Moral Philosophy is Socratic. (John Rawls)

This could be heaven for everyone. (Roger Taylor/Freddy Mercury)

Understanding Ethical Reasoning

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1. Introduction: The Moral Stance and the Human Condition

When we deliberately perform moral actions for their own sake, we have taken the moral stance. The moral stance is a person's capacity and enduring motivation to recognize common goods, to accept moral demands and to respect other person's happiness-conducive interests. People have various motivating reasons for moral actions, such as, for example, the interest in successful economical cooperation, the desire for social recognition, religious belief, altruism. However, we perform moral actions *for their own sake* only if having taken the moral stance.

The moral stance has three aspects:

(i) Having taken the moral stance we put constraints on our self-interests. Thus moral agents are capable of having second order volitions. The moral stance includes the particular capacity of practical reasoning. Through practical reasoning we form intentions, which consist of a belief and a desire. Practical reasoning therefore is both

a cognitive, and volitional capacity—for an intention without a belief would lack propositional content, and an intention without a desire would lack motivating force.[1] (ii) As moral agents we recognize *common goods*, which moral actions aim to protect. (iii) Moral experiences create a specifically moral familiarity between persons, which is an intermediate inter-personal, emotional stance between contractual obligations and private familiarity (friendship, love). Moral agents consider each other not merely as contracting parties who agree upon certain terms of contract, but they rather also have certain attitudes towards each other, such as resentment, gratitude, respect or moral indignation.[2] Morality is a *mode* of people's *encountering* with each other. As moral agents we share the desire for the common experiences of respect, solidarity, sincerity, and trust.

Human beings pursue happiness, and all our happiness-conducive deliberate activity is pleasant and therefore intrinsically desirable.[3] This assumption about the *conditio humana*, which I take to be uncontroversial, has an important implication for the understanding of morality. Given our pursuit of happiness, we can maintain the moral stance only if moral agency is pleasant and intrinsically desirable, for otherwise we could not maintain the moral stance for a lifetime. There are various kinds of pleasure. Morality's pleasure is what we may call *modal pleasure*. Modal pleasure is a *mode* of *activity*—as opposed to mere sensations of pleasure. A person enjoys modal pleasure when she successfully exercises her capacities (or skills).[4] I assume that the moral stance is a necessary condition for the successful exercise of our happiness-conducive human capacities—above all for our personal autonomy—and is therefore in every individual person's interest. If this is true, then moral agency is pleasant and intrinsically desirable. It is true, many moral actions are arduous, even painful and therefore unpleasant in terms of *sensate* pleasure, but those actions can nevertheless be desirable and pleasant in terms of *modal* pleasure.

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[1] Cf. I explain this thesis about practical reasoning in Hardy 2011, pp. 344-352.

[2] Cf. Peter Strawson's explanation of what he calls „reactive attitudes" (Strawson 1962).

[3] I share this assumption with ancient eudaimonism and, in some sense, with modern utilitarianism, but my view of the human condition is not committed to any particular ethical theory. Audi 2007, Quante 2003, Siep 2004, and Stemmer 2000 provide excellent discussions of the major metaethical questions.

[4] I adopt the term „modal pleasure" from George Rudebusch who introduces this term in his interpretation of Socrates' conceptions of virtue and pleasure: Rudebusch 2002, pp. 5-7; 92-96. We can in fact trace back the idea of modal pleasures to the philosophy of Plato and Aristotle, cf. the references in Rudebusch 2002 and Hardy 2011.

2. Moral Demands

Moral demands have four crucial features:

(i) Moral demands aim to *protect common goods*, such as bodily integrity and autonomy. For this reason, arguments for ethical claims have to rely on general evaluative assumptions, which ideally every person can agree upon. Since the acceptance of a moral demand expresses the will of a person, the general evaluative assumptions of ethical arguments—that we might also call ethical principles—are common agreements.

(ii) Moral demands are *evident*: What we owe to each other is obvious because we all know the common goods, which moral demands aim to protect. Morality is, as Kant says, a matter of fact of reason („ein Faktum der Vernunft"[5]). So we do not need complex and fallible reasonings in order to understand the content of moral demands. But we need complex reasonings in order to find solutions to particular ethical problems.

