Episodic Ethics

GALEN STRAWSON

I guess I wont send that note now, for the mind is such a new place, last night feels obsolete (Emily Dickinson, 1830–1886).[1]

She said: 'Rejoice, for God has brought you to your fiftieth year in the world!' But she had no inkling that, for my part, there is no difference at all between my own days which have gone by and the distant days of Noah about which I have heard. I have nothing in the world but the hour in which I am: it pauses for a moment, and then, like a cloud, moves on. (Samuel Hanagid, 996–1056, Vizier to the King of Granada)

1 Four temporal temperaments

The first thing I want to put in place is a distinction between one's experience of oneself when one is considering oneself principally as a human being taken as a whole, and one's experience of oneself when one is considering oneself principally as an inner mental entity or 'self' of some sort—I'll call this one's self-experience. When Henry James says, of one of his early books

> I think of ... the masterpiece in question ... as the work of quite another person than myself ... a rich ... relation, say, who ... suffers me still to claim a shy fourth cousinship'[2]

he has no doubt that he is the same human being as the author of that book, but he doesn't feel he is the same self or person as the author of that book. It's this phenomenon of experiencing oneself as a self that concerns me here. One of the most important ways in which people tend to think of themselves (quite independently of

[1] Letter to Mrs. J. G. Holland, early October 1870. When I cite a work I give the first publication date or estimated date of composition, while the page reference is to the text referred to here. E. Dickinson, *Emily Dickinson: Selected Letters*, T. H. Johnson (ed.) (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1830/1971).

[2] 1915: 562-3.

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religious belief) is as things whose persistence conditions are not obviously or automatically the same as the persistence conditions of a human being considered as a whole.

I'm going to use the terms 'Diachronic', 'Episodic', 'Narrative' and 'non-Narrative' with capital letters to denote four psychological tendencies, four natural ways of experiencing life in time. To be *Narrative* is

> [N] to see or live or experience one's life as a narrative or story of some sort, or at least as a collection of stories.

To be *non-Narrative* is not to live one's life in this way; one may simply lack any Narrative tendency, or one may have a positively anti-Narrative tendency.

Everyone, I think, agrees that there is such a thing as Narrativity, although there's a large debate about what it is, exactly, and about whether or not it's a good thing. I'm not going to say much about it here, though, because I'm more concerned with the less familiar distinction between Episodics and Diachronics.[3]

If one is *Diachronic*

> [D] one naturally figures oneself, the self or person one now experiences oneself to be, as something that was there in the (further) past and will be there in the (further) future.
>
> Diachronics needn't be Narratives, even if (as may be doubted) Narratives are bound to be Diachronics, for the basic Diachronic experience of self and life can exist as just defined in the absence of any specifically Narrative—story-discerning, unity-seeking—attitude to one's own life. Many human beings, it seems, are Diachronic. Others are Episodic, where the defining feature of being *Episodic* is that
>
> [E] one does not figure oneself, the self or person one now experiences oneself to be, as something that was there in the (further) past and will be there in the (further) future
>
> although one is of course fully aware that one has long-term—lifelong—continuity considered as a human being. Episodic experience is the direct opposite of Diachronic experience.

Many think that a good human life must be both Narrative and Diachronic. They think that an Episodic person cannot live a fully

[3] I discuss Narrativity in 'Against Narrativity', *Ratio* 16, 2004, 428–452.

moral life. An Episodic, they say, cannot properly inhabit the realms of responsibility, duty and obligation—not to mention those of friendship, loyalty, and so on.[4]

Is this true? In discussing the question I will use 'I*' ('me*', 'mine*', etc.) as I have done before to represent that which I experience myself to be when I'm apprehending myself specifically as a self or inner subject considered as something different from GS, i.e. the human being that I am considered as a whole. (The asterisk attaches equally well to other personal pronouns and adjectives—'you*', 'their*', etc.—to denote others' sense of themselves as selves or inner subjects as opposed to their sense of themselves as human beings considered as a whole.)

According to Kathy Wilkes

> morality is a matter of planning future actions, calculating consequences, experiencing remorse and contrition, accepting responsibility, accepting praise and blame; such mental phenomena are both forward—and backward—looking. Essentially ... Emotions such as love or hate, envy or resentment, would not deserve the name—except in some occasional rare cases—if they lasted for but three seconds, and were thereafter claimed, not by any me*, but by some former self ... *The Episodic life could not be richly moral and emotional*; we must have a life, or self, with duration. We are, and must consider ourselves as, relatively stable intentional systems. Essentially.[5]

This is forcefully put, and I agree with quite a lot of it. It does, however, misrepresent what it is to be Episodic, and I think that its central claim is false. The Episodic life is certainly not the same as the Diachronic life, any more than the non-Narrative life is the same as the Narrative life, but it is certainly not less moral, or less feeling. Nor is it less human or humane, less vivid, less understanding, or less responsible. A happy-go-lucky person can be the best among us.

[4] The notion of Diachronicity is close to the special notion of consciousness of past events that Locke employs in his discussion of personal identity. Consciousness in his sense is essentially accompanied by 'concernment', a sense of ownership and involvement. See M. Schechtman, *The Constitution of Selves* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996), 105–109; G. Strawson, *Locke on personal identity* (in preparation).

[5] K. Wilkes, 'ΓΝΩθΙ ΣΕΑΥΤΟΝ (Know Thyself)', *Journal of Consciousness Studies* 5, 1998, 153–165, 155, criticizing G. Strawson, ' "The Self" ', *Journal of Consciousness Studies* 4, 1997, 405–428 (my emphasis).

