
THE JOURNAL OF PHILOSOPHY

VOLUME XCIV, NO. 6, JUNE 1997

THE RIGHT AND THE GOOD*

There is a story about the right and the good which strikes me as very attractive.¹ Although there are gaps in it, I think its structure must be correct. But first some background.

The story about the right and the good which comes down to us from G. E. Moore—I shall call it *Moore's story*—is familiar enough, and many people find it very attractive. Many people nowadays reject it, but even among them, many understand perfectly why its friends resist invitations to reject it: that is because they themselves accept its first two parts and concede that it is hard to supply a clear rationale for rejecting its concluding third part.

Moore's story begins with the good. Some things are good, Moore said, and some things are not good; so there is such a property as goodness—all good things have it and all things that are not good lack it.² Moore had much to say about which things do and which things do not possess the property goodness, but for a reason that

* An early draft of this article was presented at the Chapel Hill Colloquium in 1995, and later drafts were presented as the Hagerstrom Lectures for 1996 at the University of Uppsala, and at a symposium at University College, London; I am grateful to the participants for their comments. The later drafts were written at the Centre for Advanced Study in Oslo; I am grateful to the Centre for providing me with support and very pleasant surroundings in which to work. Many people gave me helpful comments along the way: I thank Alexander Byrne, James Higginbotham, Ralph Wedgwood, and, in particular, Catherine Elgin, who commented on several drafts.

¹ I shall be trying to improve on the story I told in chapter 8 of Gilbert Harman and my *Moral Relativism and Moral Objectivity* (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1996).

² Moore said in *Principia Ethica*: "Ethics is undoubtedly concerned with the question what good conduct is; but, being concerned with this, it obviously does not start at the beginning, unless it is prepared to tell us what is good as well as what is conduct. For 'good conduct' is a complex notion: all conduct is not good; for some is certainly bad and some may be indifferent. And on the other hand, other things, besides conduct, may be good; and if they are so, then, 'good' denotes some property, that is common to them and conduct; and if we examine good con-

will emerge, I shall not summarize his views on this matter. The second part of the story flows from the first: there being such a property as goodness, there is also such a relation as being better than, or *betterness*. (Not every property has a comparative, but this one surely must.) Moore's story then concludes: the right is analyzable in terms of the relation betterness. Thus, for it to be the case that Alfred ought to do a thing at a time is for it to be the case that the world will be better if he does the thing than it will be if he does any of the other things it is open to him to do at the time.

There are at least three things that make this story seem attractive. In the first place, it is wonderfully simple. It counts in favor of a theory if it supplies a simple picture of what had initially looked like chaos. Second, it does seem to us that there is such a thing as one thing's being good and another's not being good, and that there is such a thing as the world's being better if things go this way rather than that. We certainly say *words* like this often enough. Third, and most important, it is hard to see how it could be perfectly all right to fail to do what would make the world go better than it otherwise would. If you really would make the world go worse if you did a thing, then are you not called on morally to refrain from doing it? What else is there for the right to turn on than how good the world will be if you act in this way rather than that?

As I said, many people nowadays reject Moore's story. The ground most commonly given for doing so is that accepting the story yields intuitively implausible conclusions about the right. Suppose that Alfred is under the following threat by the Mafia: kill Bert, or we shall kill Charles, David, and Edward. Moore's opponents say: under those conditions, the world will surely be better if Alfred kills Bert than if he leaves the Mafia to kill the three others. After all, deaths are surely bad, and three of them surely three times as bad as one. But, they go on: moral intuition delivers, firmly, that it would be wrong for Alfred to kill Bert. In short, what is wrong with Moore's story lies in its concluding part. All is well with its two earlier parts, which tell us about goodness and betterness; the trouble lies only in the story's then going on to declare that the right is analyzable in terms of betterness.

duct alone of all good things, then we shall be in danger of mistaking for this property, some property which is not shared by those other things ..."—Thomas Baldwin, ed. (New York: Cambridge, 1993, rev. ed.), p. 54. Thus, good conduct is what has the two properties goodness and being conduct, and other things besides good conduct have the property goodness: goodness is the property that all good things have in common.

Moore's friends—and he still has a good many—reply: “But look, you have conceded that the world really will be better if Alfred kills Bert; so how could it possibly be wrong for him to do so? What is there that could be thought to make his doing so wrong, given that the world will be better if he does it?” This, in effect, asks “What's your alternative story?” and expresses skepticism about the possibility of any plausible alternative. There is much to be said for that skepticism, for it *is* hard to see what could make Alfred's killing Bert wrong if it is not bad, and then hard to see how the Mafia's killing the three other people could fail to be at least three times as bad.

This dispute still goes on in moral philosophy, and what is puzzling about it is that a deeper objection to Moore's story not only is available but has been available for many years now. Peter Geach (in 1956), Paul Ziff (in 1960), and G. H. von Wright (in 1963)³ gave the excellent advice that we should *look and see* how the word ‘good’ is actually used. They showed, conclusively, that it does not function in the way in which adjectives like ‘visible’ and ‘happy’ do. In saying ‘That's good’, we are not ascribing a property goodness—indeed, there is no such thing. Curiously enough, this idea was not picked up by moral philosophers, and brought to bear on Moore's story, for some twenty years. My impression is that Philippa Foot's article “Utilitarianism and the Virtues” (1983)⁴ is the first work by a moral philosopher to declare that since there is no such property as goodness, Moore's story is incoherent from the outset.

It should really have been clear back in 1903 that there was something fishy about Moore's story. At the beginning of *Principia Ethica*, Moore says that the question he will be addressing himself to in what follows is the question ‘What is good?’, and he rightly thinks that we are going to need a bit of help in seeing exactly what question he is expressing in those words. He proposes to help us by drawing attention to a possible answer to the question he is expressing—that is, to

³ See Geach, “Good and Evil,” *Analysis*, xvii (1956): 33-42, reprinted in *Theories of Ethics*, Philippa Foot, ed. (New York: Oxford, 1967); Ziff, *Semantic Analysis* (Ithaca: Cornell, 1960); von Wright, *The Varieties of Goodness* (London: Routledge, 1963).

⁴ Foot's article was first published in *Proceedings and Addresses of the American Philosophical Association*, LVII (1983): 273-83. A revised version appeared in *Mind*, xciv (1985): 196-209, and was reprinted in *Consequentialism and Its Critics*, Samuel Scheffler, ed. (New York, Oxford, 1988). I attribute the declaration to Foot's article and not to Foot herself, since while I continue to believe that the article can be interpreted as making it, Foot has recently said that she did not mean to do so, and she must be allowed final say as to her intentions.

