

Self-Responsibility and *Eudaimonia*

John J. Drummond (Fordham University)

drummond@fordham.edu

The notion of authenticity, or as I am calling it, self-responsibility, reveals a moral urgency at the center of Husserl's philosophizing. Authenticity has both descriptive and normative dimensions, but this notion remains divorced both from Husserl's discussions of the normative dimension of axiology and from his account of *eudaimonia*, the notion that, in one way or another, expresses – or should express – the end of our moral urgings. I have come to believe that Husserl's discussion of *eudaimonia* is insufficiently strong when thought in relation to his notion of self-responsibility. I shall claim that a more adequate notion of *eudaimonia* is available in the notion of self-responsibility itself and that understanding the latter notion eudaimonistically positions us to enter a number of contemporary philosophical debates in ethics and meta-ethics.

1. *Authenticity or Self-responsibility.*

Husserl was concerned to articulate a notion of “authentic” reason as an antidote to the philosophical and cultural crisis infecting his world. This concern characterizes his thought as early as the “Prolegomena” to the *Logical Investigations*¹ and endures through *The Crisis of European Sciences*

¹Edmund Husserl, *Logische Untersuchungen. Erster Band: Prolegomena zur reinen Logik*, ed. Elmar Holenstein, Husserliana XVIII (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1975).

and *Transcendental Phenomenology*.¹ In the thirty-five years intervening between the two works, what Husserl had first identified as a crisis in the foundations of logic and mathematics became for him a moral and cultural crisis of reason in the broadest sense. In response to this crisis, Husserl develops a conception of reason that departs from the modern sense of reason in two ways: it severs the bonds between reason and scientific theory and those between reason and rational procedure or calculation.

In severing the bond between reason and scientific rationality, Husserl by no means rejects the rationality of scientific theory. Instead, he expands the notion of reason, insisting that there are other forms of reason as well, namely, the axiological and practical. They are not rational in exactly the same way that a theoretical science is, but they are no less rational in their own proper way.² In severing the bond between reason and calculation, Husserl moves beyond a procedural view of reason to what might be called a “teleological” and “intuitive” or “evidential” account of reason. Reason involves a striving for evidence, where “evidence” is understood as the experience of the agreement between what is meant and what is intuitively given.³ In the case of cognitive judgment, for example, evidence is the act in which I am aware of what Husserl calls the “congruence” (*Deckung*) between the sense of an assertion and the sense of the given state of affairs.⁴ Although Husserl devoted most of his energies to the discussion of theoretical reason, he nevertheless believed that in all three rational domains the aim of experiential life is the same – to live the life of intuitive evidence. While the evidential experiences for which rea-

¹Edmund Husserl, *Die Krisis der europäischen Wissenschaften und die transzendente Phänomenologie. Eine Einleitung in die phänomenologische Philosophie*, ed. Walter Biemel, Husserliana VI (2nd ed., The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1962).

²Edmund Husserl, *Ideen zu einer reinen Phänomenologie und phänomenologischen Philosophie. Erstes Buch: Allgemeine Einführung in die reine Phänomenologie*, ed. Karl Schuhmann, Husserliana III/1 (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1976), §139.

³Hua III/1, p. 334.

⁴Edmund Husserl, *Logische Untersuchungen. Zweiter Band, zweiter Teil: Untersuchungen zur Phänomenologie und Theorie der Erkenntnis*, ed. Ursula Panzer, Husserliana XIX/2 (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1985), p. 652; see also Edmund Husserl, *Analysen zur passiven Synthesis. Aus Vorlesungs- und Forschungsmanuskripten 1918–1926*, ed. Margot Fleischer, Husserliana XI (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1966), p. 102, and Edmund Husserl, *Formale und transzendente Logik. Versuch einer Kritik der logischen Vernunft*, ed. Paul Janssen, Husserliana XVII (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1974), p. 128.

son strives take different forms in cognition and the theoretical sciences, in valuation and the axiological sciences, and in volition and the practical sciences, the task of reason is always to ensure in fulfilled experiences the “truthfulness” of our judgments about what is the case, about what is valuable, and about what is right to do.¹ The *telos* of experience is truthfully apprehending things and states of affairs, having appropriate affective and evaluative attitudes towards those things and states of affairs, and acting rightly in response to and on the basis of our truthful cognitions and attitudes. This achievement of evidenced truth in all the domains of reason is for Husserl the full exercise of reason.

