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OBJECTIVISM AND RELATIONAL GOOD*

By Connie S. Rosati

I. Introduction

In his critique of egoism as a doctrine of ends, G. E. Moore famously challenges the idea that something can be "good for" someone.[1] Moore asks, "In what sense can a thing be good *for me*? It is obvious, if we reflect, that the only thing which can belong to me, which can be *mine*, is something which is good, and not the fact that it is good. When therefore, I talk of anything I get as 'my own good,' I must mean either that the thing I get is good, or that my possessing it is good."[2] As Moore's remarks indicate, the notion of "my own good" strikes him as strangely proprietary; and, as he goes on to argue, its proprietary nature precludes it from being normative. In this respect, Moore appears to have found the expression 'good for me' akin to the peculiar expression 'true for me.'[3] Just as the latter expression suggests a kind of truth that the individual herself could have exclusive reason to believe, so the former expression suggests a kind of value that the individual herself could have exclusive reason to promote, and that, Moore evidently thought, would be no kind of value at all. As

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[1] G. E. Moore, *Principia Ethica* (1903), revised edition, ed. Thomas Baldwin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), sec. 59.

[2] Ibid. (Moore's emphasis).

[3] See Thomas Hurka, "'Good' and 'Good For'," *Mind* 96, no. 381 (1987): 71–73. Hurka, who agrees with Moore in rejecting talk about the good for, makes the analogy to "true for" explicit. In canvassing the sundry meanings of 'good for,' none of which he finds unconfused, Hurka considers uses which treat what is good for a person as what she believes good, either in relation to herself or impersonally. He remarks, "If someone falsely believes that p we do not say that p is 'true for her.' That would go too far toward endorsing her belief, and we should have the same worry here. If we mean only that someone believes a thing good, that is all we should say, leaving issues of truth or acceptability wide open" (73). I am suggesting that a related, if not identical, parallel underlies Moore's thinking.

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Moore expresses it, "the only reason I can have for aiming at 'my own good' is that it is *good absolutely* that what I so call should belong to me. . . . But if it is *good absolutely* that I should have it, then everyone else has as much reason for aiming at my having it, as I have myself."[4] The expression 'good for me,' insofar as it denotes something *normative,* must simply be a convoluted way of saying that my possessing a thing is good *tout court.*

Moore's challenge to the notion of "my own good" has implications not just for egoism, of course, but for the very idea of individual welfare, at least insofar as the idea of welfare or *good for a person* signifies something more than that the thing a person gets is good or that the state of her possessing it is good.[5] Insofar as it does have implications for the notion of individual welfare, Moore's challenge presents a problem not only for welfare consequentialism, the dominant contemporary rival to his own "ideal" utilitarianism, but for any theory of ethics that assigns us a duty to promote individual welfare.[6] The challenge might fairly be understood as partly normative, at least in its implications, for ontology circumscribes obligation, but it is, at its core, metaphysical. If Moore is right, the notion of a person's "own good" or what is "good *for* her" reflects a fundamental error about the sorts of value properties that exist, and, as a consequence, no plausible objectivism about ethics could be welfarist, at least not in the welfarist's sense.

[4] Moore, *Principia Ethica,* sec. 59. Jan Narveson has asked why we should bother to consider seriously Moore's challenge when the claim he makes—that everyone has as much reason for aiming at my good as I do—is, as Narveson sees it, so implausible. If X satisfies one of my desires, Narveson claims, it doesn't follow that anyone else has a reason to help me secure X. Because Narveson's puzzlement might be shared, perhaps it would be helpful to highlight at least two points on which he and I evidently part company; our differences with respect to these points help to explain our differing reactions to Moore's challenge. First, whereas Narveson is inclined to accept a desire theory of welfare, I believe we have pretty conclusive reasons to reject any such theory. I have argued against certain desire theories of personal good elsewhere. See Connie S. Rosati, "Persons, Perspectives, and Full-Information Accounts of the Good," *Ethics* 105, no. 2 (1995): 296–325; Rosati, "Naturalism, Normativity, and the Open Question Argument," *Noûs* 29, no. 1 (1995): 46–70; and Rosati, "Agency and the Open Question Argument," *Ethics* 113, no. 3 (2003): 490–527. For other critical discussion of desire theories, see, e.g., J. David Velleman, "Brandt's Definition of 'Good'," *Philosophical Review* 97 (1988): 353–71; David Sobel, "Full Information Accounts of Well-Being," *Ethics* 104, no. 4 (1994): 784–810; Don Loeb, "Full-Information Theories of Individual Good," *Social Theory and Practice* 21, no. 1 (1995): 1–30; and Wayne Sumner, *Welfare, Happiness, and Ethics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), chap. 5. Second, Narveson apparently maintains what I would deny, namely, that good for can (or does?) give rise only to agent-relative reasons. See note 33 below. I am inclined to take Moore's challenge seriously, because I think we still need an analysis of *good for,* as well as a better understanding of the sorts of reasons a person's good might give to her or to anyone else.

[5] Michael Smith has argued that Moore's challenge also has implications for the very idea of agent-relative value. See Michael Smith, "Neutral and Relative Value after Moore," *Ethics* 113, no. 3 (2003): 576–98.

[6] That would include the broadly Kantian view I favor, a view that makes central the proper valuing of persons and that regards proper valuing of persons as constituted in part by an appropriate regard for their welfare.

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Moore's argument has recently been revived in a way that makes explicit the broader challenge it poses to the notion of welfare or good for a person. Donald Regan, a largely unreconstructed Moorean, elaborates on Moore's argument, employing it, as he says, to "cast doubt on a proposition which many people would regard as the first axiom of moral theory," namely, that morality is fundamentally concerned with advancing the welfare or well-being of individuals.[7] Regan claims we have no need of the notion of well-being or *good for a person,* which, so far as he can see, captures nothing not already captured by Moore's idea of good possessed by a person, or as Regan prefers to describe it, *good occurring in a person's life.* I will here follow Regan in referring to theorists who treat *being good for a person,* or *being good for P,* as a distinct normative property, and who may give normative primacy to individual welfare or personal good, as "good-for theorists," and I will frequently refer to Mooreans as "good theorists," which is not, I hasten to add, to endorse Regan's view.[8]

Regan makes clear that in denying the distinctness and normative primacy of good for, he does not mean to deny that we ought to be concerned with what goes on in one another's lives. Moreover, he remarks more than once that the Moorean concept of intrinsic value may well encompass everything encompassed by the good-for theorist's concept of welfare: the best account of *the* good, he assures us, will likely include whatever is plausibly *the* good *for* individuals, even if it includes a good bit more than this.[9] The question that interests him is *why* we ought to be concerned with what goes on in one another's lives. As he expresses it, "I

[7] Donald H. Regan, "Why Am I My Brother's Keeper?" (hereafter "Brother's Keeper"), in R. Jay Wallace, Philip Pettit, Samuel Scheffler, and Michael Smith, eds., *Reason and Value: Themes from the Moral Philosophy of Joseph Raz* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2004), 202. See also Hurka, "'Good' and 'Good For'."

[8] I say that these theorists *may* give normative primacy to good for, because one can believe that *being good for P* is a distinct normative property or concept without believing that personal good or welfare has primacy from the standpoint of moral theory. My interest in this essay lies just with whether good-for talk concerns a distinct normative property, though what I say on this score no doubt bears on the question of whether good or good for (or neither) is fundamental to morality and moral theory. I explain my preference for the expression 'personal good' in Connie S. Rosati, "Personal Good," in Terry Horgan and Mark Timmons, eds., *Metaethics after Moore* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 108–9.

[9] Regan says, more precisely, that on the "best versions of each theory of value, '*the* good' and '*the* good for' *may* have the same extension" (Regan, "Brother's Keeper," 209; final emphasis added). But he sometimes seems to think it likely that they will have the same extension. In particular, he seems confident that at least his own view of the good, which includes pleasure as a part of every state that ought to be promoted, will capture everything that good-for theorists deem a good for (210). Indeed, he later considers as a challenge to his view the suggestion that by treating the good as consisting only in pleasurable experiences of worthy objects or activities, the Moorean shows himself really to be interested in the good for (value *for* an individual) after all (221). As I have expressed it in the text, what is important is that the extension of *good,* even if broader than that of *good for P,* is likely to encompass all of the good for. On Regan's view of the good, the extension of *good* may in fact be no broader than that of *good for P.* But whether or not this is so will depend on how Regan ultimately spells out the details of his view, as well as on the correct analysis of *good for P.*

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do not ask, like Cain, *whether* I am my brother's keeper," but, rather, "*why* [I am] my brother's keeper."[10] The good-for theorist, he maintains, can offer no coherent answer, not one, at least, that does not rest on a prior Moorean conception of value that renders good for otiose. "So far as I can see," Regan tells us, "well-being as a normative concept does not figure in the best account of why we are obligated to care about what happens in others' lives (or, for that matter, in our own)."[11]

One might be tempted to dismiss the broader challenge. Whatever the merits of Moore's criticism when directed against egoism, one might argue, it ought not to lead us to abandon common sense.[12] After all, what could be more obviously true than that things can be good or bad, not merely in an absolute sense, but *for us*? What could be clearer than that our lives can go better or worse, not just, to borrow Henry Sidgwick's memorable phrase, from the point of view of the universe, but *from our point of view*? Yet as clear and obvious as this may be, I feel the pull of Regan's rhetoric when he virtually dares the good-for theorist to pony up and offer a genuine analysis of welfare, or at least some story that would vindicate *being good for P* as a normative concept or property distinct from *being good.* A striking feature of the rather extensive literature on welfare is, as Regan rightly emphasizes, how little in the way of analysis good-for theorists provide. As far as I have been able to discover, no real effort has been expended trying to explain, as Regan puts it, what the "for" is doing in the notion of "good for," or for that matter, what the "good" is doing.[13]

In this essay, I want to explore what I will from here on call the "Moorean challenge," focusing exclusively on Regan's recent and more extensive presentation and development of it.[14] I am interested in this challenge for

[10] Ibid., 202.

[11] Ibid., 203.

[12] In the context of Moore's critique of egoism as a doctrine of ends, his claims about "my own good" are preliminary to showing that egoism involves a contradiction. Moore construes egoism as the view that each of us "ought rationally to hold: My own greatest happiness is the only good thing there is." He claims, as we have seen, that the *good* of a thing cannot be private; the only reason a person can have for aiming at "her own good" is that it is good *absolutely* that she possess it, but if it is good absolutely, then everyone has reason to aim at it. So when the egoist holds that a person's happiness or interest ought to be her sole end, this can only mean that it is *the sole good* and the only thing at which everyone ought to aim. "What Egoism holds, therefore, is that *each* man's happiness is the sole good—that a number of different things are *each* of them the only good thing there is—an absolute contradiction" (Moore, *Principia Ethica,* sec. 59). For criticism of Moore's critique of egoism, see C. D. Broad, "Certain Features of Moore's Ethical Doctrines," in Paul Arthur Schilpp, ed., *The Philosophy of G. E. Moore,* 3d ed. (La Salle, IL: Open Court Publishing Co., 1968), 43–50.