(iii) Morals demands are *universal*; they hold for any person and any action in any situation—regardless of any particular property of an individual person.

(iv) Moral demands are *categorical* (or unconditional, respectively); moral actions do not depend on any particular condition and they are not primarily a means for achieving a certain end, but they are rather an end in itself. It is true; we very often do moral actions for their own sake as well as for the sake of social advantages, because we seek social recognition and want to avoid blame and punishment. Having taken the moral stance, we, however, do moral actions for their own sake because they contribute to our pursuit of happiness.

The insights into these aspects of moral demands go hand in hand with each other. Let me explain: If we accept moral demands for their own sake, we then follow moral laws, which aim to protect common goods. All human beings are equal in seeking happiness; we all have the desire for conducting a good life. And we all *share* the same *vulnerability*. We know that we all share the same vulnerable properties, and once we are aware of the fact that moral laws are made to protect the vulnerable properties of human beings, we know that moral laws must be *universal*. Everyone can suffer from pain and noone wants to suffer from pain. This is what we all know. So if we accept an *individual person's* demand not to be hurt because we

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[5] Kant: Kritik der praktischen Vernunft, 5:31

consider it a *moral* demand, then we accept *everyone's* demand not to be hurt. If I am sure that not inflicting pain to a human being is morally right, I expect everyone else to think the same way. The very idea that there is an obligation *only for me*—or a particular group of people, respectively—to perform moral actions does not make sense. Once we are aware of the fact that moral laws are made for protecting *common* goods, we know that moral laws must be unconditional. If we seriously respect the happiness-conducive interests of other persons, we want to do this under *any* possible conditions—even though we might sometimes fail to perform morally right actions due to negligence. It would not make sense to accept moral demands and to do moral actions merely as a means for achieving a certain particular end that we would *not* want to achieve under some other conditions. Protecting a common good is—to put it in Kantian terms—an end in itself. When we want to protect *common* goods, we consider moral demands universal and unconditional.

There is a possible objection against the idea of categorical moral demands: Imagine a situation in which someone hurts an assassin in order to prevent him from attacking defenseless people. Actions of that kind are undoubtedly morally right. In some cases in which a person is faced with a conflict of moral norms she has to break a certain moral law and to impair a certain good in order to protect a higher good. The fact of moral conflicts shows that we need to agree upon a hierarchy of goods in order to solve those conflicts, but it does not conflict the assumption that moral demands are categorical (or unconditional, respectively).

3. Two Paradoxes of Moral Motivation

There are two paradoxes of moral motivation. The first one is the paradox of a universal will. It is true; *individual* persons make decisions for actions. Yet we consider moral actions as if the source of those actions is a will, which is the same in every human being. This is the idea of the Kantian *categorical imperative*: We consider our own individual moral wanting as if it were not merely our individual, but rather a *universal* will—in Kant's words: „Act only according to that maxim by which you can at the same time will that it should become a universal law".[6] The second paradox concerns volitional necessity.[7] There is no necessity in human decision making and acting. When we make a decision, we can always choose

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[6] Kant: Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten, p. 421.
[7] On volitional necessity cf. Frankfurt 1999.

between (at least two) alternative possibilities. And yet we consider decisions for moral actions *as if* we had no choice to do otherwise. This is the idea of a *duty* (Pflicht). Duties are what we have in mind when speaking of actions that we *ought to do*. A duty is self-binding and it creates a quasi-necessity.

4. Common Goods and the Awareness for Humanity

Particular instances of common goods have *vulnerable* properties that moral demands aim to protect. A certain property is vulnerable because it can be impaired or even destroyed, and we consider such a property valuable because we want to protect it. Human beings share various common goods, to which general evaluative premises of ethical arguments refer to, such as human dignity, social justice, the common benefit. I endorse value-pluralism, but I assume that there is one supreme common good for every human being: human dignity, which includes—above all—bodily integrity and personal autonomy. If this is true, we all can agree upon the assumption that we always have and want to protect these elements of dignity— regardless of national or ethical origin, social status, language, gender, religion or political opinion. The insight into the supreme value of human dignity is the motivating reason for moral obligation: We know that everyone can suffer from bodily pain and from loosing the authority over her/his own life, and we do not *want* anyone to suffer or to loose authority over her/his life. Let us call this insight the *awareness for humanity*.

