
COMPLETING THE KANTIAN PROJECT: FROM RATIONALITY TO EQUALITY*

JAMES P. STERBA

UNIVERSITY OF NOTRE DAME

Presidential Address delivered before the One Hundred Fifth Annual Central Division Meeting of The American Philosophical Association in Chicago, Illinois, on April 18, 2008.

It is generally recognized that in today's society academic philosophers have very little impact on moral and political decision-making. For example, in contrast to members of other disciplines and professions, philosophers have very rarely in our times been called upon to serve as advisors to governors, labor leaders, presidents, prime ministers, or even dictators. To some extent, this is because philosophers have not, until recently, directed their attention at the practical issues that daily concern our moral and political leaders. But just as importantly it is because philosophers have done so little to resolve the fundamental conflicts between opposing moral and political ideals of our times. In this address, I will try to improve the status of our profession just a bit by offering a justification of morality and further by showing how morality so justified leads to a demand for substantial equality. Given my wont, I would have liked to extend my argument to include a defense of radical feminism, environmental biocentrism, and just war pacifism, but, of course, the time traditionally allowed for presidential addresses does not permit such an expansive agenda. I do propose to break with our tradition in one respect, however. Following my address, there will be fifteen minutes where you can raise questions that I will do my best to answer. Maybe this will be seen to be folly or maybe it will start a new tradition.

Now to defend or justify morality, it would be helpful to show that morality is grounded in rationality. This requires not just showing that morality is simply rationally permissible because that would imply that egoism and immorality were rationally permissible as well.¹ Rather, what needs to be shown is that morality is rationally required, thus excluding egoism and immorality as rationally permissible.² Unfortunately, the goal of showing that morality is rationally required has been abandoned by most contemporary moral philosophers who seem content to show that morality is simply rationally permissible.³ No doubt most contemporary moral philosophers would like to have an argument showing that morality is rationally required, but given the history of past failures to provide a convincing argument of this sort, most contemporary moral philosophers

have simply given up any hope of defending morality in this way.⁴ Here, in contrast, I hope, maybe foolishly, to provide just such a defense of morality and to show further how morality so justified leads to a demand for substantial equality thereby completing what has come to be thought of as the Kantian project in moral and political philosophy.⁵

Now the most ambitious attempts to justify morality have tried to show that endorsing egoism or immorality is somehow inconsistent. In one version of this argument our desires for the freedom and well-being necessary to achieve our purposes, when universalized, as consistency requires, are said to lead to our endorsing a moral right to freedom and well-being, which in turn requires us to reject egoism and immorality.⁶ But this version of the argument fails to recognize that when we universalize a prudential claim, we only get another prudential claim, albeit a universal one. Accordingly, when I say that I ought, prudentially, to pursue my freedom and well-being, I have to grant that others, similarly situated, ought to do so as well—that everyone has the same justification as I have for behaving self-interestedly—but I don't have to grant that I should help or not interfere with their pursuit of freedom and well-being or that they should help or not interfere with my pursuit of freedom and well-being, as a symmetrically action-guiding moral right to freedom and well-being would require.

The prudential "oughts" at issue here are analogous to the "oughts" found in most ordinary examples of competitive games. For instance, in football (a very touchy subject at my university this year) a defensive player may think that the opposing team's quarterback ought to pass on a third down with five yards to go, while not wanting the quarterback to do so and indeed hoping to foil any such attempt the quarterback makes. Or, to adapt an example of Jesse Kalin's, if you and I are playing chess, at a certain point in the game I may judge that you ought to move your bishop and put my king in check, but this judgment is not action-guiding for me. What I in fact should do is sit quietly and hope that you do not move, as you ought. If you fail to make the appropriate move, and later, I judge that I ought to put your king in check, that judgment, by contrast, would be action-guiding for me. So prudential or self-interested oughts are asymmetrically action-guiding just as the oughts of competitive games are asymmetrically action-guiding. Universalizing prudential or self-interested oughts, therefore, as consistency demands, only leads to generalized asymmetrically action-guiding oughts; it does not lead to the symmetrically action-guiding oughts that constitute morality.

Something similar obtains with respect to Kant's Categorical Imperative. The egoist, in particular, is not required by consistency alone to abide by maxims that can meet the test of the Categorical Imperative in any of its formulations. So whether or not Kant's Categorical Imperative actually succeeds in capturing the requirements of morality, no argument has been given that all rational agents, including egoists, must, in consistency, abide by those requirements.⁷

Still, another version of the argument to justify morality by consistency alone maintains that our reasons for action must be public in the way that languages are public and that this publicity requirement is inconsistent with egoism and immorality.⁸ According to this argument, egoism is, in fact, a myth, no more possible than private languages are possible. But while it is surely the case that any normative ideal must be public in the sense that it is communicable to others, egoistic and immoral ideals have no difficulty satisfying this requirement.

Consider the egoistic ideal in its most defensible general form according to which everyone ought to do what best serves his or her overall self-interest.⁹ From Plato to the present, we find numerous attempts to defend the consistency and reasonableness of this ideal. So there really is no question that philosophers have discussed this egoistic ideal and communicated with one another about it. Moreover, in practice, egoists would also be willing to communicate their reasons or interests to others who have overlapping or compatible reasons or interests in order to secure for themselves the benefits of coordination in joint endeavors.

But what about those occasions when the reasons of egoists conflict with the reasons of others? Surely then egoists will not want to communicate their reasons to those with whom they are in conflict so as not to lose out. It is just here that egoists will want their reasons to be kept private. In this respect, egoists differ sharply from those who are committed to morality. Those committed to morality usually want to communicate their reasons to those with whom they are in conflict in the hope that a morally acceptable resolution of the conflict can be achieved.¹⁰ So we can agree that egoistic reasons have a private dimension to them that moral reasons lack. Nevertheless, even when egoists are striving to keep their reasons private, those reasons still remain public in the sense that they are communicable to others. In such cases, their reasons can be found out even when egoists are striving to conceal them.

In this respect, egoistic reasons are again analogous to the reasons found in competitive games. Players in football are usually trying to conceal the particular reasons they have for being in certain formations, just as players in chess are usually trying to disguise the particular reasons they have for making certain moves. Nevertheless, in such cases, the players can be found out, as when an offensive lineman in football inadvertently signals a running play by the way he lines up to block.¹¹ What this shows is that egoism meets the reasonable demand of being consistent with the publicity requirement of languages and competitive games by being communicable to others, even though it does not meet the stronger publicity requirement of morality of usually wanting its recommendations to be communicable to others.¹² If we are to defeat the egoist or immoralist, therefore, we need to base our argument on more than consistency alone.

So let us begin by imagining that each of us is capable of entertaining and acting upon both self-interested and moral reasons and that the question we are seeking to answer is what reasons for action it would

be rational for us to accept.¹³ This question is not about what reasons we should publicly affirm, since people will sometimes publicly affirm reasons that are quite different from those they are prepared to act upon. Rather, it is a question about what reasons it would be rational for us to accept at the deepest level—in our heart of hearts.

Of course, there are people who are incapable, by nature, of acting upon moral reasons. For such people, there is no question about their being required to act morally or altruistically. Yet the interesting philosophical question is not about such people but about people, like ourselves, who are capable of acting morally as well as self-interestedly, and who further, let us assume (usefully idealizing a bit), are aware of all the relevant moral and self-interested reasons they are capable of acting upon and are seeking a rational justification for following a particular course of action.¹⁴

In trying to determine how we should act, let us assume that we would like to be able to construct a good argument favoring morality over egoism, and given that good arguments are nonquestion-begging, we accordingly would like to construct an argument that does not beg the question. So instead of trying to justify morality on grounds of consistency alone, I propose that we also appeal to the principle of nonquestion-beggingness.¹⁵

Now the question at issue here is what reasons each of us should take as supreme, and this question would be begged against egoism if we proposed to answer it simply by assuming from the start that moral reasons are the reasons that each of us should take as supreme. But the question would be begged against morality as well if we proposed to answer the question simply by assuming from the start that self-interested reasons are the reasons that each of us should take as supreme. This means, of course, that we cannot answer the question of what reasons we should take as supreme simply by assuming the general principle of egoism:

Each person ought to do what best serves his or her overall self-interest.

We can no more argue for egoism simply by denying the relevance of moral reasons to rational choice than we can argue for altruism simply by denying the relevance of self-interested reasons to rational choice and assuming the following general principle of altruism:

Each person ought to do what best serves the overall interest of others.¹⁶

Consequently, in order not to beg the question, we have no alternative but to grant the *prima facie* relevance of both self-interested and moral or altruistic reasons to rational choice and then try to determine which reasons we would be rationally required to act upon, all things considered. Notice that in order not to beg the question, it is necessary to back off both from the general principle of egoism and from the general principle of altruism, thus granting the *prima facie* relevance of both self-interested and altruistic reasons to rational choice.¹⁷ From this standpoint, it is still

an open question, whether either egoism or altruism will be rationally preferable, all things considered.¹⁸

Here it might be objected that we do have nonquestion-begging grounds for favoring self-interested reasons over moral reasons, if not egoism over altruism. From observing ourselves and others, don't we find that self-interested reasons are better motivators than are moral reasons, as evidenced by the fact that there seem to be more egoistically inclined people in the world than there are altruistically inclined people? It might be argued that because of this difference in motivational capacity, self-interested and moral or altruistic reasons should not both be regarded as *prima facie* relevant to rational choice.

But is there really this difference in motivational capacity? Do human beings really have a greater capacity for self-interested behavior than for altruistic behavior? If we focus for a change on the behavior of women, I think we are likely to observe considerably more altruism than egoism among women, particularly with respect to the care of their families.¹⁹ Of course, if we look to men, given still dominant patriarchal social practices, we may tend to find more egoism than altruism.²⁰ But most likely any relevant differences between men and women in this regard, irrespective of whether we consider them to be good or bad, are primarily due to the dominant patterns of socialization—nurture rather than nature.²¹ In any case, it is beyond dispute that we humans are capable of both self-interested and altruistic behavior, and given that we have these capabilities, it seems reasonable to ask which ones should have priority.²²

Our situation is that we find ourselves with some capacity to move along a spectrum from egoism to pure altruism, with someone like Mother Teresa of Calcutta representing the paradigm of pure altruism and someone like Thrasymachus of Plato's *Republic* representing the paradigm of egoism.²³ Obviously, our ability to move along this spectrum will depend on our starting point, the strength of our habits, and the social circumstances under which we happen to be living. But at the outset, it is reasonable to abstract from these individual variations and simply to focus on the general capacity virtually all of us have to act on both self-interested and altruistic reasons. From this, we should conclude that both sorts of reasons are relevant to rational choice and then ask the question which reasons should have priority. Later, with this question answered, we can take into account individual differences and the effects of socialization to adjust our expectations and requirements for particular individuals and groups. Initially, however, all we need to recognize is the relevance of both self-interested and altruistic reasons to rational choice.

In this regard, there are two kinds of cases that must be considered: cases in which there is a conflict between the relevant self-interested and moral or altruistic reasons, and cases in which there is no such conflict.