The term “authenticity” is used to describe the experiencing agent who achieves authentic reason, that is, the agent who is rational in the full sense.² An agent is rational in the full sense when she in an evidential experience “decides” for herself what is true, or when she in the light of evidence takes up the right attitudes and emotions regarding things, events, actions, and persons, or when she in the light of evidence decides what is truly good and what is rightly done. The contrasts are with the experiencing agent who merely accepts passively what others claim to be the true, the good, or the right and with the experiencing agent who judges without evidence, who merely supposes that such and such is the case. In either case, the experiencing agent does not “decide” for herself.

The language of “decision,” however, is misleading. It suggests the Cartesian notion that when judging one frames and entertains a propositional content and then affirms or denies that content in an act of the will. I think that this view of judgment is incorrect. Insofar as our cognitions, valuations, and volitions occur in the natural attitude, they share the natural attitude’s belief in the existence of the world and its objects. In the case of judgments, then, whether judgments about what is the case, about what is good, or about what is the right course of action, the affirmation

¹Hua III/1, p. 290.

²Edmund Husserl, *Aufsätze und Vorträge (1922-1937)*, ed. Thomas Nenon and Hans Rainer Sepp, Husserliana XXVII (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1989), pp. 11, 30; see also Edmund Husserl, *Ideen zu einer reinen Phänomenologie und phänomenologischen Philosophie. Zweites Buch: Phänomenologische Untersuchungen zur Konstitution*, ed. Marly Biemel, Husserliana IV (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1952), p. 269.

occurs in the articulating that is the judging itself rather than in some decision that is added to the propositional content. The proposition as such arises only in a reflective modification of our original judging attitude, a modification in which we take the state of affairs as judged simply as a supposition.¹ It is only at this point that the proposition as such is available to us and that we can reflectively and explicitly affirm or deny the propositional content belonging to the judgment. What does this mean for the notion of authenticity or self-responsibility? Are we authentic only when we reflect and explicitly affirm or deny? If so, that would suggest that we are not and cannot be truly responsible in our straightforward judging, and that seems an unhappy conclusion.

Let us consider this issue a bit more closely. In judging in the natural attitude, our attention remains turned to the objective state of affairs rather than any logical objectivity that we might call the judgmental or propositional content or, more simply, the proposition.² However, in those cases where we come to doubt the truth of our own judgments or of those reported to us by a speaker, we neutralize our acceptance of the judgment and critically reflect upon it by directing our attention to the judged state of affairs precisely as supposed in the act of judging. The judgment thereby takes on for us a double character: what is judged – the categorially formed state of affairs itself – and the proposition as such – the judgment in the logical sense, the supposed state of affairs just as supposed.³ The intended state of affairs and the proposition are properly distinguished, therefore, by means of a difference in the way we attend to the meant objectivity: as affirmed or as supposed.

The logical domain first emerges, then, in this “critical attitude”⁴ occasioned by a concern with the truth or falsity of judgments. In the critical reflection on a judgment, we consider the proposition in relation to the state of affairs straightforwardly experienced. In critically adjusting our attitude, in other words, we remain attentive to the state of affairs intended in the original act. We engage in a certain reflection upon that state of

¹Hua XVII, p. 131.

²Hua XVII, p. 120.

³Hua XVII, p. 127.

⁴Hua XVII, p. 127.

affairs, upon the manner in which it is meant, and the adequacy of this meaning to the object's reality. Such critical or propositional reflection is, therefore, continuous with our natural concern with the way things are. The concern with truth is addressed, in other words, in the interplay between the critical and natural attitudes, between the proposition as such and the state of affairs, between propositional reflection and the categorial intuition of states of affairs.