It is worth mention that the idea at least *lurked* in von Wright. That exceedingly interesting book unfortunately had no impact on moral philosophy at the time; I attribute that fact to the seductiveness of Moore's story.

something that would be an answer to it, whether or not it is *the* or *a* correct answer to it. Here is what he offers us: "Books are good." Books are good? What would you mean if you said 'Books are good'? Moore, however, goes placidly on: "though [that would be] an answer obviously false; for some books are very bad indeed" (*op. cit.*, p. 55). Well, some books are bad to read or to look at, some are bad for use in teaching philosophy, some are bad for children. What sense could be made of a person who said, "No, no, I meant that some books are just plain *bad things*?" There is something weird about that passage in *Principia*, and it is puzzling that this was not noticed at the time.

In any case, it should be clear enough by now that all goodness is goodness in a way, and that, if we do not know in what way a man means that a thing is good when he says of it 'That's good', then we simply do not know what he is saying of it. Perhaps he means that it is good to eat, or that it is good for use in making cheesecake, or that it is good for Alfred. If he tells us, "No, no, I meant that it is just plain a *good thing*," then we can at best suppose he is a philosopher making a joke.

The same is true of betterness: it, too, is always betterness in a way. People do say the words 'This is better than that', but what they mean is always that the first thing is better to eat, or better for use in making cheesecake, or better for Alfred, and so on.

But if there is no such property as goodness, and no such relation as betterness, then, a fortiori, the right is not analyzable in terms of the relation betterness, and we need not appeal to moral intuition to justify rejecting Moore's story. In sum, what is wrong with Moore's story is not merely its concluding part but its very beginning.

We need a new story about the right and the good, then. Here is the one that strikes me as attractive.

I

It begins with what I shall call the *first-order ways of being good*. I mentioned being *good to eat*; there are also being good to look at, or listen to. I mentioned being *good for use in making cheesecake*; there are also being good for use in hammering in nails, or planting bulbs. I mentioned being *good for Alfred*; there are also being good for Alfred's lawn mower, or Alfred's apple tree. There are others, too: being *good at hanging wallpaper*, playing chess, or singing, being *good in Hamlet* (the play), being *good as Hamlet* (the Prince), being *good with children*, and so on. Let us follow a practice common among linguists in using the term 'adjuncts' to refer to the expressions 'to eat', 'for use in making cheesecake', and so on, which I added to 'good' to get 'good to eat', 'good for use in making cheesecake', and

so on. In general, then, whenever we predicate an expression of the form 'good plus adjunct', we ascribe a first-order way of being good.

Perhaps the following will suggest itself: so after all there really is such a property as goodness!—it is the disjunction of the properties being good to eat, being good for use in making cheesecake, being good for Alfred, and so on. Or more compactly, that being good is being good in at least one of those ways. No doubt there is a property that is the disjunction of all of those properties. But it is an uninteresting property, for everything has it: everything is good in one or other of those ways. (If you find an example that strikes you as good in none of those ways, then it is sure to be good for use in a philosophical discussion of goodness.) It is therefore of no interest to any friend of Moore's story. Moreover, it is not what anybody ever means to be ascribing to a thing in saying 'That's good', so its title to be called "goodness" is at best dubious.

What about what we ascribe when we predicate an expression of the form 'good *K*'? Geach had said that 'good' is an attributive adjective, meaning by that: '*X* is a good *K*' is not equivalent to '*X* is good' and '*X* is a *K*'. Compare 'big', which is also attributive in that '*X* is a big *K*' is not equivalent to '*X* is big' and '*X* is a *K*'. (Geach said: by contrast, an adjective such as 'red' is predicative, for '*X* is a red *K*' is equivalent to '*X* is red' and '*X* is a *K*'.⁵) Indeed, he said something stronger, namely, that 'good' is "essentially an attributive adjective," meaning by that:

Even when "good" or "bad" stands by itself as a predicate [as, for example, in "That is good"], and thus is grammatically predicative, some substantive has to be understood; there is no such thing as being just good or bad, there is only being a good or bad so-and-so (*op. cit.*, p. 65).

Thus, 'good' is like 'big' not merely in being an attributive adjective in the sense Geach indicated, but also in the following respect: just as there is no such thing as being just big, but rather only being a big so-and-so, so also there is no such thing as being just good, but rather only being a good so-and-so—in both cases, "some substantive has to be understood."

If this stronger claim were true, then we could (again) say that there is such a property as goodness: it is a relative property like big-

⁵ 'Red' was not in fact well chosen for Geach's purposes, since 'red' is heavily context dependent: what we ascribe to an apple when we say 'It's red' is different from what we ascribe to the paint in a certain can when we say 'It's red'. Better choices would have been 'visible' or 'happy', which I mentioned above, or any of the following: 'sautéed' ('pureed', 'boiled'), or 'poisonous' ('nauseating'), or 'fermented' ('carbonated'), or 'acidic' ('alkaline'), and so on.

ness. (As being big is being a big *K*, so also being good is being a good *K*.)

But the stronger claim is not true. The weaker claim is true: 'good' certainly is an attributive adjective in the sense Geach indicated, for 'X is a good *K*' is not equivalent to 'X is good' and 'X is a *K*'. Moreover, it is certainly right to say there is no such thing as being just good. But it is not right to say that "some substantive has to be understood." If a man says "That's good," he *may* mean the likes of "That's a good book" or "That's a good banana"; but he may instead mean the likes of "That's good for use in making cheesecake" or "That's good for Alfred," and here no substantive needs to be understood. (In fact, for what *K* could it at all plausibly be thought that being good for use in making cheesecake is being a good *K*? For what *K* could it at all plausibly be thought that being good for Alfred is being a good *K*?)

I suggest, in addition, that our understanding of assertions of sentences of the form 'X is a good *K*'—like our understanding of assertions of 'That's good'—rests on our knowing, from the context of utterance, in which of what I called the first-order ways of being good the speaker means that the thing is good.⁶ I should think that most assertions of 'That's a good book' are made in contexts in which what is in question is which book to read, and the speaker is therefore likely to mean that the thing is a book that is good to read. But if what we had asked for was advice about which book to use in teaching elementary logic, the speaker is likely to mean, instead, that the thing is a book that is good for use in teaching elementary logic. In still other contexts, the speaker is likely to mean that the thing is a book that is good for children to read, or that it is a book that is good to look at. Similarly for 'That's a good banana': in most contexts, the speaker is likely to mean that the thing is a banana that would be good to eat, but where what we wanted was a banana for use in the display of fruit on the dining room table, he is likely to mean that it is a banana that is good to look at.

The context has to tell us what a speaker means by 'That's a good *K*' (as what a speaker means by 'That's good') or we simply do not know, for the expression 'good *K*' leaves this open. The point emerges most starkly when we look at odd expressions of the form 'good *K*'. Suppose someone calls a thing a good corpse.⁷ What on earth does the speaker mean? I have no idea, because I have no idea

⁶ Or in which of what I shall in the following section call *second-order ways of being good* the speaker means that the thing is good, for that, too, is a possibility.