No Conflict Cases

It seems obvious that where there is no conflict and both reasons are conclusive reasons of their kind recommending the same course of action,

both reasons should be acted upon. In such contexts, we should do what is favored both by morality or altruism and by self-interest.²⁴

Conflict Cases

Now when we rationally assess the relevant reasons in conflict cases, it is best to cast the conflict not as a conflict between self-interested reasons and moral reasons, but instead as a conflict between self-interested reasons and altruistic reasons.²⁵ The grounds for this shift will become apparent later.²⁶ Viewed in this way, three solutions are possible. First, we could say that self-interested reasons always have priority over conflicting altruistic reasons. Second, we could say just the opposite, that altruistic reasons always have priority over conflicting self-interested reasons. Third, we could say that some kind of compromise is rationally required. In this compromise, sometimes self-interested reasons have priority over conflicting altruistic reasons, and sometimes altruistic reasons have priority over conflicting self-interested reasons.

Once the conflict is described in this manner, the third solution can be seen to be the one that is rationally required. This is because the first and second solutions give exclusive priority to one class of relevant reasons over the other, and only a question-begging justification can be given for such an exclusive priority. Only by employing the third solution, and sometimes giving priority to self-interested reasons, and sometimes giving priority to altruistic reasons, can we avoid a question-begging resolution.²⁷

Notice also that this standard of rationality will not support just any compromise between the relevant self-interested and altruistic reasons. The compromise must be a nonarbitrary one, for otherwise it would beg the question with respect to the opposing egoistic and altruistic perspectives.²⁸ Such a compromise would have to respect the rankings of self-interested and altruistic reasons imposed by the egoistic and altruistic perspectives, respectively. Accordingly, any nonarbitrary compromise among such reasons in seeking not to beg the question against either egoism or altruism would have to give priority to those reasons that rank highest in each category. Failure to give priority to the highest-ranking altruistic or self-interested reasons would, other things being equal, be contrary to reason.

Now it might be objected here that my argument just assumes that we can provide an objective ranking of both a person's self-interested and altruistic reasons.²⁹ This is correct. But it is difficult to see how any defender of egoism could deny this assumption. Egoism claims that each person ought to do what best serves his or her overall self-interest, and this clearly assumes that each person can know what that is. Nor is it plausible to interpret egoism as maintaining that while we can each know what best serves our own self-interest, we cannot know what best serves the interest of others, and that is why we should be egoists. Rather, the standard defense of egoism assumes that we can each know what is good for ourselves and what is good for others and then claims that, even with this knowledge, we still always ought to do what is good for ourselves.³⁰ Nor

is the idea of providing a relatively precise ranking of one's self-interested reasons from an egoistic perspective or a relatively precise ranking of one's altruistic reasons from an altruistic perspective something to which an egoist would reasonably object.³¹ Nor would the egoist reasonably object to the interpersonal comparability of these rankings. Difficult though such rankings may be to arrive at in practice, the egoist's objection is that even when such relatively precise rankings of our self-interested and altruistic reasons are known, and even when it is known that acting on high-ranking altruistic reasons is comparably more beneficial to others than acting on conflicting low-ranking self-interested reasons is beneficial to ourselves, we should still always favor self-interested reasons over altruistic ones.

Accordingly, the egoist's objection to morality must be distinguished from the relativist's or the skeptic's objection. While it is important to defeat each of these foes of morality, it seems best to take them one at a time.³² Here we are simply concerned with the egoist, who does not deny what I have assumed for the sake of argument—a relatively precise ranking of one's self-interested reasons from an egoistic perspective and a relatively precise ranking of one's altruistic reasons from an altruistic perspective, and the interpersonal comparability of these two rankings.

Lifeboat Cases

Of course, there will be cases in which the only way to avoid being required or forced to do what is contrary to your highest-ranking reasons is by requiring or forcing someone else to do what is contrary to her highest-ranking reasons. Some of these cases will be "lifeboat cases," as, for example, where you and someone else are stranded in a lifeboat that has only enough resources for one of you to survive. But although such cases are surely difficult to resolve (maybe only a chance mechanism, like flipping a coin, can offer a reasonable resolution), they surely do not appear to reflect the typical conflicts between the relevant self-interested and altruistic reasons that we are capable of acting upon.³³ At least for humans, it would appear that typically one or the other of the conflicting reasons would rank significantly higher on its respective scale, thus permitting a clear resolution.³⁴

Now we can see how morality can be viewed as just such a nonarbitrary compromise between self-interested and altruistic reasons. First, a certain amount of self-regard is morally required, and sometimes, if not morally required, at least morally acceptable. Where this is the case, high-ranking self-interested reasons have priority over conflicting low-ranking altruistic reasons, other things being equal.³⁵ Second, morality obviously places limits on the extent to which people should pursue their own self-interest. Where this is the case, high-ranking altruistic reasons have priority over conflicting low-ranking self-interested reasons, other things being equal. In this way, morality can be seen to be a nonarbitrary compromise between self-interested and altruistic reasons, and the "moral reasons" that constitute that compromise can be seen as having a priority over the self-interested or altruistic reasons that conflict with them, other things being equal.

It is also important to see how this compromise view is supported by a two-step argument that is not question-begging at all. In the first step, our goal is to determine what reasons for action it would be rational for us to accept on the basis of a good argument, and this requires a nonquestion-begging starting point. Noting that both egoism, which favors exclusively self-interested reasons, and altruism, which favors exclusively altruistic reasons, offer only question-begging starting points, we took as our nonquestion-begging starting point the *prima facie* relevance of both self-interested and altruistic reasons to rational choice. The logical inference here is somewhat analogous to the inference of equal probability sanctioned in decision theory when we have no evidence that one alternative is more likely than another.³⁶ Here we have no nonquestion-begging justification for excluding either self-interested or altruistic reasons as relevant to rational choice, so we accept both kinds of reasons as *prima facie* relevant to rational choice. The conclusion of this first step of the argument for the compromise view does not beg the question against either egoism or altruism because if defenders of either view had any hope of providing a good, that is, a nonquestion-begging argument for their view, they too would have to grant this very conclusion as the only option open to them. In accepting this step of the argument, therefore, the compromise view does not beg the question against a possible defense of either of these other two perspectives, and that is all that should concern us.

Once, however, both self-interested and altruistic reasons are recognized as *prima facie* relevant to rational choice, the second step of the argument for the compromise view offers a nonarbitrary ordering of those reasons on the basis of the rankings of self-interested and altruistic reasons imposed by the egoistic and altruistic perspectives, respectively. According to that ordering, high-ranking self-interested reasons have priority over conflicting low-ranking altruistic reasons, other things being equal, and high-ranking altruistic reasons have priority over conflicting low-ranking self-interested reasons, other things being equal. There is no other plausible nonarbitrary ordering of these reasons. Hence, it certainly does not beg the question against either the egoistic or altruistic perspective, once we imagine those perspectives (or, more appropriately, their defenders) to be suitably reformed so that they too are committed to a standard of nonquestion-beggingness. In the end, if one is committed to a standard of nonquestion-beggingness, one has to be concerned only with how one's claims and arguments stake up against others who are also committed to such a standard. If you yourself are committed to the standard of nonquestion-beggingness, you don't beg the question by simply coming into conflict with the requirements of other perspectives, unless those other perspectives (or better, their defenders) are also committed to the same standard of nonquestion-beggingness. In arguing for your view, when you come into conflict with those who are arguing prejudicially, you do not beg the question against them unless you are also arguing prejudicially yourself.³⁷

Other Immoral Views

Notice, too, that this defense of morality also works against those forms of immorality that are group-based, like racism and sexism, because in the case of these immoralities, there are no nonquestion-begging grounds for the way that those who are dominated favor their interests over the interests of those they dominate. Moreover, with respect to group-based immoralities, unlike the egoistic challenge that we have been envisioning, there is also a group-based epistemic failing—those who dominate use biased, that is, question-begging, information, to conceive of their interests as superior to the interests of those they dominate, which they then think entitles them to their privileged status.³⁸

Generalizing, then, we can say that all immoralities involve an inappropriate (question-begging) favoring of the interests of self (or a particular group of selves) over the interests of others (or a particular group of others), and in this way run afoul of the defense of morality I have just sketched.³⁹ Accordingly, when Christine Korsgaard seeks to expose people who adopt and maintain immoral identities as insufficiently reflective, I would suggest that they might better be critiqued for lacking a nonquestion-begging justification, and hence, a good argument, for adopting and maintaining those identities.⁴⁰

A Neglected Defense

Unfortunately, this approach to defending morality has been generally neglected by previous moral theorists. The reason is that such theorists have tended to cast the basic conflict with egoism as a conflict between morality and self-interest rather than as a conflict between altruism and self-interest. Viewed in this light, it did not seem possible for the defender of morality to be supporting a compromise view, for how could such a defender say that, when morality and self-interest conflict, morality should sometimes be sacrificed for the sake of self-interest? Thus, Henry Sidgwick, at the end of his *Methods of Ethics*, unable to find a rational reconciliation between egoism and utilitarian morality, entertained the possibility of an omnipotent and benevolent deity who guaranteed their reconciliation in an afterlife.⁴¹ But while previous theorists, including Sidgwick, understood correctly that moral reasons could not be compromised with self-interested reasons, they failed to recognize that this is because moral reasons, including the reasons that constitute a utilitarian morality, are already the result of a purportedly nonarbitrary compromise between self-interested and altruistic reasons. To ask that moral reasons be weighed against self-interested reasons is, in effect, to count self-interested reasons—once in the compromise between egoism and altruism that constitutes a conception of morality, and then again, assuming moral reasons are weighed against self-interested reasons, and this double-counting of self-interested reasons would be clearly objectionable from a nonquestion-begging standpoint. Thus, while previous moral theorists intuitively knew that moral reasons could not be compromised with self-interested reasons, they were still unable to conceptually back-up and see how morality itself can be represented as a compromise between altruism and self-interest,

and, for that reason, they failed to recognize this approach to defending morality.⁴²

Individual Variations in the Ability to be Moral

In setting out this defense of morality, I assumed that we humans have the capacity to move along a spectrum from egoism to pure altruism. I granted that our ability to move along this spectrum would depend on our starting point, the strength of our habits, and the social circumstances under which we happen to be living. But I argued that, at the outset, it is reasonable to abstract from these individual variations and simply focus on the general capacity virtually all of us have to act on both self-interested and moral or altruistic reasons. Now, however, that I have argued that both self-interested and altruistic reasons are relevant to rational choice and assigned priorities in cases of conflict, it is appropriate to return to the question of how individual differences and the effects of their socialization should adjust our expectations and requirements for particular individuals and groups.⁴³

Here two kinds of cases seem particularly relevant. In one case, certain people, due to their nature, lack, to some degree, the capacity to act on high-ranking altruistic reasons when they conflict with low-ranking self-interested reasons. In the other case, certain people, due to socialization, lack, to some degree, this same capacity. Obviously, people who have the capacity for altruism and are motivated to act on it will have to try to work around, reform when possible, and, if necessary, protect themselves from those who, to varying degrees, lack this capacity. In cases in which those who lack this capacity are themselves at least partially responsible for this lack, blame and censure would also be appropriate.⁴⁴ Nevertheless, as long as the greater majority of people have by nature and/or by nurture the capacity to act on high-ranking altruistic reasons when they conflict with low-ranking self-interested reasons and the capacity to act on high-ranking self-interested reasons when they conflict with low-ranking altruistic reasons and are committed to the principle of nonquestion-beggingness, then, a socialization guided by the previous argument should serve to motivate them to endorse and abide by the basic requirements of morality, other things being equal, thereby exemplifying that common ground toward which the most defensible internalist and externalist views of motivation seem to be gravitating.⁴⁵ Similarly, since both ethical realists and ethical anti-realists would endorse the principle of nonquestion-beggingness, they should also endorse my defense of morality over egoism and altruism, even while they continue to give their competing realist and anti-realist interpretations of the self-interested and altruistic reasons that are employed in that defense.⁴⁶

Now it may be objected that my argument for favoring morality over egoism and altruism would be analogous to naturalists and supernaturalists splitting the difference between their views and counting supernaturalist reasons as valid half the time, and naturalist reasons as valid the other half the time.⁴⁷ But as I understand the debate between naturalism and supernaturalism, many naturalists claim to have conclusive reasons for rejecting supernaturalism, and some supernaturalists claim to have

conclusive reasons for rejecting naturalism. So this example does not parallel the case of egoism and altruism.

