

Reductionist Contractualism: Moral Motivation and the Expanding Self

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I Introduction

According to a popular contemporary contractualist account of moral motivation, the most plausible explanation for why those who are concerned with morality take moral reasons seriously — why these reasons strike those who are moved by them with a particular inescapability — is that they stem from, and are grounded by, a desire to be able to justify one's actions to others on grounds they could not reasonably reject.¹ My

1 I draw explicitly here from a version of contractualist moral motivation articulated by T.M. Scanlon, originally in 'Contractualism and Utilitarianism,' in *Utilitarianism and Beyond*, Amartya Sen and Bernard Williams, eds. (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press 1982), and more recently (and more robustly) in *What We Owe To Each Other* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press 1998), esp. Chapter 4, 'Wrongness and Reasons.' In the latter work, Scanlon alters the formulation of the ideal of justifiability, changing the contractualist motivational focus from a *desire* to be able to justify one's actions to a *reason* to desire to be able to justify one's actions (see, e.g., 154). Scanlon makes this move because he now believes the notion of a desire must be 'understood in terms of the idea of taking something to be a reason' (8), rather than vice versa, if it is to fulfill its ordinary role in explanation and justification. Consequently, it is reasons, rather than desires, that are motivationally basic on Scanlon's new contractualist picture. Nevertheless, in this paper I will stick with the earlier account of moral motivation as being grounded on a certain sort of *desire* for three reasons. First, the most prevalent (and, to my mind, most plausible) contemporary accounts of motivation in *general* are still desire-based accounts (see, e.g., the flood of papers — too many to cite — following,

belief that an action is immoral, on this account, triggers this desire, this source of my moral motivation, and consequently I am moved to refrain from such an action by the fundamental desire that my actions be adequately justifiable. Furthermore, it is this desire to which contractualism appeals in its account of the wrong-making feature of certain actions: an action is wrong if it would violate a set of rules which no one could reasonably reject.²

There seem, however, to be two general worries about this picture: one, that the range of its application is too extensive; the other, that the range of its application is too limited. On the one hand, there seem to be reasons or desires *other* than the desire to be able to justify our actions that play (and ought to play) the crucial motivational role in much of our moral deliberation. This is the complaint pressed frequently by commu-

and more or less in line with, Harry Frankfurt's seminal desire-based hierarchical account of the self and motivation in his 1971 paper 'Freedom of the Will and the Concept of a Person,' reprinted in Harry Frankfurt, *The Importance of What We Care About* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press 1988). An account of moral motivation in keeping with this quite popular account of motivation in general will thus have a built-in widespread appeal. Second, I am ultimately interested in providing a bridge between the foundations of two different contemporary strands of contractualism, one essentially Kantian, the other essentially Hobbesian. Scanlon's view has much in common with the Kantian strand (which Scanlon admits on 5-6 of *What We Owe To Each Other*), but I believe that by continuing to formulate the contractualist account of moral motivation in a desire-based way, I will have articulated a fairly general contractualist view that is perfectly compatible, at its foundations, with the Hobbesian strand as well (given that the Hobbesian strand clearly takes desires as motivationally basic). Although I do not argue explicitly for this latter point in the present work, I believe it will be obvious by the end how such a move could be made. Third, I believe the desire-based account Scanlon offered originally in 'Contractualism and Utilitarianism' remains — for better or worse — the most influential articulation of contemporary contractualism, and the communitarian and amoralist worries I cite in the text are worries repeatedly expressed in the literature to *this* version of contractualism. Scanlon takes what he is doing in the first part of his book (in which he changes the focus from desires to reasons) to constitute, in part, a response to these sorts of worries. But if we can resist these worries *without* altering the original focus on desires as motivationally basic, we undercut any communitarian/amoralist attempts to repackage the same old worries in the new terms of Scanlon's latest project. Of course, doing so also undercuts part of the stated motivation for Scanlon's own reworking of the contractualist view, but this strikes me as neither here nor there. Consequently, I refer to the contractualist view sketched in the text as *Scanlonian*, rather than as Scanlon's, and I will still refer, where relevant, to Scanlon's 1982 articulation of the view in 'Contractualism and Utilitarianism.'

2 Scanlon, 'Contractualism and Utilitarianism,' 110; and *What We Owe To Each Other*, 153

nitarians and virtue theorists, who suggest that this type of Kantian contractualism remains too impartial, either ignoring or subordinating important considerations of character and personal attachments in its picture of the kind of life one should lead. Accordingly, it seems the contractualist account of moral motivation implausibly extends the idea of justification too far, pushing it into a moral domain within which it has no place.

On the other hand, even if this account *could* provide the best explanation of moral motivation, what are we to do in cases where the motivating desire is absent? We might think here of Hobbes' Fool, someone for whom considerations of prudence clash with, and always outweigh, the demands of justice. Generally, contractualists merely assume that most people have the desire in question, and those that do not are simply to be left out of the moral loop. But this seems quite unsatisfactory. Is there no way to deal with this kind of amoralist other than to ignore him? In other words, the range of agents motivated by the idea of justification may simply be too limited to establish the kind of universal contractualist morality desired. Indeed, what would justify the cultivation and maintenance of this morally motivating desire in the first place?

It is my aim in this paper to sketch an answer to these worries by appealing to recent movements in the metaphysics of persons and personal identity. Specifically, I will draw upon the work of Derek Parfit to supplement the contractualist account at its foundation, outlining a view in which the Parfitian entities called 'selves' are the relevant contractors and are entities for whom the desire for justifiability is entailed by certain more basic commitments, commitments of prudential rationality which are themselves shared by both our communitarian and amoralist objectors.

II Scanlonian Contractualism

In what follows, I take T.M. Scanlon's contractualism as a basic model, although I believe my conclusions could be generalized to most, if not all, variations on his theme. On the Scanlonian view, what makes an action wrong is 'if its performance under the circumstances would be disallowed by any set of principles for the general regulation of behavior that no one could reasonably reject as a basis for informed, unforced general agreement.'³ This is a contractualist view, in that the principles of morality are

3 Scanlon, *What We Owe To Each Other*, 153

determined through unforced, hypothetical general agreement, and the conditions under which agreement would be reached are specified.⁴ It is also a Kantian view, in that its scope is, with certain caveats, universal (i.e., it determines the rightness/wrongness of an action for *any* rational being in my particular circumstances for whom the notion of justification to another such being makes sense), it involves the specific determination of moral duties, it is impartial, it holds that one's pursuit of the good is restricted by and subordinate to the demands of the right, and it takes as fundamental a natural equality of moral status, which renders each person's interests a matter of impartial concern.⁵

The source of moral motivation, on this account, is the desire that one's actions be justifiable to others on grounds they could not reasonably reject (henceforward, 'the desire for justifiability'). Scanlon seems merely to take this motivational desire as a given in most people, calling it 'an extremely plausible account of moral motivation.'⁶ But what is the relation between this desire and a contractualist morality? On the Scanlonian view, the justificatory force of certain moral properties — their 'to-be-doneness' or 'not-to-be-doneness' — can best be explained in terms of the notion of reasonable agreement.⁷ Moral properties are justified, on this view, via the possibility of reasonable agreement: what will count as a good moral argument is one which justifies 'acting in a certain way, a justification which others would be unreasonable not to accept,'⁸ and it is this kind of moral argument that triggers the source of moral motivation found in the desire to be able to justify our actions to all similarly motivated others. It is this motivational desire that is satisfied by the possibility of the kind of reasonable agreement in question. After all, when I desire to justify a certain action to you, what that desire amounts to is simply that I want us both to be able to *agree* on a certain

4 Scanlon, 'Contractualism and Utilitarianism,' 112

5 It is this last feature that (in part) distinguishes a Kantian contractualism from a Hobbesian contractualism, in which morality involves the recognition and protection of others' interests as merely a matter of mutual advantage. See Will Kymlicka, 'The Social Contract Tradition,' in *A Companion to Ethics*, Peter Singer, ed. (Cambridge, MA: Basil Blackwell 1993), 188.