⁷ That lovely example comes from Ziff.

what he means to be saying the corpse is good for use in, or good to, or good for, and so on. ('Good state of affairs' and 'good event' are unlike 'good corpse': it is not that we have no idea what a speaker might mean by predicating them, but rather that there are too many possibilities—the speaker might mean that the thing is a state of affairs or event that is good for him and his friends, or for people generally, or that it is good for use as an example in a class in philosophy of history, and so on and on.)

So just as there is no such a thing as being just good, there is no such thing as being just a good *K*—for example, just a good book or just a good banana. A fortiori, the instances of being a good *K* are not themselves among the ways of being good.

II

In some contexts, a person who says 'That was a good act' is likely to mean it was an act that was good to look at; but in other, perhaps more common contexts, a person who says this is likely to mean it was an act that was just, or generous, or kind, or considerate, and so on. An ascription of being just or being generous and so on is praise; and it seems clear that these are further ways in which a thing can be good. But they are intuitively not first-order ways of being good. Certainly, 'X is just' is not equivalent to anything of the form 'X is good plus adjunct', and similarly for the rest. The story I am telling says that these are *second-order ways of being good*.

There are other second-order ways of being good besides the moral. There are the aesthetic: being graceful, striking, dazzling, serene, witty, and so on. There are also being charming, elegant, sophisticated, and so on. (Are those aesthetic properties?) What about being healthy? I should think that it, too, is a way of being good. (I should think that being healthy is being in good health.) Is 'X is healthy' equivalent to anything of the form 'X is good plus adjunct'? Presumably not, and I therefore include it among the second-order ways of being good.

The context of an assertion of 'That's good'—as of a sentence of the form 'X is a good *K*'—may make it likely that the speaker means that the thing is good in a first-order way ('good for use in making cheesecake', 'good for Alfred') *or* that it is good in a second-order way ('just', 'graceful').

Why *second-order*? My suspicion is that while none of the ways of being good that I here call second-order is *simply* reducible to a first-order way of being good, they rest on first-order ways of being good. How? I shall restrict myself to the moral second-order ways of being

good, since it is only those which are relevant to the story I am telling.

Two preliminaries. First, it is not merely some acts that are just, generous, and so on: some people are so, too. But it is surely plain enough that we should not take the property of being just to be the “what is in common” to all just entities, people as well as acts, the possession of which marks them all as just. (Compare Moore on goodness in the passage I quoted in footnote 2 above.)

A helpful model is Aristotle’s example of health. Some people are healthy, and so are some foodstuffs; but being healthy is not the property had in common by all healthy things—rather, being healthy is what all healthy *Xs* have in common, healthy *Ys* being healthy only derivatively, in the appropriate sense. Surely, the *Xs* here are people, and the *Ys* foodstuffs; that is, surely being healthy is what all healthy people have in common, healthy foodstuffs being healthy only derivatively, in the sense that eating them is conducive to a person’s becoming or remaining healthy.

So similarly, we may take it that being just is what all just *Xs* have in common, just *Ys* being just only derivatively, in the appropriate sense. But which are the *Xs* *here*? Some philosophers say that acts are the *Xs*: thus they say that being just is what all just acts have in common, just people being just only derivatively, in the sense that they are prone to performing just acts. Other philosophers say that people are the *Xs*: thus they say that being just is what all just people have in common, just acts being just only derivatively, in the sense that they are acts that a just person would perform. (I take this to be Aristotle’s view.) The notions “just act” and “just person” are presumably interdefinable: Which way should analysis proceed? I am myself in the former group; that is, I think that an act’s being just is metaphysically prior, and a person’s being just metaphysically secondary, and I shall assume that that is so. But I shall not argue for this idea, since the story I am telling does not rely on it. Given interdefinability, the story I am telling could as well have been told the other way round.

In sum, I shall take the noun phrase ‘being just’ to refer to what all just acts have in common, just people being just only derivatively, in the sense that they are prone to performing just acts.

But I shall follow a common usage according to which the noun ‘justice’ refers to a character trait possessed by people, namely, the character trait that consists in proneness to performing just acts. (Perhaps it need not be said, though it will be, that this proneness to

performing just acts includes proneness to avoiding unjust acts, since it includes proneness to performing just avoidances.)

Similar questions arise in respect of being generous, being kind, and so on.⁸ I shall take the noun phrase 'being generous' to refer to what all generous acts have in common, generous people being generous only derivatively, in the sense that they are prone to performing generous acts. I shall take the noun 'generosity' to refer to the character trait that consists in proneness to performing generous acts. Similarly for 'being kind' and 'kindness', and so on.

A second preliminary is required because the list of moral second-order properties that I gave trails off into 'and so on'. What fixes what does and does not belong on the list? I shall have more to say about this in the following section. For the moment, I mean for the list to include all of those act properties *F* such that there is a character trait consisting in proneness to performing *F*-ish acts, and it is a *virtue*. Thus, being just is on the list since there is a character trait consisting in proneness to performing just acts—I am taking the noun 'justice' to refer to it—and it is a virtue. For similar reasons, being generous, being kind, and being considerate are also on the list. In light of that condition on membership on the list, I shall call these properties *virtue properties*.

III

The story I am telling says that the virtue properties are second-order ways of being good, resting on the first-order goodness-for.

How resting? On subjectivist views, for an act to possess a virtue property, it is only intention that matters, and not success. On those views, therefore, an act can possess a virtue property and be good for no one at all, since the world may conspire against the agent and make his just or generous or kind act misfire. I think that a mistake. My own, objectivist, view is that, if a man intends to be acting justly or generously or kindly, that may (or may not) speak well for him personally, but his intention in acting does not at all settle the question whether he has *in fact* acted justly or generously or kindly. I shall not argue the matter here, however.

⁸ It has to be conceded that from this point of view, being just is not as simple a case as the others on the list. Being generous and being kind are possessed only by acts and people. Being just has a wider range of application: some states of affairs and forms of government are also just. Are *they* just only derivatively? And in what sense are they if they are? One could instead argue that it is states of affairs that are (nonderivatively) just, and everything else (acts, people, governments) at best derivatively just. I must leave these things open. Fortunately, nothing in my story relies on any particular decision about them.

For even if it is success (and not mere intention) that matters, it is plain enough that an act can possess a virtue property and not be *on balance* good for people, either because it is good for fewer than an available alternative or because it is less good for those affected than an available alternative. The example of Alfred, who is under threat by the Mafia, is of the former kind, that is, good for fewer. The example went like this: if Alfred does not kill Bert, the Mafia will kill three other people. Those who offer this as a counterexample to Moore's story believe that Alfred's killing Bert would be unjust; they believe that Alfred's refusing to kill Bert would be just, and that is surely right. Now, Alfred's refusing to kill Bert would be good for Bert. But it would be bad for the three others. So the fact of the refusal's being just is entirely compatible with the refusal's being good for fewer than the available alternative, and thus with its failing to be on balance good for people.

So we cannot say that an act possesses a virtue property only if it is on balance good for people. If the virtue properties rest on goodness-for, then they do so in a more complex way than that.