But suppose there were equally good reasons for naturalism as for supernaturalism, would we be rationally required to act on naturalism half the time and supernaturalism the other half the time? In this case, a far more reasonable resolution would be to continue to lead the life of a naturalist or a supernaturalist while periodically re-evaluating the relevant reasons with the hope of some day resolving this issue. This interim solution is preferable because there is no way to compromise the issue between naturalism and supernaturalism that would respect the most important elements of each view. That is why the conflict between naturalism and supernaturalism, even assuming that there were equally good reasons for both views, differs from the conflict between egoism and altruism because in the latter case there is a way to compromise the issue between the two views which respects the most important elements of each: Favor high-ranking self-interested reasons over conflicting low-ranking altruistic reasons, other things being equal, and favor high-ranking altruistic reasons over conflicting low-ranking self-interested reasons, other things being equal.

This illustrates how the requirement of nonquestion-beggingness favors different solutions in different contexts. Thus, in contexts where action can be deferred, it favors deferring action until compelling reasons favoring one course of action can be found, for example, putting off your choice of a vacation spot until you have good reasons for going to one particular spot. However, in contexts where action cannot be deferred (and you do not have nonquestion-begging grounds favoring one alternative over the others), either it is or it is not possible to combine the best parts of the existing alternatives into a single course of action. If it is not possible to combine the best parts of the existing alternatives, as in the assumed case concerning naturalism and supernaturalism, the requirement of nonquestion-beggingness favors arbitrarily choosing between them, while periodically re-examining the situation to determine whether, at some time or other, compelling reasons can be found for favoring one alternative over the other. If it is possible to combine the best parts of existing alternatives, as in the case of egoism and altruism, the requirement of nonquestion-beggingness favors this course of action. It is on this account that I argue that Morality as Compromise is rationally preferable to both egoism and altruism.⁴⁸

The Enforcement of Morality Question

While Morality as Compromise can be seen as rationally preferable to both egoism and altruism, and so helps to establish the justification of morality over those two perspectives, it is anything but a complete moral perspective.⁴⁹ In particular, it does not clearly specify when its requirements can be coercively enforced, and so its requirements seem to be open to a libertarian, or a welfare liberal, or even a socialist interpretation. Agreeing with libertarians, it would appear that we could hold that high-ranking altruistic reasons have priority over conflicting low-ranking self-interested

reasons, and that acting upon them would provide comparably greater benefit, and still hold that we should not enforce that priority by means of a welfare state. Alternatively, it seems, we could agree with welfare liberals that we should coercively establish a right to welfare, or agree with socialists that we should go further and require substantial equality. Morality as Compromise appears open to all three interpretations. It is not a full conception of morality, but only a partial one that nevertheless remains quite useful because it succeeds in showing the superiority of morality over egoism and altruism.⁵⁰

Nevertheless, we now need to go further and address the enforcement of morality question. Here, it behooves us to start with the assumptions of the libertarian perspective, the view that appears to endorse the least enforcement of morality, given that I propose to show that this view, contrary to what its defenders usually maintain,⁵¹ requires a right to welfare, and that further, this right to welfare, which is also endorsed by a welfare liberal perspective, leads to the substantial equality of a socialist perspective. So far, I have argued from a conception of rationality as nonquestion-beggingness to the incomplete moral perspective of Morality as Compromise.⁵² Now I will argue that completing this conception of morality with respect to the enforcement question leads to substantial equality.

The Ideal of Negative Liberty

Let us begin by interpreting the ideal of liberty as a negative ideal in the manner favored by libertarians. So understood, liberty is the absence of interference by other people from doing what one wants or is able to do. Libertarians go on to characterize their political ideal as requiring that each person should have the greatest amount of liberty morally commensurate with the greatest amount of liberty for everyone else.⁵³ Interpreting their ideal in this way, libertarians claim to derive a number of more specific requirements, in particular, a right to life; a right to freedom of speech, press, and assembly; and a right to property.

Here it is important to observe that the libertarian's right to life is not a right to receive from others the goods and resources necessary for preserving one's life; it is simply a right not to have one's life interfered with or ended unjustly. Correspondingly, the libertarian's right to property is not a right to receive from others the goods and resources necessary for one's welfare, but rather typically a right not to be interfered with in regard to any goods and resources that one has legitimately acquired either by initial acquisition or by voluntary agreement.⁵⁴

Of course, libertarians allow that it would be nice of the rich to share their surplus resources with the poor. Nevertheless, they deny that government has a duty to provide for such needs. Some good things, such as providing welfare to the poor, are requirements of charity rather than justice, libertarians claim. Accordingly, failure to make such provisions is neither blameworthy nor punishable. As a consequence, such acts of charity should not be coercively required. For this reason, libertarians are opposed to coercively supported welfare programs.

Conflicting Liberties

Now, in order to see why libertarians are mistaken about what their ideal requires, consider a conflict situation between the rich and the poor. In this conflict situation, the rich, of course, have more than enough resources to satisfy their basic needs.⁵⁵ In contrast, imagine that the poor lack the resources to meet their basic needs to secure a decent life for themselves even though they have tried all the means available to them that libertarians regard as legitimate for acquiring such resources. Under circumstances like these, libertarians maintain that the rich should have the liberty to use their resources to satisfy their luxury needs if they so wish. Libertarians recognize that this liberty might well be enjoyed with the consequence that the satisfaction of the basic needs of the poor will not be met; they just think that liberty always has priority over other political ideals, and since they assume that the liberty of the poor is not at stake in such conflict situations, it is easy for them to conclude that the rich should not be required to sacrifice their liberty so that the basic needs of the poor may be met.

Of course, libertarians allow that it would be nice of the rich to share their surplus resources with the poor. Nevertheless, according to libertarians, such acts of charity are not required because the liberty of the poor is not thought to be at stake in such conflict situations.

In fact, however, the liberty of the poor is at stake in such conflict situations. What is at stake is the liberty of the poor not to be interfered with in taking from the surplus possessions of the rich what is necessary to satisfy their basic needs.

Needless to say, libertarians want to deny that the poor have this liberty. But how can they justify such a denial? As this liberty of the poor has been specified, it is not a positive liberty to receive something but a negative liberty of noninterference. Clearly, what libertarians must do is recognize the existence of such a liberty and then claim that it unjustifiably conflicts with other liberties of the rich. But when libertarians see that this is the case, they are often genuinely surprised for they had not previously seen the conflict between the rich and the poor as a conflict of liberties. In responding to my work in recent years, libertarians Tibor Machan, Eric Mack, and Jan Narveson, among others, have come to grudgingly recognize that this liberty of the poor, as I have specified it, is indeed a negative liberty, but then they want to go on to argue that this liberty is illegitimate, or, at least, as Machan sees it, practically illegitimate.⁵⁶

Now when the conflict between the rich and the poor is viewed as a conflict of liberties, we can either say that the rich should have the liberty not to be interfered with in using their surplus resources for luxury purposes, or we can say that the poor should have the liberty not to be interfered with in taking from the rich what they require to meet their basic needs. If we choose one liberty, we must reject the other. What needs to be determined, therefore, is which liberty is morally enforceable: the liberty of the rich or the liberty of the poor.⁵⁷

The “Ought” Implies “Can” Principle

I submit that the liberty of the poor, which is the liberty not to be interfered with in taking from the surplus resources of others what is required to meet one’s basic needs, is morally enforceable over the liberty of the rich, which is the liberty not to be interfered with in using one’s surplus resources for luxury purposes. To see that this is the case, we need only appeal to one of the most fundamental principles of morality, one that is common to all moral and political perspectives, namely, the “ought” implies “can” principle. According to this principle, people are not morally required to do what they lack the power to do or what would involve so great a sacrifice or restriction that it is unreasonable/contrary to reason to ask them, or in cases of severe conflict of interest, unreasonable/contrary to reason to require them to abide by.⁵⁸

For example, suppose I promised to attend a departmental meeting on Friday, but on Thursday I am involved in a serious car accident that puts me into a coma. Surely it is no longer the case that I ought to attend the meeting, now that I lack the power to do so. Or suppose instead that on Thursday I develop a severe case of pneumonia for which I am hospitalized. Surely I can legitimately claim that I cannot attend the meeting on the grounds that the risk to my health involved in attending is a sacrifice it is unreasonable/contrary to reason to ask me to bear. Or suppose instead the risk to my health from having pneumonia is not so serious, and it is reasonable and not contrary to reason to ask me to attend the meeting (a supererogatory request). However, it might still be serious enough to be unreasonable/contrary to reason to require my attendance at the meeting (a demand that is backed up by blame and coercion).

This “ought” implies “can” principle claims that reason and morality must be linked in an appropriate way, especially if we are going to be able to justifiably use blame or coercion to get people to abide by the requirements of morality. It should be noted, however, that although major figures in the history of philosophy, and most philosophers today, including virtually all libertarian philosophers, accept this linkage between reason and morality, this linkage is not usually conceived to be part of the “ought” implies “can” principle.⁵⁹ Nevertheless, I claim that there are good reasons for associating this linkage with the principle, namely, our use of the word “can” as in the example just given, and the natural progression from logical, physical, and psychological possibility found in the traditional “ought” implies “can” principle to the notion of moral possibility found in my formulation of the principle. In any case, the acceptability of my formulation of the “ought” implies “can” principle is determined by the virtually universal, and arguably necessary, acceptance of its components and not by the manner in which I have proposed to join those components together.⁶⁰

Now applying the “ought” implies “can” principle to the case at hand, it seems clear that the poor have it within their power to relinquish such an important liberty as the liberty not to be interfered with in taking from the rich what they require to meet their basic needs. They could do this.

Nevertheless, it is unreasonable/contrary to reason in this context to require them to accept so great a restriction. In the extreme case, it involves requiring the poor to sit back and starve to death. Of course, the poor may have no real alternative to relinquishing this liberty. To do anything else may involve worse consequences for themselves and their loved ones and may invite a painful death. Accordingly, we may expect that the poor would acquiesce, albeit unwillingly, to a political system that denied them the right to welfare supported by such a liberty, at the same time we recognize that such a system has imposed an unreasonable/contrary to reason restriction upon the poor—a restriction that we could not morally blame the poor for trying to evade. Analogously, we might expect that a woman whose life is threatened would submit to a rapist's demands, at the same time that we recognize the utter unreasonableness of those demands. By contrast, it is not unreasonable/contrary to reason to require the rich in this context to sacrifice the liberty to meet some of their luxury needs so that the poor can have the liberty to meet their basic needs. Naturally, we might expect that the rich, for reasons of self-interest or past contribution, might be disinclined to make such a sacrifice. We might even suppose that the past contribution of the rich provides a good reason for not sacrificing their liberty to use their surplus for luxury purposes. Yet, the rich cannot claim that relinquishing such a liberty involves so great a sacrifice that it is unreasonable/contrary to reason to require them to make it; unlike the poor, the rich are morally blameworthy and subject to coercion for failing to make such a sacrifice.

