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Will, Obligatory Ends and the Completion of Practical Reason: Comments on Barbara Herman's *Moral Literacy*

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Abstract
This paper discusses three inter-related themes in Barbara Herman's *Moral Literacy* – the idea that, for Kant, the will is a 'norm-constituted power' whose activity is guided by its own internal norm, that the obligatory ends are reasonably viewed as the ends of all rational choice, and that morality 'completes' practical reason or rational agency.

1

Barbara Herman's *Moral Literacy*[1] is an important collection of essays that extends the resources of Kantian moral theory in powerful ways. To mention a few themes in her book, some essays work out a Kantian conception of character and moral development that reframes the standard take on the relation between desire and reason in Kant's moral psychology – for example, allowing that desire is a condition of an agent having a reason for action, but also that desires are developmentally responsive to rational principle and are available as motives only when informed by a conception of value (chapters 1 and 6). The title concept of 'moral literacy' is that of a minimal moral competence that agents can be expected to have that is the basis of moral responsibility and the development of moral character. It includes the capacity to respond to basic moral facts, to acquire new moral knowledge and to respond to 'new moral facts' that emerge due to changes in the social world. It is also available as a 'backstop moral motive' when individuals' more developed moral sensitivities fail (chapters 4–5).

One essay develops Kant's account of the obligatory ends to provide a theoretical framework for specifying the scope of the duty of beneficence

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(chapter 9). One problem in this area of moral theory has been to address in a non-arbitrary way the tensions between the endless claims of need in the world and the limits to what is reasonably demanded of individuals. Herman does this, not by seeking a balance between competing spheres of value, but arguing instead that a Kantian theory should assign moral significance to (our) own happiness that can stand up to reasons stemming from the needs of others. Furthermore, she argues that our involvements with others determine the content of the duty of beneficence, and that there are reasons to give priority to local needs. Later essays make a case for giving obligatory ends a central role in moral theory, as ends that bear on all rational choice (chapters 11 and 12).

I will be discussing Herman's views about three interrelated topics that appear in the second half of the book: the will, the obligatory ends and the idea that morality 'completes' practical reason or individual rational agency. Since the connections between these themes are intricate, I shall devote the bulk of my remarks to explaining Herman's views on these topics. I have a name for this project: 'philosophical Herman-eutics', or interpreting what Barbara Herman has said. After the hermeneutical component, I close with a few brief comments.

2

I begin by exploring Herman's conception of the will as a 'norm-constituted power' (pp. 230, 249–53). The will is a capacity to act from principles, and Herman asks whether this capacity is

> fully independent of the nature or content of principles, or is it a capacity whose exercise depends on some good-related principle or law that nonetheless leaves us free to act on other principles? (p. 244; cf. p. 257)

According to the first option – what we may call the 'elective conception of the will' – the will is the capacity to act according to some principle or other, to be elected by an agent. The will itself has no guiding principle, but is the capacity to select between given incentives and principles, all the way up to fundamental principles that determine what count as reasons. It is a capacity to 'do as one pleases', where 'what pleases' is a matter of individual psychology prior to the operation of the will that supplies the input to choice. According to the second option – the norm-constituted power conception – the will has its own constitutive or internal norm, which might initially be

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characterized as the principle of acting according to good or sufficient reasons. Its constitutive principle gives the will the formal end of acting according to good reasons (p. 251) or willing correctly (p. 261), and it guides all rational volition. The large question here is whether the constitutive principle provides any substantive guidance, and the holy grail in certain areas of contemporary Kant studies is to make out the view that the principle of the will is the moral law, understood as a principle that can guide and initiate choice. The will is then defined as the capacity to act according to moral principles. It would be a capacity whose exercise depends on some 'good-related principle' – the moral law – in the sense that rational volition is in all instances tacitly guided by this norm. But it leaves us free to act on other principles in the sense that operating according to its own internal norm is what puts it in the business of acting from principles, rather than from some other kind of representation.