6 Scanlon, 'Contractualism and Utilitarianism,' 116. In *What We Owe To Each Other*, 155-6, he claims that his (slightly altered — see note 1 above) contractualist account of moral motivation seems 'to be phenomenologically accurate' and can best account for certain significant complexities in moral motivation.

7 As opposed to, say, their objective, morally real, status in the world.

8 Scanlon, 'Contractualism and Utilitarianism,' 118

set of standards for action, and I also want us both to be able to agree that the action I performed did not violate those standards. That is just what the notion of justifiability means. So the contractualist notion of reasonable agreement has its motivational source in the desire to be able to justify one's actions to others on grounds they could not reasonably reject. In other words, the desire to be able to justify my actions to all similarly motivated others is basic, and it is this desire — this source of moral motivation — which is triggered by my belief that an action is wrong (ibid., 116).

But is this in fact the most plausible account of *all* moral motivation? And even if we have reason to think that it is, how might we convince the amoralist to cultivate the motivational desire at the heart of this account? The first problem has been articulated in a number of articles attacking both utilitarian and deontological views (such as Kantian contractualism) for ignoring the sources of moral motivation found in human beings' pursuit of the good life.⁹ Against the kind of contractualism I have discussed, the objection might run as follows. Surely it must be agreed that some of the greatest human goods include love, friendship, community attachments, and the having of one or another ground project (a project the pursuit of which lends meaning to one's life). And having these sorts of goods necessarily involves having certain motives for action. For example, the love I have for my wife necessarily involves not only valuing her *qua* beloved, but also *not* valuing her as, say, simply the possessor or producer of certain values (e.g., as a particular instantiation here and now of a free moral agent) (Stocker, 459). So I am moved to help her, for example, simply in light of the fact that she is my beloved. Similarly, I may have certain ground projects which provide meaning for my life, and it is these ground projects which propel my life forward and give me reasons for acting in certain ways (Williams, 10-15).

But it is alleged that the source of moral motivation elaborated by the contractualist seems importantly at odds with the source of motivation underlying these everyday moral pursuits, in one of two ways. On the one hand, it has been claimed that if the ultimate source of moral motivation is to be the desire for justifiability, then the very possibility of pursuing certain of these crucial human goods is undermined. After all, if my motivational set embodies the notion of *justification* as its sole

9 I have in mind especially Bernard Williams's 'Persons, Character and Morality,' in *Moral Luck: Philosophical Papers 1973-1980* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press 1981); Michael Stocker's 'The Schizophrenia of Modern Ethical Theories,' *Journal of Philosophy* 73 (1976) 453-66; and Susan Wolf's 'Moral Saints,' *Journal of Philosophy* 79 (1982) 419-39.

focus, I will necessarily be treating all other people externally, that is, as possessors of certain values, and not as intrinsically valuable, that is, as valuable in themselves, a stance *required* for love, friendship, and certain community attachments (Stocker, 461). If I am moved to action solely by the desire for justifiability, then this motivation seems to preclude one of the motivations involved in love, e.g., that I perform certain actions entirely for the sake of the beloved *and for no other reason* (such as, for example, that the beloved is a person for whom the notion of such justification makes sense).

On the other hand, suppose contractualists are not claiming that the desire for justifiability is the *only* source of moral motivation. Perhaps it is merely the ‘trumping’ source.¹⁰ Yet even if this is the case, a similar problem remains. For it seems as if we all recognize ‘that among the immensely valuable traits and activities that a human life might positively embrace are some of which we hope that, if a person does embrace them, he does so *not* for moral reasons’ (Wolf, 434). Suppose, for example, that I am on a boat with my wife and a stranger. The boat capsizes, and I am able to rescue only one of these two people. What would the contractualist have us do? It would surely be absurd to maintain impartiality by flipping a coin, and fortunately the Scanlonian picture avoids such a result. Rather, it would be permissible for me to save my wife just in case no one could reasonably reject a set of rules allowing such an action, and in this case it seems as if no one *could* reasonably reject such a set of rules. So I can justify to the stranger my letting him die on grounds he himself could reasonably accept. But notice the oddness of the result, for it sounds as if some relief is attached: ‘Whew! Thank goodness my moral commitments didn’t require me to let my wife die!’¹¹ The oddness here, as Bernard Williams points out, stems from there being one thought too many. One would think that, finding myself in such circumstances, I would be motivated to save my wife *solely because she is my wife*, and not because ‘she is my wife and ‘in situations of this kind it is permissible

10 I take it that this is Scanlon’s current view. See *What We Owe To Each Other*: ‘These values [e.g., love, friendship, etc.] themselves, properly understood, give way to morality’s demands when conflicts arise’ (161). It is clear that Scanlon thinks the worry articulated in the previous paragraph — that the pursuit of certain crucial human goods is precluded by the contractualist account of moral motivation — is unjustified, given that contractualist ‘principles could reasonably be rejected on the ground that they left no room for valuing other things that are important in our lives’ (*What We Owe To Each Other*, 160).

11 This is a case Williams discusses on 17-18.

to save one's wife'" (ibid., 18). Some morally charged situations, it seems, lie outside the arena of justification altogether.

Consequently, the contractualist faces a real problem if she cannot fully account for the motivational source(s) grounding these crucial human pursuits. On the one hand, if the Scanlonian source of moral motivation is supposed to be our *sole* ultimate source of moral motivation, then it would have to preclude the possibility of genuine love and fellow-feeling, which is absurd. On the other hand, even if this desire for justifiability is merely to be the *trumping* motivational source among certain other desires or reasons for action, then it still occasionally provides one thought too many and thus seems at worst implausible and at best redundant. The desire for justifiability thus looks inadequate as a source of moral motivation, and any contractualism resting on such a desire would seem to be highly problematic.

Furthermore, a serious question remains, for even if we can somehow establish that the Scanlonian view *does* provide an adequate account of the source of moral motivation, what are we to do in cases in which it is absent? There seems to be no way to justify the having of the desire for justifiability to the amoralist (or, for that matter, to *anyone*). This worry applies the question 'Why be moral?' to the ground level of contractualism, i.e., 'Why have a desire for justifiability at all?' Scanlon himself has recently suggested that this kind of justification seems to depend on finding 'an argument that begins from something to which such a person [the amoralist] must be already committed and shows that anyone who accepts this starting point must recognize the authority of the morality of right and wrong' (*What We Owe to Each Other*, 148). But he is doubtful 'whether such a justification can always be provided' (ibid.). Nevertheless, it is precisely at this point that I believe considerations of personal identity may play a significant role.

III Parfitian Metaphysics

Surprisingly enough, the model I wish to develop and apply to the foundations of contractualism is essentially a particular version of Derek Parfit's reductionist view of persons and personal identity. The reason this move may be surprising is that Parfit himself argues that reductionism actually provides partial support to the foundations of *utilitarianism*. I have argued elsewhere that his arguments to that end are seriously problematic,¹² but what I wish to argue here is that, regardless of the

12 See my 'Utilitarianism and Personal Identity,' *The Journal of Value Inquiry* 33 (1999) 183-99.

implications of reductionism for utilitarianism, there are good reasons to think that reductionism may also provide crucial support for contractualism.