Consequently, if we assume that however else we specify the requirements of morality, they cannot violate the “ought” implies “can” principle, it follows that, despite what libertarians claim, the right to liberty endorsed by them actually favors the liberty of the poor over the liberty of the rich.⁶¹

This means that within the bundle of liberties allotted to each person by the basic principle of libertarianism, there must be the liberty not to be interfered with (when one is poor) in taking from the surplus possessions of the rich what is necessary to satisfy one's basic needs. This must be part of the bundle that constitutes the greatest amount of liberty for each person because this liberty is morally superior to the liberty with which it directly conflicts, that is, the liberty not to be interfered with (when one is rich) in using one's surplus possessions to satisfy one's luxury needs. In this context, the “ought” implies “can” principle establishes the moral superiority and enforceability of the liberty of the poor over the liberty of the rich.⁶²

Yet couldn't libertarians object to this conclusion, claiming that it would be unreasonable/contrary to reason to require the rich to sacrifice the liberty to meet some of their luxury needs so that the poor can have the liberty to meet their basic needs? As I have pointed out, libertarians don't usually see the situation as a conflict of liberties, but suppose they did. How plausible would such an objection be? Not very plausible at all, I think.

For consider: What are libertarians going to say about the poor? Isn't it clearly unreasonable/contrary to reason to require the poor to restrict their liberty to meet their basic needs so that the rich can have the liberty to meet their luxury needs? Isn't it clearly unreasonable/contrary to reason to coercively require the poor to sit back and starve to death? If it is, then, there is no resolution of this conflict that is reasonable and not contrary to reason to coercively require both the rich and the poor to accept. But that would mean that libertarians could not be putting forth a moral resolution because a moral resolution, according to the "ought" implies "can" principle, resolves severe conflicts of interest in ways that it is reasonable and not contrary to reason to require everyone affected to accept,⁶³ where it is further understood that a moral resolution can sometimes require us to act in accord with altruistic reasons.⁶⁴ Therefore, as long as libertarians think of themselves as putting forth a moral resolution, they cannot allow that it is unreasonable/contrary to reason in cases of severe conflict of interest both to require the rich to restrict their liberty to meet some of their luxury needs in order to benefit the poor and to require the poor to restrict their liberty to meet their basic needs in order to benefit the rich. But I submit that if one of these requirements is to be judged reasonable and not contrary to reason, then, by any neutral assessment, it must be the requirement that the rich restrict their liberty to meet some of their luxury needs so that the poor can have the liberty to meet their basic needs; there is no other plausible resolution, if libertarians intend to put forth a moral resolution.⁶⁵

It should also be noted that this case for restricting the liberty of the rich depends upon the willingness of the poor to take advantage of whatever opportunities are available to them to engage in mutually beneficial work, so that failure of the poor to take advantage of such opportunities would normally cancel the obligation of the rich to restrict their own liberty for the benefit of the poor.⁶⁶ In addition, the poor would be required to give back the equivalent of any surplus possessions they have taken from the rich once they are able to do so and still satisfy their basic needs.⁶⁷ Nor would the poor be required to keep the liberty to which they are entitled. They could give up part of it, or all of it, provided that they discharge their obligations to themselves and others. Consequently, the case for restricting the liberty of the rich for the benefit of the poor is neither unconditional nor inalienable.⁶⁸

It is sometimes thought that there is a different interpretation of libertarianism where rights, not liberties, are fundamental and where another argument is needed to establish the conclusion I have just established here.⁶⁹ Under this presumptively different interpretation, the rights taken as fundamental are a strong right to property and a weak right to life. Yet, given that for libertarians such rights are also rights of noninterference, that is, (negative) liberty rights, the question arises of why we should accept these particular rights of noninterference (liberties) and not others—which is just the question that arises when we consider the conflicting liberties to which an ideal of liberty gives rise. What this shows is that the "rights" interpretation of libertarianism is not really distinct from the "liberty" interpretation we have just been discussing.⁷⁰

In brief, I have argued that a libertarian ideal of liberty can be seen to support a right to welfare by applying the “ought” implies “can” principle to conflicts between the rich and the poor. Here the principle supports such rights by favoring the liberty of the poor over the liberty of the rich. Clearly, what is crucial to the derivation of these rights is the claim that it is unreasonable/contrary to reason to coercively require the poor to deny their basic needs and accept anything less than these rights as the condition for their willing cooperation.

Morality as Compromise gave us the priority of high-ranking altruistic reasons over conflicting low-ranking self-interested reasons, but it left open the possibility that failing to act on the high-ranking altruistic reasons might involve simply not helping the poor meet their basic needs rather than interfering with the poor’s meeting those needs. So that if we were only concerned to enforce against such interference, there would be no need to do so in these cases. However, once we recognize that conflicts between the rich and the poor can be understood to involve either interfering with the poor meeting their basic needs or interfering with the rich meeting their nonbasic needs, the need for an enforceable resolution becomes apparent.⁷¹ Applying the “ought” implies “can” principle to these cases, we were then led to favor the more important liberty (noninterference with the poor) over the less important liberty (noninterference with the rich), thereby justifying a right to welfare.⁷²

A Universal Right to Welfare

Now, for libertarians, fundamental rights are universal rights, that is, rights possessed by all people, not just those who live in certain places or at certain times. Of course, to claim that rights are universal does not mean that they are universally recognized. Rather, to claim that rights are universal, despite their spotty recognition, implies only that they ought to be recognized because people at all times and places have or could have had good reasons to recognize these rights, not that they actually did or do so.⁷³ Nor need universal rights be unconditional. This is particularly true in the case of the right to welfare, which, I have argued, is conditional upon people doing all that they legitimately can to provide for themselves. In addition, this right is conditional upon there being sufficient resources available so that everyone’s welfare needs can be met.⁷⁴ So where people do not do all that they can to provide for themselves or where there are not sufficient resources available, people do not normally have a right to welfare. Given the universal and conditional character of this libertarian right to welfare, what then are the implications of this right for distant peoples and future generations?

Distant Peoples and Future Generations

At present, worldwide food production is sufficient to provide everyone in the world with at least 2,720 kilocalories per person per day.⁷⁵ To meet the nutritional and other basic needs of each and every person living today, however, would require a significant redistribution of goods and resources. To finance such redistribution, Thomas Pogge has proposed a 1 percent tax on aggregate global income, netting \$312 billion annually.⁷⁶

Peter Singer, as an alternative, has proposed a graduated tax on the incomes of the top 10 percent of U.S. families, netting \$404 billion annually with an equal sum coming from the family incomes of people living in other industrialized countries.⁷⁷ Both Pogge and Singer are confident that their proposals would go a long way toward meeting basic human needs worldwide. In fact, Singer remarks that before coming up with his recent proposal, he never “fully understood how easy it would be for the world’s rich to eliminate or virtually eliminate, global poverty.”⁷⁸

Yet, while Pogge’s and Singer’s proposals would doubtless do much to secure a right to welfare for existing people, unfortunately, they do not speak very well to the needs of future generations. How then do we best ensure that future generations are not deprived of the goods and resources that they will need to meet their basic needs? In the U.S., currently more than one million acres of arable land are lost from cultivation each year due to urbanization, multiplying transport networks, and industrial expansion.⁷⁹ In addition, another two million acres of farmland are lost each year due to erosion, salinization, and water logging.⁸⁰ The state of Iowa alone has lost one-half of its fertile topsoil from farming in the last one hundred years. That loss is about thirty times faster than what is sustainable.⁸¹ According to one estimate, only 0.6 of an acre of arable land per person will be available in the U.S. in 2050, whereas more than 1.2 acres per person are needed to provide a diverse diet (currently 1.6 acres of arable land are available).⁸² Similar, or even more threatening, estimates of the loss of arable land have been made for other regions of the world.⁸³ How then are we going to preserve farmland and other food-related natural resources so that future generations are not deprived of what they require to meet their basic needs?

And what about other resources as well? It has been estimated that presently a North American uses seventy-five times more resources than a resident of India. This means that in terms of resource consumption the North American continent’s population is the equivalent of 22.5 billion Indians.⁸⁴ So unless we assume that basic resources such as arable land, iron, coal, and oil are in unlimited supply, this unequal consumption will have to be radically altered if the basic needs of future generations are to be met.⁸⁵ I submit, therefore, that recognizing a universal right to welfare applicable both to existing and future people requires us to use up no more resources than are necessary for meeting our own basic needs, thus securing for ourselves a decent life but no more.⁸⁶ For us to use up more resources than this, we would be guilty of depriving at least some future generations of the resources they would require to meet their own basic needs, thereby violating their libertarian-based right to welfare.⁸⁷ Obviously, this would impose a significant sacrifice on existing generations, particularly those in the developed world, clearly a far greater sacrifice than Pogge and Singer maintain is required for meeting the basic needs of existing generations. Nevertheless, these demands do follow from a libertarian-based right to welfare.⁸⁸ In effect, recognizing a right to welfare, applicable to all existing and future people, leads to an equal utilization of resources over place and time.⁸⁹

Now, it might be objected that if we fail to respect this welfare requirement for future generations, we would still not really be harming those future generations whom we would deprive them of the resources they require for meeting their basic needs. This is because if we acted so as to appropriately reduce our consumption, those same future generations whom we would supposedly harm by our present course of action won't even exist.⁹⁰ This is because the changes we would make in our lives in order to live in a resource-conserving manner would so alter our social relations, now and in the future, that the membership of future generations would be radically altered as well. Yet, to hold that we only harm those who would still exist if we acted appropriately is too strong a restriction on harming.

Consider an owner of an industrial plant arguing that she really did not harm your daughter who is suffering from leukemia due to the contaminants that leaked into the area surrounding the plant because only by operating the plant so that it leaked these contaminants was it economically feasible in this particular place and time. Hence, the plant would not have opened up, nor would you have moved nearby to work, nor would this daughter of yours even have been born, without its operating in this way.⁹¹ In brief, the owner of the plant contends that your daughter was not really harmed at all because, if there had been no contamination, she would not even have been born. Assuming, however, that we reject the plant owner's counterfactual requirement for harming in favor of a direct causal one (the operation of the plant caused your daughter's leukemia), as we should, then, we have to recognize that we too can be held responsible for harming future generations if, by the way we live our lives, we cause the harm from which they will suffer.

Now it might be further objected that if we did limit ourselves to simply meeting our basic needs—a decent life, but no more, we would still be harming future generations at some more distant point of time, leaving those generations without the resources required for meeting their basic needs. While our present non-conserving way of living would begin to harm future generations in, let's say, two hundred years, our conserving way of living, should we adopt it, and should it be continued by subsequent generations, would, let's assume, lead to that same result in two thousand years. So either way, we would be harming future generations.

