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Author
Shiffrin, Seana

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Moral Overridingness and Moral Subjectivism*

Seana Valentine Shiffrin

Increasingly, claims of morality's overridingness are resisted, especially by those who regard moral reasons as, in an important sense, subjective. These theorists believe that moral considerations provide reasons for a person only if they appeal to independent aspects of her psychology, character, or life, such as her aims, projects, and relationships. But they doubt that these subjective, reason-grounding, factors will reliably be strong enough to guarantee that all-things-considered moral requirements will always override conflicting considerations.

This article challenges this resistance by arguing that moral overridingness may be reconciled with this significant form of subjectivism about moral reasons. It does not argue for or endorse this form of subjectivism. In fact, I suspect the view is false. But, because of subjectivism's persistent pull, it is worth exploring its ramifications and, in particular, whether—through its challenge to overridingness—it would deflate morality's authority. Such an exploration will show that a critical source of overridingness may be found in objective features of morality, at least given a reasonable conception of morality's structure. Whether morality issues reasons at all for someone may depend upon facts about that individual, but it does not follow that the strength of the reasons it issues likewise depends upon those facts. Even if participation in the institution of morality is not rationally mandatory, the sort of institution it arguably is—an inclusive and comprehensive system of reasoning—can entail that morality is overriding for its participants.

It will be useful to begin with a working characterization of the overridingness claim. Roughly, the claim states that an all-things-considered moral requirement to perform (or refrain from) a certain act may genuinely conflict with nonmoral as well as moral, nonsupererogatory consid-

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erations against performing (or refraining from) that act, but will always outweigh or trump them. If one is a moral agent, one has most reason to perform that which is all-things-considered[1] morally required or its supererogatory, morally permissible alternative.[2] Further, it would be contrary to reason to defy such a requirement and to opt for a nonsupererogatory alternative.

I will concentrate on two main strategies of argument for the overridingness claim: one that emphasizes rationality as the source of overridingness and another that emphasizes morality's nature as its source.[3] One approach tries to show that it is straightforwardly contrary to reason to defy morality's requirements. Ideal rational agents must, necessarily, accept and comply with moral requirements irrespective of their desires,

1. An "all-things-considered" moral requirement to ϕ reflects a thorough review and decisive determination of all the relevant considerations for and against ϕing. If there is an all-things-considered moral requirement to ϕ, then: first, the moral considerations in favor of ϕing are sufficiently weighty such that, if they were the only considerations relevant to ϕing, they would instruct that one *must* ϕ; second, these considerations subsume or are sufficiently weighty to defeat competing considerations. Section II of the article connects the overridingness claim to the distinctive, central role that all-things-considered determinations play in moral reasoning.

2. The qualification marks the point that moral requirements may recommend different actions than supererogatory considerations, but the claim of moral overridingness does not assert that moral requirements trump all supererogatory considerations. To draw on Frances Kamm's example, I am morally required to keep a promised date with an acquaintance, even if I feel shy or a better social opportunity presents. But, suppose I could save a life by donating a kidney, but only at the promised time. Although I am not morally required to donate my kidney, if I chose to, I could permissibly break the promise. This qualification concerning the supererogatory could instead be captured by an implicit understanding that what is all-things-considered morally required may be disjunctive, including supererogatory alternatives as disjuncts. I focus solely on conflicts between moral requirements and nonsupererogatory considerations. Kamm offers an illuminating treatment of the relationship between moral requirements and supererogatory considerations in "Supererogation and Obligation," *Journal of Philosophy* 82 (1985): 118–38, and *Morality, Mortality* vol. 2, *Rights, Duties, and Status* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), chap. 12. See also Michael Stocker, *Plural and Conflicting Values* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), pp. 40–41; Bernard Williams, *Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1985), chap. 10; and Susan Wolf, "Above and Below the Line of Duty," *Philosophical Topics* 14 (1986): 131–48.

3. A third strategy appeals to human nature. It claims, roughly, that human nature precludes both being a moral agent and reasonably rejecting overridingness (leaving open whether another sort of rational being could adopt a more restricted posture toward morality). I do not discuss this strategy because I believe the one I explore is more promising. The argument pursued in Sec. I, however, helps to clear space for this more naturalist approach. Examples may arguably be found in John McDowell, "Virtue and Reason," *Monist* 62 (1979): 331–50; "Are Moral Requirements Hypothetical Imperatives?" *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society Supplement* 52 (1978): 13–29; and Warren Quinn, "Rationality and the Human Good," in his *Morality and Action* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994). Although Samuel Scheffler does not endorse the overridingness claim, the Freudian analysis of morality's authority in *Human Morality* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992) has much in common with this approach.

interests, and commitments. The other approach appeals to considerations about the nature of morality and a person's adopting a status as a moral agent. If one is and remains a moral agent, certain structural features of morality make morality's ultimate demands conclusive and contrary to reason to defy.

Many critics of overridingness proceed, whether implicitly or explicitly, as though the strategy that identifies rationality as the source of overridingness is the only available route of argumentation.[4] Consequently, they attack the overridingness claim indirectly, arguing for a subjectivism about moral reasons—what I label *reasons-subjectivism.* The article's first task is to argue that the overridingness question would still be open, even were reasons-subjectivism true. Thus, the strategy of arguing for overridingness by appealing to features of morality remains available. The article's second task is to sketch an argument for the overridingness claim using this other strategy. The argument appeals to structural features of morality but is nonetheless compatible with reasons-subjectivism.

I

In this part, to support the reconciliation of overridingness with reasons-subjectivism, I explore the motivations behind reasons-subjectivism and attempt to disambiguate the overridingness claim. As I will argue, discussions of moral overridingness tend to conflate two different notions of morality's authority. Concerns about morality's purported mandatory *bindingness* are collapsed or implicitly equivocated with concerns about the *strength* of moral requirements. Only the latter notion, I will suggest, is properly associated with morality's overridingness. This discussion has three stages: in the first section, I clarify (at some length) what subscription to reasons-subjectivism involves; in the second, I characterize the common approach taken to the overridingness claim as one that weds its defense to efforts to refute reasons-subjectivism; in the third section, I argue that this approach is misguided.