The awareness for humanity is both a certain kind of knowledge (or understanding, respectively), and empathy. We all know what it means to be hurt or to loose authority over one's own life. These experiences are common ones—we just did not have them without sharing them with other persons. We share these experiences because we are human beings. Empathy provides the awareness for humanity with its volitional and motivating force. But there is no universal empathy, for only propositional attitudes can be generalized. The awareness for humanity therefore requires empathy and understanding—the understanding of the *human condition*. Once we have become aware of the supreme value of physical integrity and autonomy we know for certain that we do not want to harm anyone.[8]

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[8] In modern western civil societies, the respect for human dignity and autonomy is the result of a long political process, which leads to the formulation of human rights and the formation of nations with legal institutions, which protect human rights. There were and there are societies that do not know the ideas of dignity and human rights as common goods. What I call the awareness for humanity seems, however, to be an irreversible moral insight; once people have come to recognize dignity and

Ludwig Siep presents an ethics, in which an overall good world is the central good. He argues that knowing a certain good can itself motivate us to actions, which aim at protecting a certain good. The desire to protect a good does not require any other particular interest of an agent:

> Meine These ist, dass die Einsicht in die Güte bzw. den positiven Wert eines Zustands, auch wenn dieser in keiner Beziehung zu einem sonstigen Wunsch […] des Handelnden steht, in ihm unmittelbar die Absicht der Aufrechterhaltung bzw. Herbeiführung dieses Zustands auslösen […] kann […] Es ist klar, dass in der ethischen Ordnung der Gründe denjenigen das höchste Gewicht zukommt, die sich auf das umfassende Gut beziehen. Dass das „gute Ganze" sein soll, kann ebenso zum Handeln motivieren wie die Überzeugung von den Pflichten gegen andere. Die Konkretisierung dieses Guten führt zu Wertungen und bewertenden Beschreibungen, die ebenso zum Handeln motivieren können wie alles, was wir als wertvoll erfahren haben [...].[9]

I agree, but I would like to put it this way: Since the moral stance entails both understanding and empathy, the kind of moral insight that has a sufficiently strong motivating force is the recognition and *acceptance* of a (common) good. The *acceptance* of a *good* conjoins the insight that a certain vulnerable and valuable thing is in fact a good with the intention to protect such a good for its own sake—regardless of any other particular interest that one might also have for protecting a certain good. We just would not have the *belief* that something is a *good* without having the desire to protect it. In other words: The acceptance of a good is a motivational belief.[10]

5. Three Faces of Dignity and the Argument from Autonomy

The awareness for humanity entails, as I said, the recognition and acceptance of human dignity as the supreme common good. Let us distinguish three kinds of dignity. Human dignity is

> (1) a legal status; the protection of dignity guarantees the protection of human rights, as stated in Article 1 of the universal declaration of human rights as well as in Article 1 of the German constitution,

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autonomy as *common* goods, they will not give up this insight. Cf. Ludwig Siep: *On the Historicity and Irreversibility of Human Rights*, unpublished manuscript.
[9] Siep 2004, pp. 88-93.
[10] Cf. Hardy 2011, pp. 344-352.

(2) a moral status, which moral agents ascribe to each other when accepting moral demands,

(3) an individual person's self-relation.

5.1. Dignity as a Legal Status

The universal declaration of human rights by the United Nations, i. e., the United Nations general assembly resolution 217 A states:

Article 1. All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.

Article 2. Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status. […]

Article 3. Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person.

The first article of the German constitution (Art. 1 Abs. 1 GG) states:

Die Würde des Menschen ist unantastbar. Sie zu achten und zu schützen ist Verpflichtung aller staatlichen Gewalt.