I cannot say now exactly what that more complex way is. There is a gap in my story here. Still, there is a familiar idea about the virtues that I think must surely be right, and if it is, then the following may anyway point toward a way of filling the gap.

What I have in mind is the idea that the fact of there being people who possess the virtues is good for us. On some views something stronger is the case, namely, that a person's possessing a virtue is good for that very person. Perhaps that stronger idea is correct. Even if not, however, there being people who possess the virtues is plainly good for the rest of us.

Justice is an obvious case. Justice is proneness to performing just acts; that is, it is proneness to doing what one *owes* to others—whether in the way of keeping one's word, or refraining from taking advantage of the weakness or ignorance of others, or carrying one's fair share of the community's burdens, and so on. No doubt a particular just act may not be on balance good for people (as in the example of Alfred). But it is better for us that the people among whom we live be just than that they not be just. Indeed, this is not merely better for us, but essential to us, since we can form a community at all—and thereby obtain benefits which are essential to us and which only community can provide—only if a substantial number of those among whom we live are just.

I stress: whatever else may be true of the people among whom we live, it is better for us that they be just than that they not be just. Even if they are not generous, not kind, and not considerate. For it would be worse for us if they were also not just.

What I suggest now is that we should take this to be, not merely a fact about justice, but what marks it as a virtue.

Is honesty a virtue? Well, what exactly is it? If honesty is (as some people think it is) a sheer unwillingness to lie, come what may, then on my view it should not turn out to be a virtue. (Indeed, on my view it is a peculiarly unattractive form of self-righteousness, and thus a minor vice.) And it does not turn out to be a virtue on this account of the matter, for it is better for us if the people among whom we live are ready to lie when they do not owe it to their hearers not to lie and lives will otherwise be lost. If honesty is, more narrowly, an unwillingness to lie where one does owe it to one's hearers not to lie, then it is a virtue, a subvirtue falling under justice.

Is prudence a virtue? Again: it depends on what prudence is. If prudence is (as some people think it is) entirely self-advantaging, if, that is, it is carefulness only where one's acts may cause harm to oneself, then prudence should not turn out to be a virtue, and does not on this account of the matter. If prudence includes, more broadly, carefulness where one's acts may cause harm to others, then it should turn out to be a virtue. But then so understood, it, too, is a subvirtue falling under justice.

For obvious reasons, we can call this nested cluster of virtues the *reliance virtues*.

There is a second cluster of virtues, which we can call the *virtues of concern*. They include generosity, kindness, and considerateness, and they have two features, the first of which marks them as virtues, the second as virtues distinct from the reliance virtues. The first is that they are pronenesses to doing what is good for others at a cost, at most, to their possessors. (It is not generosity in me to take from you to give to others. On the other hand, I say 'at most' since a kind act may be entirely costless; by contrast, an act is not generous unless it is in a measure costly to its agent.) In light of their having this first feature, they have a direct connection with goodness-for, more direct than the reliance virtues. It is plain that whatever else may be true of the people among whom we live, it is better for us that they possess these traits than that they do not.

Their second feature is that the acts these virtues are pronenesses to performing are not called for by justice; that is, it is not unjust to omit them. (However much good it may do my grocer for me to pay

his bill, paying it is not an exercise of generosity or kindness or considerateness.) In light of their having this second feature, they are not among the reliance virtues: a person can be just without possessing any of them.

A person might have a proneness to “maximizing goodness-for”—that is, he is prone to doing a thing wherever it would be on balance better for people that he do it than that he not do it. That proneness also has a direct connection with goodness-for. But two things should be noticed about it. On the one hand, it is not a virtue of concern, since it fails to meet the first of the two conditions I mentioned, for when I do what I owe it to you not to do, because it would be on balance better for others that I do it, then my act imposes a cost (not on me, but) on you. On the other hand, while it might have seemed, off the cuff, to be better for us that those among whom we live possess this trait than that they do not, that is not true. If we cannot count on others’ keeping their word to us unless we are so far lucky as that their keeping their word to us maximizes goodness-for, then we (simply) cannot count on others’ keeping their word to us. The bearing of this on the possibility of our forming a community is obvious.

Perhaps the virtues of concern nest in the way in which the reliance virtues do, with generosity dominating them as justice dominates the reliance virtues. No matter, for present purposes.

What about courage? Courage appears on many philosophers’ lists of the virtues, but I have so far postponed discussion of it. Suppose we believe that (i) courage is a virtue. What is it? Suppose we believe, as I do, that (ii) courage is (roughly) steadfastness of purpose, proneness to “standing firm,” even in face of danger. This says nothing about what the courageous person’s purposes are—it leaves open what they are—and that may seem to make trouble for my test for being a virtue, which says that (iii) a trait is a virtue just in case whatever else may be true of the people among whom we live, it is better for us that they have the trait than that they not have it. For if the people among whom we live are just, then all is well, it is better for us that they also be courageous. But if they are unjust, then it is (much!) better for us that they be cowards. In sum, if (ii) and (iii) are true, then courage is not a virtue. But (i) says it is a virtue, so something has to give.⁹

⁹ If we accept (ii) we are committed to accepting that it is entirely possible for a person to be both courageous and a villain. Geach and Foot reject this possibility; see Geach, *The Virtues* (New York: Cambridge, 1977); and Foot, “Virtues and Vices,” in her *Virtues and Vices* (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1978). But I have been unable to become clear about what alternative construal(s) of courage they would have us adopt.

I suggest that it is (i) that should give. Courage subserves justice in the sense that just acts require at least a minimum measure of courage. (It also subserves generosity, for generous acts may also require courage, and very generous acts may require great courage.) But it also subserves injustice, for unjust acts also require at least a minimum measure of courage, and very unjust acts may require great courage. It is hard to see how a trait that subserves a major vice can plausibly be thought of as, itself, a virtue.

Courage is not unique in this respect. Compare industriousness. (What is this industrious man industrious *at*?) A minimum measure of industriousness is required by just acts; but very unjust acts may require it, too. Again, compare loyalty. (Who or what is this loyal man loyal *to*?) A minimum measure of loyalty is required by just acts; but very unjust acts performed by groups are likely to require it, too. Similarly for conscientiousness. (What are the contents of this conscientious man's conscience?)

In sum, then, I suggest that we should not include courage—or industriousness, loyalty, or conscientiousness—among the virtues.

Let us return now to what I was calling *virtue properties*. I said I meant for the list to include all those act properties *F* such that there is a character trait consisting in proneness to performing *F*-ish acts, and it is a virtue. Justice and generosity are pronenesses to performing just and generous acts, and they are virtues; so being just and being generous are virtue properties. Courage is not a virtue; hence being courageous is not a virtue property.