The norm-constituted power conception is certainly correct as a reading of Kant. To see how we might get to it, I consider Herman's approach to more basic issues, such as: why talk about the will in the first place?

'Bootstrapping' approaches the issue of what the will is by asking what we need it to do. For Kant, the will is a fundamental capacity whose role is to guide choice by objective rational standards. In the *Groundwork* he famously characterizes the will as the 'capacity to act in accordance with the representation of laws, that is, in accordance with principles' and to 'derive actions from laws' (*G* 4: 412).[2] Herman cites Harry Frankfurt as a theorist who thinks that we need not treat the will as fundamental – that we can bootstrap our way to whatever capacities we need for practical reasoning using the material of desire, higher order volition, decisive identification and so on. For example, one might think that an adequate account of practical reasoning must include a capacity to respond to non-discretionary reasons that make demands on us. For Frankfurt, value and reasons are based in what we care about, but some of what we care about is so deeply rooted in our psychology and our identity that we are not free to abandon these concerns. What we care about can thus give us 'unconditional reasons' without assuming objective value or any capacity to track it. Developing Kant's view, Herman understands the will as a fundamental capacity to respond normatively to objective standards of value and good reasons, whose authority is independent of our attitudes. To paraphrase her, will involves the capacity to make the (objective) value of some action or end one's reason for choosing or taking an interest in it (p. 158).

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There are (at least) two dimensions to this conception of the will. First, the will is a capacity to respond normatively to objective standards that are independent of an agent's antecedent motives. So there is an objectivity condition in the sense that, absent objective practical standards, there would be no need to posit any such capacity.

Second, because the will is a capacity to be motivated by a representation of an action or end as objectively good, a conception of the will needs to satisfy 'internalist motivational strictures' that assume a connection between practical reason claims and motivation. Let's call this a self-determination condition since it makes the will a capacity for self-determination through judgements about objective value and good reasons. These internalist strictures point to a conception of the will as a norm-constituted power. Herman claims that in order to avoid an unbridgeable gap between value and an agent's (motivating) reasons, 'the standard of value or conception of the good in terms of which we conceive our actions cannot be alien to the will' (p. 170). 'Not alien to' means 'internal to' – so the internalist strictures are satisfied by conceiving of the will as a kind of causality that operates according to its own constitutive principle, referred to in this essay as 'the principle of best (and sufficient) reasons' (p. 171). If rational volition is constitutively aimed at making value or good reasons one's own reasons, there is no unbridgeable gap between objective value and motivation. Judgements about value and good reasons will be motivational states.

These two dimensions of the will are somewhat recast in 'Obligatory Ends'. Here Herman says that one of Kant's most important claims from a contemporary perspective is 'that value, and not just valuing, is a condition of free rational action, and so of morality' (p. 256). We don't need a notion of the will as a capacity for free *rational* action unless there are objective practical standards, including objective standards for ends (the objectivity condition). The self-determination condition is here enriched as 'the Kantian thesis of volitional autonomy': 'that there is a general standard of correctness for action derived from (or representing) the constitutive principle of the power of rational action itself – that is, the will' (p. 256–7). The will is not a capacity for true self-determination unless it operates according to its own internal principle, and further, unless the objective standards to which it is responsive are derived from its constitutive principle. So the constitutive principle needs to do double duty, both guiding the operation of the will and grounding the objective practical standards to which it is a capacity to respond.

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3

Some background on Kant's conception of the will as a certain kind of faculty of desire may help fill out the norm-constituted power conception of the will. Kant defines a faculty of desire as a capacity to cause, through one's representations, the objects of these representations (*M* 6: 212, *CPractR* 5: 9n.). That is, a faculty of desire is a capacity to move from a representation of an object to a desiring or interest in it that can lead to action. Herman argues that 'desires are not primitive elements of the desire system … they are determinations of a desiderative faculty' that are closer to activity than to feeling (p. 235). Desires are not, as it were, brute inputs to choice, but states of activity generated by the operation of the faculty of desire.