Reductionism is the view that the facts of persons and personal identity over time simply consist 'in the holding of certain more particular facts' about brains, bodies and interrelated physical and mental events.¹³ If one believes the facts of persons and personal identity involve some *further* facts about Cartesian egos or souls, say, one is a non-reductionist. Parfit has also famously argued that the diachronic identity-relation is not the relation that matters in terms of our survival and anticipation/concern for the future. Rather, what matters is what he calls Relation R, which consists of two psychological relations: psychological connectedness and psychological continuity. Psychological connectedness holds between two person-stages just in case there are between them direct psychological relations, such as direct memory connections, intentional connections, character connections, and connections of beliefs, desires, and goals. Further, such connections can hold to any degree. *Strong* connectedness, for instance, holds between two person-stages when 'the number of direct connections, over any day, is *at least half* the number that hold, over every day, in the lives of nearly every actual person' (ibid., 206). Psychological continuity, on the other hand, holds between two person-stages when there are overlapping chains of strong psychological connectedness between them. The idea, then, is that even in imagined cases where the identity-relation fails to hold (between me and my two fission products, say), Relation R may nevertheless hold, and when it does, we have something just as good as ordinary survival.¹⁴

The final relevant aspect of the Parfitian metaphysics involves the terminology of 'selves,' labels for those person-stages united by strong psychological connectedness. On Parfit's view, I may legitimately refer to my ten-year-old self as a past self, in that there are between us very few direct psychological connections (although I am nonetheless psychologically *continuous* with that past self). Similarly, my eighty-year-old self will most likely be a future self, given that (I assume) there will be very few direct psychological connections between me now and that person I will be psychologically continuous with fifty years hence. And the parts of my life with which I am currently strongly psychologically

13 Derek Parfit, *Reasons and Persons* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1984), 210

14 See, for example, ibid., Section 90.

connected are united as my present self.¹⁵ In this way, different selves more or less resemble different persons.

Parfit himself is neutral as to which of three possible metaphysical units we should target as being the objects of both moral and prudential significance, i.e., which of various possible units we should focus on as being the ones that matter, in both moral and prudential reasoning, for things like resource distribution, responsibility, desert, commitments, project planning, etc. First, we might target *persons*, those entities unified by psychological continuity. These units would roughly correspond, in most normal cases, to the lives of individual human beings from psychological 'birth' to psychological 'death.' Second, we might target *selves*, those entities unified by strong psychological connectedness. These units would correspond to certain periods within the lives of persons, but their individual duration may vary, such that one person's life may consist in several overlapping, successive selves, while another person's life may consist in only one self.¹⁶ Finally, we might target *momentary experiencers* (or 'person-atoms'), entities whose temporal existence is defined by the duration of a single experience (however defined).¹⁷ We may then label the advocate of the first view a Conservative Reductionist, the advocate of the second view a Moderate Reductionist, and the advocate of the third view an Extreme Reductionist.

As I have said, Parfit does not commit himself to any of these views, instead allowing that each might be a defensible specification of reductionism. What I propose to do in what follows, then, is simply to pick the version of reductionism I find most plausible and explore what it implies about morality and prudence. Consequently, my overall argument will be crucially conditional: *if* Parfit's general metaphysical picture is largely correct, and *if* my favored specification of what the reductionist moral and prudential units ought to be is indeed the most plausible specification of that metaphysical view, then reductionism may provide significant partial support for contractualism. Nevertheless, even if the conditionals turn out to be unsatisfied, I believe that what I say below

15 Ibid., Section 101. The word 'I,' then, would refer only to my present self.

16 We might say, then, that the second person's life is more deeply integrated than that of the first person.

17 One reason for advocating this last view might be that the only units that could justifiably be targeted for morality and prudence are non-reductionist units (e.g., Cartesian egos), and if such units do not exist (given the truth of reductionism), then the unities generated by both psychological continuity and connectedness are themselves irrelevant. The only 'units' left, then, would be momentary experiencers.

constitutes a significant advance in our understanding of the relation between metaphysics and ethics.

From here on out, then, I will take *Moderate Reductionism* to be the most plausible of the three specifications of reductionism. Although I have argued for this position in detail elsewhere,¹⁸ I find that Moderate Reductionism about the morally and prudentially significant metaphysical units is, for practical reasons, better able to account for a number of features crucial to agency than are either the Conservative or Extreme versions. Consider first Extreme Reductionism, the view according to which the morally/prudentially significant metaphysical units are to be momentarily-existing experiencers. One problem with this view is that it undermines the very possibility of agency. If moral/prudential agents are entities concerned with advancing their own interests, then they must have interests they are concerned to advance, but there would seem to be no interests whatsoever that a momentarily-existing experiencer could have, given the way interests as we take them to be are intimately tied to our having pasts and futures.¹⁹ On the Extreme Reductionist view, then, there would be no moral/prudential agents, which would render the point of moral/prudential restrictions and permissions entirely moot, and it would leave us with no reasons for actions of any kind, an altogether implausible result.

On the other hand, Conservative Reductionism, which takes the morally/prudentially significant metaphysical units to be *persons* (entities unified by psychological continuity), can certainly account for our concerns as agents to advance our interests, but it does so at a significant cost not borne by the Moderate Reductionist. What seems to matter in our everyday survival is the holding of strong psychological connectedness, and it seems clear that we identify closely with certain periods of

18 See my 'Selves and Moral Units,' *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly* 80 (1999) 391-419. I also defend this version of reductionism from certain Kantian objections in 'Theoretical Persons and Practical Agents,' *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 25 (1996) 318-32.

19 One might try and press the issue by positing these entities as having certain basic, primal interests, e.g., the desire to get pleasure *now*, or the desire to cease pain *now*. But this move will not work either, insofar as the most plausible versions of hedonism view pleasure and pain as functional states, so the mental state of pleasure is a sensation such that the person who has it wants it to continue and will thus take actions to prolong it, and the person having the mental state of pain undergoes a sensation such that he wants it to cease and will thus take actions to stop it. So to experience pain/pleasure *is just to be* an entity we can only think of as having a future beyond the immediate present. On this point, see David Brink, 'Rational Egoism and the Separateness of Persons,' in *Reading Parfit*, Jonathan Dancy, ed. (Oxford: Blackwell 1997), 112.

our lives (those with which we are now unified by strong psychological connectedness), while we fail to be able to do so with other periods of our lives (e.g., those in the distant past), viewing them instead as being more akin to the lives of strangers. Thus, when deliberating between two courses of action, one of which will benefit me in the near future and one of which may not benefit me for a very long time, I may rationally choose the first course of action, not because I am time-discounting, but rather because the first course of action will yield a benefit to a person-stage I can anticipate being able to more closely *identify* with than the second course of action. The Conservative Reductionist, however, maintains that, because both future person-stages will equally be stages of the same person — me — there is no non-arbitrary reason, other things being equal, for me to favor one course of action over the other. But this response seems to me to ignore a crucial aspect of the way in which we generally do — and perhaps ought to — reason about our futures. Instead, it seems to make more sense to target those person-stages unified by strong psychological connectedness for moral and prudential purposes, which is precisely the position of Moderate Reductionism.²⁰

Suppose, then, that we follow the Moderate Reductionist in focusing on selves as the appropriate objects of both moral and prudential concern, positing psychological connectedness as the sole relevant relation underlying and justifying resource distribution, attributions of moral responsibility, prudential planning, etc. What this would mean is that, in matters of prudence, say, the degree to which I care about some future stage of myself should correspond to the degree to which I expect to be psychologically connected to that future stage. In matters of moral responsibility, the degree to which I am morally responsible for a past