A. Reasons-Subjectivism and Values-Subjectivism

Reasons-subjectivism holds that a moral claim provides a reason for a particular person to act only if that claim connects to that individual's psy-

4. This diagnosis captures, I believe, the thrust of the critiques of Philippa Foot, Samuel Scheffler, and Bernard Williams. See Foot, "Are Moral Considerations Overriding?" and "Morality as a System of Hypothetical Imperatives," in her *Virtues and Vices* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978); Scheffler, *Human Morality,* chaps. 4–5; Williams, *Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy,* chap. 10. See also Owen Flanagan, "Admirable Immorality and Admirable Imperfection," *Journal of Philosophy* 83 (1986): 41–60, esp. p. 55. Although McDowell defends a view related to the overridingness claim, he seems to accept that reasons-subjectivism threatens it. An effort to refute reasons-subjectivism precedes his defense of the "silencing" power of moral reasons. See "Virtue and Reason," "Are Moral Requirements Hypothetical Imperatives?" and "Might There Be External Reasons?" in *World, Mind and Ethics,* ed. J. Altham and R. Harrison (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

chological motives, dispositions, or to her particular life in an appropriate way. The nature of the requisite connection differs among variants of the theory. They may require an appeal to elements of her motivational set that could motivate her to perform an act, for there to be a reason *for her* to perform this act.[5] Or, as I will discuss, they may alternatively require that the action otherwise furthers her interests or projects (assuming it does not appeal to an element in her motivational set).[6] Reasons-subjectivists thus deny that (true) moral propositions holding that an agent should perform an action necessarily provide reasons *for that agent* so to act. For them, whether reasons are yielded depends upon facts about that individual and her relationship to the action, where the dependence may be on her motivational and mental states, interests, affiliations, or commitments.[7] In this way, the position is subjectivist.

Although the two are often associated, reasons-subjectivism should be distinguished from a different sense of moral subjectivism, namely *values-subjectivism.* Values-subjectivism holds that moral propositions are true only in virtue of an agent's[8] positive mental attitudes toward their content. Reasons-subjectivism need not imply values-subjectivism. As I

5. This position is best articulated in Bernard Williams's "Internal and External Reasons," in his *Moral Luck* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), and "Internal Reasons and the Obscurity of Blame," in his *Making Sense of Humanity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995). The term 'motivational set' is Williams's. For Williams, a person has a reason to do something only if she could conclude she should do it by way of a "sound deliberative route from the motivations she already has," where these motivations are construed broadly. In addition to simple desires, one's motivational set "can contain such things as dispositions of evaluation, patterns of emotional reaction, personal loyalties, and various [egoistic and non-egoistic] projects as they may be abstractly called, embodying commitments of the agent" ("Internal and External Reasons," p. 105).

6. Philippa Foot advances this latter position in "Morality as a System of Hypothetical Imperatives," and "Reasons for Actions and Desires," in *Virtues and Vices;* and "Morality and Art," in *Philosophy as It Is,* ed. T. Honderich and M. Burnyeat (New York: Pelican, 1979). Such views that recognize real, but unacknowledged, interests of a person as reason-providing for her may seem better captured by 'reasons-individualism' than 'subjectivism'. Little hangs on the terminology; for ease of exposition, I will use 'subjectivism' uniformly.

7. I leave aside epistemological variations of reasons-subjectivism. These hold that for A to have a reason to ϕ, A must be capable of "seeing" ϕ's value or, on stronger versions, A must have, within her subjective command, the grounds to conclude that ϕ is valuable. Another question, parallel to this article's inquiry, is whether the strength of moral requirements varies depending upon the acuteness of an agent's moral epistemic resources and capacities. I should also note that I use 'x has a reason to ϕ' interchangeably with 'ϕ is a reason *for* x'. Tyler Burge has reminded me of a distinct, important, epistemic sense of 'has a reason to ϕ': it signifies not only that ϕ provides a reason *for* A to act, but also that A possesses sufficient information about ϕ and the value of ϕ-like things, so that she could recognize that ϕ provides a reason if she fully exercised her rational and imaginative faculties.

8. For my purposes, more universal, intersubjectivist accounts of value have more in common with values-objectivism than with values-subjectivism. For my limited purposes, I will treat them as values-objectivist theories.

will argue, one may reasonably believe that there are objectively true moral claims which, nevertheless, do not provide agents with reasons to act unless these claims connect, appropriately, to the agents' personalities or lives. The question would remain whether *this* form of subjectivism about reasons could be compatible with morality's being, objectively, overriding. Contrary to common wisdom, I contend that they are compatible.

To make this claim out, it will be useful to elaborate upon the distinction between values- and reasons-subjectivism and to try to ascertain why the temptation to associate them is so strong. Whether reasons-subjectivism can plausibly be decoupled from values-subjectivism may depend upon one's reasons for entertaining the former. One may differentiate three main sources of attraction to reasons-subjectivism. The first just is values-subjectivism. I suspect that it accounts for a natural tendency to associate the two positions. If one believes that some act, ϕ, is valuable only if ϕ seems (perhaps under ideal deliberative conditions) valuable to oneself, then it will be natural to think that a putative moral reason to ϕ is a reason *for one* only if ϕ appeals to one's "motivational set," broadly construed. For if it did not, there would be no value in ϕing in the first place.

Of course, if values-subjectivism were the sole ground for reasons-subjectivism, they could not be separated. But there are two other, distinct motivations for reasons-subjectivism. One may reject values-subjectivism and hold one or more of the following: that values are objective, that the truth of moral propositions holds independent of our acceptance of them, and that the content of morality's directives issues from sources independent of agents' endorsements.[9] Still, one might think that these objective moral claims do not yield reasons to act *for any particular person* unless certain additional, specific facts about her connect her to the act. Here enter the two other sources of attraction to reasons-subjectivism.

Some adopt reasons-subjectivism on grounds relating to the possibility of an agent's being motivated to act. An appeal is made to the joint ideas that a reason for an agent must be capable of motivating him to act, and that motivation is possible only if elements of his motivational set are activated. This is perhaps the most familiar form of contemporary reasons-subjectivism, notably defended by Bernard Williams.[10] He argues that if Q has a reason to ϕ, then it must be possible for that reason to figure in the explanation of his ϕing. To do so, the reason must "be, in

9. Compare Foot, "Morality and Art," p. 23. Foot argues that, definitionally, there are many fixed, objective points to morality, although she takes a reasons-subjectivist stance about the reasons morality provides.

10. Williams, "Internal and External Reasons," and "Internal Reasons and the Obscurity of Blame."

some form, in his [motivational set]."[11] Williams and other neo-Humeans aim to acknowledge that reasons have normative force. Due to gaps in self-knowledge, agents may have internal reasons they do not acknowledge or recognize; so, pointing out that an agent has a reason to ϕ may both be true *and* news to the agent. But there cannot be revelations of reasons that could not *possibly* have motivated an agent through appeal to her motivational set.

Many have been dissatisfied by this argument. Some critics have thought that an agent could be moved to act just by the recognition that it is his duty or in his interest to act, regardless of his prior subjective dispositional states. Others suggest that one could genuinely have reason to do that which one is not and could not be motivated to do; that is, there could be reasons that did not hold out the realistic possibility of explaining that person's action.