The will is a kind of faculty of desire that effects the transition from a representation of an object to active interest in it in a certain way. Kant says that, if a faculty of desire operates with conceptual representations and 'the ground determining it to action lies within itself and not its object', then it is a 'faculty to do or refrain from doing as one pleases'. A will (*Wille*) is a faculty of desire of this kind where 'the inner determining ground, hence even what pleases it, lies within the subject's reason' (*M* 6: 213). Thus it is a faculty to do or refrain as one pleases whose determining ground and the source of what pleases it are found in reason. In 'The Will and its Objects' Herman extracts some extremely interesting features of the will from these remarks (which I present somewhat simplified). The will does not just choose between incentives, including rational incentives, presented to it ready made. Rather it partly produces desiring (p. 236), thus what a subject finds pleasing, through the application of rational principles. That makes the will the capacity to move from a representation of an object to a desiring or interest in it through the application of rational principles – viz. through judgement that the end, or action directed at that end, is called for by a rational principle and thus objectively good. In contrast to the elective conception, the norm-constituted power conception understands 'doing or refraining as one pleases' as acting on one's own judgement of what there is most reason to do. Furthermore, the will 'is not in the business of electing principles, but of using or doing its work by way of them' (p. 240) – that work being to move from representations of objects (as called for by rational principle) to desiring or choice. What makes the will robustly self-determining is not just that the application of rational principles is the ground of desiring and interest (and thus of what pleases), but that these principles include or are in some way based in the will's constitutive principle. Of course, the task

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remains to show that the constitutive principle of the will leads to objective standards sufficient to guide choice. I return to this point in section 5 below.

4

The norm-constituted power conception of the will points to resolutions of various standing problems in Kantian theory, for example explaining why the moral law is the law of free agency, and how morally bad action is freely willed. Here Herman suggests an extremely fruitful take on Kant's idea that rational volition involves deriving actions from the representation of a law. She says: 'among the laws that we can and do represent to ourselves is the law that is constitutive of the will's own causal power' (p. 171). Let us take the will's constitutive principle to be that of acting from sufficient objective reasons (reasons that are universally valid) and for now grant that this principle is equivalent to the moral law.[3] So we are heading towards the idea that all rational volition derives action from a representation of the moral law as its constitutive principle. How might this work?

Herman writes:

> Now for a rational agent to will something she must have a conception of herself as willing (e.g., of herself as an acting cause for her ends). Then in willing an action – any action – an agent is moved by a perceived connection of the action to her representation of herself willing an end, which is to say, according to a representation of the will's constitutive principle (as a power to produce effects). If the principle constitutive of the will's own activity were the moral law, then it would be what we (always and necessarily) represent to ourselves in and as a condition of rational choice. (p. 246)

Her idea is that an agent who rationally wills an action *represents* herself as willing that action, since rational volition is self-conscious. Further her representing herself as *willing* an action includes a representation of the constitutive principle of the will. She is moved to active interest in the action by taking the action to fall under the principle of sufficient objective reasons, and thus to be objectively good. Her maxim of action is just a representation of the action (or action/end pair) as derived from her representation of the will's own principle – that is, a representation of the action as objectively good (p. 171).

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On Herman's picture, what makes an action freely willed is that it is derived from a representation of the internal principle of the will. The moral law is the ground of all free rational choice because a representation of this principle figures in all rational choice. Many questions arise about what it means to derive an action from a representation of this principle. But as I understand it, this is a formal feature of volition, namely that all rational choice involves the implicit judgement that an action is supported by an objective (or universally valid) principle. Bad or faulty action is still free because it is derived from a *mis*representation of the principle of the will – free because it is derived from a representation of the principle of the will, but faulty because that principle is misrepresented (pp. 171–2, 246). Again, this idea needs further exploration, but for an example, think of what Kant says about self-conceit in the second *Critique*: self-conceit involves making self-love into an unconditional practical principle (*CPractR* 5: 74). That sounds like a misrepresenting of the internal principle of the will. But the formal component of rational volition remains, since some principle – self-love – is taken to be a law or objective standard with justifying force.