That, I think, is as it should be. The properties I am calling virtue properties are those I indicated at the beginning of section II: being just, being generous, being kind, being considerate, and so on. I said that an ascription of these is praise, and that it seems clear that these are further ways of being good—that is, ways of being good in addition to the first-order ways of being good. Is an ascription of being courageous praise? When we ascribe being courageous we typically are praising; that is because we do not typically ascribe being courageous where we think ill of the act in question on other grounds. (Nobody says of a particularly villainous act, "Well, it was good in one way anyway: it was courageous." Nobody for a moment considers giving medals for courage to courageous villains.) These facts can be explained if we take seriously that an act's being courageous just is its having been performed despite danger to its agent, for this suggests that the praise goes to the act for occurring at all. Suppose a man risked his life to save another. That was a very generous act. It was also very courageous. To praise it on the former ground is to

praise it for what it was; to praise it on the latter ground is to praise its occurring despite the danger to its agent. That is why praise of an act on ground of its being courageous is parasitic on there being other grounds for welcoming the act. (It also explains why no praise goes to courageous acts of villainy.)

All of this is rough, however, and I must leave it open. As I said, there is a gap in my story here. I have wished merely to point toward what *may* be a way of filling it.

IV.

What we have so far is this. The first-order ways of being good are the likes of being good for use in, good at, good for, and so on. There are also second-order ways of being good: among others, the virtue properties being just, generous, kind, and so on. These rest on a particular first-order way of being good, namely, goodness-for. (Exactly how do they rest on goodness-for? I made a suggestion, but it was no more than that.)

If what we have so far is correct, then we are home free: the rest of the story is briefly told, for we can get to the right relatively easily from the virtue properties. In short, what we are morally required to do is to avoid their contraries. Morality requires us to *do* a thing if and only if not doing it would be unjust, or mean, or cruel, and so on. Morality requires us *not* to do a thing if and only if doing it would be unjust, or mean, or cruel, and so on.¹⁰

Some philosophers have been saying in recent years that moral philosophers should look at the virtues, and some among them have said, more strongly, that moral philosophers should not only look at the virtues, they should also overcome their fixation with moral requirement. I agree that it would be profitable to look at the virtues. But that is because of the importance of their contraries, the vices, to supplying an account of what morality requires us to do.

My way of putting the matter might seem more complicated than it need have been. Why put it in the negative rather than the positive? Why say we are morally required to avoid injustice, meanness, and cruelty instead of saying that we are morally required to act justly, gener-

¹⁰ For my own part, I believe we should accept an objectivist view of the requirements of morality, that is, a view according to which a person's having done what morality requires him to do turns on success rather than on intentions—just as, for my own part, I believe we should accept an objectivist view of the virtue properties (and their contraries), that is, a view according to which an act's possessing a virtue property (or its contrary) turns on success rather than on intentions. (See the second paragraph of section III above. I regret having wobbled about this matter in *Moral Relativism and Moral Objectivity*.) I do not argue for these things here, however. What is surely plain, and is in any case required by this part of my story, is that we should be either objectivist about both or subjectivist about both.

ously, and kindly? Moral requirement seems to me to be a rather weak notion: the standard it imposes is that of mere human decency. Now, generosity, kindness, indeed justice itself, can be very costly, and there are cases in which paying those costs would be supererogatory. Morality may require us to pay those costs, but I suggest that it does so only where refusing to pay them would be mean, cruel, or unjust.

To return just briefly, then, to Alfred and the Mafia: I said it is hard to see what could make Alfred's killing Bert wrong if it is not bad, and then hard to see how the Mafia's killing the other three people could fail to be three times as bad. Now we can say: the way in which Alfred's killing Bert would be bad is that it would be unjust. The way in which the Mafia's killing the three others would be bad is that it, too, would be unjust. Morality, therefore, requires both Alfred and the Mafia to refrain. That they will not refrain from killing their three if he refrains from killing his one leaves that conclusion entirely unaffected.

This solution to the problem relies on one's willingness to agree that the fact that the Mafia will not refrain from killing their three if Alfred refrains from killing his one does not mean that Alfred owes it to the three to save them from the Mafia. It seems to me plain that that fact does not mean this. Fortunately for my story, there is reason to think that Alfred's not owing it to the three to save them can be explained by appeal to the first-order goodness-for. A moral regime under which I can make you owe people something simply by threatening not to pay my own debts to them is a moral regime with a massive free-rider problem, and thus is a regime that would be bad for all of us.

Two points remain to be taken note of. First, a potential difficulty for my account of moral requirement emerges as follows. Suppose we believe that the following is possible:

- (1) Bert's not doing such and such would be unjust, but Bert's doing the such and such would be cruel.

Then my account of moral requirement yields that the following is possible:

- (2) Morality requires Bert to do such and such and morality requires Bert not to do it.

Is that possible?

On some views, (2) is entirely possible.¹¹ If it is, then the potential difficulty is not an actual difficulty.

¹¹ See the literature on "moral dilemmas"—for example, *Moral Dilemmas and Moral Theory*, H. E. Mason, ed. (New York: Oxford, 1996).

But suppose we believe (as I do) that (2) is not possible. Then we may seem to have an actual difficulty, for either we must give up the account of moral requirement that I have offered, or we must agree that (1) is not possible. Which to do?

It will not surprise that I suggest we should agree that (1) is not possible. I have no argument to the effect that it is not. But I simply cannot imagine how the following could be true: justice in a given case calls for doing what it is cruel to do. Justice may, of course, require harming people, as, for example, where it calls for imposing a severe punishment; proceeding, where it does, is not cruelty. (What is cruel is hurting or harming gratuitously.) Similarly, I believe, for any other pair of contraries of virtue properties. So for my part, too, the potential difficulty here is not an actual difficulty. But others may think otherwise.

The second point that remains to be taken note of is that my account of moral requirement construes it as entirely other-regarding. That is a consequence of the fact that my account of the virtues, and therefore my procedure for picking out the virtue properties, construes them as fundamentally social: that is, my account of what fixes whether a character trait is a virtue, is its effect on others. But that a story about the right and the good yields that moral requirement is other-regarding seems to me exactly as it should be. Gluttony, fecklessness about one's own interests, and excessive timidity are a bad business; they are certainly bad for their possessor, but on my view they are no breach of moral requirement—unless they issue in injustice, meanness, cruelty, and the like. That is because, as I said, moral requirement seems to me to be a rather weak notion. I said that the standard it imposes is that of mere human decency, and what I meant was human decency in dealings with others.

v

What precedes is two thirds of the story about the right and the good I find attractive. In sum, I began with the first-order ways of being good, and went up from there to the second-order ways of being good that consist in the virtue properties, and then up from their contraries to the requirements of morality. We need now to return to the first-order ways of being good, and go down from there.