20 Obviously, much more needs to be said here. For that ‘much more,’ see my ‘Selves and Moral Units,’ where I also attempt to provide a robust *metaphysical* argument for Moderate Reductionism, and I spend a great deal of time defending this view from various other Extreme and Conservative Reductionist attacks. My primary interest here, however, is to suggest a few considerations in favor of Moderate Reductionism, and then show how that view could actually provide some crucial foundational support for contractualism. One might be inclined to suggest that the support provided for contractualism by Moderate Reductionism actually counts as an argument in its favor, but of course it will only do so for those sympathetic to contractualism to begin with. Instead, I prefer the position that there are good, independent metaphysical grounds for going with Moderate Reductionism (detailed in ‘Selves and Moral Units’), and that the truth of this view would have certain important implications for contractualism. I ultimately think, then, that metaphysical considerations are prior to, and provide the foundation for, ethical considerations (although I certainly do not argue for that view here).

action should correspond to the degree to which I am psychologically connected to the stage of myself that performed the action. And so forth, for other matters both prudential and moral. On this view — Moderate Reductionism — psychological connectedness is the relation that matters and the scope of morality is widened to target selves as the morally significant units. Let us see, then, what Moderate Reductionism might imply about contractualism.

IV Moderate Reductionism, Interpersonal Connectedness, and the Desire for Justifiability

We may begin by examining a case of ordinary prudential reasoning. According to the Self-Interest Theory of Rationality, my ultimate aim, if I am prudentially rational, is that things go as well as possible for me. Thus, when faced with two possible courses of action, say, I should choose the prospect that I expect will be better (overall) for me, and it would be prudentially irrational of me to choose the prospect I expect to be worse (overall) for me. And in my pursuit of the good life, as a prudentially rational agent, I value and desire certain goods, not just as goods, but as goods *for me*. What moves me to action, then, if I am rationally self-interested, is a *desire* to bring about the best possible state of affairs for me.

But it also seems quite plausible to call this desire a desire to be able to justify my actions to myself. In other words, I should have a desire, if I am rationally self-interested, to be able to justify my choices/actions now to a particular person, namely, the person I anticipate will be *me*. Furthermore, I cannot simply offer any justification I like; instead, I must choose/act now with the sincere anticipation that the affected future stage of myself will be able to agree with the *reasonableness* of my present justification. We might think of this idea in terms of bargaining: I cannot now just unilaterally implement a plan to which a future stage of myself must conform; rather, I must take into consideration the interests of such a future stage in my present planning so that things, ultimately, will not go worse *for me*.²¹ I do not want to wake up tomorrow and be disgusted with the choices I made the night before if there were other, better choices I could have (indeed, *should have*) made. And when I am deciding between various prospects, I choose

21 The image of bargaining between ex ante and ex post selves is suggested by Edward F. McClennen in *Rationality and Dynamic Choice: Foundational Explorations* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press 1990), 217.

with the knowledge that a later stage of myself will have to live with the results, and so I choose carefully, wanting the best results to occur so that I am not angry with myself later on for making a poor choice now. In a very real sense, I must be able to *live with myself* regarding the choices I make. So if what I have said is right, the source of motivation triggered by my belief that an action is prudentially irrational is my desire to be able to justify my actions to a future stage of myself on grounds he/she could not reasonably reject. My source of *prudential* motivation, then, is this desire for justifiability.

Now if we adopt the Moderate Reductionist assumptions spelled out in the previous section, the scope of this kind of prudential motivation ought to be somewhat limited. Remember, I am taking as given the metaphysical view maintaining that psychological connectedness is the only relation that matters in personal identity, and so what should ground my anticipation/concern for the future is this relation, not the identity-relation. On Moderate Reductionism, then, the source of my prudential motivation will be my desire to be able to justify my actions to my *present self*, i.e., to all those person-stages with whom I am or I anticipate I will be strongly psychologically connected.²²

But because psychological connectedness is a one-many relation, I may also be strongly psychologically connected to other (spatially distinct) selves. In other words, while I can obviously be strongly connected to more than one simultaneously-existing person in the future (illustrated by the imaginary fission case, say), there is no reason in principle for why I may not also be strongly connected to more than one simultaneously existing person *now*.²³ In Parfit's own famous phrase, the boundaries between persons are 'less deep' on a reductionist view than they would be on a non-reductionist view.²⁴ For example, I may be strongly connected to a loved one: we may share highly similar goals,

22 Parfit, in *Reasons and Persons*, notes that this revision ends up breaking 'the link between the Self-interest Theory and what is in one's own best interests' (317).

23 Parfit himself seems quite leery of such a move, however, maintaining that psychological continuity, for example, cannot hold between two simultaneously-existing persons (and implying, therefore, that neither can psychological connectedness). See, e.g., *ibid.*, 302. Nevertheless, I believe his implied reluctance to allow interpersonal connectedness is arbitrary, a panicky *ad hoc* designed to forestall the anticipated (and obviously wrong-headed) objection that his view would imply that different selves could simultaneously be the same self. As we shall see, the natural implication of a view like Moderate Reductionism is instead that the boundaries of an individual self are much wider than is normally thought to be the case.

24 See *ibid.*, 339, for example.

values, beliefs, and experience memories. And this is not an unusual phenomenon. It is a common feature of many best friends and couples that they are able to complete one another's sentences and laugh at stories to which they only obliquely refer, much to the consternation of people around them. Consequently, the boundaries of my identity, in a very important sense, are widened on Moderate Reductionism to include those other contemporaneous selves with whom my present self is strongly psychologically connected.

This move is certainly not without controversy, however, so I need to take the time to spell out some important details. For one thing, it might be thought that those psychological elements serving to connect me now to some past stage of myself must have the right kind of cause, where the right kind of cause is taken to be the *normal* cause.²⁵ For example, my experience-memory now of some past event E must be causally dependent on some past stage of myself's having actually *experienced* E. Or the belief I have now at t2 that is the same belief I had at t1, and is a belief that has persisted since, t1 (and thus serves as a connection between me-now and my past t1-stage) must be causally dependent on my having had that belief at t1. We might then say that what is actually required for my connectedness now to some past stage of myself is the thing that has established and provided the causal dependency of my present psychological elements on my past psychological elements, viz., my *brain*. On this objection, consequently, interpersonal connectedness is impossible, simply because what is required for true connectedness — sameness of brain — is missing between persons.

Nevertheless, I believe this objection relies on an arbitrarily restricted picture of psychological connectedness. Indeed, Parfit himself argues against this view rather forcefully, concluding that what truly matters to us in our concern about our own futures is psychological connectedness and/or continuity with *any* cause, which may very well include causes that are abnormal or unreliable (see *ibid.*, 284-7). After all, when we think carefully about it, what we care about is simply that there will be someone who exists in the future who bears the relation of connectedness to us, and it does not matter to us whether that person has the same brain (or even the same body) as we do now.

Still, it may remain implausible to many people to move from this wide, 'connectedness-with-any-cause' picture of diachronic intrapersonal connectedness to the possibility of there being synchronic connectedness between simultaneously-existing selves. Indeed, isn't there

25 This is what Parfit calls the Narrow Psychological Criterion. See *ibid.*, 207-8.

something importantly different between my psychological relation to some past stage of myself and my psychological relation to you?