Even if these criticisms succeed, they would not entirely extinguish the attraction to reasons-subjectivism. An independent, important motivation that is less explicitly discussed and distinguished often drives reasons-subjectivist sentiments. For want of a better term, I will label it the *narrative* ground. It draws its motivation from the concern that some putative reasons do not seem properly addressed to agents as individuals and thus may not represent reasons *for* them. These putative reasons do not "speak" to them because they do not engage with their interests, values, projects, and substantive concerns. These putative reasons may even stem from objective values, but they may not represent reasons for an agent because they do not connect to any particular feature of that individual. The underlying idea is that a reason for an individual must engage with something specific about her as an individual—it must answer the question, "What's it to me?" So, the narrative ground's primary stress is not upon the conditions of provoking action. Instead, it maintains that there must be a robust, substantive connection between one's reasons and the contents of one's life; what one has reason to do must connect in some nontrivial way to the content or purposes of one's life, character, or personality. Thus, one will lack a reason to ϕ if ϕing does not further one's endorsed desires, aims, or interests.

This account yields a form of reasons-subjectivism that can be, depending upon its details, both broader and narrower than the reasons-subjectivism that is supported by the motivational account. The narrative account may acknowledge reasons to act that do not motivate the agent. For example, what is in the agent's self-interest may supply him with a reason to act, even if it does not connect to any of his subjective motivational states; even though his self-interest may leave him cold, it bears a sufficiently substantive connection to his life to supply reasons *for him* to

11. Williams, "Internal and External Reasons," p. 106, and "Internal Reasons and the Obscurity of Blame," p. 39.

act.[12] On the other hand, the view will deny that I have a reason to act, independent of whether I could be motivated to do it, because the action would not fit properly into *my* life and could not register with me as *my* action. For instance, I may see, intellectually, the value of Shaker austerity and believe that I could do valuable things by adopting that simple, removed existence. The prospect of *my* taking up this life leaves me utterly cold, yet (I imagine that) I *could* take up such a life. But, living as a Shaker would not resonate with the cherished values that mark my life as I live it and that represent my character as I identify with myself; nor would that life further my self-interest. From a distant, removed perspective, I might regard the Shaker life as admirable. But because I could not intimately identify with this life and because *my* living this life would represent such a radical departure for me, one might reasonably resist the claim that its value supplied reasons *for me* to do it. On more pronounced readings of this view, even some desires that could motivate one to act may not provide reasons to act. A recovering alcoholic's desire for a drink may not provide a reason to drink because it does not bear the proper substantive connection to the contents of his life, given his repudiation and pronounced alienation from his desires to drink.

Understandably, the motivational and narrative grounds for reasons-subjectivism are often elided. Whether something does or could figure as part of *my life* has a great deal to do with its relationship to my motivational set. So, these two grounds often dovetail. Still, their emphases and explanations are importantly different. The motivational basis draws attention to problems relating to possible action based on a purported reason, whereas the narrative basis requires of reasons that the actions they direct should fit into the specific substantive narrative of an individual's life, so that the particular individual living it could identify with it and not, reasonably, feel alienated from it.

On either of these grounds for reasons-subjectivism, one may separate reasons-subjectivism from values-subjectivism. Neither ground dislodges or discredits objectivist accounts of value. And the truth of value objectivism does not *obviously* entail the rejection of reasons-subjectivism. For example, the correct moral theory *could* include the (objective) requirement that for a moral claim or consideration to act as a reason for

12. This narrative ground provides explanatory support for Foot's prudential reasons-subjectivism. She claims that I may have a reason to ϕ if it is in my interest, even if ϕ cannot be derived from an element of my subjective motivational set. She explicitly rejects the motivational ground for her position but does not much further explain why one's interest alone would supply one with a reason. See "Morality and Art," p. 23. Perhaps the underlying explanation is this: I will have to admit that furthering what is in my interest would figure in what could recognizably be construed as *my* life. I may lack necessary motivations to pursue my self-interest because my welfare or my life leaves me cold. But, what is in my interest should, insofar as I am reasonable, resonate with me as *mine*.

a particular person, it must hold a substantive, "narrative" connection to a person's life.[13]

Examining the combination of values-objectivism and reasons-subjectivism may prove fruitful. Given some objectivist, reasonable understandings of morality's structure, this examination may reveal that morality has authoritative resources independent of its (disputed) power to yield, necessarily, *pro tanto* reasons for obedience for all rational agents. Further, if such resources may be adduced (e.g., if morality were still overriding for moral agents), then some of the putative threat to morality's authority posed by reasons-subjectivism would be defused.

B. The Common Approach to Evaluating the Overridingness Claim

Detaching reasons-subjectivism from values-subjectivism permits us to better isolate what is at issue about moral overridingness. I suspect that the tendency to regard the "rationality" strategy as the only available avenue of justification emanates from a temptation to perceive a strong connection between two distinct claims about the authority of morality. This results in a perceived linkage of the claim of overridingness with the rejection of reasons-subjectivism.

The first claim about the authority of morality I will call the Rational Foundations (RF) claim. It holds that:

> RF: If there is a moral consideration in favor of ϕ's performance by a normal, rational agent Q, then necessarily it supplies Q with *some*

13. This separation admits the theoretical possibility that an act could be morally good, yet yield a reason *for* no one. This possibility (in part) trades on the improbable contingency that no agent's motivations, interests, or projects will bear the right connection to the act. In reaction to this possibility, one might object that this meant an agent could act wrongly even though she lacked a reason to act otherwise. But this concern seems more properly targeted against the criteria of blame. If it could be said that an agent acted wrongly, but blamelessly (because she lacked a reason to act rightly), this source of resistance would be defused. One may also object that it would deflate morality's importance if there could be true, specifiable moral propositions that were not necessarily reason-giving for someone. True, moral judgments would have less significance if they did not motivate any agents to act, but they would still convey important information about the world: that there were moral wrongs, conflicts of values, and that it and we were morally sub-par, even if (and because) due to our contingent constitutions, this did not generate reasons for us to act. In any case, this worry may suggest reasons to reject reasons-subjectivism altogether, but it is not activated specifically by the separation of reasons- and values-subjectivism. The deflationary consequences flow from the reasons-subjectivist component of the pair, not the values-objectivist component or their combination. The alternative combination, one that ties reasons- and values-subjectivism together, would also render morality less powerful. On that view, all of morality's authority, including its having independent content and its being overriding, hinges upon the refutation of reasons-subjectivism. It seems no less deflating to hold that there would be no objective moral truths whatsoever if certain accounts of motivation were true.

> reason to ϕ, regardless of Q's particular psychological structure, desires, interests, affiliations, and commitments.

The Rational Foundations claim holds not merely that moral predicates apply to one despite one's indifference to morality (e.g., even the amoralist may correctly be called cruel and immoral).[14] It further holds that moral considerations supply reasons to act. One is answerable to them despite an utter indifference to morality's prescriptions. The reason the moral consideration supplies may not, of course, be an all-things-considered reason. RF just claims that one has some positive, *pro tanto* reason to do what is favored by the moral consideration, although that reason may be outweighed by reasons to the contrary.