[13] Of those who have offered what they claim to be analyses of personal good, only Stephen Darwall, as far as I have been able to discover, has said anything that would bear on Regan's question. See Stephen Darwall, *Welfare and Rational Care* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002), in which he offers an analysis of a person's good as consisting in what one ought to want out of concern for her or *for her sake.*

[14] For a discussion of Moore's challenge in the context of providing a fitting-attitude or "buck passing" analysis of personal value, see Toni Rønnow-Rasmussen, "Analysing Per-

several reasons, two of which I want to mention from the start. First, although much has been written about welfare or personal good, we still lack a fully adequate theory, and the Moorean's claims provide a useful entry into the question of how to understand the basic normative idea of something's being good for a person.[15] Second, if objectivism or realism about ethics is true, then our most immediate access to ethical facts, I suspect, is likely to be our access to facts about individual welfare. Ask any parent raising a child or any person engaged in caring for an infirm parent or an ailing partner what he or she is doing—anyone who does these things without ulterior motive, that is—and however skeptical they may otherwise be about morality, they will tell you that they are looking out for their child's or parent's or partner's interests. Ask any person planning a life for herself why she seeks what she does—any person whose choices rest not on avowed self-sacrifice, that is—and she will likely report not merely that she finds those undertakings or pursuits interesting, challenging, important, or valuable but that she believes they suit her and that engagement with them will enable her to lead a happy life.[16] If normative facts exist, I conjecture, they get their first grip on us in relation to those we love, including ourselves.[17] If these conjectures are correct, then making sense of good for will be important to vindicating a plausible objectivism.

sonal Value," *Journal of Ethics* 11, no. 1 (2007). As I understand it, the notion of personal value that Rønnow-Rasmussen has in mind is not identical to the notion of personal good or welfare.

[15] For preliminary work in this direction, see Rosati, "Personal Good."

[16] Regan, more than once, tries to enlist in support of his challenge to the "usefulness" of good for Joseph Raz's claim that we do not pursue our goals because doing so will further or enhance our welfare. Regan, "Brother's Keeper," 203–4, 219. See Joseph Raz, *The Morality of Freedom* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), 316–17. I think the claim is false. I would go this far with Raz: we *often* undertake the goals we do because we believe them to be valuable, and when asked why we undertake them, our explanation often appeals to their value rather than to the benefit to us. But I believe these facts are compatible with what I also think is clearly true, namely, that we pursue the goals we do because we believe that they will (or may, where we are uncertain) enhance our welfare. The ordinary person tends not to talk in terms of his or her welfare or well-being, but that is because the terms 'welfare' and 'well-being' are mainly philosophers' terms. Suppose we ask any ordinary person not "Why do you pursue X?" but, rather, "Of the many things you believe to be valuable and worth pursuing, why do you pursue X rather than Y?" I conjecture that a typical response would be something along the following lines: "I enjoy X more" or "I believed that, in the long run, X would make me happier." Of course, a person might also tell us that X would give her a life she found more meaningful, but we often think of the best lives for us as lives that we will find meaningful.

[17] Here I express another disagreement with Regan, who suggests, in acknowledging that there is something to the good-for theorist's position, that "We come to the idea of value through our experiences of wanting and desiring and feeling needs, and so it may seem that when we ascribe value to something, we are necessarily ascribing value 'for' ourselves." Desire, he indicates, seems to him to be "implicated in the aetiology, and to some extent the continuing plausibility, of the idea that value is essentially 'value for'" (Regan, "Brother's Keeper," 209). Although our desires and felt needs may have something to do with the aetiology of "good for," I think a more plausible account would appeal to our experience of loving people (including ourselves) and seeing them, apparently, suffer or thrive.

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Before turning to Regan's arguments, I want to note that some philosophers have argued for a position that is the direct inverse of Regan's, namely, that *nothing* is good *simply,* things can only be good *for* or good *in a way.*[18] A few have evidently claimed, even more stringently, that nothing can be good unless it is good *for someone.*[19] The welfare theorist need not go so far. On the contrary, she can allow that even if good for turns out to have normative priority from the moral point of view, some states are simply good and so ought, other things equal, to be promoted.

My aim in this essay is certainly not to argue either that nothing can be good unless it is good for or that good for is less epistemically and metaphysically problematic than Moorean good.[20] Instead, my aim will be, in the first instance, to explicate the Moorean challenge, the better to clear away certain confusions. Moore, and Regan following him, and no doubt other neo-Mooreans besides, maintain that *good* is unanalyzable.

[18] See, e.g., Judith Jarvis Thomson, *Goodness and Advice* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001).

[19] Larry Temkin argues persuasively against this view in "Harmful Goods, Harmless Bads," in R. G. Frey and Christopher W. Morris, eds., *Value, Welfare, and Morality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993). Temkin cites for this view Bernard Williams, "The Point of View of the Universe: Sidgwick and the Ambitions of Ethics," *Cambridge Review* (1982), reprinted in Williams, *Making Sense of Humanity and Other Philosophical Essays, 1982–1993* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); and Philippa Foot, "Utilitarianism and the Virtues," *Mind* 94, no. 374 (1985): 196–211.The view Temkin criticizes should not be confused with what Christian Coons has called the "dependence thesis," which is the view that the value of states of affairs depends on the value of individuals. See Christian Coons, *The Value of States and the Value of Individuals* (doctoral dissertation, University of California, Davis, 2006). On Coons's view, states can be good—that is, they can merit promotion—only for the sake of valuable individuals, and states can be promoted for the sake of an individual either out of respect or concern for her. Coons here exploits Darwall's suggestion that concern and respect are the basic normative attitudes we bear toward persons in order to defend a broader thesis about the structure of value. See Darwall, *Welfare and Rational Care.*

[20] Regan goes to some efforts to explain why he thinks that the concept of welfare faces the same epistemological and metaphysical difficulties as Moorean good, perhaps because some welfare theorists have suggested otherwise. But whether good for faces the same difficulties as Moorean good surely depends on what we may yet learn about what it is for something to be good for someone. So I do not think that the matter can be settled at this juncture. In any event, no part of my efforts to understand good for depend on the claim that good for is less problematic than Moorean good. Regan's claims assume that the concept of welfare is "irreducibly normative." He seems to think that means that the concept does not admit of analysis, and, at least, that it could not be a natural property. He invokes an argument of Stephen Darwall's which he takes to show that the concept of welfare is irreducibly normative. See Darwall, *Welfare and Rational Care,* 11. But Darwall thinks that the concept does admit of analysis, and he thinks he has provided the correct analysis: on his view, what is good for P is what one ought to want for P out of concern for her or for her sake. Darwall has indicated to me, in an e-mail exchange, that he does not mean to preclude the possibility that the "ought" which figures in his analysis of good for and renders it normative could be a natural property, in the fashion of the Cornell realists; but it cannot be given a definitional reduction and is in that sense irreducibly normative. Regan appears to have a number of related targets in his essay: the idea that good for is better off epistemologically and metaphysically than good, the idea that good for has normative primacy, the idea that good for is fully normative, and the idea that good for is independent of (not parasitic on) Moorean good.

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One could take the position that *good for P,* too, is unanalyzable, and if that is right, then making out that *being good for P* is a distinct normative property cannot require that one provide an analysis of it.[21] I am not inclined to think that *good for P* is unanalyzable, and, indeed, I have made preliminary efforts at an analysis elsewhere.[22] What I hope to do here is to provide an account of the form and function of *good for P,* with the aim of characterizing the distinct normative property that apparently figures in talk about a person's good. The account will elucidate what ordinary good-for talk is about, while making sense of what must arguably be common ground among good-for theorists, regardless of whether they think *being good for P* is analyzable and regardless of the form of analysis they might favor. I cannot make a complete case for good for, of course, any more than the good theorist can make a complete case for good. I shall not, in any event, be concerned to defend the "axiom" at which Regan takes aim. My interest lies in clarifying our theoretical alternatives so that we might better decide what to admit into our moral ontology and better assess what may be at stake in whether objectivists treat good or good for as fundamental.

II. The Moorean Challenge

The Moorean challenge is best understood, I believe, on the model of J. L. Mackie's skeptical critique of objective values.[23] Recall that Mackie did not challenge our ordinary understanding of what our normative sentences mean or our understanding of the truth conditions for those sentences. On the contrary, he allowed that we intend to talk about objectively prescriptive properties and that our utterances would express truths about the instantiation of just those properties, if only there were any.[24]

The good theorist likewise does not challenge our understanding of what our sentences mean (of what we intend by our utterances) when we talk, as we so commonly do, about what is good for people. At least, the good theorist is not best understood as challenging our understanding of what we mean. After all, ordinary speakers are presumably competent with both the concepts *good* and *good for.* When we talk about what is

[21] Regan himself ("Brother's Keeper," 207) seems to allow that the good-for theorist could take the position that good-for is unanalyzable, though he thinks this would reveal a point he means to press, namely, that good for "has no metaphysical and epistemological advantage over Moore's good." See note 20.

[22] See Rosati, "Personal Good." *Good for* is, strictly speaking, a relation, and this is, as I explain later, important to understanding the nature of personal good; those items that stand in the requisite relation to P have the property of *being good for P.* For ease of discussion, I sometimes talk simply in terms of good for when I have in mind the property rather than the relation, but the context should make clear when I have the property in mind.

[23] J. L. Mackie, *Ethics: Inventing Right and Wrong* (New York: Penguin, 1977).

[24] Mackie's skeptical argument is, as has been pointed out in varying ways, premised on an implausible idea of what objective normative properties would have to be like and of what we are committed to in talking as if there were such properties.

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good for someone, we fully intend, as the good theorist recognizes, to talk about people's welfare, and the sentences we utter in so doing are best understood as expressing propositions about people's welfare, not propositions about the good. The good theorist is also not best understood as challenging our understanding of the truth conditions for our claims about what is good for people.[25] When we assert the sentence

(a) "X is good for P"

we express the proposition

(b) *X is good for P,*

which is presumably true if and only if

(c) X is good for P.

It might seem that because the good theorist believes that the only truths about value are truths about the good, we must understand his challenge differently. The good theorist must instead be claiming that proposition (b) is true if and only if

(d) X is good,

or perhaps that (b) is true if and only if, to adopt Moore's other phrasing,

(e) P's possessing X is good.

Given the platitude that

(f) The proposition that p is true if and only if p,

this understanding of the challenge would have the Moorean rejecting the disquoted truth condition, and so accusing us of being confused about the truth conditions for our own claims.[26] Alternatively, the good theorist

[25] See Gilbert Harman, "Moral Relativism," in Gilbert Harman and J. J. Thomson, *Moral Relativism and Moral Objectivity* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), 3–5. Harman likens his claim about moral relativity to Einstein's claim about the relativity of an object's mass. He contends that Einstein's Theory of Relativity does not involve the claim that people are mistaken about the meaning of their judgments about an object's mass; rather, the truth conditions for their claims are not as they suppose, "because the only truths there are in the area are relative truths" (ibid., 4). Harman, in discussing evaluative relativity (ibid., 14–16), treats good for as relativistic, but if he means 'good for' in the welfarist sense, then the good-for theorist would contend that he confuses relativism with relationalism.

[26] See Paul Boghossian, "What Is Relativism?" in Patrick Greenough and Michael P. Lynch, eds., *Truth and Realism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006). I here follow Boghossian, who rejects Harman's ideas about how to characterize relativism in the context of his own effort to develop a model for how to understand the discovery that truths in a partic-

must be accusing us of repeatedly misspeaking. We mean to say "X is good," which expresses the proposition *X is good*, and is true if and only if X is good; or we mean to say "P's possessing X is good," which expresses the proposition *P's possessing X is good*, and is true if and only if P's possessing X is good. But we continually slip and say "X is good for P."

Putting to one side any difficulties internal to these understandings of the Moorean challenge, what is important for present purposes is that either understanding would fail to capture the Moorean's claim to be baffled as to what we could be talking about when we talk about what is good *for* an individual. Were we simply confused about the truth conditions for our own claims, the correct truth conditions being ones the Moorean well understands, or were we merely misspeaking, our slips being easily identified and corrected, there would be nothing to baffle the Moorean. We intend to talk about what is good for P, and we take the judgment that X is good for P to be true if and only if X is good for P. *This* is what the Moorean finds unintelligible.

The good theorist surely means to make a claim about the normative facts: just as Mackie's more general challenge seeks to call into doubt the existence of objectively prescriptive properties, so the Moorean challenge seeks to call into doubt the existence of a distinct normative property of *being good for P*. Of course, we talk as if there were such a distinct property—ordinary normative discourse is littered with claims about what is good for us, quite apart from claims about the goodness or value of states of affairs. The good theorist argues, in effect, that we are in error. Obviously, the good theorist cannot endorse a global error theory; rather, he advances a *local* error theory with respect to good for.