What I mean becomes clear if we return to Moore's story for a moment. I said that Moore's story begins with the good. Some things are good, Moore said, and some things are not; so there is such a property as goodness. I said that Moore had much to say about which things do and which things do not possess the property goodness, but that I would not summarize that part of his

story. My reason should now be clear: there is no such property as goodness. Now, anyone who likes the story I have been telling so far is going to need to say something about which things are good in the first-order ways. What makes a thing be good to look at? What makes a person be good at hanging wallpaper? What makes a thing be good for use in making cheesecake? In one respect, these questions seem even more pressing than their analogue in the case of Moore's story, for surely the first-order ways of being good are not a mere happenstance clutter. There must be something they have in common that marks them all as ways of being *good*.

Expressed in the formal mode: it is not mere happenstance that the word 'good' appears in the expressions 'good to look at', 'good at hanging wallpaper', 'good for use in making cheesecake', and so on: its meaning makes a contribution to their meanings, and we need to see what that contribution is.

Intuitively, for a thing *X* to be good in one of the first-order ways is for *X* to *benefit* someone or some thing *Y* (which might or might not be *X* itself) in the appropriate way, or to be capable of doing so. There has to be something "in it" for some *Y*, a gain or potential gain of the appropriate kind, if *X* is to be good in a first-order way. That, my story says, is what the first-order ways of being good have in common.

What are the ways in which *X* might benefit *Y*? *X* might please *Y*. *X* might answer to *Y*'s wants. There are other possibilities, too, one of which will emerge as important in the following section.

Take being good to look at, taste, or listen to. A thing that has one or other of those properties has them in that it pleases people: looking at it pleases, tasting it pleases, listening to it pleases, and so on.

Take being good at doing something, as it might be, hanging wallpaper or playing chess. A person who is good at hanging wallpaper is one who is capable of hanging wallpaper as people typically want that done when they want it done. (There is nothing in the nature of wallpaper that fixes how it should be hung; there is only how people typically want it hung.) A person who is good at playing chess is one who is capable of winning when playing with experienced players, thus is capable of answering to his own wants when playing with them. (Unlike wallpaper hanging, chess has rules that fix what counts as winning, and you are not playing chess on a given occasion—you are only dabbling, playing *at* chess—if you are not then trying to win.)

Take being good for use in doing this or that. Spring-form pans are good for use in making cheesecake: that is because getting a cheesecake out of an ordinary pan is hard, and results in a mangled cake, and people who want to make cheesecake typically want the making of it to be easy, and the result to be smooth and round.

Moreover, where what is wanted varies from place to place, so does what is good for use in doing this or that. In Norway, lye is good for use in preparing codfish; that is a function of Norwegian wants—not merely of what pleases them but also of what is and is not cheaply available there. Not so in America. (It would be weird to say that lye is really good for use in preparing codfish everywhere, it is just that Americans do not know that. It would be equally weird to say that lye is not good for use in preparing codfish anywhere, it is just that Norwegians do not know that.)

I have so far mentioned three of the first-order ways of being good: first, being good to look at, taste, listen to; second, being good at doing a thing; third, being good for use in doing a thing.¹² Let us focus on a fourth, namely, being good for a thing. That way of being good is crucial to my story since it is what the story says the virtue properties rest on.

VI

Very many inanimate objects Y are such that for some X , X is or would be good for Y . I begin with artifacts. Regular oiling is good for a lawn mower. How so?

All artifacts have one or more of what might be called *design functions*, where 'Among the design functions of Y is to A ' is true just in case A -ing is among the things Y is designed to do.¹³

Where Y is an artifact, Y is designed to A in that it was designed by a human designer to A . That is, a human designer selected some features F for Y because Y 's having F would increase the likelihood that it would A . Thus, among the design functions of any lawn mower is to enable its user to mow lawns with it, since some of its features were selected for it because its having them would increase the likelihood of its enabling its user to mow

¹² For more detail, see *Moral Relativism and Moral Objectivity*. I should add, however, that the account of goodness for which appears in the following sections is different from the one I offered there.

¹³ I adapt this notion *design function* from what is currently the most widely accepted analysis of functions; I have been particularly helped by Philip Kitcher, "Function and Design," *Midwest Studies in Philosophy*, xviii (1993): 379-97. (Design functions are different from what I shall later call *use functions* and *role functions*.)

lawns with it. Another of the design functions of a lawn mower is likely to be to enable its user to mow lawns safely with it, since some of its features are likely to have been selected for it because its having them would increase the likelihood of its enabling its user to mow lawns safely. (I doubt that any artifacts have only one design function. Whatever the use to which a manufactured item is to be put, some of its features are likely to have been selected, not just to increase the likelihood of its being usable for that purpose, but also to increase the likelihood of its being safe to use for that purpose.)

Now, I said in the preceding section that intuitively, for a thing X to be good in one of the first-order ways is for X to benefit someone or some thing Y in the appropriate way, or to be capable of doing so. I suggest, then, that we should say: if Y is an artifact, then (i) X is good for Y just in case X benefits Y , and (ii) X benefits Y by and only by conducing to Y 's doing what it is among Y 's design functions to do. For example, regular oiling is good for a lawn mower and that is a consequence of the fact that regular oiling benefits it, which it does by conducing to the lawn mower's doing what it is among its design functions to do, namely, to enable its user to mow lawns with it.

What is important is that on this account of the matter, the benefit supplied by X does not consist in anybody's being pleased, or in anybody's wants being answered to: the benefit supplied by X is to the artifact Y itself. That seems to me as it should be. Regular oiling is good for a lawn mower, and that is not because regular oiling of a lawn mower pleases anybody, or answers to anybody's wants. No doubt it was the wants of consumers, and therefore the wants of manufacturers, that fixed that lawn mowers were designed in such a way as to have, among other design functions, the design function of enabling their users to mow lawns. No doubt people buy lawn mowers nowadays because they want to be able to mow their lawns, and are pleased when they are able to do so. But regular oiling would still be good for a lawn mower even if people stopped wanting to mow their lawns, and even if manufacturers therefore stopped making lawn mowers. Suppose that starting next year, lawn mowers pile up in garages and warehouses, rusting away from lack of care because of lack of users. Oiling a lawn mower would not benefit any person, but would all the same benefit *the lawn mower*; and oiling it would benefit it precisely because, though nobody wants to use it to mow lawns, oiling it would conduce to its being in a condition in

which it *could* be used to mow lawns. That, after all, was what it was designed to do.

We can repute the matter in the following way. Many things have one or more of what might be called *use functions*, where 'Among the use functions of *Y* is to *A*' is true just in case some people do in fact use *Y* to *A*. I should think that as things are, the use function of all (working) lawn mowers is to mow lawns, since some people do use them to mow lawns. But two facts remain. (a) The design functions of a lawn mower remain what they are no matter what its use functions come to be. Thus, the design functions of a lawn mower continue to include 'to enable its user to mow lawns with it', even if the lawn mower—indeed, even if all existing lawn mowers—cease to have any use function (as by being allowed to rust in warehouses) or acquire a novel use function (as by coming to be used merely as garden ornaments). (b) Where a lawn mower's use functions diverge from its design functions, what is good for it is not conducing to its doing what it is among its use functions to do, but rather conducing to its doing what it is among its design functions to do.