In the course of justifying our judgments, we become habituated to this interplay between the judgment as proposition and the judgment as state of affairs, and the adoption of the critical attitude and the teleological concern with the truthfulness of our judgments becomes part of the judging experience in the full sense. This habituated interplay informs even our everyday judging. This is the manner in which self-responsibility is realized in everyday experience. It is in the transition from passively accepting beliefs that are handed down in tradition or communicated by others to the active taking over of a judgmental content as my own conviction, one for which I have intuitive evidence.

Similarly, in the evaluative and volitional spheres, rational justification includes a reference to a moment of justifying intuition. Let us first consider the axiological sphere. Evaluative experiences, according to a widely shared phenomenological view, apprehend the valuable in a moment of feeling or an episodic emotion that is founded on a "presentation."¹ I believe this foundational claim is better stated as follows: there must be distinguishable layers of sense within the founded noematic sense of the evaluation such that a "presentational" layer – the layer presenting the merely descriptive features of the object – founds additional, affective layers of sense. The significance of this more precise foundational claim is that acts that are not themselves purely objectifying must be founded on a presentational or descriptive *content* of the sort that belongs to a purely

¹The view originates in Franz Brentano, *Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint*, trans. A. C. Rancurello, D. B. Terrell, and L. L. McAlister (2nd ed., London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1995), 45, 80, 276. For the view in Husserl see Edmund Husserl, *Vorlesungen über Ethik und Wertlehre 1908–1914*, ed. Ullrich Melle, Husserliana XXVIII (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1988), p. 252. To say that *B* is founded upon *A* is to say (i) that *B* presupposes *A* as necessary for it and (ii) that *B* builds itself upon *A* so as to form a unity with it.

objectifying act.

Value-attributes, then, are the correlates of feelings and episodic emotions that are the affective response of a subject with a particular experiential history – that is, particular beliefs, emotional states, dispositions, practical interests, and so forth – to the non-axiological properties of an object or situation. The value-attributes intended are neither separate from nor reducible to the non-axiological properties on which they are founded, but our valuations – precisely insofar as they are grounded on cognitive presentations – track these non-axiological properties. Conversely, the non-axiological properties provide reasons for the valuation accomplished in the affective response. Value-attributes, while disclosed by feelings or episodic emotions, exist independently of those feelings and emotions, at least in the sense that a thing's being valuable is not reducible to its being felt valuable. Rather, the valuable is that toward which the valuing feeling or episodic emotion is correct or appropriate. The intentional feeling or episodic emotion experienced by the subject is appropriate when it is rationally motivated by the non-axiological properties underlying it and when the underlying apprehension of the non-axiological properties is itself both true and justified.

By way of example, I evaluate a supervisor's angrily speaking loudly at an employee as rude; I take it not merely as speaking loudly but as shouting. My evaluation is immediately grounded in my directly witnessing the behavior or hearing about it from someone whose testimony is reliable. The speaking loudly along with facial or bodily features, say, a reddened face, rationally motivate my adverse affective response (say, shock or indignation). The behavior and accompanying bodily features are reasons for my felt indignation and the negative evaluation of the behavior. In brief, in experiencing the speaking loudly and reddened face of the employer, I immediately and at once recognize the action as rude and disapprove of it. This evaluation depends on an understanding both of what a conversational situation entails and of the evaluative concept of 'rudeness.' Shouting is inconsistent with what the nature of conversation entails, and to resort to shouting does not conduce to realizing the ends of conversation. The evaluative moment is rooted in the underlying

cognitive dimension and so thoroughly united with it such that it is, as it were, a “matter of fact” (although not in the sense of ‘fact’ favored by proponents of the fact-value distinction¹) that this shouting behavior is rude. Anyone who fails to recognize it as rude is mistaken and suffers from a misconception of what constitutes polite and rude behavior in conversational contexts. Experiencing and negatively evaluating the action as rude is, in other words, based on the features intrinsic to the behavior itself and the ordinary expectation we have about the behaviors appropriate to different kinds of human transactions. The general sense of appropriate behavior is established and modified over time in the light of our untutored, affective responses and the education of the attitudes and emotions that occurs within the communities to which we belong.