The second claim about the authority of morality takes what *seems* to be a next step in a progression, advancing a version of the idea that morality is overriding. It not only contends that moral considerations in favor of Q ϕing necessarily supply Q with *some* reason to ϕ. It further contends that for those considerations whose strength is sufficient to make them moral requirements, such requirements provide decisive, all-things-considered reasons for that agent:

> O1: If there is an all-things-considered moral requirement that Q ϕ, then Q has an all-things-considered, decisive reason to ϕ, one that necessarily defeats competing, nonsupererogatory considerations. So, it would be contrary to reason to defy the requirement, regardless of Q's particular psychological structure, desires, interests, affiliations, and commitments.

This articulation of the overridingness claim makes it natural to regard overridingness as depending upon RF. As formulated, O1 looks like an extrastrong version of RF. The implicit strategy it suggests for its own justification is: first, show that all moral considerations necessarily provide reasons for all agents; second, show that the strongest moral considerations, those that underlie moral requirements, are so overwhelmingly strong that they bind agents absolutely.

Given this picture, it will seem reasonable to think that if morality does not necessarily provide reasons for all rational agents, then we must abandon the idea that morality's reason-giving force is strong enough to *demand* compliance in the face of very strong, conflicting considerations. Along these lines, Samuel Scheffler argues that the overridingness claim is unlikely to be true because, he submits, it presupposes an ambitious view of rationality, on which something could be a reason for someone without appealing to her interests or desires.[15] In other words, the overridingness claim requires the defeat of reasons-subjectivism. For suppose reasons-subjectivism were true. Notably, the strength of the desires or

14. See, e.g., Foot, "Morality as a System of Hypothetical Imperatives," p. 160.
15. See Scheffler, *Human Morality,* chaps. 4 and 5.

interests through which morality exerts sway over an agent, if it does at all, may vary from person to person and occasion to occasion, particularly in the face of very strong, opposing aesthetic or personal considerations. There is no necessary coincidence between the absolute and comparative strength of a moral consideration (e.g., its being strong enough to make up a requirement) and the strength of those features of the agent or her life that make moral considerations reason-providing for her. If morality is just a system of hypothetical imperatives, then it may seem highly unlikely that every agent's contingent connection to morality will take the unyielding form presupposed by the claim of overridingness.

C. Separating the Two Forms of Authority More Neatly

Despite this argument for the connection between reasons-subjectivism and the rejection of overridingness, this entailment can be challenged. The typical formulation of the overridingness claim—O1—invites the sense that there is a necessary connection between overridingness and RF. Although O1 represents a familiar expression of overridingness, it is misleading. It unnecessarily imports a requirement of morality's inescapability into the characterization of overridingness. We could capture the driving idea behind overridingness through a more fine-grained characterization, namely:

> O2: *If* moral considerations favoring Q's ϕing do in fact provide reasons *for* Q to ϕ, *then* all-things-considered moral requirements to ϕ provide Q with decisive reasons to ϕ (i.e., reasons that defeat all nonsupererogatory considerations to the contrary). The requirements are decisive in the sense that it would be contrary to reason not to follow them.

The antecedent of this conditional is met if RF holds; but, significantly, it could be satisfied, for particular individuals, in other ways that are consistent with reasons-subjectivism. The antecedent might be satisfied *for me* in virtue of facts about my psychology or life—because my desires and interests hook up to moral considerations in the right way; for example, I happen to care about others, and so I am motivated to take morality seriously. Or, it may be satisfied in virtue of my commitments or the ends with which I identify. I may have committed to act as a moral agent, even if it would not have been contrary to reason to refrain from making such a commitment.[16]

16. Compare Robert Louden, "Can We Be Too Moral?" *Ethics* 98 (1988): 361–78. Interestingly, Louden advances his (different) thesis in a conditional form: "If one takes morality seriously *and* wants to guide one's life by the *best* moral conception possible, then one has reason to be as morally good as one can" (p. 363). He does not discuss the connection between this conditional formulation and reasons-subjectivism; also, he puts aside questions about overridingness, addressing instead whether one may be criticized as *excessively* moral.

This reformulation of the overridingness claim is superior to O1 because it analytically separates the issue of how morality gets a motivational grip on us (whether due to our rationality or due to more individual-specific features) from the issue of what *sort* of grip it exerts once (and if) it gains a foothold. It untangles questions about the motivational foundations of morality from intuitively distinct questions about how morality relates to other domains of value, ends, and interests. This recenters our attention on what is essential to the issue of morality's overridingness: how moral requirements relate to very compelling considerations to the contrary; whether morality can and should be viewed as one discrete project or commitment among many; and ultimately, whether once the moral perspective has been taken up, it must assume a special status in one's life.

By reflecting a separation between two aspects of morality's authority, this reformulation of the overridingness claim reopens, as a promising line of inquiry, the second strategy of argument for morality's overridingness that locates the source of overridingness in the nature of morality. If the content and strength of these moral reasons is generated independently from that which makes the reason applicable to a person, then reasons-subjectivism and overridingness could both be true. That there should be such independent generative sources should seem possible given the compatibility of values-objectivism and reasons-subjectivism. No affirmative argument has been offered yet for overridingness. Nonetheless, just separating these issues that are often run together highlights the logical space that the second strategy occupies. It shows that the overridingness claim is not undermined merely by the supposition that reasons-subjectivism is true. The next section explores the space cleared by this reformulation.

II

Some of Philippa Foot's remarks provoked my skepticism toward the implicit common wisdom that closely connects the Rational Foundations claim, reasons-subjectivism, and the overridingness claim. Although Foot rejects the idea that morality is a system of categorical imperatives, she is no cynic about moral motivation.[17] She describes moral agents as volunteers who are prepared to fight hard and sacrifice for moral ends because they "are the kinds of ends that arouse devotion."[18] This language is attractive, but it raises questions about Foot's and others' resistance to overridingness. For even supposing that, at least for some, attachment to morality arises from an inspired commitment, why should we assume

17. Although, she opposes overridingness in "Are Moral Considerations Overriding?" for the reasons I challenge.

18. Foot, "Morality as a System of Hypothetical Imperatives," p. 166.

that the sort of commitment morality inspires must be reasonably susceptible to degrees that depend on other facts about the person or the occasion? A devoted commitment to morality may not be rationally required, but, still, the nature of a commitment, if it transpires, may not be entirely dependent upon facts about oneself. The proper, appropriate sort of devotion it arouses may be overriding. To invoke a legal metaphor, morality may present a standard-form contract. Signing onto it may be up to oneself (assuming reasons-subjectivism is true), but its internal terms *and* the stringency of their demands are not themselves negotiable or dependent upon facts about oneself.