Das Deutsche Volk bekennt sich darum zu unverletzlichen und unveräußerlichen Menschenrechten als Grundlage jeder menschlichen Gemeinschaft, des Friedens und der Gerechtigkeit in der Welt.

Die nachfolgenden Grundrechte binden Gesetzgebung, vollziehende Gewalt und Rechtsprechung als unmittelbar geltendes Recht.

Article 1 of the German constitution binds together human dignity and the protection of human rights. The legal status of human dignity and the set of human rights are coextensive; the protection of dignity comprises the protection of the various particular human rights. It makes, however, good sense to explicitly state dignity as the *one* supreme good because this legal statement ensures the inclusion of *all* human rights into dignity, and it also allows for the inclusion of further goods and corresponding rights into the realm of dignity. Thomas Gutmann explains the legal meaning of human dignity as an absolute constraint: „Der Würdegrundsatz (i. e. Art. 1 Abs. 1 GG) umschreibt das Fundament reziproker Anerkennung von Menschen als Rechtspersonen. Seine primäre [...] Funktion ist die eines *constraints*, einer deontologisch verstandenen *Grenze* dessen, was Rechtspersonen angetan werden darf. […]

Der Würdegrundsatz ist weder Gegenstand noch Resultat von Prozessen der Güterabwägung".[11]

5.2. Dignity as a Moral Status and a Way of Living

The acceptance of dignity as a *moral* status is a social practice that does not necessarily depend on legal rules. Kant brilliantly voices the idea of dignity as the supreme moral value in his formulation of the categorical imperative. As already cited, the first formulation of the categorical imperative says: „Act only according to that maxim by which you can at the same time will that it should become a universal law".[12] Kant then proceeds to explain the categorical imperative as the respect for mankind and dignity:

> Der praktische [kategorische, JH] Imperativ wird [...] folgender sein: Handle so, dass du die Menschheit, sowohl in deiner Person, als in der Person eines jeden andern, jederzeit zugleich als Zweck, niemals bloß als Mittel brauchtest. [...] Die praktische Notwendigkeit, nach diesem Prinzip zu handeln, d. i. die Pflicht, beruht gar nicht auf Gefühlen, Antrieben und Neigungen, sondern bloß auf dem Verhältnis vernünftiger Wesen zu einander, in welchem der Wille eines vernünftigen Wesens jederzeit zugleich als gesetzgebend betrachtet werden muß [...] Die Vernunft bezieht also die Maxime des Willens als allgemein gesetzgebend auf jeden anderen Willen, und auch auf jede Handlung gegen sich selbst, und dies zwar nicht um irgend eines andern praktischen Bewegungsgrundes [...] willen, sondern aus der Idee der Würde eines vernünftigen Wesens, das keinem Gesetze gehorcht, als dem, das es zugleich selbst gibt. Im Reich der Zwecke hat alles entweder einen Preis, oder eine Würde. Was einen Preis hat, an dessen Stelle kann auch etwas anderes als Äquivalent gesetzt werden; was dagegen über allen Preis erhaben ist [...], das hat eine Würde. [...] Nun ist Moralität die Bedingung, unter der allein ein vernünftiges Wesen Zweck an sich selbst sein kann, weil nur durch

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[11] Gutmann 2014, p. 62. Blömacher 2016 provides a comprehensive study of the interpretation of the statement on human dignity in Art. 1 Abs. 1 GG, its application in the German law, the interpretation of the idea of human dignity in the Council of Europe, and the application of the idea of human dignity by the European Court of Justice (EuGH). Schaber 2012 and Sandkühler 2014 explore the political, juridical and philosophical dimensions of the concept of human dignity and its history. Sandkühler proposes a convincing defence of the absolute status of dignity (cf. my review of his book in: *Zeitschrift für Menschenrechte* 2015). For a discussion of the status and function of the idea of dignity in applied ethics cf. Borchers 2007. Many facets of human dignity are illuminated in the *Cambridge Companion on Dignity*, edited by Jens Braarvig/Roger Brownsword/Marcus Düwell/Dietmar Mieth, 2014.
[12] Kant: Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten, p. 421.