There is a difference, however. While both courses of action would ultimately harm future generations, if we do limit ourselves to simply meeting our basic needs, a decent life, but no more, and other generations do the same, then many generations of future people would benefit from this course of action who would not benefit from our alternative, non-conserving course of action. Even more importantly, for us to sacrifice further for the sake of future generations would require us to give up meeting our own basic needs, and this normally we cannot be morally required to do, as the "ought" implies "can" principle makes clear. We can be required to give up the satisfaction of our nonbasic needs so that others can meet their basic needs, but, normally, without our consent, we

cannot be required to sacrifice the satisfaction of our own basic needs so that others can meet their basic needs.⁹² So while future generations may still be harmed in the distant future as a result of our behavior, no one can justifiably blame us, or take action against us, for using no more resources than we require for meeting our basic needs.

Of course, someone could ask: How do you distinguish basic from nonbasic needs? A person raising this question may not realize how widespread the use of this distinction is. While the distinction is surely important for global ethics, as my use of it attests, it is also used widely in moral, political, and environmental philosophy; it would really be impossible to do much philosophy in these areas, especially at the practical level, without a distinction between basic and nonbasic needs.

Another way that I would respond to the question is by pointing out that the fact that not every need can be clearly classified as either basic or nonbasic, as similarly holds for a whole range of dichotomous concepts like moral/immoral, legal/illegal, living/nonliving, human/nonhuman, should not immobilize us from acting at least with respect to clear cases. This puts our use of the distinction in a still broader context suggesting that if we cannot use the basic/nonbasic distinction in moral, political, and environmental philosophy, the widespread use of other dichotomous concepts is likewise threatened. It also suggests how our inability to clearly classify every conceivable need as basic or nonbasic should not keep us from using such a distinction at least with respect to clear cases.

There is also a further point to be made here. If we begin to respond to clear cases, for example, stop aggressing against the clear basic needs of some humans for the sake of clear luxury needs of others, we will be in an even better position to know what to do in the less clear cases. This is because sincerely attempting to live out one's practical moral commitments helps one to interpret them better, just as failing to live them out makes interpreting them all the more difficult. Consequently, I think we have every reason to act on the moral requirements that I have defended in this address, at least with respect to clear cases.

Conclusion

Let me end by simply summarizing my argument, so far sketched. My argument has proceeded from a conception of rationality as nonquestion-beggingness to an endorsement of morality over egoism and altruism. I then further argued that even a libertarian version of the conception of morality that I defended leads to a right to welfare. Lastly, I argued that extending this right to welfare, particularly to future generations, as I claim we must, leads to the egalitarian requirement that as far as possible, we should use up no more resources than are necessary to meet our basic needs, securing for ourselves a decent life but no more. Accordingly, with this argument from rationality to substantial equality, I hope to have completed the Kantian project in moral and political philosophy. In addition, if the argument is successful, and it becomes widely accepted by moral and political philosophers so that they consistently make

recommendations within its framework, then I think it would go some way toward improving the status of our profession, at the same time that it would lead to significant cuts in our own salaries and in the salaries of just about everybody we know.

Endnotes

* Many philosophers commented on various drafts of this address. Here I particularly want to thank Karl Ameriks, Elizabeth Ashford, Robert Audi, Annette Baier, Jason Baldwin, Gillian Brock, Philip Cafaro, Stephen Darwall, Jerry Gaus, Bernard Gert, Paul Gombert, Carol Gould, Elizabeth Harman, Richard Joyce, Christine Korsgaard, Lara Ostaric, Katherine Piatti, Thomas Pogge, Jeffrey Reiman, Russ Shafer-Landau, Robert Shaver, A. John Simmons, Peter Singer, Holly Smith, Patrick Smith, Tara Smith, David Solomon, Anita Superson, Laurence Thomas, and John Van Ingen.

What I now regard as less adequate versions of some of the arguments of this address appeared in *The Triumph of Practice Over Theory in Ethics* (New York: Oxford, 2005) and in earlier publications.

1. Although I mention egoism and immorality separately here, egoism, for me, is still one particular type of immorality. I further understand the moral/immoral classification (where moral includes morally permissible as well as morally required) to be exhaustive. Accordingly, I take the amoralist to be just a particular kind of immoralist, not too different, if different at all, from the egoist.
2. While egoism is an ethical perspective because it provides norms about how one should behave, it is not what I would regard as a moral perspective because it never requires a person to sacrifice her overall interest for the sake of others. Yet, even when egoism is seen in this way as an ethical, not a moral, perspective, the egoist can still be regarded as immoral when she fails to conform to requirements of morality.
3. John Rawls is typical here, as is Thomas Nagel. See Rawls's *A Theory of Justice* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971), 36, and Nagel's *The View From Nowhere* (New York: Oxford University Press), 200ff.
4. *Ibid.*
5. According to some interpreters, Kant himself, in his later writings, may have given up on trying to derive morality from an ideal of rationality. See John Rawls, *Lectures in the History of Moral Philosophy*, edited by Barbara Herman (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 2000), pp. 253-272 and Karl Ameriks, *Kant's Theory of Mind* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982), Chapter 6. Even so, most surely Kant would have welcomed such a derivation. Yet, he may not have welcomed the conclusion that morality requires substantial equality, although even here, Kant surely would have followed the derivation of morality from rationality wherever it led.
6. Alan Gewirth, *Reason and Morality* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1978).
7. Another way to put the problem for Kant is that both the general principle of egoism and the Categorical Imperative are "unconditional" in that the acceptance of neither principle is conditional upon the acceptance of some more ultimate principle. In addition, both principles are universal and thus

have the “form of law.” This means that we do not have here a Kantian argument that favors morality over egoism. See Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork for a Metaphysics of Morals*, Akademik Edition, 420-421.

8. Christine Korsgaard. “The Sources of Normativity.” In *The Tanner Lectures on Human Values* (Salt Lake City, University of Utah Press, 1992), 20-112. In her e-mail comments on an earlier draft of this address (2/3/08), Korsgaard says that she does not intend her argument here to be an appeal to consistency as I characterize it, but rather argues that egoism fails a publicity requirement for reasons analogously to the way “private languages” fail a publicity requirement for languages. But in “The Sources of Normativity,” Korsgaard does say, “The idea of a private language is inconsistent with the normativity of meaning,” (p. 95) and I take this to also mean “inconsistent with the publicity of meaning.” So I would have thought she is also claiming that just as private languages are inconsistent with the publicity of meaning, so egoism is inconsistent with the publicity of reasons. And, of course, what I am arguing here, is that objectionable though the egoism may be on other grounds, the view is not inconsistent with a publicity requirement because its reasons are public analogous to the way that languages are public, or to the way that the “oughts” or reasons of competitive games are public, even though they are not public in exactly the same way that moral reasons are public. But, of course, Korsgaard wasn’t arguing that egoistic reasons fail a publicity requirement because they are not public in exactly the same way that moral reasons are public!
 9. The universal ethical egoist has to see herself as having the same legitimate goals as everyone else. If the egoist is going to give her own self-interest complete priority, in consistency, she has to say that others can legitimately do the same. Of course, the claims she makes about herself and the claims she makes about others are asymmetrically action-guiding in contrary ways.
 10. Those committed to morality, however, may want to hide their reasons from those who are not similarly committed so as to avoid being taken advantage of.
 11. It might be objected that the “oughts” of competitive games, unlike the “oughts” of egoism, are contained with a higher normative structure that is itself governed by the symmetrically action-guiding “oughts” of morality. This is true. But for an analogy to be useful, the analogues need not be identical in every respect. However, for an even closer analogue to the asymmetrically action-guiding “oughts” of egoism, think about the asymmetrically action-guiding “oughts” used by players who systematically and successfully cheat to win games they would otherwise lose.
 12. Meeting the stronger publicity requirement of morality would render the practice of egoism self-defeating in just the same way that it would render the practice of many competitive games self-defeating. But this fact could only count against the practice of egoism if it also counts against the practice of competitive games, and it does not count against the practice of competitive games.
 13. “Ought” presupposes “can” here. So unless people have the capacity to entertain and follow both self-interested and moral reasons for acting, it
-

does not make any sense asking whether they ought or ought not to do so. Moreover, as I will make clear later, moral reasons are understood here to include some altruistic reasons and some self-interested reasons. So the question of whether it is rational for us to follow self-interested reasons rather than moral reasons should be understood as the question of whether it is rational for us to follow self-interested reasons exclusively rather than some appropriate set of self-interested reasons and altruistic reasons, other things being equal.

14. It is important for my argument later that we also include knowledge of one's relevant altruistic reasons here, many of which are also moral reasons anyway. It should also be noted that not all the reasons that people are capable of acting upon are relevant to an assessment of the reasonableness of their conduct. First, reasons that are evokable only from some merely logically possible set of opportunities are not relevant; they must be evokable from the opportunities people actually possessed. Second, reasons that radically different people could have acquired are also not relevant. Instead, they must be reasons that people could have acquired without radical changes in their developing identities.
 15. The principle of nonquestion-beggingness requires that we not argue in such a way that *only* someone who already knew or believed the conclusion of our argument would accept its premises, or, put more succinctly, that we not assume what we are trying to prove or justify.
 16. I understand the pure altruist to be the mirror image of the pure egoist. Whereas the pure egoist thinks that the interests of others do not count for herself, except instrumentally, the pure altruist thinks that her own interests do not count for herself, except instrumentally.
 17. This is one strategy to avoid begging-the-question. Another is to assume the premises that one's opponent actually accepts and argue from those premises. A variant of the second strategy is to put the best construction on one's opponent's view and then determine what follows from the view so construed. Which strategy is appropriate is determined by the context. In this debate with the egoist, requiring both egoist and the altruist to "back up" is appropriate because it permits a debate-settling resolution. Of course, some philosophers have used the second strategy with the egoist and tried to derive morality from purely egoistic premises. David Gauthier's work, *Morals by Agreement* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), takes this approach. However, I have argued elsewhere (*How To Make People Just* (Totowa: Rowman & Littlefield, 1988)), that the use of this particular strategy is unsuccessful, justifying at best a truncated morality. Moreover, altruists or those endorsing the altruistic side of morality have little or no reason to accept what results from using this strategy. By contrast, this same strategy of starting with the premises of one's opponent works well, I hope to show, in the debate between the libertarians, welfare liberals, and socialists. This is because each of these three moral/political conceptions represents a different compromise of self-interested and altruistic reasons, and so the best way to carry out a debate among them, is, in fact, to work internal to one of those conceptions, specifically the libertarian conception, to effect a different weighing of the self-interested and altruistic reasons within it and
-

thereby bring that conception more in line with the requirements of the other two. Nor would the “back-up” strategy work well for this particular debate because it turns out that all plausible backup positions seemingly neutrally enough to be acceptable to libertarians, welfare liberals, and socialists are too general to support any particular resolution. Of course, we could “force” libertarians, welfare liberals, and socialists to take the back-up strategy more seriously. We could have them back-up to the basic self-interested and altruistic reasons in their views and work from there. However, it turns out to be easier to just start with the libertarian view and work internally to show how a re-evaluation of conflicts of liberty in that view that correspond to conflicts between self-interested and altruistic reasons leads to different practical requirements from those that libertarians usually endorse, thereby helping to reconcile the libertarian view with both welfare liberalism and socialism.