5

Various content problems need to be resolved in order for this picture of rational volition to work. One needs to show that plausible candidates for the constitutive principle of the will have sufficient content to guide choice (cf. p. 171). One needs to show that this principle can be specified as the moral law, again understood as having sufficient content to *initiate* (and not just constrain) action. And one needs to show that moral principles can, within a reasonable moral theory, initiate *all* rational choice (which is then free because derived from a representation of the principle of the will). At this point the obligatory ends appear on the scene.

Herman addresses these content problems by arguing from the conception of the will as a norm-constituted power to Kant's obligatory ends of self-perfection and the happiness of others. Since the will is a capacity to act from objective practical standards, we may assume that its proper exercise is subject to the limiting condition of universality associated with the formula of universal law. But to *initiate* action we need objective ends beyond the formal condition of universality. Part of the norm-constituted conception is that all rational choice has the formal end of willing correctly. Herman argues that bringing in various facts about our finite sensible nature specifies this formal end in terms of

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the ends of self-perfection and the happiness of others. And since that formal end is the end of all rational choice, its material specifications are likewise the ends of all rational choice. If the constitutive principle of the will in this way leads to objective ends, it does indeed have sufficient content to guide and initiate choice.

Our finite sensible nature enters the argument for the end of self-perfection by establishing both the need for self-perfection and the arena in which it occurs. First, given the imperfection of our rational capacities, in order to will correctly we need to develop the 'general abilities required for rational action – for getting things right' (pp. 261–2). Second, sensible 'desires and interests give us material to reason about' (p. 262). Her point, I take it, is that self-perfection cannot get off the ground unless we are already in some other business that provides the occasion for developing rational capacity – say, the project of leading a human life (within a particular social context). Following Herman, let's call that project 'the pursuit of happiness' (see p. 265). Her idea is that the natural interest in happiness – forming (an initially 'desire-based') conception of how one's life is to go – is 'the vehicle that drives the development of human rational agency', through which one becomes a 'particular agent' with a stable set of life-structuring interests and ends (p. 216; cf. pp. 181–3). The work of self-perfection is to shape and transform our pursuit of happiness and to set a standard for natural end-setting (p. 265). By providing material to work with, our sensible nature and natural interest in happiness give content to the end of self-perfection.

Her argument from the formal end of correct willing to the end of the happiness of others also rests on what individual subjects need in order to develop rational abilities. I will come back to this point later in my discussion (in section 8 below).

Herman claims that the obligatory ends are 'somehow the ends of all rational action' (p. 256) – that they can initiate all rational choice by serving as correct premises for practical reasoning (p. 263), and presumably that proper representations of these ends would figure in all good action. This claim is an important part of the picture that all free rational choice is derived from a representation of the principle of the will. The principle of sufficient objective reason and the formal end of correct willing may be present as formal elements in all volition, and though they may be able to constrain choice, they seem too thin on their own to initiate action. When specified in terms of the obligatory ends,

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they can initiate action, and this possibility is needed to make good on the conception of free volition. But how can the obligatory ends figure in *all* rational choice, and can the thought that they do be part of a moral conception that is not unreasonably demanding?

6

Herman's defence of the idea of obligatory ends is a significant addition to Kantian moral theory. She has always supported an 'austere reading' of Kant's duties of virtue, stressing Kant's remark that 'a wide duty is not to be taken as permission to make exceptions to the maxim of actions but only as permission to limit one maxim of duty by another (e.g., love of one's neighbor in general by love of one's parents), by which the field for the practice of virtue is widened' (*M* 6: 390; see *Moral Literacy*, p. 214). However her account of the role of the obligatory ends in practical reasoning shows how they can be 'ubiquitous' (pp. 219, 263) and always 'deliberatively salient' (p. 215) within a reasonable moral view that does 'not make our lives unlivable' (p. 204). Here is one partial statement of her view:

> [The obligatory ends] introduce positive moral conditions into the pursuit of happiness, requiring that the activities and ends we choose for the sake of happiness must also, in ways that they can, be valued as they promote our perfection (natural and moral) and the happiness of others. And as I will argue, because the moral work of the obligatory ends is done through shaping the pursuit of happiness from the inside, they draw own happiness into the space of moral reasons. (p. 213)

How can a moral theory reasonably make the obligatory ends the ends of all rational action? The idea is not that we should take every possible occasion to promote an obligatory end. Rather, the role of obligatory ends is, first, to transform desire and second, to supply standards of practical reasoning and justification (for acting on the interests thus transformed). As one might say, they transform the objects of natural interest into ends of value from different quarters, both as a matter of moral psychology and normatively.

The role of the obligatory ends in moral psychology is to 'shape the pursuit of happiness from the inside' by shaping desires. Acknowledgement of the moral law, can, she says, 'make possible the rational transformation of (some) desires, and the enabling of (some) distinctly

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human modes of evaluation so that we no longer [have] to regard all non-moral ends as hedonically fungible'; and it can rationally alter 'the content and structure of the desires we act on' (pp. 191, 193). The idea is that the obligatory ends can shape what we find agreeable. We can come to take pleasure in forms of work, leisure activity or human relationships that provide occasions for rational development (broadly construed), and be indifferent to those that do not. The flourishing of others that we care about can become integral to our own well-being, and so on. That is the point about content. The point about structure is that the obligatory ends can transform natural desires into forms of valuing that are responsive to reasons; that is, natural interest becomes an affective attraction to activities that are objectively (humanly) good, and that attraction is guided by an awareness of their proper value. One example of this transformative process (from 'Rethinking Kant's Hedonism') is that recognition of one's moral standing as an agent with dignity can, 'by altering our sense of who we are, … [change] what we count as our well-being' and 'change the terms of the recognition that we want from others' so that the natural desire for esteem from others is only satisfied by being accorded proper moral respect (pp. 195, 196). Our self-conception as moral agents can shape what we find satisfying, and can lead us to desire activity that draws on rational capacity (broadly construed) and to desire connection with others based on mutual respect.

The role in moral psychology of the obligatory ends is to shape natural interests, so that they track ends and activities of value. The normative point is that the obligatory ends supply 'correct premises of practical reasoning' to action for this end that supports a judgement about its value. Because (for Herman) reasons depend upon standards of correct reasoning, the obligatory ends supply *reasons* to act on these interests, where before there was only desire. She writes: 'We get correct premises of practical reasoning when the objects for which we would act are objects for which we should or may act under the authority of an obligatory end' (p. 263). The point, I take it, is that the obligatory end can authorize – provide – a reason to act for an object which already interests us, and in which we will find satisfaction.

One more element of fitting the obligatory ends into a reasonable moral conception is that this conception leaves room for choosing ordinary activities because they are enjoyable, and not 'because or on condition that these acts will benefit my rational nature. I act because I expect to have an enjoyable or stimulating time. The role of the obligatory end is

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to explain how or why these considerations [enjoyment] can justify acting' (p. 264). Considerations of enjoyment can justify because denying oneself or being indifferent to enjoyment is a 'Kantian vice' (p. 217). Two arguments are given for this claim. First, since the natural interest in happiness drives the development of human rational agency (p. 216), possessing a 'healthy capacity for enjoyment' is important to the 'ability to discern what matters morally'. It facilitates an understanding of what human beings need and what they care about, without which one cannot act well towards self or other. Second, given the kinds of creatures we are, 'a life without pleasure makes us less able to sustain higher rational functioning' (p. 264). These facts explain why one's concern for one's own happiness has moral standing and is a source of reasons that can stand up to other kinds of moral demands.[4]

Let me raise a quick question about this indirect argument for the moral significance of enjoyment. A simpler argument might cite the fact that individuals care about enjoyment because it is a condition of engagement in our lives and, say, that given our standing as ends in themselves, what matters to us as natural beings can have moral significance. Thus, one might ask, why not argue for the moral significance of enjoyment directly, rather than indirectly through its role as a condition of self-development?