A. The anti-good-for argument

The good theorist's "anti-good-for argument" can be presented more formally as follows:

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ular domain are relativistic. Boghossian first rejects a model according to which the discovery of relativism in a domain is the discovery that the propositions expressed by sentences in that domain are unexpectedly relational. This model, he claims, would not account either for classic cases of relativistic discoveries in physics or for relativistic claims about morality. He then rejects Harman's model, which would treat the discovery of relativism not as a discovery about the propositions expressed by typical sentences in a domain but as a discovery about their truth conditions. As Boghossian explains, the model would have speakers misunderstanding the truth conditions for their claims and would amount to abandoning the platitude expressed in (f). He finally arrives at a model that treats discoveries of previously undetected relativism as "correcting our view of what the facts are." Boghossian's conclusion regarding how to model relativistic claims treats relativism about a domain, in this regard at least, as akin to Mackie's skepticism insofar as it corrects for a view about the facts that was "in error." Of course, the situation I explore in this essay is just the inverse of the one that interests Boghossian: the "discovery" the Moorean means to press is not that truths about value are unexpectedly relativistic but that truths about value, contrary to our good-for talk, are never relational in the way we suppose.

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(1) The sentence "X is good for P" expresses the proposition *X is good for P,* which is true if and only if X has the property of *being good for P.*
(2) There is no such property as *being good for P.*
(3) So there are no facts about what is good for P.
(4) Therefore, all sentences of the form "X is good for P" are, strictly speaking, not true.

This much gets us to the good theorist's negative conclusion with respect to good for. Of course, as we have already seen, the good theorist does not maintain that we point to *nothing* real when we mistakenly talk as if there were good-for facts. We can, accordingly, understand the argument to continue as follows:

(5) There is, however, an absolute or monadic property *good.*
(6) Moreover, this monadic property can be instantiated by things that P possesses, or by P's possessing X, or by things that occur within the life of P.
(7) Therefore, among the truths about value are truths of the form
X is good and possessed by P,
P's possessing X is good, and
X is good and occurs in the life of P.
(8) The only truths about value and persons that approximate to what we might mean to express by utterances of the form, X is good for P, are in fact truths of the form
X is good and possessed by P,
P's possessing X is good, and
X is good and occurs in the life of P.
(9) Therefore, if we are to speak truly and precisely about value and persons, we should make only judgments of the form
X is good and possessed by P,
P's possessing X is good, and
X is good and occurs in the life of P.[27]

Having presented his negative case and offered his alternative formulations, the good theorist argues, in short, that either the predicate "is good for" denotes nothing at all or it denotes "good." From here on, I will focus on the formulation "X is good and occurs in the life of P" or *good occurring in the life of P.* I do so not merely because that is the formulation Regan

[27] In "What Is Relativism?" Boghossian treats the relativist as urging us to substitute for our claims about monadic properties those relational truths that are the "closest truths in the vicinity." I am here suggesting that the Moorean should be understood as urging a reform in the opposite direction.

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adopts but because I believe that the best construal of it likely provides the best construal of the other formulations as well.

Now we will want to be careful in how we understand step 9 of the anti-good-for argument. The good theorist need not be understood as advocating that we purge ordinary discourse of good-for talk (as if we could do that), or even (more realistically) that we theorists refrain from such talk. After all, the good theorist's point concerns the facts, and so long as we keep ourselves straight about those, the good theorist can allow that no harm need come from our continuing to use good-for talk as shorthand for his more accurate but awkward locutions.[28]

I want to focus on two steps in the argument—steps 2 and 8. I will consider step 8 in Section III below, but I will begin, here, with step 2. Why, according to Regan, should we doubt that there is any such property as *being good for P*? Regan argues that good for is a chimera in the classical sense, a fiction cobbled together from not merely incongruous but, in this case, contradictory elements.[29]

Regan relies on certain critical assumptions in setting out his argument. He assumes that when something is good simpliciter, we are *required* to care about it: a *reason* exists to care about it and to *promote* it.[30] The reason in play is an external, agent-neutral reason, so the "we" means just what it says: *any* agent should care about and, ceteris paribus, promote something insofar as it is good. As Regan acknowledges, some will reject his externalism about reasons, insisting that an agent has a reason to care about and promote something only insofar as she takes an interest in it.[31] For purposes of the present discussion, however, we can grant Regan his assumptions. Even if the good-for theorist believes that an individual's good gives him agent-relative reasons, she can allow that it also gives him—and anyone else—agent-neutral reasons. We needn't worry here about whether such reasons are also, strictly speaking, external reasons. The main point is that the good-for theorist can and should concede that it would rob personal good of the possibility of any important place in moral theory if facts about what is good for a person only provided

[28] Compare Mark Kalderon's discussion of "revolutionary" fictionalism in Mark Eli Kalderon, *Moral Fictionalism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2005), 136–42. See also Boghossian, "What Is Relativism?" On Boghossian's construal of relativism, the relativist is engaged in a "reforming project" which would urge us to "abandon the absolutist discourse we currently have in favor of a discourse which accommodates [the relativist's] conviction that the only facts in the vicinity of that discourse are certain kinds of relational facts." Of course, we would expect the impact of such abandonment to vary. It is one thing to give up talk about absolute motion in favor of motion relative to a frame of reference; it is quite another to give up talk about absolute moral requirements in favor of moral relativism. In the former case, we still have motion, just better understood; in the latter, we (arguably) no longer have morality. But then, if the relativist is right, we never had it. Still, there may be pragmatic effects of absolutist moral talk that we would want to retain, even if we became convinced that the relativist was right about the facts.

[29] Regan, "Brother's Keeper," 218.

[30] Ibid., 211 and note 22.

[31] Ibid., note 22.

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agent-relative reasons.[32] Ordinary ethical thought, in any case, arguably does not treat personal good as purely prudential and normatively agent-relative; and so the good-for theorist would, in my view, make a mistake in treating it as such, at least insofar as she means to capture the notion of good for that figures so prominently in our everyday lives. From the standpoint of moral theorizing, if we suppose that ordinary ethical thought affords some insight into morality, moral theory must be responsive to it, whether or not, in the end, moral theory properly gives primacy to good for.[33]

[32] I am prepared to say, then, that the fact that something is good for a person gives agent-neutral reasons, but I am not prepared to say, as Regan seems to, that we can be required to *care* about something. Care is, after all, a conative state, and it is uncertain to what extent we have control over our carings. Even if it does not make sense to say that we ought to care, we can still reasonably say both that it is appropriate to care and that one ought to behave as would someone who did care. On the latter idea, see Darwall, *Welfare and Rational Care*.

[33] These last few sentences are intended to provide what I acknowledge to be an all too quick reply to the surprising resistance I have encountered to the suggestion that facts about what is good for a person provide agent-neutral reasons. David Sobel has suggested, for instance, that it is optional whether the good-for theorist treats good for as of great moral significance and as giving rise to agent-neutral reasons. I doubt this, at least if the good-for theorist is interested in whatever property 'good for P' expresses and whatever facts there may be about what is good for persons. I doubt it for the reasons I have gestured toward in the text. Ordinary moral thought and talk seem to presuppose that the good of other people makes at least some claim on us, and not merely the good of those with whom we have special relationships or to whom we have special obligations. Of course, a theorist can *stipulate* a notion of good for that treats it as purely prudential. But it is unclear what interest such a notion could have or how it could be normative. What might it capture that is left out by the notion of good for that figures in our ordinary talk and in the work of most welfare theorists? And why should the individual herself be interested in her own purely prudential good for unless it captures something otherwise missed? Sobel has also suggested that my position may rule out egoism. I am not convinced that it does. Egoism, in my view, is not properly classified as a moral theory; rather, it is a theory of what individuals have most reason to do that competes with morality. The egoist can allow that any person's good gives one a reason to act, while maintaining that one's own good alone gives overriding reason to act. It seems to me, then, that the egoist could take on board what I have to say about good for; any difficulties in doing so are internal to egoism itself. Richard Kraut has correctly taken my remarks to imply that we each have reason to promote the well-being of every other person. But we each only need the help of certain others, he has reminded me, and so why suppose all moral agents should help? I am inclined to think that this sort of resistance to the idea that personal good gives rise to agent-neutral reasons can be overcome by further reflection on what that might involve. P's good, for example, can give everyone a reason to act, even if each of us still has overriding reason to do something other than act to promote P's good. We have reason, for example, to support some division of labor with respect to promoting other people's good; it makes sense to attend to those we know well and whom we are best positioned to aid. Not all of us will be equally well-positioned to aid P. Moreover, we have reason to leave it to P, ordinarily, to promote her own good without our aid or interference. After all, P is an autonomous agent, and her good will partly consist in her own active pursuit of a way of life. Except in the case of children or adults who are unable to act on their own behalf, acting so as to promote another's good involves some risk of subverting her autonomy. Third parties tend, in any case, to be less well positioned to promote an individual's good than the individual herself. For these reasons, and not because good for gives rise only to agent-relative reasons, the reason third parties have to promote another's good may be overridden or conditional. The fact that good for gives anyone a reason for action is consistent with recognizing differences among individuals in their

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I want to emphasize that in granting, for purposes of argument, that when something is good we have agent-neutral reason to promote it, I do not take myself to be granting anything special about good. Saying that when something is good we have reason to promote it is, I would argue, just a way of indicating that *good* is *normative.* But so are *right* and *ought.* And so, the good-for theorist wants to insist, is *good for,* as Regan well recognizes.

B. The dilemma argument

Which brings us to Regan's argument. The notion of good for, Regan evidently thinks, combines incompatible ideas: the concept of *good,* of something normative, something that makes a claim on any individual, and an unexplained "for," which involves a restriction to the individual that undercuts that universal claim. As a consequence, Regan maintains, the good-for theorist faces a dilemma.[34]

On one horn of the dilemma, she can concede that 'good for' merely denotes what the Moorean's 'good occurring in the life of' denotes. That would allow the good-for theorist to retain the claim that when X is "good

obligations to promote someone else's good. A parent does not have exclusive reason to promote his child's welfare, but he has special obligations that the rest of us may lack, so the duty of seeing to his child's welfare ordinarily falls, in the first instance, on him. Moreover, he may have, in addition to the agent-neutral reasons anyone has to promote his child's welfare, agent-relative reasons. Finally, much of what we do, and ought to do, in response to the claim that others' good makes on us takes the form of indirect support. We arrange for public financing or make charitable contributions; we support institutional arrangements that provide aid or otherwise support individuals in their self-development and pursuit of their own good. Kraut has suggested as a counterintuitive implication of my position that since, e.g., a disease is bad for the trees in the forest, we all have reason to ensure that trees do not acquire diseases. I do not believe that 'good for' in talk about what is good or bad for trees, artifacts, and so on expresses the same normative notion involved in talk about what is good for a person. For one thing, I do not believe that trees and artifacts are the sorts of things that have a welfare. An adequate response to Kraut would require explaining what things have a welfare and how nonwelfare good-for talk should be understood, but I cannot undertake to address these matters fully here, so I merely register my views. Mark LeBar has questioned my apparent assumption that only agent-neutral reasons can be fully normative. I do not mean to make any such assumption. For purposes of the arguments in this essay, I assume only that good for would be without much interest from the standpoint of moral theory were it merely to give rise to agent-relative reasons. And I claim that whether or not there are fully normative agent-relative reasons, and whether or not good for is also normative in this agent-relative way, good for is normative in the way the Moorean claims it is not.

[34] Regan himself describes the dilemma argument as an argument against the "usefulness" of good for, and also as an argument for why good for cannot make a claim on people (other than the individual whose good it is), if it is "genuinely independent of Moorean good." See Regan, "Brother's Keeper," 213. Challenging the usefulness of a normative concept seems a peculiar criticism unless whether a concept plays a useful normative role bears on whether the concept is of a genuinely normative property. I argue later that judgments about good for play a certain normative role and that judgments about good (or good occurring in the life of) are not well suited to this role. The claim that good for cannot make a claim on other people is, I believe, best understood as a challenge to the existence of *being good for P* as a distinct normative property.