Since the evaluative experience incorporates both presentational and affective moments, it can go wrong in two ways. First, the underlying presentation can be false or unjustified. For example, I might discover that the person at whom I am angry for misleading me did not, in fact, mislead me. I might then, in a moment of reflection, feel remorse or shame for my original anger. However, there are also instances when the underlying cognition is true and justified and the emotion is nevertheless unjustified and inappropriate. This inappropriate affective response will sometimes be corrected in a way that is similar to the correction of cognitive mistakes. The affective response might change over time as, for example, when someone disagrees with my assessment of shouting behavior and I learn better what constitutes rude behavior. The original disagreement introduces discordance into the stream of evaluative experience and motivates a critical reflection that appeals both to the particulars of the circumstances and to our intersubjective understanding of evaluative concepts and their relation to non-axiological properties.

In other cases, however, this kind of critical reflection might be beside the point. Someone might, for example, have an inordinate fear of heights and refuse to go out on an observation deck she knows to be safe. She truly and justifiably grasps the non-axiological features of the situa-

¹See Philippa Foot, “Moral Arguments,” in *Virtues and Vices* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2002), pp. 102–105.

tion and knows it is most unlikely that she will fall, but she nevertheless fears to go out on the deck. This fear might, in one respect, be perfectly intelligible. She might have previously fallen from a height and suffered severe injuries. Nevertheless, she herself might recognize that her fear *in this case* is unjustified and inappropriate. She perfectly well understands the concept of danger and accurately sizes up the situation as safe but continues to experience fear. It is, therefore, neither the cognitive dimension nor reflection on one's feelings that accounts for her awareness of the inappropriateness of her episodic emotion. It is the affective dimension itself; she intuitively grasps this inappropriateness in a moment of pre-reflective self-awareness that has its own affective and evaluative moment. In fearing to go out on the observation deck, she is pre-reflectively aware of herself as experiencing fear. In having and recognizing this emotional reaction, she is, say, embarrassed by her fear. Her embarrassment is a negative appraisal of that fear, and it highlights the fact that one aspect of her knowledge of the situation – that is, that the observation deck is constructed so as to prevent her from falling – fails to justify her fear even as another aspect of her knowledge – that is, the the observation deck is high – motivates it. But in this case her intuitive, affective self-awareness discloses the underlying emotional episode as inappropriate. Modifying a proposal by Mulligan,¹ we can say, therefore,

if

- (1) *E* is an intentional feeling or episodic emotion whose base *p* is either a presentation (perceptual or judgmental) or representation (memorial or imaginative) of an object or situation *O* and its non-axiological properties *x*, *y*, and *z*,

and

- (2) “justification” in this context means *prima facie*, non-inferential, and defeasible justification,

then,

¹Kevin Mulligan, “From Appropriate Emotions to Values,” in *The Monist* 81 (1988), pp. 161–88.

- (3) *E* is appropriate to *O* and its non-axiological properties *x*, *y*, and *z* if and only if
- (a) *p* is a veridical or true presentation or representation of *O* and its properties *x*, *y*, and *z*, and
 - (b) *p* is justified, and
 - (c) *p* is a reason for and justifies *E*, and
 - (d) *F*, a (pre-reflectively or reflectively) self-assessing feeling or emotion (such as approbation or pride) positively appraises and justifies *E*, and
 - (e) no relation of justification mentioned is defeated.

Conditions (3a) and (3b) jointly address the correctness of the underlying cognitive content, ensuring that *p* is both true and justified. To say that *p* or any cognitive content is justified means that it is directly presented to consciousness in a perception – a seeing of *O* as *x* – or a categorial modification of perception – a seeing that *O* is *x*. Conditions (3c) and (3d) jointly address the correctness of the affective response. Condition (3c) necessarily involves our understanding of evaluative concepts and their basis in non-axiological properties, and condition (3d) brings into play the self-assessing emotions that justify the affective dimension of the object-directed feeling or emotional episode. To have a self-responsible evaluative experience, a self-responsible and appropriate emotion, is to have this structure of justification.