7

A thesis that runs through several essays is that morality completes practical reason, or 'completes and perfects what we are as rational agents' (p. 141). There are several components to this thesis. First, it begins from the assumption that our natural interest in happiness is the 'vehicle that drives the development of human rational agency' through which one becomes a particular agent (p. 216). That means that forming a conception of one's happiness is the site at which rational development occurs. Second, the interest in happiness is also the site of moral development: 'the project of moral education [is] the task of developing the rational faculty *from* its "natural" state of concern for one's own well-being *to* a fully moral power' (p. 136). Moral development is not just about instilling a set of principles and a reliable moral motive on top of our natural interests, but about shaping the interest in happiness from the inside, and about orienting all uses of practical reason towards objective value. A third element is the 'problem of natural happiness' (p. 191). Herman accepts Kant's hedonistic construal of the principle of happiness as the source of this problem, but any subjective conception would do. The problem of natural happiness

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is that the end of happiness, so construed, provides no stable regulative guidance in the choice of ends. For example, desire satisfaction provides no standard for ends, or for staying with some end in the face of a contrary inclination (p. 191). Considerations of desire satisfaction are not of the right form to provide reasons (pp. 243, 244–5, 263). Because empirical practical reason provides no standards for ends, it cannot complete the task of forming a conception of happiness or that of developing rational nature. Fourth, Herman accepts the strong claim that only morality introduces reasons for ends, thus reasons for actions in the full sense. This is because (a) reasons for actions and ends are introduced by objective practical principles that supply standards of correct reasoning; and (b) given 'the problem of natural happiness', morality – through the objective ends – is the only source of such principles and standards of reasoning (pp. 243, 260–3).

Because morality makes it possible to resolve the problem of natural happiness, and because the interest in happiness is the site of rational development, morality completes practical reason. It shapes natural interest to become responsive to what is humanly good and the obligatory ends provide standards for ends that the idea of happiness cannot supply. Given the dependence of reasons on standards of practical reasoning, the obligatory ends put reasons for ends on the table by providing 'correct premises of practical reasoning' (p. 263).

Herman's 'completion thesis' leads to an integrated conception of practical reason that has much to offer. Note that there is movement in two directions. Because the obligatory ends shape the pursuit of happiness, the content of happiness becomes 'moralized' in a certain way. The other direction is that considerations of happiness (own happiness and the happiness of others) become morally significant. In that respect morality is humanized because it authorizes actions that we find satisfying and because it both allows and directs the full development of our human nature.

8

I close with comments on two points: Herman's argument from the formal end of correct willing to the obligatory end of the happiness of others and her thesis that morality is needed to complete practical reason.

Regarding her argument that the happiness of others is an objective end: that morality requires concern for others, Herman assumes, is

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established 'long before we get to obligatory ends', so the question is 'why the welfare of the rational nature of others is an obligatory end for us' (p. 267). This is what she says: 'the connection is (and has to be) through the conditions of our own rational willing. In the full sense of rational abilities that fall under the obligatory ends … we have very strong reasons to want those we interact with to have them … Our own rational abilities are in many ways dependent on those of others' (p. 267). The idea is that proper self-development requires a social world in which we interact with others who are properly formed and function well (pp. 267–8). Further, a condition of one's own proper rational functioning is healthy connection to others, which includes direct concern for others and attachment based on recognizing their objective worth, not just liking or attraction (pp. 268–71). I can't function well as a rational agent unless I interact with properly formed others on terms that recognize their independent standing.