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for" P, a reason exists for anyone to care about and promote X for P. After all, promoting X for P would just be one part of promoting the good simpliciter, which, according to the Moorean, is precisely what *is to be promoted.* But it would amount to acknowledging that *being good for P* is not a distinct normative property, or as Regan puts it, "That would amount to abandoning 'good for' as an independent concept."[35]

On the other horn of the dilemma, the good-for theorist can deny that good for is simply good occurring in the life of, aiming to maintain *being good for P* as an independent concept or distinct normative property. But Regan contends that if the good-for theorist takes this approach, she must give up her claim that welfare or good for is normative, because she must give up the claim that the fact that something is good for someone provides reasons for anyone, not merely for the individual whose good is in question.[36] If X is good *for P,* P may have a reason to promote or obtain X, but no one else has a reason to promote or obtain X for P.

I believe the confusions alluded to earlier (in Section I) lie precisely in Regan's reasons for drawing the conclusion that *being good for P* cannot be both a concept or property *distinct* from *good* and a *normative* concept or property. In fairness to Regan, though, this is also precisely where the good-for theorist needs to do some serious theoretical work. What Regan thinks is that if *being good for P* is to be a concept or property independent of *good,* it must involve a relativization not merely of the sort involved in talking about the good that occurs relative to one life or another, but a *relativization of goodness*—of the *normativity*—itself. As Regan expresses it, "The good for Abel must be peculiarly Abel's—the *goodness* or the *value* must be peculiarly Abel's—in a way that the mere occurrence of universal good in Abel's life does not necessarily satisfy. But if the good for Abel is peculiarly Abel's—if its *value* is somehow essentially a value *for Abel*—then why indeed should Cain care? We think there is a deep connection between value and reasons. That suggests precisely that if the good for Abel is a matter only of value *for Abel,* then it creates reasons *for Abel,* and

[35] Ibid., 211.

[36] After presenting the dilemma argument, Regan goes on to "consider how the dilemma manifests itself in connection with" certain contemporary theories of well-being. After discussing the views of Wayne Sumner and James Griffin, he remarks, "[T]he joint lesson of the discussion of Sumner and Griffin is that 'good for' is a chimera. If we take seriously the dependence on the agent's subjective evaluation, which Sumner plausibly claims is the best realization of the 'for', we get the very implausible conclusion that a life spent in trivial pursuits can be as valuable as Bach's life or Darwin's life if the subject is as satisfied, and that the life of trivial pursuits can make as strong a claim on others to be promoted, so far as intrinsic prudential value is concerned. This is not plausible; the 'for', in Sumner's account, undermines the 'good'. In contrast, emphasizing the perfectionist element, as Griffin does, seems to attenuate the 'for' to the point where it is a mere empirical accident ('occurring in the life of') rather than an aspect of the normative concept. In Griffin's account, the 'for'-ness is totally unrelated to the nature of the value" (ibid., 218). See Sumner, *Welfare, Happiness, and Ethics,* and James Griffin, *Well-Being: Its Meaning, Measurement, and Moral Importance* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986).

for no one else."[37] The Moorean idea of good occurring in the life of does not, Regan claims, face a similar difficulty: "If the 'for' means 'occurring in the life of', this gives us an empirical relativization to the agent, but the normativity involved is still the universal normativity of 'good'."[38]

It is understandable why Regan thinks that good for involves a relativization of goodness or normativity. As I have already noted, good-for theorists say little that would explain what the 'for' or the 'good' in 'good for' means, and in the absence of an alternative explanation, Regan's thought seems natural enough. Moreover, theories of welfare—hedonistic theories, desire theories, and even Wayne Sumner's authentic happiness theory—have tended to be subjectivist.[39] (The objective list theory and Stephen Darwall's recent rational care theory stand out partly because they are exceptions to the dominant subjectivist trend.)[40] Regan rightly questions (for example, in discussing Sumner's theory) whether an individual's (subjectivist) good could provide any agent other than the individual herself with a reason. After all, according to Sumner, if an individual is satisfied, say, with a life of self-flagellation, then so long as her satisfaction is informed and autonomous, her welfare lies in self-flagellation.[41] Perhaps we should concede that such an individual *herself* has reason to pursue her heart's desire, Regan would allow (though he sometimes appears to doubt that welfare claims yield even agent-relative reasons); but surely, he would insist, *we* have no reason to promote her enjoyment of this (worthless) endeavor.

Contrary to what Regan claims, however, the concept of *being good for P* does not involve a relativization of normativity or goodness, or so I will suggest. If we can sensibly wonder whether we have reason to promote

[37] Regan, "Brother's Keeper," 211 (Regan's emphasis).

[38] Ibid., 212.

[39] Although disagreement exists as to how best to understand John Stuart Mill's moral philosophy, he claims to advocate a form of hedonism, which he offers as a theory of the good rather than as a theory of welfare. See John Stuart Mill, *Utilitarianism* (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Co., 1979). Mill claims that the sole good is happiness, and he describes a happy life as one relatively free of pain and rich in enjoyments both in point of quantity and of quality. Although he offers hedonism as a theory of the good, or what he seems to think is the same thing, the sole end, Mill's emphasis on the importance of "experiments in living," so that individuals may determine wherein their own happiness lies, at least suggests that his real concern was with individual good or welfare. See John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty* (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Co., 1978). For a recent hedonistic theory, also offered as a theory of the good rather than as a theory of welfare, see Fred Feldman, *Utilitarianism, Hedonism, and Desert* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997). For differing kinds of desire theories, according to which what is good for a person is, roughly, what she would desire, or desire for herself to desire, under more or less optimal conditions, see, e.g., Griffin, *Well-Being;* Peter Railton, "Moral Realism," *Philosophical Review* 95, no. 2 (1986): 163–207; and Peter Railton, "Facts and Values," *Philosophical Topics* 14 (1986): 5–31. Sumner offers helpful critical discussion of hedonistic and desire theories of welfare before presenting his own theory of welfare as autonomous or authentic happiness; see Sumner, *Welfare, Happiness, and Ethics,* chaps. 4 and 5.

[40] See Darwall, *Welfare and Rational Care.* See also notes 13 and 20 above. For the idea of an objective list theory, see Derek Parfit, *Reasons and Persons* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984).

[41] See Sumner, *Welfare, Happiness, and Ethics,* chap. 6.

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a person's good as some theory of welfare construes it, then we should doubt the adequacy of that theory, rather than the coherence of something's being good for a person. Regan claims that unless the 'for' in 'good for' signals a relativization of normativity, good for cannot be distinct from good, though, of course, it is just this relativization that would prevent judgments about what is good for a person from making a claim on agents other than the individual herself. But this is incorrect. After all, we have a number of other terms—for example, 'right,' 'ought,' and 'rational'—each of which expresses universal normativity, while also expressing a property distinct from *good.*

How, then, should we understand good for? What the Moorean seems to imagine when he criticizes the good-for theorist's position is that the latter's good-for judgments must concern a relational complex, *X is good for P,* with the following structure: X has the monadic property *good,* but this goodness, or perhaps X's being good, stands in a (curious) *for* relation to P. If this were so, then we could begin to see why the Moorean would find talk about what is good for someone unintelligible. The line of thought seems to be that insofar as X has the property *good, X is good for P* provides agent-neutral reasons, but insofar as the *for* relation relativizes the normativity or goodness to P, *X is good for P* provides only agent-relative reasons. Hence, good for is incoherent, combining as it does these incompatible elements; and *being good for P* lacks normativity, because being a normative property just is being a property facts about the instantiation of which provide agent-neutral reasons.[42]

In my view, this line of thought misconstrues good-for judgments. The relational complex, *X is good for P,* does not include the monadic property *good* at all. Instead, it includes the relational property *is good for P:* it has X and P as relata and *is good for* as a dyadic relation.[43] We should not be

[42] More fully, we might say that on the Moorean picture, being a normative concept just is being a concept propositions about the correct application of which provide or entail agent-neutral reasons; and being a normative property just is being a property facts about the instantiation of which provide or entail agent-neutral reasons. One might certainly challenge this idea. And that suggests a rather different route to addressing the Moorean, though one that will arguably rest on my diagnosis of his argument. That route would take on board something like the claims I shall make about how to understand the words 'good' and 'for' in 'good for,' while holding that personal good provides only agent-relative reasons. As I have made clear, however, I believe that facts about what is good for a person also provide agent-neutral reasons.

[43] Alternatively, we might say that the proposition expressed by the sentence "X is good for P" does not have the logical form

(X is good) for P

but, rather,

x G p

(using 'G' to express the relation *is good for*). I have found Boghossian's discussion in "What Is Relativism?" helpful in clarifying the Moorean's mistake, as I see it. The Moorean sees the

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misled by the fact that the word 'good' occurs as part of the name of the relation expressed by 'is good for.' We should not be misled here anymore than we should be misled by occurrences of the word 'good' in judgments of instrumental value. Consider the sentence, "A hammer is good for driving nails into wood." Surely no one supposes that the proposition expressed by that sentence concerns a relational complex with this structure: A hammer has the property *good*—the property Moore deemed the central subject matter of ethics—and stands in an instrumental *for* relation to driving nails.[44]

As an initial matter, then, good for does not involve a *relativization* of goodness or normativity. Good for P is not goodness relative to P but a distinct relational value.[45] Of course, simply to assert, as I have thus far,

good-for theorist as making something like the move Boghossian attributes to the relativist, which is to offer "replacing" propositions for our old propositions about morality that are built up out of the old propositions. As Boghossian puts it, "the replacing proposition consists in the claim that the old proposition stands in some sort of contentual relation to a set of propositions that constitute a [moral] code." My suggestion is that the good-for theorist should be understood not as asserting propositions with the sort of logical form the relativist supposes moral propositions to have—a view which is relativism's undoing—but, rather, propositions with the logical form Boghossian describes as operative in the physics cases. And propositions about what is good for a person take the latter form for a precisely parallel reason: namely, they express truths about a relational property the concept of which does not contain the concept *good* as a proper part.

[44] Notice that this would yield just the sort of incompatibility that Regan claims for good for. The sentence "The hammer is good" asserts a claim about the intrinsic value of the hammer; the added instrumental relation, "for driving nails," undercuts the claim of intrinsic value. Lest instrumental uses of 'good' seem an aberration, consider occurrences of 'good' in judgments of something as an instance of a type. Consider the sentence "The Corolla is a good car." No one supposes, to put the point differently, that the proposition expressed by that sentence is built up out of the proposition *The Corolla is good* (in Moore's sense) and a categorization as to the type of object, car. That there are distinctions in goodness and that these are not distinctions across a single monadic property should be evident, e.g., from Christine M. Korsgaard's classic discussion in "Two Distinctions in Goodness," reprinted in Korsgaard, *Creating the Kingdom of Ends* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 249–74, originally published in *Philosophical Review* 92, no. 2 (1983): 169–95. The expression 'good for,' like 'good,' appears in a variety of contexts. As I hope is entirely clear, my interest lies solely with uses of the expression in the context of individual welfare or personal good, what is sometimes described as "intrinsic" "nonmoral" good for a person. See note 33 above.

[45] Railton has explicitly described good for as *relational goodness*. See Railton, "Moral Realism," 183: "It should perhaps be emphasized that although I speak of the objectivity of value, the value in question is human value, and exists only because humans do. In the sense of old-fashioned theory of value, this is a relational rather than absolute notion of goodness. Although relational, the relevant facts about humans and their world are objective in the same sense that such non-relational entities as stones are: they do not depend for their existence or nature merely upon our conception of them." Treating *being good for P* as a distinct relational property might seem to invite greater problems down the road. In note 25, Regan remarks, "The need for good simpliciter seems even clearer when we consider the problem of how to balance the (reasons created by the) good for Abel and the good for Seth. Balance we must, and that seems to require a 'good' (explicit or implicit) which is not a 'good for'" ("Brother's Keeper," 213). If good is not a proper part of good for, we would seem to have no common value for weighing and balancing. In fact, I think the good-for theorist has plenty to say to address the worry, but here I merely flag the issue and leave questions about commensurability and balancing for another time.

