cannot be generalized. Nietzsche's conception of the proper grounds for caring replaces ethics with the imperatives of the *conatus ascendi*, which limits the will to a complex kind of egoism, reducing projective motivation to *libido dominandi*.
73. Ibid. This way of construing Augustine's doctrine of *ordo amoris* saves it from being read as requiring strict proportionality between the value of final ends and the care we devote to them.
74. Ibid., 233.
75. *Bend It Like Beckham*, directed by Gurinder Chadha (Twentieth Century Fox, 2002).
76. Frankfurt, *The Reasons of Love*, 12. The same point is made in each of Frankfurt's other essays on caring.
77. Frankfurt, "On Caring," 158.
78. Frankfurt, *The Reasons of Love*, 21.
79. Frankfurt, "The Importance of What We Care About," 90.
80. Frankfurt, *The Reasons of Love*, 56.
81. Frankfurt, "On Caring," 164.
82. Frankfurt, *The Reasons of Love*, 13, my emphasis.

83. Blustein, *Care and Commitment*, 51.
84. Tracey Ullmann, "They Don't Know," on the album *You Broke My Heart in Seventeen Places* (Stiff Records, 1983).
85. I recognize that personal appropriation of some values by the will, taking them as initial grounds for projective motivation, often results in clearer or more nuanced understanding of these values themselves (this effect is especially clear when loving particular persons results in "getting to know them" better). In other words, although an evaluative attitude of some kind precedes and grounds every project, cognitive changes follow from the projective motivation. On this idea, see my essay, "Towards an Existential Virtue Ethics," 304–9. What I say there about moral sensitivity I would now say about sensitivity to all the values that can rationally ground volitional caring of all kinds.
86. Unless the question is one of *faith*, but that is a different question from love.
87. Stocker, "The Schizophrenia of Modern Ethical Theories," reprinted in *Virtue Ethics*.
88. Noddings, *Caring*, 5.
89. Ibid., 25.
90. Ibid., 18.
91. Frankfurt, *The Reasons of Love*, 38.
92. Ibid., 43.
93. Ibid., 44.
94. Blustein believes it is possible to care universally about all persons, but he also contrasts agapē with essentially particularistic care: "such love is not concerned with others as particular and unique persons" (*Care and Commitment*, 37). By contrast, I think that true agapic regard is distinguished from universal benevolence precisely by taking the uniqueness that makes essentially particularistic care possible as the ultimate ground for loving persons *qua* their individuality as persons.
95. Herman, "Bootstrapping," 261.
96. Ibid., 257.
97. Ibid., 256.
98. See Raz, *Value, Respect, and Attachment*. Closely related themes are found in Raz's earlier book, *Engaging Reason: On the Theory of Value and Action*.
99. Raz, *Value, Respect, and Attachment*, 3.
100. Ibid., 8.
101. Ibid., 16.
102. Ibid., 17, n. 5.
103. Ibid., 18.
104. Ibid., 19.
105. Ibid., 20–21. Clearly, here Raz regards "attachment" as actively generated by the agent. He also distinguishes "meaning" from eudaimonia, as the existential approach requires, for "There is value in sadness and disappointment. They have value because they too can be meaningful elements of one's life" (15). This insight is overlooked by Frankfurt when he argues that we have to be careful never to be frustrated by our cares.

106. Ibid., 20.

107. A striking parallel is found in Blustein, who also affirms both these components as necessary for existential meaning:

> The values that govern our lives can endow our lives with meaning only if they are personal ones. Impersonal value alone cannot give my life meaning. . . . On the other hand, if something that has value for me does not point beyond itself to self-transcendent value, if something that I care about is not believed by me to *warrant* my care because it has genuine worth and importance, then it cannot give meaning to my life. (*Care and Commitment*, 48)

108. In *Saving Private Ryan*, for example, Private Ryan is partially individuated as an appropriate object of special attention for Chief of Staff George Marshall because his brothers have already all died in combat. Though logically this scenario could be repeated, it was (what Raz calls) "de facto" unique. It is also among General Marshall's grounds for devoting extraordinary effort and cost to saving Ryan that President Lincoln recorded such profound grief and collective indebtedness of all future Americans to the mother of five brothers, *all* of whom were killed serving the Union army in the Civil War. Marshall's projection of the goal "that James Ryan be saved" is partially due to conceiving that goal as including the historically singularizing specification, "so that what happened to this mother during the Civil War shall not be repeated." And that in turn reflects his own sense of indebtedness, on behalf of all Americans, to that particular mother who "laid so costly a sacrifice upon the altar of freedom." Thus collective indebtedness can also single out new ends as uniquely significant as history unfolds, and one strand of the web of responsibility is woven to others in ways that we could never completely unravel.