There may very well be. But it will only be a difference of *degree*.²⁶ To see why, let us consider the types of connectedness involved in the reductionist view.²⁷ There are, I believe, four different types: (a) similarity/resemblance connections, e.g., a general character consisting of elements roughly similar to elements embodied in some past or future character; (b) persistence connections, e.g., beliefs, desires, or goals that are maintained across time; (c) present → future connections, e.g., intentions formed now to be fulfilled in action later; and (d) present → past connections, e.g., memories now of past experiences. Let us, then, briefly examine these types of direct psychological connections in order, with an eye to whether or not they might hold interpersonally.

Once we divorce connectedness from its presumed dependence on sameness of brain/body, it seems at once obvious that the first type of connectedness can hold interpersonally (synchronically) as well as intrapersonally (diachronically). We can easily recognize the existence of

26 In what follows, the account of interpersonal connectedness I argue for may appear to be similar to an account David Brink has offered for what he calls interpersonal psychological *continuity* in 'Self-Love and Altruism,' *Social Philosophy & Policy* 14 (1997) 122-57, esp. 141-3; and 'Rational Egoism and the Separateness of Persons,' esp. 126-8. There are some important differences between our two accounts, however, that are worth noting. First, Brink insists on the relation of importance, both intrapersonally and interpersonally, as being psychological continuity, which places him in the camp of the Conservative Reductionist. As I have argued briefly here (and have argued in great detail in 'Selves and Moral Units'), I believe Moderate Reductionism is the more plausible reductionist view. Second, Brink's view is ultimately intended to provide support for a kind of egoistically based consequentialism, which is more or less in line with Parfit's own view. As is already obvious, however, I believe the most plausible reductionist view provides significant foundational support for a version of contractualism. Finally, Brink emphasizes a specific kind of causal account of interpersonal continuity, according to which it is psychological interaction with certain others that shapes the interacting parties' mental life and is constitutive of the continuity at issue (see, e.g., 'Self-Love and Altruism,' 141). I wish to maintain, however, that the type of psychological connectedness at issue here is one that may obtain between individuals who have never even met and have thus had no causal influence over each others' psychological properties, for reasons I spell out in the text. Nevertheless, there do remain important similarities between our basic models of the ways in which certain psychological relations of importance for identity may in fact hold interpersonally, so in that respect I have found Brink's claims to be quite insightful and valuable, and I will make reference to them where appropriate.

27 Here I categorize the general list of direct connections Parfit briefly mentions in *Reasons and Persons*, 205-7.

different people with roughly similar characters. Indeed, a perusal through the personal ads may reflect the number of people looking for characters similar to their own (although this clearly isn't always the case). So if what provides one significant connection between me now and some past stage of myself is a mere resemblance in character, such a resemblance relation may also obviously directly obtain interpersonally.

Consider next the second type of connectedness, involving certain persistence relations. Beliefs constitute one such persistence relation, but it seems that when we analyze the nature of beliefs in relation to the kind of connectedness desired between me now and one of my past person-stages, what matters is not actually the *persistence* of the same belief but rather the persistence of the *same* belief. For me to be connected to some past stage with respect to a particular belief, all that seems to matter is that that past stage held the same belief as I do, not that the same belief was held by my various ancestors across time. If this is right, then it again seems clear that I can bear connections of this type (for the same remarks would seem to apply as well to certain sorts of desires and goals) to other, simultaneously-existing selves. What serves to connect me to my past (in this respect) is the propositional content of the beliefs/desires/goals, and in this way I can be directly connected to other selves whose beliefs/desires/goals consist in the same propositional content.

Now what I have said to this point should be enough to establish that at least some of the relations involved in psychological connectedness may hold interpersonally, which may be sufficient for the analysis I am about to propose.²⁸ But the psychological relations that may seem most important in unifying individual persons across time are normally taken to be connections of intentions and memory. If these cannot be shown to hold interpersonally as well, then it might be thought that interpersonal connectedness remains significantly different from intrapersonal connectedness, perhaps so much so that there are still fundamentally black and white differences between individual persons. So we need to examine these remaining types of psychological relations to undermine this lingering doubt.

We may articulate the worry this way: when connections of intentions and memories are described in a way that does not presuppose personal identity (*a la* reductionism), they are still said to involve a crucial phenomenological aspect. In other words, intentions are described as being

28 Brink, for example, in 'Self-Love and Altruism,' seems to focus only on the causal significance of 'experiences, beliefs, desires, ideals, and actions' (141) without discussing the other relations Parfit actually thinks are quite important in connectedness, viz., memory and intentions.

from the inside to perform actions, and memories are described as being from the inside of past experiences. But no one person (in the ordinary sense) can intend from the inside someone else's actions or remember from the inside someone else's experiences. So it seems that these sorts of connections simply cannot coherently be said to hold interpersonally.²⁹

In responding to this worry, we can begin by considering the well-worn fission case, in which each functionally equivalent half of my brain is transplanted into my two identical triplet brothers.³⁰ In this case, the two survivors of the operation are each qualitatively identical with me, although they cannot both be quantitatively identical with me (given that the transitivity of identity would require them in that case to be quantitatively identical with one another, which they surely could not be according to any coherent concept of personhood). Now suppose that prior to the operation I had formed the intention that both fission survivors go out and celebrate their existence at the local tavern after getting out of the hospital. Upon their awakening, each will have inherited the intention to go the tavern. When each survivor thus fulfills that intention in action, is there anything missing that holds in the ordinary case? I fail to see that there would be. The phenomenologically significant causal link between the intention and the action would be just as it would be in the everyday case of my intending to go to the tavern and my actually going to the tavern. But as already noted, the identity relation cannot hold between me and both survivors (and there would be no non-arbitrary reason to suppose that it would instead hold between me and just one of the survivors), so it seems clear that I can form intentions that may be fulfilled in action by someone else, without the loss of anything at all 'from the inside.' Of course, if one insists that a person's fulfilling an earlier intention in action does in fact logically require the obtaining of the identity relation between the intender and the actor, we may describe the occurrence described here, following Parfit, as the formation and fulfillment of 'quasi-intentions' (see *ibid.*, 260-1). Nevertheless, this case at least illustrates the way in which it would be possible for one person to act on another person's intentions without any loss of the crucial everyday phenomenological aspect.

The same thing could be said for connections of memory in such a case as well. Given that (a) each survivor would seem to remember my own thoughts and experiences 'from the inside,' and (b) neither survivor

29 I am grateful to an anonymous editor at the *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* for articulating the worry in this way.

30 This is the case Parfit calls 'My Division.' See *Reasons and Persons*, 254-5.

would be identical to me, then it is at least logically possible for one person to have memories 'from the inside' of another's experiences. Or again, if one insists that remembering an experience logically requires being identical to the person who had the experience, we may describe the 'memories' involved as *quasi-memories*.³¹

All that seems to matter, then, in the story of both intentional and memory connections is (a) some agent forms an intention/has an experience, (b) *someone* (either the original intender/experiencer or someone else) fulfills that intention in action/seems to remember the experience in question, and (c) the performed action is causally dependent on that original intention/the apparent memory is causally dependent on that original experience.³² The fission survivors would clearly bear both these relations to me, then, without there being any missing phenomenological features and despite the absence of the identity relation.

But fission cases are one thing, ordinary life another. Indeed, there are two important differences between the fission case and our everyday experiences. First, fission cases just don't happen, i.e., we never have cases in which two people are *exactly similar* to some past person in this way. Second, what we wanted here was *simultaneous* interpersonal connectedness, cases in which two people existing side-by-side might bear the relations of connectedness to one another. But we have yet even to see how the *fission survivors* would be connected to one another, let alone how ordinary folks might be connected to each other in these ways.