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that good for is not as the Moorean thought only gets us so far in addressing the Moorean challenge. My claim responds to a certain argument for the charge that good for is a chimera—a cobbling together of incompatible elements—by offering a diagnosis of the mistake behind that charge. Still, one can reasonably demand a positive alternative to the view I have claimed is mistaken. The good-for theorist needs to say more to make it plausible that *being good for P* is a fully normative property distinct from *being good*.

III. Relational Good

Recall Regan's conjecture that on the best theory of the good, the notion of good occurring in the life of an individual will likely pick up every plausible good for. If the extension of *good* encompasses the good for, then it might seem not to matter whether *being good for P* is a distinct normative property, as the good-for theorist maintains. But of course, as Regan stresses, the question is not *whether* but *why* I am my brother's keeper. Even if the good theorist can pick up all the good fors that may be of practical, normative concern to the good-for theorist, he will not thereby have succeeded in answering Regan's question. The good-for theorist could still be right in thinking that talk about what is good for someone concerns a distinct normative property.

Now I agree with Regan that once we get to this stage in the debate, it is hard to come up with decisive arguments for one side or the other. He remarks:

> [W]e are approaching the point, if we are not there already, where the extensions of the Moorean's 'good' and the 'good for' theorist's 'good for' are effectively indistinguishable. In such a situation we will not be able to decide between the concepts by adducing counterexamples to one theory or the other—states or events which the proponents of one theory can claim the other theory attaches the wrong valence to. What we need is conceptual arguments, but it is not easy to find arguments that have any purchase on such a fundamental disagreement.[46]

Regan does offer a conceptual argument for the Moorean view—an unsuccessful one, I believe—which I will touch on briefly toward the end of this essay.

One consideration might seem, at the outset, to favor the good-for theorists' position. As a matter of ordinary observation, different items, activities, undertakings, and relationships seem to *suit* or *fit* different individuals, and they do so in such a way that some (and not others) at

[46] Regan, "Brother's Keeper," 210.

least appear, intuitively, to *benefit* those individuals. But the Moorean presumably recognizes something close to this thought, for he will surely acknowledge that certain goods can "occur in" some individuals' lives but not in others. The good that consists in the pleasurable experience of playing a piano sonata will occur in the life of the person capable of playing the piano and of taking pleasure in playing it, but not in the life of the person who lacks either the ability to play or to appreciate classical music. Thus, the debate seems even more intractable than Regan suggests: not only might good and good for share an extension, but, at a more theoretical level, the good theorist and good-for theorist can each apparently account for key features of our experience.

These considerations suggest a different obstacle to recognizing *being good for P* as a distinct normative property. Normative concepts figure, in differing and characteristic ways, in the regulation of attitude and action. One reason to doubt the existence of a supposed normative property would be if that property (or the concept of it) seemed to have no distinctive normative role to play. But this, the good theorist might suggest, is precisely the case with good for. Even if the concept of *being good for P* is not incoherent, why believe there is such a relational property as *being good for P* when all the normative work is apparently already done by *good* (occurring in the life of)?[47] I want to approach this question from two directions: the first returns us to step 8 of the "anti-good-for argument" (discussed above in Section II.A) and involves thinking about what is picked up by good for that might be missed by good occurring in the life of; the second involves, much more briefly, thinking directly about the normative role apparently played by good for. As I will try to show, contrary to what Regan claims, the Moorean's good and good for are not "effectively indistinguishable," and we can shed light on the distinctness of good for by attending to its special—and pervasive—normative role.

A. Good for versus good occurring in a life

Regan claims to find deeply puzzling the 'for' in 'good for P,' and I have undertaken to address his perplexity. But I want to register my own puzzlement as to what could be meant by such expressions as 'good possessed by P' and 'good occurring in the life of P.' It would be a mistake, in my view, to think that good for is problematic in a way that good occurring in the life of is not. So the question with which I want to begin is this: What might be missing from *good occurring in the life of P* that is captured by *good for P*?

[47] I think Regan hints at this worry when he raises doubts about the "usefulness" of good for, but he never articulates the point of the usefulness challenge as fully as would be desirable, and I believe expressing the problem simply in terms of "usefulness" obscures the fact that the underlying issue is ontological. See note 34.

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Suppose that a new parent approaches you, a seasoned parent, and asks for advice about child-rearing. You begin to advise him about how to discern and promote what is good for his child. He stops you short and says, "Now wait a minute, I'm a Moorean. Believe me, I love my child every bit as much as the next parent, but I'm not interested in what is 'good *for* her.' In fact, I don't understand this 'good for' talk. I'm interested in promoting good occurring in her life." You would no doubt be puzzled, and calling attention to this fact is meant to stress a point made earlier in passing, that common sense is on the good-for theorist's side. Of course, common sense might be confused, but it might instead be tracking a species of value omitted from the Moorean picture, and it is this species of value that the good-for theorist presumably seeks to investigate.

So what advice might you offer if you wanted to answer the Moorean parent in terms he would find intelligible? To figure this out, we first need to understand the Moorean notion of good occurring in the life of, and for this, we need a working account of the good. Moore himself famously thought that many things are good, although the greatest goods are certain "organic unities." As Moore explains,

> there is . . . a vast number of different things, each of which has intrinsic value; there are also very many which are positively bad; and there is a still larger class of things which appear to be indifferent. But a thing belonging to any of these three classes may occur as part of a whole, which includes among its other parts other things belonging both to the same and to the other two classes; and these wholes, as such, may also have intrinsic value. The paradox, to which it is necessary to call attention, is that the value of such a whole bears no regular proportion to the sum of the values of its parts.[48]

Moore contrasts the relation among parts of an organic unity with the relation between means and ends. A change of means would leave the intrinsic value of the end unchanged. In contrast, a change of any part would alter the intrinsic value of the whole or organic unity to which the part contributes, even if the part itself has no intrinsic value. Moore tells us that the relation between parts and whole is not causal.[49] Nor is it additive; the intrinsic value of the whole bears no regular relation to the sum of the values of its parts.[50] Otherwise, though he provides numerous examples, Moore says little to clarify the nature of organic unities, and, in fact, this is in keeping with his view of good as a simple, nonnatural, *sui generis* property.[51] No more can be said to explain why some items com-

[48] Moore, *Principia Ethica,* sec. 18.
[49] Ibid., sec. 22.
[50] Ibid., sec. 18.
[51] For excellent discussion of Moore's theory of organic unities, see Thomas Hurka, "Two Kinds of Organic Unity," *Journal of Ethics* 2, no. 4 (1998): 299–320.

bine so as to produce value in excess of their value as parts than can be said to explain why good supervenes on some things rather than others.

I will return to the matter of organic unities later. For now, I want to focus on the fact that Moore allows that a variety of things individually have at least some intrinsic value. In particular, I want to make use briefly of one of Moore's more controversial claims about the value of an individual thing. Moore famously maintained that a beautiful object has at least some intrinsic value apart from consciousness of it, even if the value of the whole comprised of being conscious of a beautiful object far exceeds the value of the beautiful object alone.[52] In a thought experiment, intended as one part of his refutation of hedonism, Moore asks us to imagine two worlds, a beautiful world filled with mountains, sunsets, forests, waterfalls, and everything we most admire, and a filthy, garbage-strewn world filled with all manner of things we find utterly revolting. He asks us to imagine further that no one will be around to experience either world. Still, Moore asks, wouldn't it be rational to produce the former world rather than the latter? Moore thinks it would: the existence of the beautiful world is better in itself "quite apart from its effects on any human feelings."[53] Although Moore maintained that 'good' expresses a simple, unanalyzable nonnatural property, he sometimes characterized being good as being such as "ought to be" or "ought to exist for its own sake."[54] In concluding that the beautiful world is better in itself, Moore effectively concludes that it is such as ought to exist.

But now consider that you (and the rest of us) are about to be annihilated. You stand in the "Create-A-World" booth with two buttons on the panel in front of you. You push the button marked "beautiful," and poof! There it is (and there we aren't). Only, as it turns out, this beautiful new world is not empty of human life—one person is in it, just one, and, indeed, as befits the world around her, she is a beautiful person, only she is endlessly sleeping. Now the question is whether beauty is occurring in her life. In one sense, the answer must be yes; after all, she's alive, beauty exists, and in the very time and place that she exists—it's all around her. If we are not prepared to say that the beauty of the world around her is occurring in her life, then at least we might be prepared to say that her *own* beauty is occurring in her life. And if Moore is right that beauty has at least some intrinsic value, that would seem to be good occurring in her life. Good occurs in the life of P when good occurs in the time and place in which P lives. Call this the time-and-place, or "TP," characterization of good occurring in the life of.

If good occurring in a life required only spatiotemporal coincidence, then individuals could sleep through lives in which a good deal of good

[52] Moore, *Principia Ethica*, sec. 50.
[53] Ibid.
[54] Ibid., sec. 69.

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occurs, and this would have peculiar results for what we ought to do.[55] We ought, other things equal, to redecorate meticulously the rooms of the permanently comatose, pipe beautiful music into their rooms, send in the clowns. To be sure, we will promote more good by expending our energies elsewhere.[56] But the suggestion that we could have *any* reason to promote good occurring in the lives of the permanently comatose, at least in this sense, is dubious at best. If this were all the Moorean had in mind, then I think we could reasonably doubt that good occurring in a life makes a claim on us just as much as we can doubt that the self-flagellator's Sumnerian good for makes a claim on us. Good occurring in the life of P, in the bare sense sketched by TP, does not capture what the good-for theorist has in mind.

If coexistence in time and place, even to the extent of physical embodiment, is not enough for occurring in a life, what more is required? Suppose our sleeping beauty awakens, and she becomes conscious of the world she inhabits. The question is not whether her consciousness of her world introduces additional value.[57] The question is whether her consciousness of it is enough to make what she is conscious of "occur in her life," so that if what she is conscious of is good, then there is "good occurring in her life."[58] Consciousness might seem to be necessary. We

[55] However problematic in other regards, this way of understanding good occurring in the life of would at least have the virtue of ruling out alleged cases in which a person benefits from events that occur after her death.

[56] Moore remarks, "In any actual choice we should have to consider the possible effects of our action upon conscious beings, and among these possible effects there are always some, I think, which ought to be preferred to the existence of mere beauty. But this only means that in our present state, in which but a very small portion of the good is attainable, the pursuit of beauty for its own sake must always be postponed to the pursuit of some greater good, which is equally attainable" (ibid., sec. 50).

[57] Moore himself at least seems to have thought consciousness to be of rather insignificant value. In his discussion of "the ideal," Moore remarks, "By far the most valuable things, which we know or can imagine, are certain states of consciousness, which may be roughly described as the pleasures of human intercourse and the enjoyment of beautiful objects" (ibid., sec. 113). But in introducing the notion of organic unities, he tells us that because consciousness does not always greatly increase the value of a whole, "we cannot attribute the great superiority of the consciousness of a beautiful thing over the beautiful thing itself to the mere addition of the value of consciousness to that of the beautiful thing. Whatever the intrinsic value of consciousness may be, it does not give to the whole of which it forms a part a value proportioned to the sum of its value and that of its objects" (ibid., sec. 18). And in the case of the organic unity involving contemplation of beauty, Moore makes it clear that the most valuable cases of aesthetic appreciation involve not "bare cognition of what is beautiful in an object," but also an emotional response appropriate to the kind of beauty in question (ibid., sec. 114). Moore later concluded that it is common to *all* intrinsic goods that they contain "both some feeling and some other form of consciousness." See G. E. Moore, *Ethics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), 107.