As valuation is founded on presentation, so volition is founded on valuation. It is in volition – the practical sphere of reason – that decision properly enters the scene, where the term “decision” more precisely denotes the choice of an action as conducive to some valued good or apparent good and as arising from deliberation. Stipulating, then, that

- (4) *V* is a volition that issues in action *A* as conducive to end *G* and whose base is *E*’s evaluation of *G* as a good end,

we can provisionally characterize self-responsibility in the practical sphere as follows:

- (5) V is rationally justified and A is right if and only if
- (a) E is appropriate;
 - (b) E rationally motivates a desire for G ;
 - (c) the desire for G rationally motivates V ;
 - (d) A conduces to G as an internal or external consequence; and
 - (f) no relation of justification entailed is defeated.

I have called this account of the structure of justified volition provisional, and we must turn to the discussion of *eudaimonia* to see the reasons for this.

2. *Eudaimonia*

The preceding descriptions reveal both an ambiguity and a bifurcation in the notion of the good. On the one hand, these descriptions point to those goods that are the objects of our self-responsible evaluations and volitions. On the other hand, these same descriptions point to the teleological dimension inherent in all intentional experience, the striving toward fulfillment, and thereby reveal the normative dimension of self-responsibility. Our being as rational agents is inherently ordered toward the good of self-responsibility in all the spheres of reason, the good of truthfully disclosing what is the case, what is genuinely valuable, and what is right to do. Reason realizes its proper end – its proper good – just insofar as it achieves evidenced judgments.

Husserl's own discussions of *eudaimonia* characterize the good in the first of these two ways, that is, as the object of our valuations and volitions. Indeed, his formulation of the first, formal law of morality – his categorical imperative, as he calls it, whose formulation he borrows from Brentano¹ – is “Choose the best among attainable ends.” Husserl states this law more objectively as “The best among what is attainable in the total practical sphere is not only comparatively the best, but the sole prac-

¹Franz Brentano, *The Origin of the Knowledge of Right and Wrong*, trans. C. Hague (Westminster: A Constable and Co., Ltd. 1902), p. 12.

tical good.”¹ His concern, *contra* Kant, is not with the mere form of a legislating reason. From the beginning there is a material dimension – the best attainable – proper to Husserl’s categorical imperative. Other laws that he cites make clear that Husserl conceives the “best among what is attainable” as the maximization of the goods available in a situation. For example, in the axiological sphere, Husserl presents us with laws governing the comparison and summation of value.² His “law of absorption” claims that in ordering our actions to the best of the goods attainable – the highest and most comprehensive good – this best absorbs all other goods under it.³ Husserl’s discussions of such laws indicate that he fails to distinguish adequately between the consequentialist and areteic versions of teleology, using such terms as *Eudaimonie* and *Glückseligkeit* with their consequentialist meanings. This supports a view of him as an idealized consequentialist.⁴

The phenomenological characterizations of self-responsibility outlined above, however, point to an areteic notion of the good. They point to a model of moral decision-making wherein the self-responsible agent weighs competing goods or apparent goods and the actions conducing to them in a deliberative activity that is either occurrent or that has been accomplished over time in such a way as to dispose the agent toward a certain kind of action. As various judgments and valuations are made and confirmed, they become convictions of the subject that inform subsequent judgments, valuations, and volitions. These habitualities, as Husserl calls them,⁵ make up our dispositions to expect certain features in certain kinds of situations, to pick out what is salient in those situations, to have certain kinds of attitudes toward them, and to act in determinate ways. This is just the kind of dispositional state that Aristotle has in mind when he speaks

¹Hua XXVIII, p. 221.

²Hua XXVIII, pp. 90 ff.; see also p. 132.