What I want to propose is a way in which we might think of such connectedness that jibes with our ordinary conception of *shared* intentions and memories, where both arise from a common cause. Consider first intentions. In ordinary cases, the causal link between intention and action is *direct*: I intend to A and this intention causes my A-ing, in some sense. But there are indeed other cases in which some original intention may *indirectly* cause the relevant action, e.g., when someone forms an intention that, once expressed, causes other people to have, and to act upon, *that* intention. This is the way in which, for instance, a general's intention to take the hill causes the soldiers under him to intend as well to take the hill and then subsequently to act upon that intention. The original intention thus provides a significant connection between the soldiers and the general. But the intentions of the soldiers to carry out

31 See *ibid.*, 220-3. For the original discussion of quasi-memories, see Sydney Shoemaker, 'Persons and Their Pasts,' *American Philosophical Quarterly* 7 (1970) 269-85.

32 Here I use and extend the criterion for quasi-memories Parfit discusses in *Reasons and Persons*, 220.

the general's plan serves to connect them to *each other* in a significant way. Shared intentions are common causes of action for many different types of groups/communities, enabling their individual members to act, essentially, *as a single corporate agent*. Consequently, as is the case with the second type of connectedness above (beliefs/desires/goals), my sharing the intention *to A* with you serves as an important type of bond between us, a type of psychological connection it seems natural to describe as holding interpersonally.³³

Similar remarks may also apply to memory connections, although here it might seem like the critics of the possibility of interpersonal connectedness really have a point. Consider, for example, the case in which my spouse and I had dinner together last week. It would seem that the actual content of our experience-memories of that event one week later will differ in crucial ways, e.g., with respect to our individual points of view, the various colorings our memories have, our particular remembrances of the taste of the food, etc. So in terms of these important differences, our individual experience-memories cannot be thought of as elements constituting our connectedness with *each other*; rather, my experience-memories connect me to the person who was seated in one position a week ago and my spouse's experience-memories connect my spouse to the person who was seated across from me a week ago. And once again, I have a special sort of knowledge *from the inside* of what my own experience was like. But this perspective is simply unavailable to my spouse, and the knowledge of my spouse's experience *from the inside* is unavailable to me. How, then, could connections of experience-memory hold interpersonally?

Consider first the various ways in which the content of my own memory of eating dinner with my spouse might be altered across time. As time passes, different features of the evening may become more salient (e.g., the waiter's cryptic smile becomes more prominent), my memory may change coloration (e.g., I may come to remember the evening being more jocular than it seemed to me at the time), and my perspective may even be altered (e.g., the point of view involved in the original experience may shift occasionally such that I remember the evening from a kind of third-person perspective, 'seeing' both my spouse *and myself* seated across the table from each other), and so forth. Despite this fluidity in the actual content of the memory, however, I am still

33 Cf. Brink, in 'Self-Love and Altruism': 'Membership in various sorts of associations will affect the beliefs, desires, expectations, and *plans* of members so as to establish significant interpersonal psychological continuity among the association's members' (141; emphasis mine).

connected to the person who experienced the event by memory. So what must matter in establishing that connectedness is that I simply remember the occurrence of *a particular event* (dinner at a certain restaurant with my spouse), and my memories of *that event* are sufficiently similar in content across time, despite the fluidity just described, to preserve the relevant connection. Similarly, then, insofar as my spouse and I both experienced *that event*, our memories both derive ultimately from this common cause, and they too will likely be sufficiently similar in content to provide the relevant bond between us. Indeed, such a construal may explain why certain extraordinary events in history serve to 'bring the nation/world together.' Everyone remembers where he/she was when certain historic events occurred (e.g., the moon landing, the Kennedy assassination, the tearing down of the Berlin Wall, etc.), and the national or international memory of such events (albeit from a large variety of individual perspectives) provides a significant kind of bond, a psychological *connection*, between otherwise quite different members of the human community.³⁴

What I am suggesting, then, is that certain events serve as a common cause for both shared experiences (in a rough and ready sense) and the later memories of those experiences. And while the various remembered experiences of an event cannot be *identical* in content (given that two or more experiencers cannot share the same physical space and perspective at any one time, and given that experiences are often interpreted through the filter of the experiencer's individual character, background, etc.), their being caused by the same event is enough, in my view, for them to provide a significant sort of connection between the rememberers, similar to the way in which children born of the same parents, while not identical to each other (in any strict metaphysical sense) are still *related* to each other in a very significant respect.

Admittedly, this topic deserves fuller treatment, but I believe my remarks here at least serve to establish the possibility, if not the plausibility, of interpersonal connectedness. Moderate Reductionism, as I have developed it, allows for me to be both connected to a future stage of myself and connected to other simultaneously-existing selves. The

34 We might add here the special type of connectedness, via experience-memories, that is instantly recognized and appreciated by survivors of various horrific events, e.g., the Holocaust, once they meet for the first time. Even though two survivors may have been in different concentration camps, say, the wrenching and unspeakable nature of the experience, and their memories of it, serves to unite them in a way that someone who didn't undergo such an experience can never understand (and which the survivors simply cannot articulate).

boundary of who I am is extended, on this view, beyond the boundary of my epidermis.

Given this background, then, we can apply these remarks to considerations of morality by extending the intrapersonal case of the prudential desire for justifiability to a limited range of interpersonal cases. The extension would go something like this: if I am rationally self-interested, I will be motivated by a desire to be able to justify my actions to myself, a desire for justifiability whose scope is determined by the relation of psychological connectedness I bear to the various stages of my present self. And if I am strongly psychologically connected to other selves, then this desire for justifiability ought to be extended to include those other selves. Thus, if I am rationally self-interested, I will be motivated by a desire to be able to justify my actions to all those person-stages with whom I am, or will be, strongly psychologically connected.

Now this extension alone may not get us very far. But it does provide a wedge for getting the prudential amoralist (e.g., Hobbes' Fool) to admit certain obligations to certain others (as long as the amoralist is self-interested and bears the relation of strong psychological connectedness to those others), solely in terms of prudential rationality. My rational desire to be able to justify my actions to my self will also require that I have a desire to be able to justify my actions to certain other spatially distinct selves.

Nevertheless, one may wonder if things haven't gone by too quickly here. It might be objected, after all, that mere recognition of the existence of my connectedness to others does not in itself yet provide me with a *reason* to justify my actions to them. Indeed, it may even be the case that my recognition of my connectedness to a future stage of *myself* does not provide a reason for my justifying my actions to him/her *either*. What, then, is the link between connectedness and reasons for action?

The link is just this: I am taking as given in our Hobbesian Fool the desire to do what is prudent. His reasons for action are determined by what he takes to be in his best overall interests. That is, if he anticipates that course of action C1 will be better for him *overall* than course of action C2, that consideration alone provides him with the motivationally effective reason for pursuing C1. But who precisely is this overall 'him' whose interests are under consideration? On Moderate Reductionism, the relation that underlies and justifies prudential reasoning is psychological connectedness. What matters in identity, remember, is just this relation. What this means, then, is that our Fool's present identity — who *he* is — is defined and delimited by the outward reach (from *right now*) of strong psychological connectedness, and so when he is engaged in prudential deliberation, his overall interests are justifiably limited to the (anticipated) interests of his present self. Consequently, what he (now) takes to be in the overall interests of his present self (defined by strong

connectedness) determines his motivationally effective reason for action. And as I have construed this process of prudential deliberation, his reason for action has its motivational source in his desire to be able to justify his actions to the affected future stage of his present self.