Neither the motivational nor the narrative grounds for reasons-subjectivism preclude this possibility. They merely specify necessary conditions for a consideration's acting as a reason for a person, requiring a motivational or personal-narrative platform upon which the consideration may rest. These grounds do not determine the content of such considerations, as the separation of values- from reasons-subjectivism underscores, nor do they specify the sufficient conditions for one's conclusive reasons. Specifically, they do not mandate that the strongest-felt of the qualifying considerations is thereby sufficient (and solely sufficient) to be a reason or that the strength of any generated reasons must correspond directly to the strength of the underlying personal platform. This is most apparent on the narrative-ground reading of reasons-subjectivism. To satisfy its constraints, one just has to demonstrate continuity or fit between the content of the putative reason and the person's interests, ends, or character. If the narrative account is kept in mind, the fluctuating desire objection outlined in Section I*B* above does not gain solid purchase. Seeing this can expose a similar opening on the motivational ground. All it requires is some connection to some desire or dispositional state. Unless it takes an extreme, almost mechanistic form, it need not require that only the strongest, most intense desire supplies a reason to act.

I will explore the possibility that morality is the sort of end whose characteristics do not wholly depend upon its adherents' features, and specifically, an end that yields reasons of overriding force, by introducing an account of the structure of moral reasoning. This account portrays it as a comprehensive and inclusive system of thought. This account seems to have been neglected in many discussions, perhaps due to a failure to separate consistently reasons-subjectivism from values-subjectivism. It is a conception worth heeding. It is intuitively plausible, and its features make morality's ability to inspire devoted adherents more readily understandable. I will not be able, here, to defend this account fully. I merely aim to present it and identify some of its attractions. Presenting this account will also draw attention to a difficulty faced by subjectivist critics of overridingness. Despite their subjectivism, these critics seek to affirm

strong identities as moral agents for whom morality plays a significant, self-defining, and pervasive role in their lives.[19] If moral reasons operate in the way these critics suggest (e.g., having only as much force as their commensurate, possibly fluctuating, contemporary motivations), it becomes a bit puzzling how morality could reasonably occupy a special, central, and stable part of one's character and serve as a singular source of pride and identification.

This part sketches the account of morality as a comprehensive and inclusive system of thought and aims to make three general points. First, morality functions as a complex end. Attachment to complex ends involves a different commitment structure than attachment to simple ends. Second, morality's comprehensiveness and inclusiveness may help to explain morality's ability to function as an appropriate, understandable object of special commitment, one that figures so prominently and specially in the identity of agents. Third, unlike many other comprehensive systems, morality's capacity to inspire devotion does not come at the expense of the recognition of other sources of value. This helps, in part, to explain what is distinctive and special about morality's appeal: it is comprehensive without being reductionist. If the account is correct, it would support the overridingness claim in a manner that is consistent with both reasons-subjectivism and its rejection.

A. Complex Ends

Reasons-subjectivist motivations seem compatible with two different sorts of reason-generating ends, distinguished by the type and structure of the commitment they require for a person truly to have them. A simple end, like getting a sundae, may provide me with instrumental reasons to act, like braving the blazing heat. But, these secondary reasons only have the strength that my contemporary desire toward that end has. If my desire weakens or other desires predominate, my reason to face the heat wanes commensurately; this is nonetheless consistent with my still having (to a lesser degree) the end of enjoying the ice cream. Moreover, simple ends have relatively undemanding commitment structures. I can genuinely have a simple end at t_1, even if I abandon it soon after at t_2, because, for example, the hunger passes. Further, simple ends may be held for some duration yet may make few demands of regular, nonsporadic responsiveness to their reasons. During the 1980s, I may genuinely have had the end of visiting Asia in my lifetime, even if during this period I did not prepare to go, and I did not act or even deliberate on opportunities to travel; because I was disinclined at the time, I may have ignored these opportunities, consistent with my genuinely having had this end, since I could always go later.

19. See, e.g., Foot's celebration of moral volunteers in "Morality as a System of Hypothetical Imperatives" (p. 167), and Susan Wolf's "Above and Below the Line of Duty."

Complex ends, by contrast, have a more complicated and demanding commitment structure. One's commitment to a complex end may not be rationally required, but if a person affiliates with it and integrates it into her life, the commitment may create certain strong (not necessarily overriding or, for that matter, moral) reasons for action *for* the person even when her occurrent desires and interests do not align accordingly. The content and strength of those new reasons derive from features about the end itself and do not significantly depend or vary upon one's state of mind, occurrent desires, or competing interests. So long as one retains the affiliation, these reasons exert rational force at particular times, even when, at that time, one is disinclined toward the end or the act required. Assuming a reasons-subjectivist framework, one's connection to the end's reasons thus has a more complex, two-tiered structure. One becomes connected to the end only by virtue of one's desires, interests, etc. But given the adoption and retention of the end, the end itself generates reasons of a particular strength that are not directly dependent on the configuration of one's current desires and interests. Moreover, complex ends generally require a greater temporal commitment. For these ends, one cannot really have them just for an instant or a day. To have them at all requires some prolonged connection, the duration of which depends on the nature of the particular end in question. And, complex ends may have more insistent commitment structures—genuinely having a complex end requires greater responsiveness to its reasons when they are generated, not when one feels inclined toward the end or its reasons. (Again, how insistent the end is will depend on features of that end.) The point is not that it would be *immoral* not to recognize or act upon such reasons. That may or may not be true.[20] It is that one cannot fully and successfully maintain an affiliation to the end if one denies, undervalues, or fails to acknowledge its typical reasons. Reasonable identification with it involves both accepting the sorts of reasons it generates and recognizing that these reasons may exclude acting upon other considerations that are not themselves unreasonable and that one may be inclined toward.

Many ends are like this. Typically, whether one befriends a particular person is not a matter of rational (or moral) requirement. Largely, it depends on personalities and interests. Nevertheless, if one pursues a close relationship and identifies as a friend, then the relationship itself has independent reason-generating power. If you are not Bob's friend,

20. The moral force and the nonmoral, identity-related force of commitments may come apart. If I absently make a genuine, but offhand, promise and later deny there is reason to keep it, I may act immorally but consistently with my identity. On the other hand, extenuating circumstances might excuse one morally from keeping a promise, but it may still be important to keep the commitment to maintain one's personal sense of honor and character. It can be morally permissible to break a promise but contrary to reason, for it would break faith with oneself.

then you need not take his (only occasional) unaccountably hurt feelings as providing you with any reason to make appeasing gestures. But if you do identify as his friend, then his hurt feelings will provide some reason to assuage them, even if you feel unsympathetic, believe he has overreacted, and would *much* rather do something else. The strength of the reason does not diminish just because you feel nonplussed at the time or because other alternatives feel particularly alluring. And, importantly, the sorts of desires that motivated one to become his friend do not necessarily differ in kind from the desires that now pull one in the opposite direction. The conflicting ends or projects that tempt one are not necessarily intrinsically weaker or less worthy; still, one's status as a friend may provide one with the stronger reason to act as a friend. And the temporal points hold: one cannot truly be a friend for a moment, or just a day; one cannot genuinely and rationally have the end of being a friend while allowing one's status or behavior as a friend to vary depending on how one feels about it at the moment; and being a friend requires being responsive to the friend's needs when they arise, not only when one is moved by them.[21] Of course, the end of friendship is not one that necessarily yields reasons of *overriding* strength.[22] The example merely illustrates that although adopting a complex end may not be rationally required, given such an ongoing affiliation, one is then bound to regard certain considerations as reasons with a certain strength, independent of other facts or contingencies about one's temperament. These reasons arise, and have a certain strength, in virtue of the kind of thing one has committed to, which now figures as part of one's identity.