[58] In a further challenge to the hedonist's claim that pleasure is the sole good, Moore asks, "Can it really be said that we value pleasure, except in so far as we are conscious of it? Should we think that the attainment of pleasure, of which we never were and never could be conscious, was something to be aimed at for its own sake?" Pleasure, Moore concludes, is "comparatively valueless without the consciousness," and thus is not the sole good. "[S]ome consciousness must be included with it as a veritable part of the end." Moore,

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think of the life of a person as something *she lives,* and not merely by being present, but by functioning as an agent. And so it would seem that for good, or anything else for that matter, to occur in her life, it has to be something that at least enters into her consciousness and in that way makes contact with her. Perhaps we should say, then, that good occurs in the life of P when good occurs in the time and place in which P lives and P is conscious of the occurrence. Call this characterization of good occurring in the life of the time-place-consciousness characterization, or "TPC." We can imagine more stringent characterizations than TPC, depending on what P must be conscious of for good to occur in her life. But because it makes no difference to the arguments to come, let's leave as an open question whether P must be conscious merely of the occurrence of something that happens to be good or whether P must be conscious not merely of something's occurrence but of its good-making qualities or even of both those and its goodness.[59]

At this point, I want to suggest, we can begin to see where the good theorist and the good-for theorist would part company. Of course, some good-for theorists might well say that TPC in fact captures all they ever meant to say when they talked about what is good for a person. Some who accept an objective list theory of welfare, for example, might take such a view. To my mind, however, if they do take that view, then they ought to be good theorists rather than good-for theorists, because they will have accepted a view that falls short of what I think good-for theorists must be tracking—or better, as we will see, *attending to*—in treating good for as distinct from good. So what does good occurring in the life of leave out that good for might capture? We should notice two points of divergence between good occurring in the life of, in the TPC sense, and good for.

First, not all good-for theorists believe that in order for something, X, to be good for P, its occurrence or existence must enter into P's consciousness. To take some stock examples, some have maintained that P could be benefited by posthumous fame or that P could be harmed by the betrayal of her faithless partner, even if she never learns of his or her faithlessness. Yet both those good-for theorists who allow for such good (and bad) fors and those who deny them, take themselves to be arguing about what is good for an individual, and so about where *good for P* is instantiated. If all that good-for talk were about was good occurring in the life of as prescribed by TPC, good-for theorists who do not accept a consciousness requirement would not be talking about good for, despite what they may think. These good-for theorists could be mistaken, but I do not think their

Principia Ethica, sec. 52. But this is not, as Moore's later discussion of organic unities makes clear, because consciousness itself has much intrinsic value. See note 57 above.

[59] Moore himself, in talking about the organic unity that comprises beauty and the contemplation of it, suggests something like this latter view. See Moore, *Principia Ethica,* secs. 115–21.

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position should be ruled out prior to our efforts to advance and assess analyses of *good for P.*

This first divergence might seem to suggest that the Moorean ought to have stuck with TP as a specification of what it is for good to occur in the life of someone. But even good-for theorists who reject a mental-state view of the good for would and should contend that TP does not capture all that is involved in being good for someone.[60] In any case, good and good for diverge in a second way, even if we suppose that goods must enter into consciousness to occur in a life.

Return to our beauty, who is now awake and conscious of the beautiful world she inhabits; add, if you like, that she is conscious of being conscious of beauty. Even if that were enough for good to occur in her life, it seems not enough, intuitively, for good *for her* to occur. We might cash out this intuition in various ways, and which way makes most sense bears on what a correct analysis of *good for P* would look like. Suppose she is conscious just as described, yet takes no pleasure in the beauty around her; it is a matter of indifference to her. Or suppose her apprehension of beauty, even if accompanied by immediate pleasure, is promptly followed by crippling prickly sensations or by an overwhelming sense of her own inadequacy that engenders suicidal ruminations. Examples like these suggest that TPC, with its consciousness condition, not only requires too much but too little. As I will try to explain, the problem is not simply that TPC is incomplete but that good occurring in the life of has entirely the wrong structure to get at what fundamentally concerns the good-for theorist.

In response to the first claimed divergence between good and good for, the good theorist might simply deny that good can occur in a life where P is not conscious of a good, even if good can also occur outside of a life. As for the cases in which our beauty apprehends beauty but takes no pleasure in it, or takes immediate pleasure promptly followed by physical or emotional suffering, good has not, in fact, occurred in her life; or, more precisely, in the latter cases, the good occurred fleetingly only to be overwhelmed by the bad. Such possibilities do not show, however, that the idea of good occurring in the life of misses something captured by good for; they merely indicate that we do not yet have the right account of the good.

As mentioned earlier, Regan himself thinks that the good is pleasurable experience of objectively appropriate activities. For Regan, then, the good consists in something like Moorean organic unities.[61] Of course, the mys-

[60] For one thing, TP does not allow us to capture common-sense ideas about when goods either do or do not make a difference to how an individual's life goes. It seems all the same to the permanently comatose patient's life, whether the walls of her hospital room remain bare or display a Picasso.

[61] Moore remarks that "Pleasure does seem to be a necessary constituent of most valuable wholes" (*Principia Ethica,* sec. 55), which, of course, leaves open the possibility of valuable

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tery, on the Moorean picture, is just the one mentioned in passing in our earlier consideration of organic unities, namely, what explains the complexity: why do some things but not others hang together in such a way that good supervenes on them?

Regan considers a more specific version of the question, as it pertains to his own claims about the good. One might ask, he conjectures, whether by limiting the good to pleasurable experiences, the Moorean is not really concerned with good or value *for* the individual after all. "Why else should an experience of a beautiful sunset, or a great mathematical theorem, or a Bach cantata, need to be enjoyable in order to be valuable?" Regan responds:

> I cannot answer this point fully here. The short answer is that what is really valuable (non-relatively) is the appreciative engagement of the subject with a worthy object. The subject's pleasure is relevant because pleasure is an inevitable concomitant, and therefore a sign, of the right sort of engagement. But it is the engagement of the subject and appropriate object that is valuable. To my mind, when there is the right sort of engagement, we could as well say that the value created is value 'for' the sunset, or the theorem, or the cantata, as insist that the value is 'for' the subject. The object of appreciation is brought to life by being attended to and appreciated. But in fact, the real value is neither 'for' the subject nor 'for' the object. The value is just there, in a whole to which both subject and object make an indispensable contribution.[62]

As far as I can see, this response merely repeats in varying ways the Moorean position, without answering the underlying question. The idea of an object of appreciation being "brought to life" by being pleasingly appreciated seems to me a mere metaphor. As for the claim that we could just as much say that the right sort of engagement creates value for the sunset, this strikes me as exposing a dilemma for Regan. If the expression 'value for' has to be understood in the same way in connection with the sunset as it does in connection with a person, and it can only plausibly be understood as an abbreviated expression for good or value occurring in the life of, then value for the sunset would have to be value occurring in the life of the sunset. But what could this mean? Either good occurring in the life of amounts to something along the lines of TPC, in which case good

wholes that do not include pleasure. He later came to the view that pleasure is a part of every intrinsically good whole, though he rejected the idea that intrinsic value is always proportionate to the quantity of pleasure. See Moore, *Ethics,* chap. 7, pp. 103–7. The passage from *Ethics* quoted in note 57 continues: "and, as we said before, it seems possible that amongst the feelings contained must always be some amount of pleasure."

[62] Regan, "Brother's Keeper," 221. I am not aware of any other place in his published work that Regan addresses the issue in full.

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cannot occur in the life of a sunset and thus be "for" the sunset, or good occurring in the life of is nothing but good, full stop, in which case Regan cannot plausibly claim that good occurring in the life of captures all that the good-for theorist could sensibly mean by good for, even if the good includes all good fors.

If Regan's response provides less illumination than we might have hoped, it nevertheless affords a very useful starting point for getting a clearer grip on the key differences between the pictures offered respectively by the good theorist and the good-for theorist. One difference concerns whether complexity or structure is to be found in substantive values or goods, or whether it is to be found in the value property itself. A view like that of Moore and Regan builds structure into its theory of the good leaving *good* itself a simple, unanalyzable nonnatural property. And, indeed, that goods have a complex structure seems the only thing that could give the good theorist a prayer of making good on the claim that the good will include any plausible good for. The good-for theorist, in contrast, finds structure in the value property. 'Good for P' expresses a kind of relational value, and to give an analysis of the relational property of *being good for P*—of welfare or well-being—is to give an analysis of a certain normative relation that holds between persons and other things.[63] Whether (and this is a point to which I will return briefly) those things are themselves good in something like the Moorean sense, whether, more precisely, they are intrinsically valuable, is a question about the good for rather than a question settled by the nature of the relational property.

In the case of both complex goods or organic unities and the good for, a relation of some sort holds between items. On Regan's view, the relation is between a worthy object or activity and a subjective response, one that fits or "brings to life" that object or activity. The subjective response is a "sign of" appropriate engagement, but we might say, more strongly, that it *fits* and *completes* the object or activity so as to produce a whole that is good. Although Regan says that what is "really valuable" is appreciative engagement with a worthy object, in calling objects worthy and activities objectively appropriate he must be supposing that such things have at least some intrinsic value. It's just that the values that are *to be promoted* are the wholes consisting of the worthy item or activity and the complementary response. It is important to be clear about the relata in the complex goods that constitute the to-be-promoted. Regan makes clear that he does not subscribe to the view that *individuals* have value.[64] The relata,

[63] By a "normative relation," I simply mean that the relation between the person and the thing gives rise to reasons and obligations or, more generally, that it entails a variety of normative judgments. That X is good for P entails, ceteris paribus, that we have reason to promote X for P, that we are obligated not to deprive P of X, that P's pursuit of X is rational, and so on.

[64] Regan, "Brother's Keeper," 225–30. See also Donald H. Regan, "The Value of Rational Nature," *Ethics* 112, no. 2 (2002): 267–91. See also notes 67 and 69 below. Could a Moorean

then, are not the worthy object and the person herself but, rather, the worthy object and the appropriate response or engagement (pleasurable experience, in Regan's view, being an indicator thereof) that happens to be had by an individual. She figures in the mix, it seems, just because it is only agents who can respond in a fitting way to worthy objects or engage in objectively appropriate activities. When the relata are in place, the simple nonrelational property *good* supervenes, or, if you prefer, the predicate "good" applies.[65]

What are the relata in the relation that is the focus of the good-for theorist? As I have already noted, good-for theorists have said extraordinarily little about this.[66] I believe, however, that the entire project of attempting to discern the elements of personal good or individual welfare rests on something like the following picture. For the good-for theorist, the relation of interest holds between a *valuable being*—a person or agent—and an object or activity or another being.[67] It might turn out that the only objects or activities that can stand in the good-for relation to a person are ones that are themselves worthy, but as far as I can tell, whether that is so is not settled by the very concept of personal good. The relata, then, are persons, valuable beings, and objects or activities or other beings that may or may not themselves be valuable. The question still to be answered by the good-for theorist concerns the nature of the relation that holds between these relata.

subscribe to the idea that persons have value? Perhaps he could, so long as he was not committed to the view that states of affairs are the sole bearers of intrinsic value, in which case the idea that persons have value would involve a kind of category error. If the Moorean could, then he could also allow that states of persons getting what is good for them have intrinsic value and even that such states are among the most valuable.

[65] See Donald H. Regan, "How to Be a Moorean," *Ethics* 113, no. 3 (2003): 651–77, esp. 651–57, where he seems to express some reservations about treating good as a property.