Stephen Darwall in his *The Second-Person Standpoint* also starts out his defense of morality by recognizing that we, as rational agents, need to step back and critically evaluate the candidates we have for reasons for action, and he usefully employs just this approach to evaluate alternative moral reasons for action (i.e., Moorean vs. Kantian reasons for action). But he does not utilize this approach to evaluate egoistic reasons for action as I do here. See Stephen Darwall, *The Second-Person Standpoint* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press: 2006), Chapter 11. See also my discussion of Darwall’s earlier work on this topic in *How To Make People Just*, pp. 163-164.

18. It might be objected here that neither the defender of egoism nor the defender of altruism would want to make this move if they were only to take into account where this argument is heading. But if the defender of egoism or altruism were to realize that if she takes a nonquestion-begging stance, her favored position would turn out to be indefensible and some other position would turn out to be defensible, doesn’t that show that she already knows that her own position is indefensible? That is what I argue happens here. A nonquestion-begging stance requires giving both egoistic and altruistic reasons *prima facie* status and this, I will argue, leads in a nonquestion-begging way to morality (as compromise). Knowing or coming to know this, both the defender of egoism and the defender of altruism either know, or come to know, that they will lose the argumentative game to the moralist.
19. Nel Nodding. *Caring: A Feminine Approach to Ethics and Moral Education* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984); Joyce Trebilcot, ed. *Mothering* (Totowa: Rowman and Littlefield, 1983); Susan Brownmiller, *Femininity* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1984).
20. James Doyle. *The Male Experience* (Dubuque: W.C. Brown & Co. 1983); Marie Richmond-Abbot, ed. *Masculine and Feminine*, Second Edition (New York: Random House, 1991). Of course, men often do behave altruistically as well, especially when there is a need to defend their families or their countries.
21. Victor Seidler. *Rediscovering Masculinity* (New York: Routledge, 1989); Larry May and Robert Strikwerda. *Rethinking Masculinity* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 1992).
22. This is not to deny that we usually have greater knowledge and certainty about what is in our own self-interest than about what is in the interest of

others, and that this difference in our knowledge and certainty can have a practical effect on what good we should do in particular contexts. It is just that, as I will point out shortly, the debate between egoism and morality gets started at the theoretical level where no assumption is made about this difference in our knowledge and certainty, since we can, and frequently do, have adequate knowledge and certainty about both what is in our own self-interest and what is in the interest of others.

23. Some might want to question Mother Teresa's reputation as a paradigm of altruism. See Christopher Hitchens, *The Missionary Position: Mother Teresa in Theory and Practice* (London: Verso, 1995). Others have suggested that I cite here a real-life paradigm of egoism to match my reputed real-life paradigm of altruism. The problem is that successful real-life egoists tend to present themselves as being committed to morality. For this reason, even Thrasymachus is not really the best fictional paradigm of egoism because he is too public about his views, despite the fact that he has long played that role in philosophical discussion.
 24. Sometimes self-interested and moral reasons will not conflict in a particular context because only one or the other reason is relevant. In which case, we should act on that relevant reason, whether it be self-interested or moral, when it is conclusive. Still, it might be objected that even when self-interested and moral reasons do not conflict, there will frequently be other reasons significantly opposed to the moral reasons—reasons that we are or were able to acquire. Such reasons will be either malevolent reasons seeking to bring about the suffering and death of other human beings, benevolent reasons concerned to promote nonhuman welfare even at the expense of human welfare, or aesthetic reasons concerned to preserve and promote objects of aesthetic value even if those objects will not be appreciated by any living being. But assuming that malevolent reasons are ultimately rooted in some conception of what is good for oneself or others, these reasons would have already been taken into account, and, in the best construal of both egoism and altruism, presumably outweighed by other relevant reasons in each case. And although benevolent reasons concerned to promote nonhuman welfare also need to be taken into account, such reasons are not directly relevant to justifying morality over egoism. Nevertheless, I do take them into account in *The Triumph of Practice Over Theory in Ethics*, Chapter 4. Finally, although aesthetic reasons concerned to preserve and promote aesthetic objects, even when those objects will not be appreciated by any living being, might theoretically weigh against human interests, but for all practical purposes, the value of such objects will tend to correlate with the value of the aesthetic experiences they provide to humans. Even the famous prehistoric art work in the cave at Lascaux, France, which has been closed to public viewing since 1963, seems to be valued because of the significance it has for us.
 25. Notice too here that moral reasons and altruistic reasons are not equivalent sets of reasons. For example, altruistic reasons could recommend greater sacrifice of self-interest than morality permits.
 26. This is because, as I shall argue, morality itself already represents a compromise between egoism and altruism.
-

27. Of course, there are arguments for only taking self-interested reasons into account based on the assumption of psychological egoism. But this assumption is clearly false. That is why I began my argument for the justification of morality with the assumption that we have the capacity to act upon both self-interested and altruistic reasons. Moreover, it is difficult to see how one could attempt to give a nonquestion-begging argument for the exclusive priority of self-interested or altruistic reasons without proceeding as I have been doing here.
 28. Notice that by “egoistic perspective” here I mean the view that grants the *prima facie* relevance of both egoistic and altruistic reasons to rational choice and then tries to argue for the superiority of egoistic reasons. Similarly by “altruistic perspective” I mean the view that grants the *prima facie* relevance of both egoistic and altruistic reasons to rational choice and then tries to argue for the superiority of altruistic reasons.
 29. I owe this objection to Michael Smith, and a later version of it to Martin Carrier.
 30. In fact, the egoist has to know how she can serve the interests of others in order to determine which of her actions she could take that would be mutually beneficial to others and so be likely to get cooperation from others in carrying them out.
 31. We are imagining that we are getting a true and accurate ranking of a person’s self-interested reasons from an egoistic perspective—one that may be different from what a person thinks is his or her true and accurate ranking of such reasons, and it same holds true of a person’s altruistic reasons as seen from an altruistic perspective.
 32. Of course, a defender of moral relativism, like Gilbert Harman (See his *Moral Relativism and Moral Objectivity* with Judith Jarvis Thomson, Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), would not see the relativist as a foe of morality. However, for a critique of moral relativism, see my *Justice for Here and Now* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 14-17. As far as the moral skeptic is concerned, she cannot be denying what the egoist grants for the sake of argument, Rather, what the moral skeptic must be claiming is that we do not know what I am trying to nonquestion-beggingly establish: that morality is justified over egoism and altruism. So to defeat the egoist here really is to defeat the moral skeptic as well.
 33. Appearances can be somewhat deceiving here, however. See the last section of this address for how there can be relatively deep conflicts between ourselves and members of future generations.
 34. When we consider conflicts between humans and nonhumans, there appear to be even more “lifeboat situations” because, for one thing, humans need to eat something in order to live, and there are good reasons for them to generally avoid eating fellow humans.
 35. Even high-ranking morally acceptable, but not morally required, self-interested reasons would have priority over low-ranking altruistic reasons with which they conflict.
 36. See R. Duncan Luce and Howard Raiffa, *Games and Decisions* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1967), Chapter 13. The analogy here is only partial
-

because in decision theory the equal probability assumption is applied under conditions of either imagined ignorance or existing, but not necessarily nonremedial, ignorance. In the egoism/altruism case, however, the choice situation is different because we are pretty confident we know, and are not just assuming, that neither egoism nor altruism provides a nonquestion-begging starting point.

37. According to Bernard Gert, when the notion of rationality is used as a “fundamental normative concept,” it does not make sense to ask “Why should I be rational?” or “Give me a good (i.e., nonquestion-begging) argument for being rational?” And presumably, Gert would also want to hold that it does not make sense to ask “Why should I not be irrational?” or “Give me a good (i.e., nonquestion-begging) argument for not being irrational?” Gert then goes on to show that a notion of rationality that he uses in his work meets this condition of being a fundamental normative concept. What both Gert and I failed to notice in our published discussions of each other’s work, however, is that my notion of rationality as nonquestion-beggingness also satisfies this condition. This is because it also does not make sense to ask “Give me a good (i.e., nonquestion-begging) argument for acting in accord with the good (i.e., nonquestion-begging) argument for Morality as Compromise?” or “Give me a good (i.e., nonquestion-begging) argument for acting against the good (i.e., nonquestion-begging) argument for Morality as Compromise?” or even more generally, “Give me a good (i.e., nonquestion-begging) argument for acting in accord with a good (i.e., nonquestion-begging) argument?” See Bernard Gert, *Common Morality* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 86-88, 91-95.
38. The egoist does not appeal to any particular feature about herself that could provide a nonquestion-begging justification for her exclusive preference for her own-interests. By contrast, the group-based immoralist does appeal to some shared feature of the group as a justification for her group-based preference. But that appeal is question-begging.
39. One interesting difference between these immoralities is that while the oughts of egoism, like the oughts of competitive games, are claimed to be asymmetrically action-guiding, the oughts of group-based moralities, like the oughts of morality, are claimed to be symmetrically action-guiding, and, unfortunately, even those who are oppressed by group-based immoralities sometimes accept them as such.
40. See Christine Korsgaard, *The Sources of Normativity* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1996), 250.
41. Henry Sidgwick. *The Methods of Ethics*, 7th edition (London: Macmillan, 1907), Concluding Chapter.
42. This failure to recognize that morality can be represented as a compromise between self-interested and altruistic reasons also helps explain Thomas Nagel’s inability to find a solution to the problem of the design of just institutions. (Thomas Nagel, *Equality and Partiality* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991)). According to Nagel, to solve the problem of the design of just institutions, we need a morally acceptable resolution of the conflict between the personal and the impersonal standpoints, which he thinks is unattainable.

But while Nagel may be right that a morally acceptable resolution of the conflict between these two standpoints is unattainable, the reason for this is that these two standpoints already represent different resolutions of the conflict between self and others. The personal standpoint represents the personally chosen resolution of this conflict, while the impersonal standpoint represents a completely impartial resolution of this conflict, which may not be identical with the personally chosen resolution. Since each of these standpoints already represents a resolution of the conflict between oneself and others, any further resolution of the conflict between the two standpoints would seem to violate the earlier resolutions, either by favoring oneself or others too much or too little in light of the earlier resolutions. It is no wonder, then, that an acceptable resolution of the two standpoints seems unattainable. A compromise between the personal and the impersonal would be judged too much from the personal standpoint if more consideration of others were required than the personal perspective regarded as justified. A compromise between the personal and the impersonal would be judged as too little from the impersonal standpoint if less consideration of others were required than the impersonal perspective regarded as justified. By contrast, if we recast the underlying conflict between oneself and others, as I have suggested, in terms of a conflict between egoism and altruism, self-interested reasons and altruistic reasons, then happily a rationally defensible resolution can be seen to emerge.

Samuel Scheffler holds a view very similar to that of Nagel's. (See Samuel Scheffler, *Human Morality* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992). However, Scheffler differs from Nagel in advocating a disproportionate concern for the personal standpoint when it conflicts with the impersonal standpoint. Yet, although Scheffler rightly holds that the impersonal standpoint presents a skewed weighing of the interests of self and others, the appropriate solution is not to disproportionately favor the personal standpoint because that too typically presents a differently skewed weighing of the interests of self and others. Rather, what is needed is a nonquestion-begging weighing of the interests of self and others, that is, a weighing that is supported by a good argument.