sie es möglich ist, ein gesetzgebend Glied im Reiche der Zwecke zu sein. Also ist Sittlichkeit und die Menschheit, so fern sie derselben fähig ist, dasjenige, was allein Würde hat.[13]

The (one and only) Kantian categorical imperative says that every person has to treat any other person always not merely as a means but as an end in itself. The respect for dignity is an insight of reason and also a social practice. The kingdom of ends ("das Reich der Zwecke") can only be built on the ground of morality. Dignity has no price, no equivalent. When we offer a product at the market, we want to get a good price for our product. We make a business about a product with someone, if—and only if—we get an equivalent for what we give. By contrast, the respect for dignity does not depend on getting an equivalent and does therefore—in Kant's view—not depend on any particular interest of a person. If we follow a maxim that should become a universal law and so treat every person as an end in itself, we then accept universal, unconditional moral demands. If the self-governing will (der gesetzgebende Wille) is independent of a person's particular interest, it is then a volitional second order capability.[14]

Peter Bieri elucidates dignity as a way of living (Lebensform), which includes what he calls moral integrity:

Wir erleben [Würde als eine Lebensform, JH] als soziale Wesen, die das, was sie sind, auch durch die Art und Weise werden, wie sie andere behandeln. Moralische Intimität ist in diesem Sinne eine Quelle von Würde: Dadurch, daß ich andere in ihren Bedürfnissen achte und mein Tun danach ausrichte, erwerbe ich eine Form der Würde, die man *moralische* Würde nennen könnte. [...] Sie ist eine besondere Form der moralischen Integrität: diejenige, bei der es nicht um *irgendwelche* Interessen anderer geht, sondern um Bedürfnisse, die mit dem Kern ihrer Würde zu tun haben: das Bedürfnis nach Selbständigkeit, nach echten Begegnungen, nach geschützter Intimität und Verstehen, nach Wahrhaftigkeit und Selbstachtung.[15]

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[13] Kant: Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten, pp. 429-435. Audi 2015 provides an excellent interpretation of this formulation of the categorical imperative, which has come to be known as the humanity formula.

[14] I explain this thesis about the Kantian theory of practical reason in Hardy 2011, pp. 413-417.

[15] Bieri 2013, pp. 269-270.

5.3. Dignity as Personal Autonomy

Dignity as a self-relation is the capacity of personal autonomy; an autonomous person is capable of protecting and defending her own dignity. Personal autonomy includes both social autonomy, and mental autonomy. Social autonomy is a person's capability to exercise authority over her own life and to claim legal and moral rights, whereas mental autonomy is—above all—self-determination and self-governance. Social autonomy requires protection by laws (by a legal system), access to elementary goods such as water, food, health-care, and education, a minimum income, the absence of coercion and manipulation, and—last but not least—privacy.[16]

Mental autonomy (gedankliche Selbstbestimmung) is a person's ability of clearly understanding and guiding her mental states. An autonomous person is able to guide her beliefs, desires, and intentions in such a way that she can pursue general, supreme goals, such as doing research, building a house, taking care for her family etc. With all our particular deliberate actions we pursue general, supreme goals. We need to have such goals in order to choose between alternative actions and to make rational decisions. A general goal is a goal that we pursue with several actions of the same kind. If I go for a 5 kilometre run every morning, I pursue the general, supreme goal of staying healthy. Someone else may do the same every morning because he trains to run a marathon, which finally serves his general goal of testing the limits of his physical capabilities. A supreme goal is a goal that has priority over others. If I decide to give money to charity that I could also spend for travelling around the world, then I give helping other people priority over experiencing new countries and their cultures. If I want to write a philosophical book, I give thinking about philosophical arguments priority over other cognitive activities—such as, for example, writing a novel or studying the composition of *Verdi*'s operas—that I could do during that long period. If we have to choose between two or more alternative actions, we then choose the one that serves a general, supreme goal. We pursue such goals, once we know what we want to do and have the will we want to have. In other words: We pursue general, supreme goals through self-determination.