[66] Some have, nevertheless, viewed themselves as engaged in providing an analysis of welfare. See, e.g., Sumner, *Welfare, Happiness, and Ethics,* ch. 6; and Darwall, *Welfare and Rational Care.*

[67] In what does the value of persons consist? This is, in my view, one of the million-dollar questions in ethics, and I confess to having no especially interesting answer to it. Still, we can get a feel for the idea of persons as valuable beings by reflecting on some of the ways in which philosophers have been or might be tempted to answer it. One might say that the value of persons just consists in their being appropriate objects of certain attitudes, such as love, concern, or respect. (Coons, following Darwall's suggestions in *Welfare and Rational Care* about care and respect as attitudes we take up toward persons, adopts a view something like this. See Coons, *The Value of States and the Value of Individuals,* chap. 2.) Or for those who, like me, do not favor "fitting-attitude" analyses of value, one might point to features of persons in virtue of which certain attitudes are fitting. Perhaps the most common feature philosophers have adverted to is, roughly following Kant, their "rational nature." (But see note 68.) I am tempted to say, as a first approximation, and will simply assert in the text of this essay, that the value of persons consists in their being intrinsic sources of legitimate normative demands. Cf. John Rawls, "Kantian Constructivism in Moral Theory: The Dewey Lectures 1980," *Journal of Philosophy* 77, no. 9 (1980): 515–72, p. 543: "People are self-originating sources of claims. . . ." But I have no illusions that this suggestion takes us very far in answering the question.

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Another difference between the pictures offered by good and good-for theorists should, at this juncture, already be apparent: the relations respectively involved in the good and in good for involve differing *directions of fit*. For the good theorist, fit is *object-* or *activity-directed*—attitudes or responses are to fit worthy objects or appropriate activities. Certain responses are, we might say, "called for" by the nature of the valuable item and complete a valuable whole as to-be-promoted. For the good-for theorist, in contrast, fit is *person-* or *agent-directed*—items (valuable or not) are to fit or suit a valuable being—are "called for" by her nature—and so are to be promoted in relation to her.[68] The views differ, we might say, in what they deem to be the center of normative gravity.[69]

[68] When I say that, in the case of good for, items are to fit the person, I mean to allow that this fit to the person can be achieved in various ways, some of which will involve changes in the individual. Either way, however, the direction of fit normatively speaking is toward the person—she is the center of normative gravity. I have talked about a person's nature as "calling for" certain items. But her nature includes her capacities as an autonomous agent, and this fact, I have argued elsewhere, has important implications for the nature of personal good. See Rosati, "Personal Good."

[69] As I have explained in a commentary on Darwall's *Welfare and Rational Care,* I believe that the deep insight behind his rational-care theory of welfare is that a person's welfare is in some sense what one ought to want for her out of an appreciation of her value. See Connie S. Rosati, "Darwall on Welfare and Rational Care," *Philosophical Studies* 130, no. 3 (2006): 619–35. Of course, this is not precisely how Darwall formulates his own view, but I believe that the appeal of his view lies in how it reflects this idea. In advancing his rational-care analysis, Darwall is quite explicit that the direct object of care is the person herself, and he claims that concern for the person is "primitive" (Darwall, *Welfare and Rational Care,* 71). A few philosophers, including Darwall, have suggested that the normativity of welfare rests on the value of persons—our welfare matters because we matter. In addition to Darwall, see Elizabeth Anderson, *Value in Ethics and Economics* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), 26; J. David Velleman, "A Right of Self-Termination?" *Ethics* 109 (1999): 606–20; and Rosati, "Personal Good." Of course, the historical roots of this idea lie in Kant's distinction between conditioned and unconditioned value. See Immanuel Kant, *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals,* trans. Lewis White Beck (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1995), 393–95 (Prussian Academy pagination). I believe that the underlying insight, as well as the insight about the normativity of welfare, are best understood as indicating a feature of the relational property, what I have been calling its "direction of fit." I have explained elsewhere why I do not think that Darwall's insightful account succeeds as an analysis of welfare. See Rosati, "Darwall on Welfare and Rational Care"; see also Rosati, "Personal Good." For a reply by Darwall, as well as other commentary on his book, see Stephen Darwall, "Précis of *Welfare and Rational Care*," *Philosophical Studies* 130, no. 3 (2006): 579–84; Fred Feldman, "What Is the Rational Care Theory of Welfare?" *Philosophical Studies* 130, no. 3 (2006): 585–601; and Thomas Hurka, "A Kantian Theory of Welfare?" *Philosophical Studies* 130, no. 3 (2006): 603–17. Regan examines Darwall's theory in the course of making his case against good for. I do not address his discussion of Darwall, in part, because I do not fully agree with his characterization of Darwall's position; but, more important, I do not believe that most of Regan's criticisms of Darwall's view apply to what I say. The one claim he makes that would be relevant to assessing the position sketched in this essay is that he sees no special dignity or worth in persons. Regan has critically examined arguments for the idea that rational nature has value; see Regan, "The Value of Rational Nature." Although I think he is right to find fault in extant arguments, I do not believe the shortcomings of those arguments by any means end the matter. In any case, my aim in this essay is not to argue for the value of persons but to explain how 'good for P' might express a distinct, fully normative property. For a reply to Regan, see David Sussman, "The Authority of Humanity," *Ethics* 113, no. 2 (2003): 350–66.

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Notice that this difference in the center of normative gravity tends to upend Regan's inquiry, or at least his framing of it. As he expresses it, his inquiry concerns not *whether* but *why* we are our brother's keeper. The good theorist, he claims, thinks that we ought to be concerned with what goes on in one another's lives, that we are our brother's keeper; he merely offers a different and, Regan thinks, better account of why we are our brother's keeper than the one offered by the good-for theorist. But now we can see that this is not, strictly speaking, true. Being concerned with what happens in our brother's life is not being concerned for our brother, and, indeed, if our brother is not himself valuable, such direct concern would appear to be misguided. On the good theorist's view, we never ought to act, to borrow Stephen Darwall's edifying formulation, for our brother's sake, but only for the sake of what goods may occur in his life. Our brother and his responses will be an "inevitable concomitant," to be sure, and we cannot promote the good without supporting him as a part of that process, but if the question is *whether* I am my *brother's* keeper, the answer must be no. And so, contrary to Regan's framing of his inquiry, the question "Why am I my brother's keeper?" can never really arise for the good theorist.[70]

The difference in what I have been calling the center of normative gravity reflects, in turn, a difference between two types of normative reasons, each of which has the universal normativity that Regan claims good has but that good for, if distinct from good, lacks. Some normative reasons derive from the value of worthy objects when appropriately appreciated or from the value of objectively worthwhile activities appropriately engaged in by an agent. Other normative reasons derive from the value of agents or persons themselves. The normative reasons provided by facts about what is good for a person are of the latter sort, and because the value of persons is an objective value, not a merely relative one, reasons deriving from what is good for a person are reasons for anyone.[71]

These considerations point us to an important fact about the nature of good for that helps to make clear why the monadic property *good* is no proper part of *good for P* and that helps us to see what the 'for' is for. 'Good for' expresses a relation; the good for is a form of objective value. But whereas 'good' in the good theorist's scheme signals the intrinsic

[70] For related reasons, Regan's view has a problem that is the mirror opposite of a well-known problem for desire theories. Whereas desire theories, as Mark Overvold has argued, seem to leave no room for self-sacrifice, Regan's view makes no room for self-interested action, because it recognizes no meaningful notion of self-interest. One could act on one's desires or what one values, contrary to promoting the good, but that would not be to act self-interestedly in the usual sense. See Mark Overvold, "Self-Interest and the Concept of Self-Sacrifice," *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 10 (1980): 105–18. But see Regan's discussion of the self-sacrifice problem, which no doubt reveals how he would respond to my remarks in this footnote: Regan, "Brother's Keeper," 224, note 52.

[71] This assumes, of course, that the good-for theorist is correct in presupposing the value of persons.

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value of an item or whole, 'good' in the expression 'good for' does not signal the intrinsic value of the item deemed to stand in the good-for relation or to instantiate the relational property of *being good for P.* We can make the point clearer by reminding ourselves of an important distinction, to which Christine Korsgaard has called our attention, between two ways in which something can have value.[72] It can have *intrinsic value,* which is the value a thing has in itself, a value which has traditionally been taken to depend on a thing's intrinsic properties.[73] It can also have *extrinsic value,* or value that derives from some other source. Whereas the good theorist's good is intrinsic value, the good-for theorist's good for, although just as normative, is a kind of extrinsic value; the good for gives anyone a reason to act, but the source of the "good-for value" of any item that is good for a person is its relation to a being with value. Of course, an item with good-for value might also have intrinsic value, but that is not the sort of value our good-for talk concerns.[74]

Although good for is a form of extrinsic value, we can still meaningfully distinguish between those extrinsically valuable things that are good for a person directly, or just in themselves, and those that are merely indirectly or instrumentally good for her.[75] Those things that are instrumentally good for her are those that are means to the things that are directly good for her. Those that are directly good for her are those that stand in a relation to her of the sort that the good-for theorist still needs to specify—those, we might say, that "fit" her. Insofar as these claims about the structure of the value tracked by our good-for talk are correct, the 'good' in 'good for' signals not intrinsic value but the existence of a reason for promoting or supporting X in relation to P. Again, the item in question might itself have intrinsic value, but the occurrence of 'good' in 'good for' does not signal the intrinsic value of that item.[76] So how should we understand the 'for'? If 'good for,' in talk about what is good for a person, expresses a relation of "fit" between a person and some object,

[72] See Korsgaard, "Two Distinctions in Goodness." See also Anderson, *Value in Ethics and Economics*, 26. Rae Langton provides helpful refinement of Korsgaard's distinctions in her excellent essay "Objective and Unconditioned Value," *Philosophical Review* 116 (2007).

[73] For a challenge to this traditional view, see Shelly Kagan, "Rethinking Intrinsic Value," *Journal of Ethics* 2, no. 4 (1998): 277–97.

[74] Here might be as good a place as any to acknowledge that it might also be *good that* persons have what is good *for* them. But the fact, if it is one, that some or even all valuable states of affairs are states of persons getting what is good for them would not show that *being good for P* is not a distinct normative concept or property.

[75] I talk in terms of things that are directly good for a person rather than in terms of ends, because not everything that is good for a person plausibly counts as an end, at least in the sense of something she could undertake to pursue or promote.

[76] I should add here an important qualification to the line of argument I have been pressing. The qualification is that the concept *good for* does not contain the concept *good* as a proper part if we understand good in the Moorean's sense. That leaves open the possibility that, on other understandings of the concept *good,* we might plausibly understand propositions about what is good for a person as, in some sense, built out of propositions about what is good.

activity, or being, the 'for' indicates the direction of fit.[77] As a first approximation, I would suggest that when we say that X is good *for* P, we indicate that there is a reason to promote X with P as the beneficiary of the action *in light of or out of regard for the value of P.*

An analogy may help to shed light on the structure of the relational property of *being good for P.* Consider a valuable work of art—valuable aesthetically speaking, that is. When we appreciate the value of a work of art, or what we take to be a valuable work of art, we undertake to preserve it in its valuable condition. That will involve preserving not simply the features of it in virtue of which it is aesthetically valuable, but other features and surrounding conditions which may be necessary to preserve its overall condition. What this will require will vary, of course, with the sort of art work it is; preserving a marble sculpture will involve actions different from those involved in preserving a medieval fresco. Nevertheless, these undertakings have in common an orientation toward the valuable work of art.

Good for a person operates in a structurally similar way, presupposing the ethical value of persons. Of course, persons are not themselves "to be promoted"; we face no general duty to produce persons, as many believe we do to produce or bring about the good. Persons are, however, valuable in the sense that their nature renders them sources of a legitimate demand for our considerate and respectful treatment.[78] We perhaps most readily appreciate the value of persons in the context of personal affections, and we may be moved to act toward our intimates out of love or concern in precisely the ways we *ought* to act just out of a regard or respect for them as valuable beings. When we appreciate, and act out of regard for, the value of a person, we seek to preserve her condition as the valuable being she is. That will involve not simply attending to those features she shares with all persons and in virtue of which persons are valuable, but attending to her sundry other features and her circumstances, all of which may bear on what preserves, sustains, or nurtures her. What regard for a person will require will vary, at least in important ways, with the varying features and circumstances of different individuals. Nonetheless, as in the case of a valuable work of art, our orientation in considering what is good for a person is the person herself.