109. Raz, *Value, Respect, and Attachment*, 14–15.

110. Ibid., 23.

111. Ibid., 20.

112. I also make reference to this dynamic, for example, in explaining how certain types of radically evil will can be seen by their agents as grounded in agent-relative reasons (see chap. 10, sec. 2.2).

113. Ibid., 24.

114. Ibid., 26.

115. Ibid., 33.

116. Cindy Lauper, "True Colors," from the album *True Colors* (Sony Records, 1990).

117. Raz, *Value, Respect, and Attachment*, 31.

118. Most of the rest of Raz's analysis in *Value, Respect, and Attachment* focuses on how to understand the universality of values that is a key aspect of their intelligibility, the social dependence of many values, and the status of moral values demanding respect for persons.

119. In her recent Presidential Address to the Central Division of the APA (March 2006), Eleonore Stump offered a Thomistic solution to this problem that involves two conditions for love: (1) desiring the good of the other, which does not depend on their intrinsic or relational properties; and (2) desiring some kind of

union with the other, which is sensitive to their intrinsic and relational properties. Although this is an interesting way of trying to avoid both extremes, the problem is that condition 2 presupposes a eudaimonist conception of motivation, whereas condition 1 requires projective motivation. The existential model of striving will thus provide a more adequate basis for analyzing different forms of love, including not only agapē (as I argue in chap. 9) but also romantic love, in which a kind of emotional union is intended. However, an existential account of romantic love must await a full existential theory of emotions that builds on the conception of striving will developed in this book.

120. J. Anderson, "Personal Lives of Strong Evaluators," 18. As Anderson notes, the problem with Taylor's account lies in his tight link "between *endorsing* a good and being *moved* by it" (33); his eudaimonist model of motivation leaves no room for projective motivation to take general value grounds and particularize them in personal projects.

121. Raz's model also comes closer to what Anderson calls a "realist approach based on properties of situations," which can include individuating histories of agents and their self-interpretations (ibid., 34).

122. Wolf, "The True, the Good, and the Loveable," 234.

123. Ibid., 236.

124. See Nozick, *Anarchy, State, and Utopia*, 42–43.

125. See Frankfurt, *On Bullshit*.

126. Frankfurt, "On the Necessity of Ideals," 25.

127. Ibid., 26.

128. Ibid.

129. Frankfurt, *Reasons of Love*, 24.

130. Ibid.

131. Frankfurt, "The Importance of What We Care About," 93 (emphasis added).

132. Nozick, *Philosophical Explanations*, 595. Nozick may have learned this from Viktor Frankl (see 579–80).

133. Frankfurt, "On the Necessity of Ideals," 25. However, he footnotes papers by Blasi, Rorty, Tugendhat, Wren, Haste, and Nunner-Winkler in *The Moral Self* as fruitfully addressing these questions.

134. Frankfurt, *Reasons of Love*, 23.

135. See O'Connor's critique of the demand for uniquely rational options in *Persons and Causes*, 90–93.

136. Frankfurt, *Reasons of Love*, 40, n. 4.

137. Ibid., 25.

138. Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac and Sketches Here and There*, "Wisconsin," 96.

139. For this reason, I am not convinced by Frankfurt's argument that because our confident love of our children is not based on rational arguments, it must not be grounded in objective values (*Reasons of Love*, 29). The intrinsic value of the child, his or her potential, and his or her historical relation to us are all good reasons for our love, although these values are not first revealed to us by reasoning

about the implicit commitments of agency; the existential objectivist position is not a kind of Kantian rationalism extended to nonmoral values. In addition to the rationalist, subjectivist, and existential accounts I have mentioned, a fourth approach inspired by Aquinas is offered by Eleonore Stump in her recent Presidential Address to the Central Division meeting of the APA (Chicago, April 2006).

140. Frankfurt, *Reasons of Love*, 26.

141. Of course, volitional devotion to such an end makes an art form of it, which is something quite distinct from ordinary appetites for various first-order pleasures (sensual, entertaining, etc.).