43. If people were only capable of a minimal degree of altruism then many more lifeboat-like situations would arise because people would not be capable of sacrificing many of their low-ranking self-interested objectives for the sake of conflicting high-ranking altruistic objectives, and for such cases, even a chance mechanism would not seem to provide a reasonable resolution.
 44. The justification for blaming and censuring such persons would not be based on any possibility for reforming them because we were assuming that they were incapable of reform. Rather the justification would be based on what the persons in question deserve because of their past behavior and on whatever usefulness blaming and censuring them would have in deterring others.
 45. Surely, the most defensible externalist and internalist views would hold that in order to appropriately blame people for not acting on certain reasons, it must be the case that they are, or were, at least capable of acting on those reasons. Internalists can further agree with externalists that moral reasons
-

do not motivate under all conditions, just as externalists can further agree with internalists that moral reasons do, and must, motivate at least under some conditions.

46. Now it might be objected that even if morality is required by a standard of nonquestion-beggingness, that does not provide us with the right kind of reason to be moral. It might be argued that avoiding nonquestion-beggingness is too formal a reason to be moral and that we need a more substantive reason. Happily, the need for a substantive reason to be moral can be met because in this case the relatively formal reason to be moral—namely, avoiding nonquestion-beggingness—itself entails a substantive reason to be moral—namely, to give high-ranking altruistic reasons priority over conflicting lower-ranking self-interested reasons, other things being equal, and to give high-ranking self-interested reasons priority over conflicting lower-ranking altruistic reasons, other things being equal, or to put this same substantive reason somewhat differently, to avoid inflicting basic harm on others for the sake of nonbasic benefit to oneself or others, other things being equal. So, as it turns out, morality as compromise can be shown to provide both relatively formal and substantive reasons to be moral.
47. Jeffrey Reiman. “What Ought ‘Ought’ Implies ‘Can’ Imply?” *Journal of Social Philosophy* (1991): 73-80.
48. In addition, whether a view is question-begging or not depends, in part, on the audience one is addressing. Thus, arguing for a particular conclusion, say, the need to pray daily, may not be question-begging in a particular argumentative context, for example, when directed at Christians and (religious) Jews, but that same argument may be question-begging in a broader argumentative context, for example, one that includes atheists and agnostics.

I have argued that the compromise view does provide a nonquestion-begging resolution to the particular debate between the egoist and the altruist. This is because neither the egoist nor the altruist has any nonquestioning-begging grounds for not allowing both sorts of reasons to have *prima facie* status. So the debate between these views is not about the existence of self-interested or altruistic reasons but about which reasons should have priority (egoists say self-interested reasons always have priority while altruists say that altruistic reasons always have priority). They are really not contesting the existence of the reasons they oppose. However, once both sorts of reasons are allowed *prima facie* status, we do have nonquestion-begging grounds for favoring high-ranking over low-ranking reasons, or so I argue. In that way, I claim, we get Morality as Compromise.

However, if the debate were construed differently, as one between the egoist and the moralist, then no such nonquestion-begging compromise position would emerge. But here, I maintain, there is a reason why a compromise would not, and should not, emerge. It is because morality is already the result of a compromise between egoism and altruism. To require further compromising here would involve an unreasonable double-counting of egoistic reasons. In addition, the reason why, in particular, my Morality as Compromise would not emerge from a debate between the egoist and the moralist is because it is virtually equivalent with just one side of the debate.

49. Here is one way I like to think about the incompleteness or inadequacy of Morality as Compromise. Suppose that John Stuart Mill had given us a nonquestion-begging argument that utilitarianism is rationally preferable to egoism. I think that we would be happy to accept such an argument as useful in our defense of morality, but then we would still want to go on to indicate the ways that utilitarianism is an inadequate morality that needs to be improved upon or reinterpreted in various ways. That is the way I think about Morality as Compromise. It is a useful way to think about morality for the purpose of showing the rational superiority of morality over egoism, but it is not useful for other purposes. That is why to settle the question of which moral requirements should be enforced, I am now shifting the discussion to a comparative evaluation of the political-moral perspectives of libertarianism, welfare liberalism, and socialism.
50. It is important to note that the idealization that was introduced to show the superiority of Morality as Compromise over egoism and altruism renders the view not as useful as it appears to be for determining particular practical moral requirements. This is because the relatively precise rankings of self-interested and altruistic reasons were simply hypothesized to better illustrate the choice over egoism, altruism, and morality. Unfortunately, such relatively precise rankings are not likely to be found in real life.
51. Here I am referring to right-wing libertarians, like John Hospers and Robert Nozick, not left-wing libertarians, like Hillel Steiner and Peter Vallentyne. Left-wing libertarians, unlike right-wing libertarians, assume that each person has an equal right to, or common ownership of, the earth's natural resources. And from this assumption, they do derive a right to welfare, but one that is not as robust as the one that I defend since it does not require the rich and talented to sacrifice any of the products of their labor to support it. Moreover, left-wing libertarians usually fail to see future generations as having welfare rights against existing generations (Steiner explicitly argues against such rights) and so they do not end up endorsing the substantial equality that I defend.

Even among right-wing libertarians, however, there are a few who endorse a minimal right to welfare, for example, Loren Lomasky, *Persons, Rights and the Moral Community* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 125-29. In this address, however, I will be primarily addressing the overwhelming majority of right-wing libertarians who reject any right to welfare, starting from the premises of their view and arguing that these premises support both a right to welfare and substantial equality. Using this strategy here is appropriate, as I indicate in note # 17, because it is possible to work internal to the libertarian view to readjust its weighing of self-interested and altruistic reasons in order to bring it more in line with views to which it is seemingly opposed. Nor would the "back-up" strategy work well for this particular debate, for the reasons I give in note #17.

52. Another objection that has been raised to Morality as Compromise is that it violates the conservativeness of logic, according to which you cannot get out of a valid inference what you don't put in. Stated formally, this thesis about logic maintains that "a predicate or propositional variable cannot occur non-vacuously in the conclusion of a valid inference unless it appears among the
-

premises.” David Hume’s famous thesis that you cannot derive an “ought” from an “is” turns out to be just a special case of this general thesis about the conservativeness of logic. The particular form of the thesis that is relevant to Morality as Compromise simply claims that moral conclusions cannot be derived from nonmoral premises.

For some reason, this sort of challenge to a defense of morality has not been taken very seriously throughout the history of ethics. When Kant is taken to be arguing that morality was grounded in rationality, most attacked the validity of his argument. To my knowledge, no one argued that Kant was trying to do something that was impossible. Similarly, among contemporary philosophers, attempts by Alan Gewirth, Kurt Baier, Christine Korsgaard, myself, and others to ground morality in rationality have not been greeted with claims of impossibility, but rather with specific objections to the derivations we provided. To my knowledge, no one has challenged Gewirth’s claim to derive morality from logical consistency on the grounds that it just could not be done because the premises of Gewirth’s argument were nonmoral. All the criticisms were directed at the particular steps of Gewirth’s argument, which seem to imply that what he was trying to do was at least logically possible. Nor when Korsgaard argues that morality is the product of a certain type of constitutive unity of the self or self-reflectiveness, critics have not replied that you cannot derive the moral from the nonmoral, but rather they have tried to show that even immoral people have that same unity or self-reflectiveness and so that it cannot be the grounds for our moral life.

Still, I do think that there is something to this thesis about logic. Consider how it applies to my argument for Morality as Compromise. The basic premise in my argument for Morality as Compromise is the principle of nonquestion-beggingness, which is a rational requirement for a good argument. So my argument is an attempt to derive morality from this principle of rationality. Accordingly, it moves not from an “is” to an “ought,” but from an “ought” to an “ought.” In fact, I agree with Hume that you cannot derive an “ought” from an “is,” unless the “is” already has a “ought” built into it. At the same time, I take the ought-ought gap to be bridgeable in way that the is-ought gap is not.

Nevertheless, the conservativeness of logic thesis maintains that my argument from “ought” to “ought” can only succeed in defending morality if its premises are moral. The principle of nonquestion-beggingness, however, doesn’t look like a moral premise. It looks like a rational principle for good arguments, which would make it a rational “ought” not a moral “ought.” But there is a sense in which it can also be regarded as moral. What the principle of nonquestion-beggingness requires is that we be fair or unbiased in our use of premises in deriving conclusions. It is a requirement of fair argumentation. It proscribes arguments, irrespective of their validity, where the conclusion is explicitly or blatantly in the premises, but not arguments where the conclusion is implicitly or subtly contained in the premises. In my argument for Morality as Compromise, the requirement of fair argumentation leads to a fair standard for leading one’s life, which is recognizably a moral standard. So there is a sense in which in my argument, the morality of the conclusion is contained in its premises as well.

Even so, the argument for Morality as Compromise remains interesting and important, even with the admission that its moral conclusion is contained in its premises, because the sense that morality is in its premises is neither obvious nor well understood. It definitely takes some doing to show how the proto-morality of fair argumentation supports the morality of ordinary life. This explains why there are many people who accept the premise of my argument (the principle of nonquestion-beggingness) without thinking that they are thereby bound to accept its conclusion (the endorsement of morality in ordinary life). Hence, my argument does serve an important function of helping to bring people to endorse the requirements of morality, even if, as the thesis of the conservation of logic maintains, its moral conclusion is contained in its premises.

53. See John Hospers, *Libertarianism* (Los Angeles: Nash, 1971), chapter 7, and Tibor Machan, *Human Rights and Human Liberties* (Chicago: Nelson-Hall, 1975), 231ff. We should think about the libertarian ideal of liberty as securing for each person the largest morally defensible bundle of liberties possible.
54. Property can also be legitimately acquired on the libertarian view by producing it out of what one already owns or legitimately possesses.
55. Basic needs, if not satisfied, lead to significant lacks or deficiencies with respect to a standard of mental and physical well-being. Thus, a person's needs for food, shelter, medical care, protection, companionship, and self-development are, at least in part, needs of this sort. For a discussion of basic needs, see my *How to Make People Just*, 45-48.
56. Machan, *Libertarianism Defended* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2006), Chapter 20; Eric Mack, "Libertarianism Untamed," *Journal of Social Philosophy* (1991): 64-72; Jan Narveson, "Comments on Sterba's Ethics Article," unpublished circulated paper (1994) and Narveson's *Libertarian Idea* (Peterborough, CA: Broadview Press: 2001), 35.
57. Libertarians have never rejected the need for enforcement when important liberties are at stake.
58. The combined predicate "unreasonable/contrary to reason" in my version of the "ought" implies "can" principle is meant to suggest that the unreasonableness of the sacrifice or restriction being assessed here is not to be determined simply by an assessment of the magnitude of the burden imposed on the agent in and of itself, but rather also requires an assessment of the reasonableness of imposing this burden in light of related burdens and obligations imposed on others.

Moreover, there are moral requirements, such as love your neighbor as yourself (if it is a moral requirement), that violate the "ought" implies "can" principle, except when they are interpreted in an aspirational way. There are also moral requirements that give rise to residual obligations when they cannot be straightforwardly fulfilled, such as a promise to return a borrowed item one has just lost, and on that account do not really violate the "ought" implies "can" principle. There are still other requirements that violate the "ought" implies "can" principle but do not appear to be moral requirements, such as that kleptomaniacs ought not to steal, unless they are interpreted as giving rise to indirect requirements, such as that kleptomaniacs ought to

seek psychological help, in which case these requirements do not violate the “ought” implies “can” principle. See Charles Pigden, “Ought-Implies-Can: Erasmus, Luther and R.M. Hare,” *Sophia* (1990): 2-30; Steve Sapontzis, “‘Ought’ Does Imply ‘Can’,” *Southern Journal of Philosophy* (1991): 383-93; Terrance McConnell “‘Ought’ Implies ‘Can’,” and the Scope of Moral Requirements,” *Philosophia* (1989): 437-54; Alan Montefiore, “‘Ought’ and ‘Can’,” *Philosophical Quarterly* (1954): 24-40.