Let me quickly sum up the discussion thus far. Good-for value is relational, not relativist value.[79] It is objective in that it gives anyone a reason for action, though *the* good for might, for all that has been said herein, be

[77] See Rosati, "Personal Good," for more discussion of the idea of 'good for' as expressing a relation of "fit."

[78] See note 67.

[79] A third reason for my interest in the Moorean challenge is a suspicion that relational properties may figure more centrally in ethics than is commonly appreciated, and so a better understanding of such properties would be helpful. Perhaps, for example, actions are never right simply but always right in relation to a context and an agent at a time.

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otherwise subjective; perhaps the normative relation *good for* itself involves a mental-state requirement, or perhaps the relational property *being good for P* is instantiated only by items that produce particular mental states. Finally, good for is a form of extrinsic rather than intrinsic value.

B. The normative role of personal good

Peter Railton has observed, in developing his informed-desire account of good for a person, that our discourse includes alongside the language of the desired, wanted, or preferred, the language of the desirable, valuable, or good.[80] These discrete kinds of talk at least purport to do different work; in particular, talk of what is desirable or good purports to provide a critical stance on the merely desired or preferred. I think a like point can be made here. Our discourse includes alongside the language of what is good or valuable or worth wanting, the language of what is good *for* someone, what is *in her interest,* what is worth wanting or doing *for her sake.* These discrete kinds of talk at least purport to do different, if not unrelated, work. Our discourse thus itself provides prima facie evidence for the existence of distinct notions, doing distinct normative work.

What normative work might that be, in the case of good for? Assuming that ordinary ethical talk is a reliable guide, good for functions normatively in at least three ways. First, judgments about what is good for a person guide child-rearing. The vast bulk of what effective parents do in raising their children, including what they do in fostering their capacities as autonomous agents and bringing them into the moral community, aims to benefit their children, if not in the present moment, then over the course of a lifetime.[81] Second, good-for judgments guide individual decision-making with regard to how to build a life. Of course, in deciding what to pursue and how to live, we attend not merely to our desires but to what we believe to be of value and to "what we owe to each other," to borrow Thomas Scanlon's apt expression.[82] But except where morality makes demands on us that require that we forgo a benefit, and except where an individual undertakes or is forced into a life of self-sacrifice, an individual rationally forms these judgments with an eye to her long-range happiness or life satisfaction. Finally, good-for judgments guide the setting of social policies. Indeed, their bearing on social policies is evident

[80] See Railton, "Facts and Values," 11.

[81] For extended discussion of effective parenting as a model for framing a theory of preference-formation, see Connie S. Rosati, "Preference-Formation and Personal Good," *Royal Institute of Philosophy Supplements* 81, Supp. 59 (2006): 33–64. See also Tamar Shapiro, "What Is a Child?" *Ethics* 109, no. 4 (1999): 715–38.

[82] T. M. Scanlon, *What We Owe to Each Other* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998). Of course, my view of personal good and, in particular, my claims about the function of personal good, indicate some disagreement with the central claims of chapter 3 of Scanlon's book, which presents a revised version of Scanlon's 1996 Tanner Lecture, "The Status of Well-Being," *Michigan Quarterly Review* 36, no. 2 (1997): 290–310.

not only when it comes to questions of public health, education, and welfare, but even in the basic operation of the law, at least in places where the legal system takes seriously the value of persons.

The property of being good for a person, as I have characterized it, well matches the normative role of judgments about what is good for a person. Whether from the first-person or third-person standpoint, our focus in making these judgments is on the person herself and what preserves and advances her, presupposing her value and attending to the particulars of her nature and circumstances.

The good theorist's position, in denying the coherence of good for, is conspicuously at odds with the way we find it natural to talk and think about ourselves and others.[83] No parent, except perhaps someone like our bewildered Moorean parent, would say that he sees to his child's education because he seeks to bring about the valuable state of affairs that consists in his child's pleasurable appreciation of knowledge. A parent aims, in his child-rearing activities, not at *the good* but at what is *good for* his child—it is good *for the child* that she be educated; and he sees to her education, at least in the first instance, out of love and concern *for her,* not out of a concern for realizing value in the world.[84] That a parent aims at the good *for* his child rather than at the good simpliciter helps to explain why he focuses on his child and what happens to her in a way the Moorean might well regard as quite out of proportion to the overall good to be realized.[85] Vast swathes of our social lives, including family law, pediatric medicine, and primary and secondary education, reflect the parental orientation, with its focus on children and their welfare. Of course, a parent may, in aiming at what is good for his child, direct her toward what he thinks is good simply; but it is for the child's own sake that he wants her not to miss out on valuable pursuits; it is for her sake that he wants the valuable state of affairs that consists in her taking pleasure in learning to obtain. No person, except perhaps a Moorean, thinks of her quest for happiness as a quest to produce valuable states of affairs. A person aims, in seeking to lead a satisfying life, not to increase the quantity of value in the world but to enhance for her own sake the character and quality of her own passage through time. And this is so, even if she enhances her own life to a very large extent by engagement in activities that increase the amount of value in the world as well. Our tendency to talk as we do and to orient much of our thought and action around what benefits ourselves and others seems utterly natural and, for reasons I will suggest shortly, nearly inescapable.

[83] True, we may be radically mistaken; we may not be valuable; there may be no normative property of *being good for P.* But, then, there may be no property of *being good* either.

[84] Darwall's discussion of welfare, in *Welfare and Rational Care,* well reflects these sorts of ideas. See also Rosati, "Preference-Formation and Personal Good" and "Autonomy and Personal Good: Lessons from Frankenstein's Monster" (manuscript).

[85] Thanks to David Sobel for urging me to stress this point.

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One might be tempted to think that the good theorist will still routinely issue the prescriptions of a good-for theorist. After all, if, say, the pleasurable responses of individuals are constituents of any valuable whole, then producing the good will be pretty much all about promoting good occurring in the lives of individuals. And as a necessary means thereto, there must be functioning persons; so we will feed, educate, and heal in all the familiar ways. But *good occurring in the life of* is in fact not well suited to the normative role that *good for* plays. Even if, in order to promote the good for, we must preserve and promote persons as a necessary means thereto, there is no reason to think that would involve us in all that we ordinarily undertake on people's behalf. The difference in direction of fit between good and good for carries with it an orientation toward different ends, and thus a difference in what is treated as a means and what is treated as an end. What's more, because the preservation and promotion of persons must be fundamentally instrumental for the good theorist, he confronts, in principle, the trade-offs that give rise to familiar, vexing problems for utilitarianism. Why, for example, waste any resources on persons whose capacities are such that developing them promises to yield little in our efforts to promote the good?

IV. Agency and Value

Trade-offs of some sort there will inevitably be, of course, and so in making the foregoing claims, I do not mean to prejudge the question of the normative priority of good versus good for, though we can perhaps begin to see what may be at stake in how we settle the question. I have been aiming simply to make it plausible that 'good for P' expresses a distinct, fully normative property and so one with a legitimate place in our moral ontology, whether or not it gets pride of place.[86]

Regan does, however, offer an argument to settle the question of normative primacy against good for and in favor of good. His argument appeals to a developmental story about agency. Regan's tale goes roughly as follows. We acquire our idea of value as a result of experiencing our own felt wants, desires, and needs. The origins of our idea of value may, in fact, explain why many are inclined, mistakenly, to think that "value must be relative to a valuing agent."[87] But even if our ideas of value have their beginnings in our desires and needs, we can develop into complete and competent agents only insofar as we come to see that we must look beyond these inner drives in order to arrive at the whole truth about value, including the truth about value occurring in our lives. The development from our initial, inner promptings to a full understanding of value occurs incrementally. At first, we may experience problems of con-

[86] This is assuming, of course, that there are any objective values at all.
[87] Regan, "Brother's Keeper," 222; see also 209.

flicting desires, and so we learn to restrain some desires in the interest of others. As a next or associated step, we may come to assess our lower-order desires from the standpoint of our higher-order desires. Ultimately, however, we will come to ask about the justifiability of our most fundamental desires and even our entire set of desires: are those desires "justified and directed at worthy ends"? Regan explains: "This is the step, raising what I have elsewhere called the 'desire-transcending question,' that makes us agents. When we ask this question, we are asking for a standard for our desires, a standard that cannot be grounded in our desires themselves. . . . [A]cknowledging this question and confronting it . . . is the crucial passage to agency."[88]

At the point at which we realize that we must "transcend our desires," Regan asks, does an agent who is deliberating about what is to be promoted think in terms of *good* or *good for*?

> So far as I can see, there is no reason why he should assume at this stage, when he first begins his survey of the world and his search for the to-be-promoted, that the to-be-promoted is necessarily limited to occurrences within people's lives—and even less reason why he should assume that the to-be-promoted is necessarily limited to occurrences within people's lives that might seem in some intuitive sense to involve benefit 'for' them. But these limitations are what would correspond to the claim that the question the agent asks himself should be understood as a question about the 'good for'. If the agent does not begin with these a priori limitations, then we should understand him as asking about the 'good'. Even if it turns out that 'the good' is entirely constituted by things in people's lives, and even things that might be thought of as 'benefiting' them in some sense, still, the agent's question is about 'the good.'[89]

Indeed, Regan claims, nothing would compel an agent "to attend to the fact of her own particularity as an agent."[90]

Although I am not convinced by all of Regan's developmental story, I see nothing in that story itself that a good-for theorist need deny.[91] The good-for theorist might well allow that we come to the idea of value through our own experiences of needing and wanting things, that we gradually come to restrain, assess, and, ultimately, seek full justification for our desires, as we develop into full-fledged agents. But if good for is as I have described it here, then full justification of an agent's desires will,

[88] Ibid., 223. See also Regan, "How to Be a Moorean," sec. 1, for more discussion along the same lines.

[89] Regan, "Brother's Keeper," 223–24.

[90] Ibid., 224–25. Regan says this in response to an objection which stresses that it is the agent, after all, who must decide what to do.

[91] But see note 17.

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in some instances, be provided by facts about *her own good* rather than facts about *the good*. What's more, the good-for theorist would remind us that Regan's developmental story, while acceptable as far as it goes, omits a critical part: namely, the process or activity of raising full-fledged agents, a process that requires that we attend not merely to the good but to the fledgling agents themselves.

Indeed, given the characterization of good for on offer here, we should expect that a fully developed agent's question regarding the to-be-promoted will largely concern the good for. To be sure, it need not, and should not, in the course of an ordinary human life, concern only *her own* good for. If she is to be a faithful friend, a loving partner, an effective parent, and a full participant in the moral community, she will inevitably ask how to promote not simply her own good and not even simply *the* good but also—and often—*another's* good. Nonetheless, as an agent, as a being with an interest in the "full truth about value," the question of her own good cannot fail to press, and legitimately so. I would even be prepared to go further and say *inescapably* so; if she is to be able to function effectively as an agent in the first place, she must operate from a standpoint that presupposes and responds to her own value. I will not try to defend these stronger claims here, however.[92] Perhaps it is possible for a fully developed agent rationally and willingly to regard her life as a mere vessel of valuable states, and herself as merely a vassal of the good. But if that is possible, it is only, I would suggest, because in the course of becoming an agent, other people did not so regard her.

V. Conclusion

If the claims I have been making about how to understand good for are correct, then 'good for P' indeed expresses the concept of a fully normative property distinct from *good*—and even from *good occurring in the life of* an individual. Given the difference in direction of fit, we have reason to doubt that in fact the extension of *good* will include all the good for, although significant overlap will no doubt exist.[93] One insufficiently explored question concerns why that would be so. Of course, it still remains for good-for theorists to offer a compelling analysis of the fundamental relation that has as its focus the value of the person. I hope to have at least made it plausible that their efforts would not be wasted.

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[92] For initial steps in that direction, see Rosati, "Autonomy and Personal Good: Lessons from Frankenstein's Monster."

[93] See Darwall, *Welfare and Rational Care,* chap. 4, for an intriguing discussion of the importance to individual welfare of what he calls "valuing activities."

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