142. The qualifier "almost" is important here, given my suspicion of volitional necessity.

143. Wolf, "The True, the Good, and the Loveable," 236.

144. I believe this also to be an implication of Heidegger's analysis of *Dasein* in *Being and Time*.

145. Larmore, *The Morals of Modernity*, 87.

146. See Adams, *Finite and Infinite Goods*, esp. chaps. 3–7; Audi, *The Good in the Right*; Dancy, *Practical Reality*; Kupperman, *Values . . . and What Follows*; Gewirth, *Self-Fulfillment*; Grünberg, *The Mystery of Values*; von Wright, *The Varieties of Goodness*; Harman and Thomson, *Moral Relativism and Moral Objectivity*; Lemos, *Intrinsic Value*; the essays from *Social Philosophy and Policy* reprinted in Paul, Miller, and Paul, *The Good Life and the Human Good*; Ryn, *Will, Imagination, and Reason*; Rescher, *Human Interests*, esp. chaps. 13, 14, and 16; Scanlon, *What We Owe to Each Other*; Tiberius, *Deliberation about the Good*, esp. chap. 7. Of course expressive antinaturalist theories still abound in contemporary metaethics, especially concerning moral norms; see, e.g., Blackburn, "Supervenience Revisited"; Brandt, *Facts, Values, and Morality*; Gibbard, *Wise Choices, Apt Feelings*; and Railton, "Nonfactualism about Normative Discourse." However, many others now argue that emotions themselves involve a kind of axiological evaluation of objects in the world in terms of which they can be judged adequate or not; see, e.g., de Sousa, *The Rationality of Emotion*, chap. 12 (although de Sousa eventually denies the contrast between subjective appropriation and objective apprehension of values, 319). Partially cognitive conceptions of emotion fit well with the Aristotelian idea that emotional tendencies to some extent reflect one's value-judgmental dispositions.

147. Liberman, *Commitment, Values, and Moral Realism*, 1–2.

148. See Chulef, Read, and Walsh, "A Hierarchical Taxonomy of Human Goals."

149. I emphasize that my list includes most of the goods one finds in recent natural-law theories, such as the list of goods basic to well-being in Murphy, *Natural Law and Practical Rationality*; but my list includes goods that range outside human well-being altogether, such as environmental goods and abstract values. In that respect, my list is more like the ones found in the "phenomenological realist" school of Dietrich von Hildebrande.

150. Since I have said little about this kind of reason until now, an example is in order. In *All Creatures Great and Small*, James Herriot does not start out with the intention of working as a vet in Yorkshire, but he seizes a lucky opportunity and

becomes ever more deeply engaged in Farnon's lively practice, the troubles and joys of the Yorkshire folk, and the beauty of this land. This whole gestalt of values worth caring about is crystallized or held together for this one individual by the initial prospect or opportunity, which is a historically unique prospective consideration.

151. I include this kind of individual ground to accommodate Frankfurt's idea of volitional necessities, although I do not endorse this idea.

152. Bugbee, *The Inward Morning*, October 8 entry, 69.

153. Blustein, *Care and Commitment*, 24.

154. See Festinger, *A Theory of Cognitive Dissonance*.

155. See Seligman and Abramson, "Learned Helplessness in Humans"; and Peterson and Seligman, "Causal Explanations and Depression."

156. Blustein, *Care and Commitment*, 25.

157. Kekes, *The Morality of Pluralism*, 11; see also Kekes, *Moral Wisdom and Good Lives*.

158. Ibid., 14.

159. Ibid., 15.

160. Ibid., 19.

161. See Flanagan's responses to Bernard Williams's contention that personal projects can trump impartial moral requirements; *The Varieties of Moral Personality*, chaps. 3 and 4.

Conclusion: The Danger of Willfulness Revisited

1. Here I want to acknowledge serious questions recently raised by John Lippitt about what work the notion of narrative unity can do in an existential account of virtue and whether it might not overvalorize planning relative to surprise or openness to being changed through encounters and unanticipatable events. See Lippitt's review of *Kierkegaard after MacIntyre* in *Faith and Philosophy* and his essay on this topic forthcoming in *Inquiry*.

2. Schalow, "Beyond Decisionism and Anarchy," 360.

3. Ibid.

4. Ibid., 363. This is why, in his debate with an adversary bent on immortality, Captain Picard says that "our mortality defines us." See *Star Trek Generations*, directed by David Carson, written by Rick Berman (Paramount Pictures, 1994).

5. Ibid., 364. Unfortunately, though, Schalow seems to infer from this that we should move beyond the idea of "a will" as "the centralization of [freedom's] power" (ibid., 366). I hope to have shown instead that the idea of willing itself need not be rejected to overcome the dangers of pure voluntarism.

6. Noddings, *Caring*, 24.

7. Ehman, *The Authentic Self*, 12–13.

8. Ibid., 13.

9. Gabrielle Taylor, "Deadly Vices?" 168.

10. Ehman, *The Authentic Self*, 14.

11. Ibid., 14–15.