Similar points hold about some animate things, which I shall turn to in the following section.

Let us first look briefly at inanimate objects that are not artifacts. If *Y* is inanimate but not an artifact, *Y* has no design functions. Yet it is possible that something, *X*, is or would be good for it. It is plausible to think that, if *X* is good for such a *Y*, then that is because *X* conduces to *Y*'s being in a condition that answers to people's wants. Where people have conflicting wants in respect of *Y*'s condition, it may (or may not) be easy to say whose wants count. Imposing regulations on disposal of wastes in the Charles River in Massachusetts was good for it. How so? It conduced to the river's being in a condition that answered to the wants of those who wanted to fish in it, swim in it, sail small boats on it, and so on. Why is it their wants that fixed what was good for the river? Why not the wants of those who wanted to dump wastes in it? I am going to bypass this question. For present purposes, what matters is only that it is people's wants that fix what is good for it. If the condition of the Charles stopped mattering to people—and were never again going to matter to anybody—then nothing at all would any longer be good (or bad) for it. Rivers are like wallpaper and unlike lawn mowers: just as there is nothing in the nature of wallpaper that fixes how it should be hung, so also there is nothing in the nature of rivers that fixes what condition they should be in or come to be in.

VII

All animate objects *Y* are such that for some *X*, *X* is or would be good for *Y*. Let us begin with plants. Watering a certain plant might be good for it. How so?¹⁴

Plants, too, are designed to do things, and thus they, too, have design functions. Where *Y* is a plant, *Y* is designed to *A* if it was designed by nature to *A*. That is so if *Y* has some features *F* because possession of *F* by *Y*'s ancestors increased the likelihood that they would *A*, where increasing the likelihood that they would *A* conduced to their reproductive success.¹⁵ Thus, among *Y*'s design functions might be to attract pollinators of kind *K*; that is so if *Y* (as it might be) flowers at a certain time of the year because its ancestors' flowering at that time of year increased the likelihood that they would attract pollinators of kind *K*, and doing so conduced to their reproductive success. Another of *Y*'s design functions might be to protect itself from disease; that is so if *Y* (as it might be) grows a scab or scar when injured because its ancestors' growing a scab or scar when injured increased the likelihood that they would protect themselves from disease, and doing so conduced to their reproductive success.

Indeed, I should think that every animate object *Y* has the following design function: to survive. (More precisely, no doubt: to survive to a time, if any, after which further survival would impede reproductive success.) For every animate *Y* has some features *F* because its an-

¹⁴ It has been suggested to me that the answer is simple: watering the plant would be good for it just in case, and because, it *needs* water. And, quite generally (and in particular, for artifacts as well as plants), that

(1) Getting alpha would be good for *Y*.

is analyzable into

(2) *Y* needs to get alpha.

This will not do, for (1) and (2) are not even equivalent. What is equivalent to (2) is surely:

(3) Not getting alpha would be bad for *Y*.

and (1) is not equivalent to (3). (For very many, if not all, things *Y*, there are things alpha such that getting alpha would be good for *Y* though not getting alpha would not be bad for *Y*—and those are therefore things which *Y* does not really need.)

It may be suggested that we should say, "Well, anyway, (3) is analyzable into (2)." Why say that rather than that (2) is analyzable into (3)? In fact, if we are unclear about what makes one of them true, we are not helped by being told that what makes it true is what makes the other true—any source of unclarity about one is equally a source of unclarity about the other.

¹⁵ "[O]ne of Darwin's important discoveries is that we can think of design without a designer"—Kitcher, p. 380. Many people, including Kitcher, recommend taking *Y*'s recent ancestors to be what matter. I bypass all the important questions that arise here.

cestors' possession of F increased the likelihood that they would survive, and doing so conduced to their reproductive success.

I suggest, then, that we should say about plants what I suggested we should say about artifacts: if Y is a plant, then (i) X is good for Y just in case X benefits Y , and (ii) X benefits Y by and only by conducting to Y 's doing what it is among Y 's design functions to do. In particular, watering a certain plant is good for it if watering it conduces to its surviving.¹⁶

So just as in the case of artifacts, what fixes what is good for a plant is not what pleases anybody, or what answers to anybody's wants. Feeding the dandelions in my front lawn a high nitrogen fertilizer would be good for them even though what I want is that they die, before reproducing if possible. A plant's use functions, if it has use functions, are irrelevant, except in so far as their use functions converge with their design functions.

VIII

People are obviously a more complicated affair than plants. They, too, have design functions: there are many things they are designed

¹⁶ Some people say that what conduces to a plant's survival is good for it, but that what conduces to a plant's reproducing is good only for its species, and not for the plant itself. Why should we believe this? (Can those who say it harbor the idea that, like many human beings, plants want to survive but do not care about reproducing?) A further difficulty is that it is by no means clear what could count as something's being good for a species. Is it bad for a species to become extinct? No doubt it might be bad for us that a species become extinct: What could possibly make it bad for the species itself to do so?

I am grateful to Paul Horwich for drawing my attention to the fact that many people say that a species' becoming extinct would be bad—not bad for us, not bad for it, but just plain a *bad thing*. I have said that there are no such properties as goodness and badness; so what can those people be taken to mean? We should note, first, that nobody says this about just any species. I gather that hundreds of species of ants (or is it termites?) become extinct every day: Is anyone seriously inclined to call that just plain a bad thing? Pandas are another matter, however. Dear living teddy bears! But that points to the way in which their becoming extinct would be bad: we would lose something if they became extinct, and thus their becoming extinct would be bad for us. (There are other losses besides losses of the useful. Consider losing your old childhood nonliving teddy bear. Or your child.) So far as I can see, it is in being bad for us, and only in being bad for us, that their becoming extinct would be bad.

The species "human being" is yet another matter. If humans become extinct because of something that causes the last of them pain, then that would be bad for them. Suppose they become extinct because the last of them want not to reproduce, and that that want is "ideal" in a sense to emerge in the text below. (Not due to ignorance, and so on.) Thereafter the world would go rolling on to its end without any human intelligence in it, without any high intelligence in it at all unless some other highly intelligent species arises. Would that be bad? (In what way?) Is the sadness that prospect provokes in some people like the sadness that some people feel at the prospect of their dying without issue? (*Is dying without issue bad? In what way?*) I leave these dark questions open.

to do since they were designed by nature to do them. Among their design functions is to protect themselves from disease: like plants, they grow a scab or scar when injured because their ancestors' doing this increased the likelihood that they would protect themselves from disease, and doing so conduced to their reproductive success. Another of their design functions is to survive.

But there are also things they are designed to do that they were not designed by nature to do, but rather by themselves. Just as a human designer can select some features *F* for an artifact because the artifact's having *F* will increase the likelihood that it will *A*, so also can human beings select some features *F* for themselves because their having *F* will increase the likelihood that they themselves will *A*. For example, a man may select unusually strong muscles for himself (going into training to acquire them) because his having them will increase the likelihood that he will win at weight lifting.