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[16] „Die Würde eines Menschen hat [...] viel damit zu tun, daß er auf die Grenzen seines intimen Raums achtet und den inneren Bezirk seines Denkens und Fühlens nicht bedenkenlos für jedermann öffnet" (Bieri 2013, p. 186).

Self-determination is itself a general goal. Let us distinguish material from modal goals. If we pursue a material goal, we want to create a certain state in the world, such as writing a letter, building a house or setting a sail. If we pursue a modal goal, we want to do something in a certain way. Pursuing a modal goal, we seek to successfully exercise a capacity (or skill), and successful actions give modal pleasure. Though it seems that we always pursue both material and modal goals with one and the same action, it makes good sense to distinguish these two kinds of goals. It is true that human beings pursue many different material goals. The successful exercise of self-determination is, however, a modal goal that everyone pursues because we can only achieve our material goals, if we really *know* what we want to do and have the will we want to have.

Self-determination includes self-evaluation, which allows us for confirming or denying our spontaneous beliefs and desires. There are three basic kinds of self-relations: We can confirm or deny a spontaneous belief, desire or intention, and we can also feel ambivalent towards a spontaneous belief, desire or intention. I might, for example, think about sailing with my sailing boat *Westwind* from Hamburg to New York in the summer of 2018. Such a plan needs careful consideration. So I examine the advantages and disadvantages of such a journey and evaluate my intention through forming second order volitions. If I come to the conclusion that I really want to make the journey, I then have confirmed my previous, spontaneous intention to do so. And if I come to the conclusion that I do not want to make the journey, I then have denied and given up my previous intention to do so. In both cases, in which I say either „Yes" or „No" to my previous, spontaneous intention, I finally have a clear, explicit intention that can serve as a basis for a rational decision. I make a rational decision if I have carefully considered all the relevant and available reasons that speak for or against a certain action. We comment on those mental states by saying that we are *sure* and know *for certain* that we want to do this and that. As long as we are indecisive—torn between two (or more) options—we are ambivalent towards a certain spontaneous belief, desire or intention, and ambivalence endangers our autonomy. As autonomous agents we are able to evaluate our spontaneous mental states and to make rational decisions. We need social and mental autonomy in order to protect our own dignity. It is quite obvious that we need social autonomy, but mental autonomy is no less important, because our mental autonomy can save us from manipulation and the negative aspects of epistemic dependence.

The acceptance of moral demands is a necessary condition for our striving for autonomy and so is the moral stance built into our *reflective* pursuit of happiness. Here is an argument

for this claim (let me call it the argument from autonomy): In our reflective pursuit of happiness we aim to create best conditions for our own (social and mental) autonomy. If we aim to create best conditions for our own autonomy, we then interact with other people in such a way that we also promote *their* autonomy. And if we interact with other people in such a way that we promote their autonomy, we have taken the moral stance. In other words: We are able to promote each other's autonomy if (and only if) we protect each other's vulnerability and respect each other's happiness-conducive interests. In our reflective pursuit of happiness we therefore have taken the moral stance.[17]

6. The Structure of Ethical Arguments

Reasons are premises of arguments. Arguments with a normative, ethical conclusion have both *evaluative*, and *descriptive* premises that refer to common goods and moral actions. When we argue for ethical claims, we agree on *general evaluative* premises, which express assumptions about common goods whose particular instances have certain *vulnerable* properties $\{V_1, ..., V_n\}$. For example, the human body's vulnerable property is the fact that it can suffer from pain. A person's mind can be manipulated. A person's dignity can be humiliated. Those are the vulnerable properties ethical arguments typically refer to. More precisely: When we argue for ethical claims, we have to make (i) general evaluative assumptions about common goods that we want to protect, which ideally all moral agents can agree upon, (ii) general and particular descriptive assumptions about the vulnerable properties of a given *particular instance* of a common good, and finally (iii) general and particular descriptive assumptions, which state that a certain action A (or actions of the kind A, respectively) is (are) necessary and adequate for protecting the vulnerable properties of a particular instance of a common good. A moral action A is adequate if and only if an agent is in the position to do A and doing A does not impair her/his own well-being.