The argument sketched in Section I*B* against morality's overridingness seems to assume that morality is a kind of simple end. If it were, then one's fluctuating desires, interests, and susceptibility to competing interests would be more relevant to the weight a moral requirement

21. There are, of course, distinctively moral reasons to treat one's friends this way, but these reasons do not fully exhaust the relevant explanations. The friend may not have relied on you or may have other sources of comfort, so he will not be harmed if you shirk. Or, because he is so unreasonable or the efforts required so demanding, giving comfort may be *morally* supererogatory, yet nonetheless required of you *as a friend*.

22. That is, to have the end of friendship, one's friend and friendship-generated reasons, generally, must assume a certain prominence in one's life but not necessarily the dominant role. Being a good friend involves recognition that one's friends, to develop as full people and to contribute to a healthy, interesting, and reflective companionship, must have independent projects, priorities, and relationships that are also central in their lives and that may exert priority over the relationship on various occasions. On occasion, one may forsake a friend in urgent, moderate need, although friendship-generated reasons require one to give aid, because, e.g., one's child is in urgent, moderate need. One may attend to one's child without acting inconsistently with one's identity as a friend. But, there are limits: one cannot, consistent with one's identity as a friend, forsake the friend in urgent, moderate need to tend to a stranger in moderate need or to pursue an intriguing intellectual lead. In what follows, I suggest an account of the structure of the end of morality that differs by not admitting the same degrees of freedom.

should exert on one. But, assuming that values-subjectivism is false, morality seems better understood as a complex end.

Regarding morality as a simple end seems inconsistent with a plausible account of moral reasons and their force. If an agent regarded morality as a simple end, as providing her reasons to behave accordingly only at the moments when she felt like doing the right thing or had distinct, independent desires to perform that action which happens to be morally required, moral reasons would have an overly limited role for her. If this were her approach to morality and its reasons, it would be difficult to characterize her identity as one of moral agency. Someone who regularly acknowledges a reason to help the needy but fails to help could be a moral agent with a chronically weak will. Her sincerity is suspect, but if she gives all the proper arguments, one could see that in a strained way, she is committed to morality—just terrible at it. But were she only to acknowledge that the alleviable suffering of others gave her reason to act when she was inclined to or felt like alleviating pain, then it is unclear that she appreciated moral considerations, in their distinctive cast, even on those occasions when she putatively acknowledged them. It seems implausible to view morality as more of a simple end, in large part because it would be hard to explain how morality could, as it does, understandably occupy a central aspect of an agent's identity and serve as a structural, organizing principle for a life.

Viewing morality as a complex end accommodates reasons-subjectivist sentiments but better reflects the richness of the identity associated with moral agency and the strong normative function moral reasons play. One cannot genuinely commit to being a moral agent just for a day, a week, or whenever one feels sufficiently inclined. To think so would involve an impoverished understanding of the nature of moral demands, their interconnections, and the complexity of the developed moral character. And, if one is to be and to act as a moral agent, one must respond to its demands as they arise, not as one feels inclined. If one identifies as a moral agent and has adopted morality as an end, whether one has a reason to perform a particular action favored by morality does not depend on there being a direct, commensurate relationship between that action and contemporary facts about oneself, including facts about one's psychological architecture, desires, interests, and commitments. Rather, adopting morality as an end involves affiliating with the moral way of thinking as such, that is, with the system of moral reasoning.

One might question why adopting morality as an end should involve affiliating with a system, and particularly with a system of reasoning. Particularist, values-objectivist views might suggest instead that one could reasonably forge a connection to some moral obligations or some moral principles but not to others. But these views face important difficulties. They seem insensitive to the fact that moral considerations and moral principles interrelate with and provide mutual support for one another;

they cannot plausibly and reasonably be taken up as discrete units or endeavors. Just as it is implausible for a moral agent to acknowledge the reason-providing force of need on one day and deny it on the next, it would be implausible (without a good moral distinction in hand) for a moral agent regularly to acknowledge the reason-giving force of the needs of children (no matter how she felt toward children at the time) but to deny the reason-giving force of the needs of the elderly; or, although all were real components of the objective stance of morality, to recognize some smattering of its principles (e.g., those responding to need) as reason-giving, but not to interrelated principles (e.g., those responding to the value of expectations or reliance). This also would not be a very coherent stance to occupy and would not support a stable, integrated identity as a moral agent.

Assuming reason-subjectivism is true, it seems more reasonable to view commitment to morality as having the more two-tiered feature of complex ends: whether one has a reason to perform a specific action favored by morality depends upon whether one is a participant in the broader-ranging institution of morality; in turn, whether one goes in for this institution may be a matter of individual attributes, inspiration, commitment, identification, or some combination thereof. But, in any given situation, whether a relevant moral consideration supplies a reason for a continuing affiliate does not depend on contemporary facts about the strength of that person's desires and interests.

If this is right, then we should direct our attention to the nature of morality as an end, to explore what sort of force the reasons it generates have. On the account of morality's structure that I will introduce, it appears that its all-things-considered requirements are overriding.

B. The Comprehensive and Inclusive Picture of Morality

On what I call "the comprehensive and inclusive picture of morality," the institution of morality involves more than the introduction or recognition of certain sorts of distinctively moral considerations with reason-giving force (e.g., considerations about the needs or welfare of others). Likewise, the institution of morality is more than a collection of types of acts or rules that participants in the institution are wont to do or follow. To see moral considerations as giving reasons and to participate in the institution of morality involves more than just acknowledging a certain sort of consideration as reason-providing and acting in accordance with these reasons. On this picture, to take up the moral point of view is to see and evaluate a whole range of reasons from a distinctive, objective point of view. Its comprehensiveness and objectivity supply some of the explanation of why people get taken up with it, commit to it, and form identities involving it. It both introduces certain distinctive considerations as having reason-giving force and offers a methodology for regarding and resolving conflicts with competing, different sorts of considerations.

That is, the moral point of view does not merely point out considerations of peculiarly *moral* salience and stop there. It takes up a more comprehensive, inclusive perspective that relates moral concerns to other sorts of concerns and values. This is a structural feature of morality that can be discerned across a range of moral theories. Consequentialist theories, for instance, assign weight to the personal point of view and relate it to other sorts of concerns in devising the maximand. One way of understanding utilitarian forms of consequentialism is that they count the personal point of view as equal in weight to those of other relevant beings. They assign no independent weight to other sorts of concerns (e.g., aesthetic or environmental values) because they are deemed not to merit greater weight than what is captured by giving weight to people's preferences concerning them. Broader forms of consequentialism also count the personal point of view as equally, but not more, important to those of other relevant beings, but they may also assign distinct weight to other sorts of concerns, such as achieving distributive equality, fulfilling rights, or protecting and producing aesthetic beauty.