³Hua XXVIII, p. 145.

⁴Christopher Arroyo, in *Kant and Husserl on Moral Obligation and Emotions* (Ph.D. diss., Fordham University, 2007) has clarified for me the consequentialism of Husserl’s axiological and practical laws. See also Ullrich Melle, “Ethics in Husserl,” in *The Encyclopedia of Phenomenology*, ed. L. Embree *et al.* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1997), pp. 180–84.

⁵Edmund Husserl, *Cartesianische Meditationen und Pariser Vorträge*, ed. S. Strasser, Husserliana I (2nd ed., The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1963), pp. 100–101.

of virtues as states or habits or dispositions to have the right attitudes and to act rightly and from the right reasons.

The virtuous agent is the one who correctly grasps and assesses situations, who has properly appraised ends and has appropriately ordered her preferences among them, who has deliberated well about which actions conduce to what ends, and who acts rightly in the circumstances. For such an agent, it is important to note, following the example of the *phronimos* is insufficient. The virtuous agent lives self-responsibly, judging, valuing, and deciding for herself in the light of evidence rather than passively accepting received attitudes and opinions. The self-responsible agent, acting virtuously in the pursuit of true goods *for* herself and others, also realizes the goods of thinking well, feeling well, and acting well – what we might call the goods *of* rational agency.¹ The goods for an agent and for others are the objects of our valuations and volitions and are realized in actions and worldly states of affairs, whereas the goods of agency are realized in the synthetic performances and achievements of subjects whose cognitive, affective, and volitional experiences both disclose and fashion the world as morally ordered. The authenticity of this kind of life is responsible self-realization, taking responsibility for one's convictions and for disclosing the evidence that warrants those convictions. It is in this moment of self-responsibility, I believe, that we properly find the eudaimonistic character of a phenomenological axiology. It is the self-responsible life that is the flourishing life for rational agents.

This account of authenticity – I shall, for sake of convenience, call it the “phenomenological” account – differs from what I shall, again for sake of convenience, call the “existential” account. Understanding the dif-

¹I have elsewhere called these goods of agency “transcendental goods” and “non-manifest goods.” For some examples, see John J. Drummond, “Moral Objectivity: Husserl’s Sentiments of the Understanding,” in *Husserl Studies* 12 (1995), pp. 165–183 (reprinted in *Edmund Husserl: Critical Assessments of Leading Philosophers*, ed. Rudolf Bernet, Donn Welton, and Gina Zavota, (5 vols., New York: Routledge, 2005), vol. 5, pp. 80–98); “Aristotelianism and Phenomenology,” in *Phenomenological Approaches to Moral Philosophy*, ed. John J. Drummond and Lester Embree (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2002), pp. 15–45; “Respect as a Moral Emotion: A Phenomenological Approach,” in *Husserl Studies* 22 (2006), pp. 1–27; and “Value-Predicates and Value-Attributes,” in *Erfahrung und Analyse / Experience and Analysis: Proceedings of the 27th International Wittgenstein Symposium*, ed. Johann C. Marek and Maria E. Reicher (Vienna: öbv&hpt, 2005), pp. 363–71.

ference can help to clarify our account. The existential account connects authenticity to human freedom. The authentic human agent is the agent that makes of herself who and what she is through her choices. The phenomenological account, on the other hand, connects authenticity to truthfulness, to having the proper sense of things. I do not, of course, mean to deny freedom in matters of cognition, feeling, or acting. Our judgments are not caused by the things whose proper sense we seek, but they are normed by those things, by what the things truly are – and, as we have seen, by what we are.

Second, therefore, whereas authenticity on the existential view is tied to a notion of self-definition through self-conscious choice, authenticity on the phenomenological view is tied to a notion of self-realization insofar as I realize myself as a truthful and responsible agent. I come to have truthful convictions about things precisely because I have achieved self-responsible, justified judgments about those things, and I am the subject of those convictions. On this view, authenticity cannot have the same content-neutrality that authenticity on the existential view does.