Furthermore, because what determines the range of the person-stages to whom the Fool owes his prudential consideration is strong psychological connectedness (and not, say, a Cartesian ego or soul), and because he may *also* bear that relation to certain other spatially distinct selves, he is *rationally required* to be ready to justify his actions to them as well. The rational requirement here is simply one of consistency. If the desire for justifiability to a future stage of himself is itself justified only by the relation of connectedness he will bear to that future stage, and he also bears that relation to entities outside the boundaries of his epidermis, then he is being arbitrary and inconsistent — *irrational* — if he refuses to extend that desire for justifiability to include those other entities in his prudential deliberation. Now he may not *recognize* the demands of those others as reasons for action, but on the Moderate Reductionist view I have developed, his failure to recognize those demands as reasons is both irrational and imprudent: irrational, because he is being arbitrary and inconsistent in refusing to see that the only relation underlying justification to what he construes as himself also holds between him and these other entities; imprudent, because he is failing to take into account the interests of those entities that are, in terms of what matters in personal identity, spatially distinct *extensions of him*.

The first part of the argument is now complete, for we have found a wedge against the prudential amoralist on Moderate Reductionist grounds. But how might we extend the scope of the desire for justifiability to include other selves with whom one is *not* strongly connected? I believe the answer can again be found by examining how Moderate Reductionism bears on the individual, intrapersonal case of prudential deliberation. First, notice that Moderate Reductionism does not require that one should not care *at all* about one's future selves. Rather, Moderate Reductionism allows that one may rationally care *less* about one's distant future, not because it is in the future, but because the degree of one's special concern is grounded by the degree to which one is, or expects to be, psychologically connected to that future self. But in nearly all normal cases, we can expect to bear *some* degree of connectedness to that future self, and so it remains rational to care to *some* degree about the well-being of that future self. Thus, if we appeal to Moderate Reductionism's grounding of the source of prudential motivation in psychological connectedness, then self-interested rationality will also involve a desire to be able to justify one's actions to future selves, albeit perhaps a weaker desire than the one regarding those selves with whom one is more strongly connected.

As a result, we can once again extend these considerations of Moderate Reductionist prudential rationality to interpersonal cases. On this extension, I ought to have a desire to be able to justify my actions to all those with whom I am psychologically connected, period. Now of course the *strength* of this desire for justifiability may rationally be weaker than the desire for justifiability involved in my relation to those with whom I am most strongly connected. But it is not the strength or weakness of the desire that is at issue here. Rather, what matters is whether or not this desire can plausibly be construed as the source of one's moral motivation. On the model I am presenting, it can.

To recap, we have seen thus far how a Moderate Reductionist view of persons and personal identity may serve to justify the having and maintaining of the desire for justifiability in terms of prudential rationality. On this view, if it is prudentially rational to desire to be able to justify my actions to myself (an entity defined in terms of strong psychological connectedness), then it is also prudentially rational (indeed, is rationally *required*) to desire to be able to justify my actions to those other selves with whom I am strongly connected. Furthermore, a self-interested rationality that is grounded in psychological connectedness also requires that I care to some extent about my distant future and thus have a desire to be able to justify my actions (to some extent) to my future self or selves. But if psychological connectedness (and not identity) is what grounds this special concern, then it also grounds a special concern for others with whom I am psychologically (but not necessarily strongly) connected, and thus grounds my desire to be able to justify my actions to those other selves with whom I am psychologically (but not strongly) connected. Thus, my prudential aim — that things go as well as possible for me — is achieved only through my having a desire for justifiability both to myself and to the other members of my community, i.e., to all those selves to whom I bear some degree of connectedness.

In addition, this view gets us a long way toward the universality of Kantian contractualism. After all, it seems safe to say that I will bear *some* degree of connectedness to virtually every other human being *qua* human being. Nearly all human beings, to take one example, share certain basic desires, e.g., desires for the necessities of life, some minimal level of welfare, and so on. And as commonality of desires is one element of psychological connectedness, the scope of my desire for justifiability ought rationally be extended (nearly) universally. Nevertheless, this model allows my desire to be able to justify my actions to an Albanian factory worker to be overridden, in cases of conflict, by a stronger desire to be able to justify my actions merely to those selves with whom I am more closely connected. This idea takes contractualism in a more communitarian direction: what will count as being truly morally significant for me

will be a function of the circles of my identification.³⁵ It will be my community, that range of spatially distinct extensions of me, that, for the most part, defines the range of my moral (i.e., prudentially rational) concern.

Of course, this result would also involve a certain degree of cultural relativism. My circle of identification, once we move beyond consideration of merely basic human desires/beliefs/values, ends more or less with the boundaries of my community — my particular culture, perhaps — and so my community may, in part, define what counts as a reasonable or unreasonable rejection. Thus, different communities will likely have different sets of agreed-upon principles determining the rightness and wrongness of particular actions. Nevertheless, I believe this kind of relativism to be quite within the spirit of most modern contractualist theories. Scanlon, for instance, admits the introduction into his own view of a ‘degree of cultural relativity,’ given that ‘many non-equivalent sets of principles will pass the test of non-rejectability,’³⁶ and the conventions of different cultures will play a central role in determining the reasonableness of certain justifications and/or rejections.

Nevertheless, the type of relativism introduced here may make some uncomfortable, particularly because of Moderate Reductionism’s restriction of the range of relevant contractors to those who are psychologically connected in important ways. After all, might not this metaphysically-derived contractualism permit slavery in a society where the dominant members claim no connectedness with, and thus no need to justify their actions to, the oppressed minority (insofar as they view the oppressed group as less than human, say)? Or, perhaps worse, might not this view permit the cultural indoctrination of the oppressed group such that they too feel they *deserve* to be slaves (or to be genitally mutilated, say), in which case they too might ‘reasonably’ agree to their oppression?

35 I am grateful to Gary Watson for this way of putting the matter. Also note the general similarity here to a claim of Brink’s, in ‘Self-Love and Altruism’: ‘We can think of the degrees of connectedness and continuity in terms of a set of concentric circles, with myself occupying the inner circle and the remotest Mysian occupying the outer circle. As we extend the scope of psychological interdependence, the strength of the relevant psychological relations appears to weaken and the weight of one’s reasons to give aid and refrain from harm presumably weakens proportionately’ (152). It bears repeating, however, that Brink’s focus is on the relation of *continuity*, while mine is on connectedness, and his conclusions for morality are *consequentialist*, while mine are contractualist.

36 Scanlon, ‘Contractualism and Utilitarianism,’ 112. See also *What We Owe To Each Other*, 338-42.

These are hard questions, not just for the view outlined here, but for contractualism in general.³⁷ I do not pretend to have a fully worked out response to the objection, but I believe there are two fruitful avenues of exploration. First, much more needs to be said about what ‘reasonableness’ consists in, precisely. This is a notorious problem for many other philosophical subdisciplines (e.g., political philosophy and philosophy of law), but I find it difficult to believe that a reasonable person, on *any* plausible construal of ‘reasonableness,’ would find slavery justifiable to other reasonable persons in his community, let alone to a potential slave. Of course, some might claim that, to most of the slaveholders in the United States 200 years ago, slavery was an *eminently* reasonable institution, and it would simply have been unthinkable (indeed, perhaps *unreasonable*) for them to desire to justify their actions to the (‘subhuman’) slaves they owned. But here we might appeal to Susan Wolf’s argument that such slaveholders were partially cognitively *insane*.³⁸ By thinking that a certain subpopulation of humans was less than human, the slaveholders were simply unable (to some extent) to recognize certain basic facts about the world, the most important of which was the (to us, obvious) fact that their slaves were, in no significant respect, psychologically different from them. And cognitive sanity is surely a necessary condition of reasonableness, if anything is.