This structural feature is most conspicuous, though, on certain nonconsequentialist accounts on which I will focus. Many nonconsequentialist theories aim to place greater weight on the personal point of view than consequentialist theories do because they believe it merits greater weight.[23] On these views, morality introduces distinctively moral considerations, but it also recognizes and accommodates the impartial value of considerations from other points of view, most prominently the personal but also, for example, the aesthetic and the political. It may, for instance, regard some morally motivated demands as asking too much of an agent because they would entail an agent's having to sacrifice something justifiably essential or central to her. Or, it may regard it as important that agents have some range of freedom in which to make decisions free from moral pressure; it will balance the significance of this freedom against the other values at stake.[24]

On the comprehensive and inclusive conception of morality's structure as interpreted by nonconsequentialists, morality does not put

23. See, e.g., Thomas Nagel, *The View from Nowhere* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986); Thomas Scanlon, "Contractualism and Utilitarianism," in *Utilitarianism and Beyond,* ed. Amartya Sen and Bernard Williams (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982); Samuel Scheffler, *The Rejection of Consequentialism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982); Michael Slote, *Common-Sense Morality and Consequentialism* (London: Routledge, 1985); Bernard Williams's essay in *Utilitarianism: For and Against,* by J. J. C. Smart and Bernard Williams (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973). My account has been especially influenced by Nagel's discussion of the relation between the impersonal and personal standpoints in chap. 10 of *The View from Nowhere.* As I try to bring out in the text, I believe this account has even greater resources to support claims of overridingness than Nagel argues for.

24. I defend this claim in "Moral Autonomy and Agent-Centred Options," *Analysis* 51 (1991): 244–54.

forth all moral considerations to ϕ as requirements of morality. There may be moral considerations in favor of ϕing, no moral considerations against it, and yet morality may merely recommend such actions as supererogatory. Morality may deem an action merely permissible, in spite of there being moral considerations in favor of it, because morality's final pronouncements are not purely informed and shaped by moral considerations.

On this account, not only is morality comprehensive and inclusive, but it has a rather special, distinctive, nonreductionist structure. It acknowledges certain sorts of reasons that other perspectives do not but also regards the other reasons in the landscape as having the true force they have. It does not approach these other sorts of reasons instrumentally—as, say, some conceptions of prudence do. Prudence may acknowledge the significance of moral concerns but only for the instrumental value that moral obedience may have for achieving one's interest. Similarly, nonmoralized, purely conventional, conceptions of etiquette acknowledge the significance of moral concerns not because of morality's intrinsic importance but because immoral behavior may be rude.[25] Morality, though, does not acknowledge prudential concerns merely to elicit morally correct behavior more often or to produce more efficient and resilient moral agents. Rather, it sees concerns emanating from the personal point of view as having a certain intrinsic value and attempts to assess what their real value is and how moral considerations relate to them. Something similar is true, I think, of morality's regard for intrinsic aesthetic value. Morality recognizes the intrinsic importance of aesthetic values because it seeks to honor and assess all forms of objective value (in addition to recognizing the derivative value that stems from the role of aesthetic concerns in people's lives and projects). This recognition

25. Although nonmoralized analyses of etiquette are popular, etiquette is better understood as a thoroughly morally infused institution. Morality demands that we have and act from respect for one another. Showing that one has such respect often involves making minimal displays in addition to observing restraints against hostile behavior; frequent, positive manifestations of respect may also ensure levels of social cohesion that facilitate high social functioning and reinforce the social bases that support moral compliance. How respect is to be manifested, though, may be partially indeterminate and rely upon convention to be fixed; societies may select certain behaviors as symbols of respect-conveyance for historical, expedient, or even arbitrary reasons. The particular act demanded by a rule of etiquette (e.g., that one *nod* as one passes a stranger if one does not greet him) may have little intrinsic moral significance. But once it has been fixed with symbolic import, following or disobeying the rule takes on moral import (although there may be room for a few eccentrics and dissenters who permissibly find other ways to show respect). To be sure, not all etiquette rules serve a respect-conveyance function. Some rules solely or partially serve bourgeois, sexist, or exclusionary purposes; they often, understandably, evoke mystification or condemnation. But much etiquette is intimately connected to morality. For this reason, allusions to etiquette's phenomenological force that aim to cast doubt on morality's intrinsic force seem underargued. They assume too cabined a view of etiquette's function in our social, moral life.

involves acknowledgment that room must be made for beauty's pursuit and preservation. The structure of moral reasoning then attempts to assess how strong this value is and how distinctively moral considerations relate to and balance against purely aesthetic considerations.

One reason to think that the moral point of view may be more comprehensive and less reductionist than other points of view is that the moral point of view is not merely a point of view from which acts are assessed and given one stamp or another. It is also a point of view that generates a picture of what a good agent should look like and how a life that embodies this point of view should be led. Given the pervasiveness and seriousness of the distinctively moral considerations, the moral point of view could not offer such a picture if it only offered the verdicts of the interactions of the distinctively moral considerations. For these considerations threaten to take over entirely; they could make potentially limitless demands. A fully valuable life, though, one that it would be reasonable to lead, could not be one that was, necessarily, exclusively devoted to the full-time pursuit of moral goals. Other points of view that represent forums of value can offer more cabined accounts because their considerations are not so pervasive or as consistently compelling. To generate this picture of how morality could be a reasonable end for an agent to undertake and incorporate in her life, the moral point of view takes into account the other sorts of objective values and reasons that present themselves to rational agents and asks how responsiveness to such other values fits into an overall life; thus, it considers how moral values relate to, and may integrate with, them.

The conception I have been articulating has advantages over more limited, piecemeal conceptions of morality's structure and force. It can more readily recognize reasoning about the relative force of the personal point of view, the range of the supererogatory, and the relative force of other sources of value, as *moral* reasoning. This helps to provide it with the resources to draw and locate naturally the (moral) distinction between perfect and imperfect duties, a traditional distinction in moral thinking, but not easily handled within more limited conceptions of morality.

On this view, morality's distinctiveness issues, partly, from its attempt to offer a superfunction of reasons. It offers a package of a special type of reasons *and* a special way of relating them to all the other sorts of reasons that present themselves.[26] Such comprehensiveness and com-

26. Compare Lawrence Becker's articulation of "no-holds-barred" reasoning in "The Finality of Moral Judgments," *Philosophical Review* 82 (1973): 364–70. It is unclear whether Becker's conception admits of distinctively *moral* considerations. The structure I describe acknowledges that there are distinctively moral considerations *and* that morality involves occupying a comprehensive point of view. Like many discussions of overridingness, Becker's approach tends to run together morality's bindingness with its overridingness. See also Louden's appeal to the "architectonic nature" of morality ("Can We Be Too Moral?" pp. 362, 373).

plexity may help to explain how it could understandably and appropriately inspire devotion.