Third, authenticity on the existential view appears in the guise of a “virtue,” a disposition to choose in certain ways. In exercising his or her freedom, a human being makes one’s projects one’s own, and authenticity names the disposition to take control over one’s life in self-conscious choices so as to free oneself from the “alienating” social and historical forces that threaten to make one a pawn of circumstance. Authenticity, then, is precisely the disposition to choose and execute projects as one’s own. On the phenomenological view, on the other hand, authenticity or self-responsibility is, as we have seen, an end, not the manner, of rational agency.

Thinking truly, feeling appropriately, and acting rightly are goods properly realized only in intersubjective contexts when others also realize them. The apprehension of moral goods, decisions about how best to realize those goods, and evaluative judgments about our own actions, the actions of others, and social practices and institutions all arise against the background of a common knowledge embodied in our collective determinations of moral concepts, of choiceworthy goods, and of praiseworthy

actions. This common knowledge – our notion of rudeness, for example, or kindness or honesty – is passed from one generation to the next by means of the stories we tell young people, the songs we sing, the practices we adopt, the laws we write, the institutions we establish, even the games we play. Moreover, it continues to be worked out, criticized, reappropriated, and modified within successive generations in our encounters with one another, with those whose opinions or reasoning might differ from our own. Our own opinions and beliefs must be tested against the opinions and beliefs of others. Only in coming to grips with differing opinions and beliefs can we truly be said to come to know ourselves as a person holding certain convictions that have withstood a certain kind of testing. In other words, one does not and cannot reason well by oneself. In order to be self-responsible and to realize the goods *of* agency, one must think *for* oneself, but since one cannot rightly think *by* oneself, these goods of agency must be effectively – even if only implicitly – chosen for others as well as for oneself.¹

Insofar as the goods *of* agency are realized in an agent's making moral sense of the world as she straightforwardly and virtuously pursues what is good *for* herself and others, we might also think of these goods of agency as second-order goods that are both (a) *inherent constituents* of or *necessary conditions* for virtuously pursuing first-order goods for oneself and others in our everyday activities and (b) superveniently realized in those virtuous pursuits. An example of an inherent constituent of the good of the self-responsible life would be the personal autonomy of both myself and the other. Since the good of the self-responsible life is realizable only in an intersubjective community, these inherent constituents often take political form as constitutionally embodied in the freedoms of thought, speech, and association. An inherent constituent of the self-responsible life is, in general, something apart from which the life of free, rational, and insightful agency is unrealizable. A necessary condition of this life, on the other hand, is a first-order good required for the exercise of the capacity for self-

¹Cf. John J. Drummond, "Time, History, and Tradition," in *The Many Faces of Time*, ed. John Brough and Lester Embree (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2000), pp. 127–47.

responsibility. Some of these conditions are primarily bodily, for example, the health, sustenance, and shelter necessary for maintaining life as well as bodily security. These too can take political form, as in protections against assault and coercion or in refashioning our conception of distributive justice in a doctrine of social and economic rights. Other conditions are not primarily bodily, for example, education with its concern for both theoretical and practical wisdom – the education, in other words, of the mind, the emotions, and of choice. These goods obligate us insofar as we recognize the necessary desirability of the constituent goods without which no one would be a free, insightful agent at all and of those conditional goods without which one could be a free, insightful agent only with great, perhaps insuperable, difficulty. Consequently, there is a class of goods – the goods *of* agency organized around the notion of thinking, feeling, and willing correctly – as well as a set of behaviors, practices, and virtues ordered to the realization of these goods that are necessarily, albeit implicitly, chosen by the virtuous agent insofar as that agent pursues any goods at all.

Securing the goods of agency for ourselves and others does not foreclose the pursuit of different first-order goods. The universality of the goods of agency is, in other words, consistent with what we might call the “democracy” or pluralism of goods pursuable in free societies. However, insofar as the responsible pursuit of culturally specific goods requires that one secure the goods of agency as such, the pursuit of some first-order goods is morally wrong on universalist grounds if that pursuit blocks the realization of the goods of agency for other persons. But within that limitation, there are many choiceworthy first-order goods.