Some people are happy to accept the following sufficient condition for use of the term 'goals' (and analogous conditions for 'aims' and 'purposes'):

- (1) *Y* has among its goals to *A* if *Y* has among its design functions to *A*.

It is a consequence of (1) that plants and lawn mowers as well as people have goals; the people I refer to are happy to accept that consequence. I am sure that at least some among them also accept:

- (2) *Y* has among its goals to *A* if *Y* chooses behaviors it thinks will increase the likelihood of its *A*-ing, and does so because it wants to *A*.

It is not a consequence of (2) that plants and lawn mowers have goals. But some things meet both sufficient conditions. My weight lifter has among his design functions to win at weight lifting, and so has that as his goal under (1); he also chooses behaviors he thinks will increase the likelihood of his winning at weight lifting, and does so because that is what he wants to do, and so has that as his goal under (2).

On the other side are people who reject (1), and opt for a strengthening of (2), namely:

- (3) *Y* has among its goals to *A* if and only if *Y* chooses behaviors it thinks will increase the likelihood of its *A*-ing, and does so because it wants to *A*.

According to (3), only people and higher animals have goals.

There is no need for us to decide which side is correct. I shall accept (3), but largely because doing so provides a perspicuous way of abbreviating the theory I think we should accept.

It is a familiar theory. It says, in short: if *Y* is an adult person, say Alfred, then (i) *X* is good for Alfred just in case *X* benefits Alfred, and (ii) *X* benefits Alfred by and only by conducing to his reaching one or more of his goals. (It may pay to make explicit that I mean to include enabling him to reach his goals under 'conducing to' his reaching his goals.)

But that is too short, for not just any goal Alfred happens to have counts for the purposes of this theory: a goal counts only if it meets two kinds of constraints: (a) Alfred does not have the goal because of ignorance of, or lack of careful attention to, the costs of doing *A*, including opportunity costs, and (b) Alfred does not have the goal because of such improper "preference bendings" as threats, drugs, or a grossly unjust political regime.

A familiar way of accommodating these constraints is by reputting the matter counterfactually: what counts is what Alfred would aim at in ideal conditions of full information about costs, assessed "in a cool hour," and lack of improper preference bendings.

Why do those constraints have to be imposed? Alternatively put, why does it matter that Alfred would aim at this or that in ideal conditions, given he does not in fact aim at the this or that? The answer is that what is in question here is what *really* benefits Alfred, not what he may happen to think would benefit him—off the cuff, in ignorance, under threat, and so on.

In sum, then, *X* is good for Alfred just in case *X* benefits him in that it conduces to his reaching one or more of (what I shall call) his *ideal goals*.

I said that this is a familiar theory, but it is certainly not universally accepted. Might it not turn out that Alfred's ideal goals are such that reaching them precludes his having family and friends, or a wide variety of intellectual and aesthetic enjoyments, or even mere good health? Would it not benefit him to conduce to his life's including those things, despite his ideal goals? Well, would it? Proponents of the familiar theory reply: if we think it would, then that is because having those things in our own lives is important to us, but it is mere hubris to suppose that getting them benefits every person, whatever his ideal goals may be, and however drastically making room for them in his life might interfere with his chances of reaching his own ideal goals. Who are we to tell the saint or research scientist or great chess master to make some friends, read some good novels, listen to some good music, keep out of unhealthy environments—assuming that his actual goals are his ideal goals?

What if Alfred's ideal goals include or require doing harm to others? Proponents of the familiar theory reply that while it *may* be true

that what benefits one does no harm to others, this is by no means an a priori truth.

These replies seem to me to be right. So the familiar theory also seems to me to be right.

Some things that follow from that theory might be worth drawing attention to. In the first place, Alfred's use functions, if he has any, are irrelevant to what is good for him; what is good for him is not fixed by what benefits others who use him for this or that purpose but by what benefits him.

Perhaps people do not on the whole have use functions. But they mostly (all?) do have what might be called *role functions*. If Alfred's job is to keep the books at the local shoestore, then keeping those books is among his role functions. Fine. But while conducing to his keeping those books may be good for him, it also may not be.

A third and more interesting consequence of the familiar theory is this: not only do use functions and role functions fail to fix what is good for a person, but so also do design functions. Suppose that Alfred was designed by nature to *A*. Conducing to his *A*-ing may conduce to his reaching one or more of his ideal goals. But it may not. Doing so may even conflict with his reaching one or more of his ideal goals. If conducing to his *A*-ing does not conduce to his reaching an ideal goal, then the familiar theory tells us that doing so is not good for him. So design functions have not the role in fixing what is good for a person that they have in fixing what is good for artifacts and plants.

But this, too, seems to me to be right. It is among Alfred's (naturally selected) design functions to survive. But the hero or saint may try to save the life of another at risk to his own life. It cannot at all plausibly be thought to be good for him to prevent him from doing so.

Again, it is among Alfred's (naturally selected) design functions to be able to engage in such physical activities as running. It is hard to imagine a person whose ideal goals are so eccentric that an ability to run would not in any way help him to reach them. But suppose that is true of Alfred: suppose he cares not the least about being able to run. Then conducing to his being able to do so is not good for him. That seems to me very plausible.

Things are otherwise when it comes to Alfred's body parts. It is among the (naturally selected) design functions of Alfred's legs to enable Alfred to run. Legs have no goals, however, so what is good for them is fixed by what conduces to their doing what it is among their design functions to do. Alfred's ideal goals are conclusive when it comes to what is good for him; they are irrelevant to what is good

for his legs, just as they are irrelevant to what is good for his lawn mower and his plants.

IX

In sum, the story I have been telling went as follows. I began by saying that there is no such property as goodness; there are rather being good for use in, being good at, being good to, being good for, and the like. I called these first-order ways of being good. The second-order ways of being good include the virtue properties: being just, generous, courageous, kind, and so on. These, I suggested, rest on the first-order goodness-for. From them we can get to moral requirement by way of the following thesis: what we are morally required to do is to avoid their contraries. If these ideas are correct, then the right does rest on the good, though unfortunately not in the very simple way described in Moore's story.

I suggested also that the first-order ways of being good rest on benefiting in appropriate ways, which may involve pleasing, or answering to wants, or conducing to something's doing what it is its design function or ideal goal to do. This may well be the most controversial part of the story. It should be stressed, however, that the rest of the story is independent of this part. What the fact of this part's being unacceptable would mean (if it is unacceptable) is just that some better account of the expressions by which we attribute the first-order ways of being good had better be found. For it is not just happenstance that the word 'good' appears in all of those expressions: its meaning surely does contribute to their meanings, and we need an answer to the question how it does.

JUDITH JARVIS THOMSON

Massachusetts Institute of Technology