Suppose we accept this account of the structure of moral reasoning. Once all of the moral considerations for and against an act are taken into account and morality's demands are calibrated in light of their relation to all other relevant considerations (e.g., to personal or aesthetic concerns), it is hard to imagine what could then outweigh an all-things-considered moral requirement. For example, a claim that personal considerations could reasonably outweigh a moral requirement just should be understood as a claim that the moral requirement is overdemanding and asks an agent to sacrifice too much of what matters to her; the production of the requirement failed to take adequate account of meritorious considerations about the personal point of view. But, if this claim has merit, then since morality itself acknowledges the unreasonableness of issuing overdemanding requirements, morality would not require it in the first place. Within its distinctive process of issuing requirements, morality already counts personal considerations to the extent that their value demands. So, it would not be required if it truly were overdemanding. If that is not the claim, then the argument seems to be that the personal considerations should be counted twice—this just seems straightforwardly irrational. One may not have to take up the moral perspective, but if one does, it seems incredible to think that rationality could then authorize one to engage in double-counting.

This is not to say that conflicts will not arise for the moral agent or that a moral agent will act wholly without reason if she deliberately defies a moral requirement. Even moral theories that allow agents to give disproportionate weight to the personal point of view may, given sufficiently important circumstances, issue moral requirements that would exact large sacrifices from an agent. An agent may reasonably feel torn between what morality requires and her other projects, concerns, and commitments. The conflict may be so great that an agent questions her moral identity entirely and may be moved to forsake her commitment to morality. If she were to defy the requirement, she would not act irrationally, in the sense of acting incomprehensibly or without all reason; she would have acted on the reasons provided by her other ends. But, she would act contrary to what is all-things-considered rational, at least so long as she retained morality as an end and her identity as a moral agent. For the weight those competing concerns actually merit from the objective, comprehensive point of view would already have been factored in when the requirement was produced. If she is committed to the objective point of view, then it would be contrary to reason to assign greater weight to her projects than the objective point of view afforded them.

Once one has identified with morality and acknowledged the relevance of moral considerations and moral thinking, the nature of the end of morality directs how the operation, content, and outcome of moral

reasoning should proceed, if done properly. I worry that to think otherwise is to adopt a rather different end—one less supportive of a stable basis around which to build an identity, much less able to capture, understandably, our interest or spark our devotion in the way morality does. (Just as it would be difficult to build a meaningful, plausible identity around being a fair-weather friend or an artistic dilettante.) Such an alternative may lack the compelling features that help to explain how morality does manage to play such a substantial role in our lives.

Further, to recognize the moral perspective as providing a comprehensive view on the weight of all relevant considerations at one moment, and then, at another, to go deaf to its dictates would risk manifesting a rather incoherent identity. It is hard to maintain a moral identity and go back and forth in this way because having a moral identity is not a matter of performing a certain number of morally correct actions or signing up for moral duty for a requisite number of hours. It has more to do with adopting a comprehensive perspective of evaluation, one which ranges outside of oneself and is relevant *at all times*. Suppose this account is right. Then, if one is committed to this perspective, to deny overridingness is either, implicitly, to relinquish this perspective or to assert something contrary to reason.[27] And, if this account is right, to fail to do what is morally required is inconsistent with one's identity as a moral agent, an identity whose contours are determined by the nature of the end of morality.[28]

27. Is morality the only reasonable end that issues overriding claims? One need not defend such a strong claim. Two weaker positions are available. Rival comprehensive and inclusive points of view may not be ones that one must, rationally, commit to; further, it would be irrational to subscribe to two such views because dual subscription would not yield a coherent identity, given the conflicts that would arise. Thus, if morality does present reasons for one, then conflicting considerations that might be overriding within another comprehensive and inclusive point of view will not, consistent with reason, present themselves as reasons *for one*, given one's commitment to morality. Or, one could hold that other defensible comprehensive and inclusive views provide reasons for action, but they never do, in fact, conflict with moral requirements. Some religious views incorporate morality, without claiming that moral considerations are instrumental reasons or reasons that hold *because* they are God's will. Such views would admit some additional considerations for deliberation, about respecting and worshiping God, the recognition of which, though, never presents a conflict with morality's requirements nor alters their weight. One could consistently subscribe to such a view and to secular morality without generating a challenge to the claim of overridingness.

28. One might object that it is only contrary to reason to deny overridingness or to defy a moral requirement if one believes the comprehensive and inclusive account. But many good moral agents, with robust moral identities, are unaware of this account or do not believe it. This might be thought to limit the scope of the argument for overridingness and to cast doubt on the claim that this picture informs the moral identity. In reply: there is a sense in which one cannot act irrationally by failing to x if one is unaware of x or its value. But this is not the sense of 'contrary to reason' that I mean to invoke. I mean just to suggest that if the end of morality has this structure, then it produces certain reasons for those who are affiliated with this end. Because one is committed to this end (which has its

Although I am not ultimately sympathetic to the view, I can see why one might claim that the personal perspective is all-enthralling, that reasons emanate exclusively from one's own place in and perspective upon the world, and that one is not rationally required to step outside of one's own place. The skeptical question, "Why must I occupy the objective perspective at all?" may have some purchase. But, likewise, I think it is not so hard to see how the objective perspective and its comprehensive, sweeping panorama of value could evoke commitment or even inspire devotion. But, I find it harder to see how an intermediate position (either one which recognized the importance of moral considerations but did not regard requirements as necessarily overriding or one that only intermittently recognized considerations from the objective perspective as having force at all) could exert the same hold on us, especially since the objective perspective recognizes the importance of the personal perspective, so the two are not in abject competition. The scattershot structure of such intermediate positions may not be enough to support the sort of enthralling commitment that morality in fact evokes. Instead, it may supply the recipe for an unstable and disintegrated identity.

These reflections suggest that, on a conception of the structure of morality that is worth taking seriously, the claim that morality is overriding is consistent with some views that emphasize the difficulties of jump-starting moral motivation just through the exercise of rationality. We may acknowledge that agents need some ignition by way of a personal connection to morality but yet insist that once one has this connection, its function is more like that of ignition rather than of fuel. That is, morality's dependence upon it is not akin to the need for a steady stream of motivational material. Thinking of morality as a sort of inspired project or commitment, then, need not entail the rejection of overridingness. If the comprehensive, inclusive account of morality is correct, what is suspect is the idea that one may reasonably conceive of oneself as a moral agent while also regarding it as reasonable to exempt oneself, on occasion, from moral requirements.

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own objective structure), one has grounds, although not necessarily epistemically subjective grounds, for following these reasons and acknowledging them, whether or not one is aware of them. To fail to do so is to act in ways that are based on partial, erroneous, or incomplete reasoning; in this way, one acts contrary to the reasons that apply to one.