Here one might ask why the argument for the obligatory end of the happiness of others launches from the conditions needed to support my own rational willing. The argument shows that the formal end of correct willing commits one to recognizing the happiness of others as an end (and that the obligatory end is a law that arises from one's own will – cf. *G* 4: 433). And it grounds direct concern for and recognition of the worth of others. But the conditions of my own willing seem to provide the wrong basis for this obligatory end. Why the happiness of others is an obligatory end is not connected to the required concern for others in the ways one might expect. A different argument might cite the equal moral standing of others and Herman's idea that the interest in happiness is the vehicle for the development of individual rational agency. The obligatory end follows directly. I don't know if this argument can be unfolded out of the formal end of correct willing, but it seems to ground the end in the right place, namely in the equal worth of others.

9

Turning now to the idea that only morality provides objective standards for ends, in chapter 2 of the *Critique of Practical Reason* Kant presents us with a stark choice (that I have always thought of as 'Kant's either/or'): either the moral law has a rational basis, or the only standard of value is the agreeable and all value is hedonistic or subjective. Actually, the choice is a bit starker: either there is a necessary law of pure practical reason based in the nature of volition prior to any notions of good; or the only standard of choice is what individuals find agreeable.

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In the latter case, nothing would strictly speaking be immediately 'good', since there would be no objective standards of good. Herman accepts this dichotomy and it leads her to argue for a strong claim (explained in section 7 above): that morality provides the only solution to the 'problem of natural happiness' and the only 'escape from hedonism' and subjective theories of value (p. 177) because morality provides the only objective standards for ends. Put another way, since reasons depend on objective practical standards and morality is the only source of such standards, only morality introduces reasons for ends. Should we accept this claim?

I have always thought that if Kant had not been so focused on explaining the authority of the moral law, he would have recognized an intermediate realm of value between moral value and the agreeable – a realm of non-moral intrinsic value. Such a view is suggested by some of what he says about the power of humanity, and about culture as a propaedeutic to moral development. That aside, one might think that our human nature (plus rationality) is a source of objective standards for non-moral ends. Good ends and activities are those that answer to certain kinds of human needs, that elicit certain kinds of responses of interest and appreciation, and that draw on our various human capacities and powers, and so on. The satisfaction that we take in such activities might be understood as our awareness of their fit with our faculties. To get objective standards for ends that are independent of actual preferences, we need more rational machinery – for example, reflective procedures establishing a normative standpoint that can ground correct judgement, or intersubjective agreement, and so on. But one might think that one can tell a story about objective standards for ends and their importance in a human life using human nature plus rationality and shared response, but without appealing to morality.[5]

This approach might not be so distant from Herman's. Basing standards of goodness for ends on our nature (plus rational structure) points us towards the end of self-perfection. Since the authority of morality is assumed, there is no thought that rational reflection about ends would be morally unconstrained. Furthermore, Herman's integrated conception of practical reason has great appeal. So the question is whether morality offers the only route to objective standards for ends and to reasons. It is not clear to me that it does, but this is certainly an issue worth pursuing.

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Notes

1 Herman (2008). Page references to *Moral Literacy* are given in the text.

2 Citations to Kant are given in the text by Berlin Academy volume and page, using the standard abbreviations: *G* = *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals; CPractR* = *Critique of Practical Reason; M* = *The Metaphysics of Morals*. All are translated in Kant, *Practical Philosophy*, trans. and ed. Mary J. Gregor (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

3 To explain this connection a bit more: if the principle of acting from sufficient objective reasons is constitutive of volition, then volition understands itself to be guided by such reasons. That is to say that volition is guided by principles that one takes to be universally valid, or that all action is guided by maxims that an agent tacitly regards as in some sense universal. I believe that some such conception is behind Kant's view that the moral law is the basic principle of free agency. (Cf. *G* 4: 446–7; *CPractR* 5: 28–9.)

4 As an aside, I cannot tell you how pleased I was to learn that denying oneself enjoyment is a Kantian vice, and all the more so since this comes from a leading proponent of the austere reading of the duties of virtue. This is truly an agreeable thought.

5 For more detail, see Reath (2009: 208–14).

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