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[17] I explain my argument from autonomy in Hardy 2011, pp. 407-430, Hardy 2017 and Hardy (forthcoming): *Würde und Autonomie*. With my assumption about the happiness-conducive function of the moral stance I follow the Socratic argument in Plato's *Republic* (cf. Hardy 2011, pp. 251-281). I also endorse, in principle, Korsgaard 2009. Korsgaard argues that a person's work of self-constitution and creating a practical identity implies the commitment to moral laws. Ancient philosophers from Socrates to the Stoics argue that the commitment to morality is an essential element of a good life (*eudaimonia*). Kant seems to hold a similar view—despite of his criticism of Ancient eudaimonism, cf. Weidemann 2001. For the various forms of Ancient eudaimonism cf. Hardy/Rudebusch 2014.

Arguments for ethical claims take this general form:

(1) (∀common good CG, ∀person, ∀vulnerable property V): If an abstract entity CG is a common good and if (logically speaking) a particular instance of the common good CG, that is, every individual person, has the vulnerable property V, then every person *wants* to protect the vulnerable property V of any other person. (The *antecedens* of this premise contains an evaluative as well as a descriptive statement.)

(2) (∀common good CG, ∀person, ∀vulnerable property V): The entity CG is a common good and every individual person has the vulnerable property V.

(3) (∀person, ∀ vulnerable property V): Therefore every person wants to protect everyone's vulnerable property V.

(4) (∀person P, ∀action A, ∀vulnerable property V): If every person wants to protect everyone's vulnerable property V and if performing actions of the kind A is necessary and adequate for the protection of the vulnerable property V of person A, then person B (and any other person) *ought* to perform actions of the kind A and must not do opposing actions of the kind non-A.

(5) (∀person, ∀action A): Performing actions of the kind A is necessary and adequate for the protection of person A's vulnerable property V.

Conclusion: Therefore person B (and any other person) ought to do actions of the kind A.[18]

Here is an example:

(1) If human dignity is a common good and if every individual person—as being a particular instance of the common good human dignity—has the vulnerable property that she can suffer from poverty, then every person wants to protect everyone who now lives in poverty from future poverty.

(2) Human dignity is a common good and every individual person can suffer from poverty.

(3) Therefore every person wants to protect everyone who now lives in poverty from future poverty.

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[18] An alternative approach to the logical analysis of ethical reasoning is deontic logic, but classical logic is, in my view, a sufficient instrument for an understanding of ethical reasoning. Hardy/Schamberger 2017 provide a theory of the calculus of natural deduction. On deontic logic in moral philosophy and the philosophy of law cf. Aqvist 2002, Carmo/Jones 2002, Lisanyuk 2014. For an alternative analysis of ethical reasoning cf. Bayertz/Kompa 2016.

(4) If we want to protect everyone who now lives in poverty from future poverty and if donating five percent of our gross income to global organizations, which reliably and efficiently help people who now live in poverty, is necessary and adequate for protecting these people from future poverty, we ought to donate five percent of our gross income to global organizations, which reliably and efficiently help people who now live in poverty.

(5) Donating five percent of our gross income to global organizations, which reliably and efficiently help people who now live in poverty, is necessary and adequate (and even sufficient) for protecting these people from future poverty.

Conclusion: Therefore we ought to donate five percent of our gross income to global organizations, which reliably and efficiently help people who now live in poverty.

Notice that arguments of this kind are not vulnerable to the objection of the so-called naturalistic fallacy since the premises entail the entire evaluative information of the conclusion.

I here only refer to persons, but the above general ethical argument might also hold true for other creatures, such as animals or even plants, if we include those non-personal entities into the realm of moral goods. Perhaps the best model for such a holistic view is the idea of a *scala naturae*, which Ludwig Siep invokes in his *Konkrete Ethik*.[19]

Acknowledgements

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[19] Cf. Siep 2004, ch. 5 and 6. An important desideratum of current meta-ethics is to formulate moral rules, which can be implemented into the algorithms of autonomous systems of artificial intelligence, cf. Kuiper 2016.

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