59. This linkage between morality and reason is expressed in the belief that (true) morality and (right) reason cannot conflict. Some supporters of this linkage have developed separate theories of rationality and reasonableness, contending, for example, that, while egoists are rational, those who are committed to morality are both rational and reasonable. On this interpretation, morality is rationally permissible but not rationally required, since egoism is also rationally permissible. Other supporters of the linkage between reason and morality reject the idea of separate theories of rationality and reasonableness, contending that morality is not just rationally permissible but also rationally required and that egoism is rationally impermissible. But despite their disagreement over whether there is a separate theory of rationality distinct from a theory of reasonableness, most in both groups usually link morality with a notion of reasonableness that incorporates a certain degree of altruism. But for those who do not so link morality with a notion of reasonableness that incorporates a certain degree of altruism, but instead favor a self-interested-based Hobbesian perspective, the first part of my address gives them a nonquestion-begging argument for making that linkage.
60. It should be pointed out that the “ought” implies “can” principle primarily ranges over that part of morality which we can justifiably enforce against others because we can reasonably expect that its requirements are accessible to those to whom they apply.
61. Moreover, while application of the unreasonable/contrary to reason standard of the “ought” implies “can” principle can be disputable in some contexts, in the context where we have to coercively enforce either the liberty of the poor or the liberty of the rich, the standard does offer a clear resolution, one that favors the liberty of the poor over the liberty of the rich.
62. Here again we should think about the libertarian ideal of liberty as securing for each person the largest morally defensible bundle of liberties possible.
63. This requirement “that moral resolutions must resolve conflicts of interest in ways that it is reasonable and not contrary to reason to require everyone affected to accept” is actually the contrapositive of the “ought” implies “can” principle, as I stated it in the text. While the “ought” implies “can” principle claims that if any action is *not reasonable or is contrary to reason to ask or require* a person to do, all things considered, that action is *not morally required or a moral resolution* for that person, all things considered [-R/C(A v Req) -> -MReq/MRes], this requirement claims that if any action is *morally required or a moral resolution* for a person to do, all things considered, that action is *reasonable and not contrary to reason to ask or require* that person to do, all things considered [MReq/MRes -> R/C(A v Re)].

64. The basis for this understanding is the priority of high-ranking altruistic reasons over conflicting low-ranking self-interested reasons that is nonquestion-beggingly justified in Morality as Compromise combined with the further realization (following from our discussion of the libertarian ideal of liberty) that since we must coercively support one or the other of these reasons, we should support (require) the reason that has moral priority, in this case, the high-ranking altruistic reason that corresponds to the negative liberty of the poor not to be interfered with in taking from the surplus of the rich what they require to meet their basic needs.
 65. By the liberty of the rich to meet their luxury needs, I continue to mean the liberty of the rich not to be interfered with when using their surplus possessions for luxury purposes. Similarly, by the liberty of the poor to meet their basic needs, I continue to mean the liberty of the poor not to be interfered with when taking what they require to meet their basic needs from the surplus possessions of the rich.
 66. The employment opportunities offered to the poor must be honorable and supportive of self-respect. To do otherwise would be to offer the poor the opportunity to meet some of their basic needs at the cost of denying some of their other basic needs.
 67. What these “former” poor give back, however, will not likely go to the rich but to others who are still poor.
 68. Of course, there will be cases in which the poor fail to satisfy their basic needs, not because of any direct restriction of liberty on the part of the rich, but because the poor are in such dire need that they are unable even to attempt to take from the rich what they require to meet their basic needs. In such cases, the rich would not be performing any act of commission that would prevent the poor from taking what they require. Yet, even in such cases, the rich would normally be performing acts of commission that would prevent other persons from taking part of the rich’s own surplus possessions and using it to aid the poor. And when assessed from a moral point of view, restricting the liberty of these allies or agents of the poor would not be morally justified for the very same reason that restricting the liberty of the poor to meet their own basic needs would not be morally justified: It would not be reasonable to require all of those affected to accept such a restriction of liberty.
 69. For a time, I thought so myself. See my *Justice for Here and Now*, Chapter 3.
 70. Now it might be objected that the right to welfare which this argument establishes from libertarian premises is not the same as the right to welfare endorsed by welfare liberals. This is correct. We could mark this difference by referring to the right that this argument establishes as “a negative welfare right” and by referring to the right endorsed by welfare liberals as “a positive welfare right.” The significance of this difference is that a person’s negative welfare right can be violated only when other people through acts of commission interfere with its exercise, whereas a person’s positive welfare right can be violated not only by such acts of commission but by acts of omission as well. Nonetheless, this difference will have little practical import, for in recognizing the legitimacy of negative welfare rights, libertarians will
-

come to see that virtually any use of their surplus possessions is likely to violate the negative welfare rights of the poor by preventing the poor from rightfully appropriating (some part of) their surplus goods and resources. So, in order to ensure that they will not be engaging in such wrongful actions, it will be incumbent on them to set up institutions guaranteeing adequate positive welfare rights for the poor. Only then will they be able to use legitimately any remaining surplus possessions to meet their own nonbasic needs. Furthermore, in the absence of adequate positive welfare rights, the poor, either acting by themselves or through their allies or agents, would have some discretion in determining when and how to exercise their negative welfare rights. In order not to be subject to that discretion, libertarians will tend to favor the only morally legitimate way of preventing the exercise of such rights: They will set up institutions guaranteeing adequate positive welfare rights that will then take precedence over the exercise of negative welfare rights. For these reasons, recognizing the negative welfare rights of the poor will ultimately lead libertarians to endorse the same sort of welfare institutions favored by welfare liberals.

71. Again, libertarians have never rejected the need for enforcement when important liberties are at stake.
72. This result in turn correlates with the moral priority of high-ranking altruistic reasons over conflicting low-ranking self-interested reasons.
73. Yet even though libertarians have claimed that the rights they defend are universal rights in the manner I have just explained, it may be that they are simply mistaken in this regard. Even when universal rights are stripped of any claim to being universally recognized or unconditional, still it might be argued that there are no such rights, that is, that there are no rights that all people ought to recognize. But how does one argue for such a view? One cannot argue from the failure of people to recognize such rights because we have already said that such recognition is not necessary. Nor can one argue that not everyone ought to recognize such rights because some lack the capacity to do so. This is because “ought” does implies “can” here, so that the obligation to recognize certain rights only applies to those who actually have or have had at some point the capacity to do so. Thus, the existence of universal rights is not ruled out by the existence of individuals who have never had the capacity to recognize such rights. It is only ruled out by the existence of individuals who can recognize these rights but for whom it is correct to say that it is at least permissible, all things considered, not to do so. But we have just seen that even a minimal libertarian moral ideal supports a universal right to welfare. And I have earlier argued in this address when “ought” is understood both morally and self-interestedly, a nonquestion-begging conception to rationality favors morality over self-interest when they conflict. So for those capable of recognizing universal rights, it simply is not possible to argue that they, all things considered, ought not to do so. It is also worth noting that the question whether there are interpersonal conflicts of interests, and if so, how best to resolve them that seems to arise in pre-Enlightenment philosophy parallels the more modern question of whether there are interpersonal conflicts of liberty, and if so, how best to resolve them.

74. Actually, I only argued earlier that the poor must take advantage of whatever opportunities are available to them to engage in mutually beneficial work, but it is this broader claim that I am making here that is required.
 75. <http://www.worldhunger.org/articles/Learn/world%20hunger%20facts%202002>.
 76. Thomas Pogge. *World Poverty and Human Rights* (Cambridge, Polity, 2002), 204ff.
 77. Peter Singer. "What Should a Billionaire Give – and What Should You?" *New York Times* (2006).
 78. *Ibid.*
 79. <http://www.balance.org/articles/factsheet2001.html>.
 80. *Ibid.*
 81. *Ibid.*
 82. *Ibid.*
 83. Lester Brown. *Plan B 2.0* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2006), 84-91. See also Lester Brown, *Outgrowing the Earth* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2004), especially Chapter 5.
 84. Linda Starke, ed. *State of the World 2004* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2004), 9. For a lower comparative consumption comparison, that still supports the same conclusion, see Jared Diamond, "What's Your Consumption Factor?" *International Herald Tribune* (January 3, 2008): 6.
 85. See Starke, *State of the World 2004*. There is no way that the resource consumption of the U.S. can be matched by developing and underdeveloped countries, and even if it could be matched, doing so would clearly lead to ecological disaster. See *Planet Under Stress*, edited by Constance Mungall and Digby McLaren (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990) and *World Hunger: Twelve Myths*, Frances Lappe and Joseph Collins (New York: Grove Press, 1986).
 86. To say that future generations have right against existing generations, we can simply mean that there are enforceable requirements against existing generations that would benefit or prevent harm to future generations.
 87. Of course, there is always the problem of others not doing their fair share. Nevertheless, as long as your sacrifice would avoid some basic harm to others, either now or in the future, it would still seem reasonable to claim that you would remain under an obligation to make that sacrifice, regardless of what others are doing.
 88. Of course, it could be argued that even if we continue our extravagant consumption of nonrenewable resources, future generations will be able to make up for the loss with some kind of a technological fix. We can even imagine that future generations will be able to make everything they need out of, say, sand and water. While surely this is possible, it would not be reasonable for us to risk the basic welfare of future generations on just such a possibility, any more than it would be reasonable for persons starting out in the lowest paying jobs in the business world to start wildly borrowing and spending on themselves and their families, relying just on the possibility that in 15-20 years their incomes will rise astronomically so then they then
-

could easily pay off the large debts they are now amassing. There are also many examples of human civilizations that failed to find an appropriate technological fix. See, for example, Jared Diamond, *Collapse* (New York: Penguin, 2005), and Ronald Wright, *A Short History of Progress* (New York: Carroll & Graf, 2004).

89. What makes this an equal utilization of resources over place and time is that the utilization is limited to fulfilling people's basic needs. Of course, once basic needs are met among existing generations, renewable resources may be used for meeting nonbasic needs in ways that do not jeopardize the meeting of the basic needs of future generations. In addition, existing generations can also justifiably meet their nonbasic needs if this is a byproduct of efficiently meeting just their basic needs. Naturally, this holds equally for each subsequent generation as well.
 90. Derek Parfit. *Persons and Reasons* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984).
 91. A similar example was used by James Woodward in "The Non-Identity Problem," *Ethics* (1986): 804-31. Woodward also provides the example of Viktor Frankl who suggests that his imprisonment in a Nazi concentration camp enabled him to develop "certain resources of character, insights into the human condition and capacities for appreciation" that he would not otherwise have had. At the same time, we clearly want to say that the Nazis unjustifiably violated Frankl's rights by so imprisoning him. Woodward, p. 809. See also Norman Daniels, "Intergenerational Justice," *Stanford Encyclopedia* (2003).
 92. Again, to appeal here to simply libertarian premises, giving up or sacrificing the satisfaction of basic or nonbasic needs can be taken to imply merely noninterference for the sake of the satisfaction of such needs.
-