The first-order goods for agents and patients are now apprehended both as necessarily transformed by and as yielding to the second-order goods of agency. For example, in exercising honesty and kindness toward a friend who is about to make a seriously flawed decision that might cost her her job, one might be honestly abrupt with one’s friend in order, as it were, to save her from herself. But one might in this circumstance offer advice in such a bullying way that one’s friend begins to feel coerced in her decision. The effect of one’s bullying honesty, no less honest because

bullying, would be to limit the friend's autonomy to decide for herself about the best course of action and thereby close off the possibility for her realization of self-responsibility. This would be to place both a good for the agent (one's own honesty) and the good for the other (the friend's keeping her job) ahead of the other's good of agency (autonomy, that is, authentically or self-responsibly deciding for herself). Recognizing the necessity, however, of the goods of agency for the pursuit of first-order goods, one's sense of honesty is refined to the point that one recognizes that honesty with a friend cannot truly be thought of in such a way that it would permit denying one's friend the autonomy to make up her own mind and to choose for herself. Genuinely brutal honesty is honesty in name only.

Similarly, in the case of rudeness mentioned earlier, the shouting is seen not merely as violating what achieves the ends of conversation but as also intimidating and belittling the employee. The shouting is deemed wrong both because it fails to conduce to the ends of conversation and because it fails to respect the employee who, as a fellow moral subject and along with me and others, discloses the moral sense of our shared world.

We can now remove the provisional nature of our characterization of self-responsible volition. We now say:

- (6) V is rationally justified and A is right if and only if
 - (a) E is appropriate;
 - (b) E rationally motivates a desire for G ;
 - (c) the desire for G rationally motivates V ;
 - (d) A conduces to G as an internal or external consequence;
 - (e) A does not frustrate (or frustrates least) the realization of necessarily valued second-order goods of agency; and
 - (f) no relation of justification entailed is defeated.

The realization of the end of the action in its performance and ensuring that the action also conduces to necessarily willed goods justify the correctness of the volition and the rightness of the action.

Phenomenological descriptions reveal important truths about essential features of the transcendental dimension of the human. In this respect, this phenomenological and areteic approach goes beyond an Aristotelian naturalism to acknowledge this dimension of the human as an agent who makes moral sense of the world and whose “making sense” is teleologically ordered toward truth in its cognitive, axiological, and practical guises. The appeal to the second-order goods of agency grounds both Aristotle’s claim that some actions are always and inherently wrong and Kant’s claim that we should not make an exception in our own case.

I mentioned at the outset that I thought the eudaimonistic reading of self-responsibility enables phenomenology to engage a number of contemporary debates. I want to suggest in concluding that this phenomenological approach yields a view compatible with a number of contemporary, neo-Aristotelian approaches at both the meta-ethical and normative levels. First, we see repeated in this axiological approach the Aristotelian meta-ethical views that the emotions have cognitive content, that they pick out what is morally salient in a situation, and that the moral agent develops habits of thinking, feeling, and acting, that is, dispositions to have the right attitudes and to act rightly. Second, the axiology sketched here affirms the Aristotelian normative view that there is a teleology – a *eudaimonia* or flourishing – proper to rational agents: the teleology of thinking truly, feeling appropriately, and acting rightly. But it also honors the Kantian claim that we must respect the autonomy of all other rational agents. Third, this view focuses our fundamental moral judgment on the self-responsibility of the agent in determining for herself the truth of her beliefs, the appropriateness of her attitudes, the correctness of her deliberations, and the rightness of her actions. The fundamental normative judgment pertains to the character of the agent rather than the rightness or wrongness of a particular action, and it is in relation to this overriding good of rational agency that we must think about the virtues appropriate for the flourishing human life. This phenomenological approach, in other words, can both position itself among contemporary neo-Aristotelian contenders and engage deontological and utilitarian viewpoints in meaningful debate.

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