Nevertheless, the more troubling potential relativist implication of contractualism-via-connectedness is the scenario in which a seemingly horrific practice is indeed successfully justified to the oppressed group. A modern day example might be the practice in certain areas of northern Africa of the genital mutilation of teenage (and younger) girls, where the girls (and their female elders) generally agree that the practice is justified and for the good of the community.³⁹ Here it seems that the girls are born into a culture in which the ‘justifiability’ of the practice is accepted by them (one wants to say *indoctrinated* into them) from an early age. The practice

37 Stuart Hampshire raises an objection of this sort in his review of Scanlon’s *What We Owe to Each Other* in *The New York Times Review of Books* (22 April 1999), 22. Robert Bernasconi and Mark Timmons have also pressed me to consider this point.

38 Susan Wolf, ‘Sanity and the Metaphysics of Responsibility,’ in *Responsibility, Character, and the Emotions*, Ferdinand Schoeman, ed. (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press 1987)

39 Although there are several women who were born into such cultures who now protest this practice. Whether or not the girls and women in these cultures indeed agree with the reasonableness of the practice is actually irrelevant, though, for the general theoretical problem remains. It is *possible*, it seems, for there to be a society like the one I have described.

is thus taken to be reasonable by both practitioners and victims, all of whom are (and could recognize that they are) psychologically connected to one another. Does, then, the model of contractualism I have developed provide support for the moral permissibility of such a practice?

It might, as the model stands, but I see no reason why contractualists could not fill in a further condition to their theory, one that demands a kind of broadened or ideal information for its potential contractors.⁴⁰ It seems, for example, that my notions of what practices would be justifiable would depend on my awareness of the available options. If I am merely limited to one option, one I have been brought up to believe in as the only possible course of action, then of course I will usually take that option to be reasonable and justifiable. But on a contractualist model, modified as I have suggested, an act/practice would be immoral if it were to violate a set of standards which no one would reasonably reject, *given their suitable access to, and awareness of, information about all relevant alternatives*. This requirement of *informed* consent would, I believe, undercut the worries raised about the objectionable nature of the relativism involved.

Nevertheless, I need to be explicit that I am offering here merely a suggestion of a couple possible rejoinders for a contractualist interested in this model. As I have said, this is a problem for contractualism in general, not just for the specific picture I have presented. But I believe these are potentially fruitful avenues for dealing with the problems cited, problems, I should add, that attach to most *communitarian* moral and political theories as well. Indeed, as we shall see in what follows, the communitarian has good reason to pay attention to such attempted resolutions, given what turns out to be her surprisingly close alliance with contractualism.

I have spent the bulk of my time to this point dealing with the worrisome prudential amoralist, hoisting him with his own petard, as it were, by showing that his desire to justify his actions to himself rationally requires him to admit into his prudential deliberation the interests of entities beyond the limits of his own hide. But we can now see how to respond as well to the communitarian critics of contractualism. In essence, the worry was that the contractualist account of moral motivation subordinates the pursuit of the good to the demands of the right (defined in terms of justification), a move which in fact undermines the very pursuit of goods constitutive of any *eudaimonistic* human life. But on the model I have given, the objection dissolves, for now we can see an

40 Perhaps along the lines of Richard Brandt, in *A Theory of the Right and the Good* (New York: Clarendon Press 1979).

individual's pursuit of the good as being inexorably intertwined with the demands of the right. On this account, my pursuit of my own good is *defined in terms of* reasonable agreement; it is the source of my prudential motivation, viz., my desire for justifiability to myself, that is triggered by my belief that an action will not bring about a good for me (i.e., that an action is prudentially irrational). But on the Moderate Reductionist picture, the boundaries of my identity are widened. The scope, then, of my desire for justifiability ought rationally be widened as well to include other spatially distinct selves with whom I am connected. It is precisely my metaphysical attachment to other selves that determines how I may treat them. Consequently, certain so-called goods are out of bounds from the start. If I cannot justify my pursuit of them to myself (as construed on Moderate Reductionist grounds), then they are things that would make my life *worse*, and so they would not even count as goods. And those things I *would* rationally be able to justify pursuing are precisely those things that serve to make my life better, i.e., they *are* goods. So the pursuit of the good and the demands of the right are in unison in this picture, for each serves to define and delimit the other. There is only one thought involved in this account of prudential/moral motivation, not one thought too many, for there is no prudential/moral arena outside justification. And far from precluding love, friendship and community attachments, this picture offers morality as *constitutive* of these goods.

V Conclusion

What I have tried to show is that if we accept the version of Parfitian reductionism about persons and personal identity in which selves are the morally/prudentially significant units and in which it is psychological connectedness that grounds our future-related patterns of concern, then we have in place a metaphysical view that provides significant foundational support for a rather powerful form of contractualism, one that both avoids some significant communitarian objections and also provides an answer to the prudentially rational amoralist.⁴¹ I have very

41 I am well aware that the move I am making may simply push the general problem back a step, forcing us to focus now on the *aprudentialist*, someone who wonders why he should cultivate the desire to justify actions to *himself*. However, this would seem to be a far less pressing issue than that involved with the prudential amoralist. Indeed, I find it rather hard to imagine people who are truly uninterested in any aspects of their own future well-being. Nevertheless, I suppose I must grant this as a logical possibility, but I fail to be much worried by it. I still consider the way I have provided to counter the move presented by the prudential amoralist to be a fairly significant result.

good reasons, now, if I am self-interested, for both cultivating and maintaining the contractualist desire for justifiability to all other selves with whom I am psychologically connected, given that they are, in a very real sense, extensions of *me*. Furthermore, the picture I have presented dissolves the tension between the demands of contractualist morality and the common-sense demands of love and other attachments. It is these attachments that in fact determine the range of my moral obligations, and they do so insofar as they define the range, in a very important sense, of who I am.⁴²

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In contrast, neither the Extreme nor the Conservative Reductionist view yields precisely this result. On the one hand, the Extreme Reductionist targets momentary experiencers as the significant prudential/moral units, and so, as explained earlier, because these entities would not even be agents concerned to advance interests, there would not even be a question of their having a desire to justify their present actions to any 'future stages' of themselves, let alone to anyone else. Indeed, they could not even have a coherent conception of the good. On the other hand, the Conservative Reductionist—someone who targets entities unified by psychological *continuity* as being significant for prudential/moral matters—would perhaps favor a more impersonal, impartial, and universalist construal of morality, if only because it seems likely I would be equally continuous with all, or nearly all, persons. Remember, psychological continuity consists in overlapping chains of psychological connectedness, so because (a) continuity is not a matter of degree, (b) continuity is a transitive relation, and (c) there are probably not that many 'degrees of separation' between each of us and any other person in the world, we are all probably (equally) psychologically continuous with one another. Brink (in 'Self-Love and Altruism') thinks this version of reductionism favors a kind of egoistically-based consequentialism (although I hasten to point out that in 'Rational Egoism and Separateness of Persons' he argues that there can be degrees of *continuity* as well, an argument about which I am quite dubious), but I doubt this is the only possible implication. It might equally yield a kind of robust universal contractualism more closely aligned with Kantian morality. Nevertheless, I find this type of view to be implausible as an account of ordinary moral motivation, insofar as most people concerned with morality care far less about being able to justify their actions to *everyone* than they are to be able to justify their actions to those with whom they are actually connected. Consequently, I find the implications Moderate Reductionism has for the issue of moral motivation to be much more compelling and natural.

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