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To some this is obvious, others find it hard to see. Human beings have radically different moral styles or personalities, and some types have a rather dim view of others.[6] Diachronics may think that an Episodic's attitude to others must be thin or cold or incomplete in some way. There is, however, no systematic quantative difference in the warmth, completeness and depth of Episodics' and Diachronics' relations with others. Human beings can flourish in very different ways, and Plutarch shows great ignorance when he writes in *On Tranquillity* as follows:

> the present good, which permits us to touch it only for the briefest period of time and then eludes perception, seems to fools to have no further reference to us nor to belong to us at all. As in that painting of a man twisting rope in Hades, who allows a donkey grazing near by to eat it up as he plaits it, insensible and thankless forgetfulness steals upon most people and takes possession of them, consuming every past action and success, every pleasant moment of leisure, companionship and enjoyment. Forgetfulness does not allow life to become unified, as when past is interwoven with present. Instead, separating yesterday from today as though it were different, and also tomorrow, it immediately makes every event to have never happened because it is never recalled.
>
> Those in the Schools who deny growth and increase, on the ground that Being is in continual flux, turn one into ... a series of persons different from oneself. So too, those who do not preserve or recall former events in memory, but allow them to flow away, make themselves deficient and empty each day and dependent on tomorrow—as though what had happened last year and yesterday and the day before had no relation to them, and had never happened at all.[7]

Diachronics may see a lack of interest in what one has made of one's life as chilling or alien—even slightly frightening—when it is

[6] Cf. e.g. O. Flanagan, *Varieties of Moral Personality* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991). One of the most profound differences is between those for whom the moral-emotional categories of resentment and humiliation are central, and those for whom they hardly figure.

[7] Plutarch, 'On Tranquillity of Mind', *Moralia* VI, Plutarch, W. C. Helmbold (trans.) (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, c 100 CE/1939), 214–217 (473B-474B); my thanks to Richard Sorabji for showing this to me. Forgetfulness is not in fact a necessary part of Episodicity, but Plutarch's overall opposition to the Episodic life is clear.

set down on paper. They should not, however, conclude that they will find people who experience things in this way chilling or frightening; some of their best friends may be like this. It is not hard to develop a sense of where people fall on the Diachronic-Episodic spectrum, although one needs to bear in mind that things like increasing age may bring about significant change, and that the strength and emotional loading of one's awareness of oneself* as something that has a past or a future can vary considerably according to what one is thinking about.

Adequate studies of the ethical differences between Diachronics and Episodics would fill a bookshelf—they already fill many, if one looks to literature—and I'm not going to attempt a systematic exposition. After forestalling one possible misapprehension I'm simply going to offer, in no particular order, a number of points in defence of the flourishing Episodic life. (It is a further question whether the non-Narrative life can be a fully moral or human life; the answer is 'Of course'.)

The misapprehension is this. In the passage quoted above Wilkes is replying to a paper in which I propose that the best thing to say about human selves, given the assumption that such metaphysical entities exist at all, is that they exist for at most two or three seconds. Now this is a strictly metaphysical proposal, motivated partly by considerations from experimental psychology, and it is meant to apply equally to all of us, Diachronics and Episodics alike, however we experience ourselves in time. It does not carry any sort of suggestion that anyone's subjective experience of their* duration will tend to be of the order of two or three seconds, and the grounds for making it would remain the same even if we were all profoundly Diachronic. As things are, it seems that some Episodics experience their* duration as the same as that of the specious present, around a second; for others, perhaps, it is experienced as considerably longer, extending, perhaps, for a few minutes, or half an hour, or a day, or for some much longer indeterminate period of time, in the Proustian or Jamesian manner.

Many will look no further than their friends and acquaintances, real and fictional, in realizing that Episodics are not as a group somehow morally worse off than Diachronics—although strong Diachronics may have to make more effort than others, in as much as they assume that the Diachronic form of moral experience is

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required.[8] The fact that Episodics are not morally inferior as a type should also be immediately clear to many moral philosophers—all those, for example, who hold that moral principles are either consequentialist, or deontological, or rights-based, or some mixture of these. For respect for these principles need not depend in any way on whether one is Episodic or Diachronic.[9] The same is true in the case of 'virtue ethics', but some virtue ethicists, i.e. those who take the concepts of virtue and moral character to be central to ethics, may think it obvious that Episodics must fall short of Diachronics.

To make their case, these virtue ethicists will have to show that there are some dispositions of character that are not only essential to a fully moral life (whether or not they are rightly called 'virtues') but are also unavailable, or significantly less available, to Episodics. I don't think this can be shown. I am, however, going to accept Wilkes's terms of debate, and take it that we are concerned with the conditions of a 'richly moral and emotional' life in her sense, not just with moral life more narrowly construed. Moral goodness is fundamentally a matter of feeling and desire, of right feeling and right desire, and there is a clear sense in which machinelike consequentialists or crabby 'Kantians' fail to live a richly moral and emotional life even if they are morally impeccable by their own standards.[10]

[8] Almost all of us assume that other people are more like ourselves, psychologically, than they are. In this domain we automatically employ something like the 'argument from analogy' and are seriously restricted in our capacity to imagine radical difference. We fail, as Murdoch (following Simone Weil) observes, to think of others with sufficient realism, imagination, and attention—where these three virtues are indissolubly connected (I. Murdoch, *The Sovereignty of Good* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1970)).

[9] Still less should it. Consider people who subscribe to a morality of divine command and who all have an equal degree of religious belief. Suppose we find out that the Diachronics among them are somewhat more likely than Episodics to observe the dictates of that morality. That will hardly show that they are, intrinsically, morally better people. It may be that they are more self-concerned, or simply that the practical effects of self-concern are different in Episodics and Diachronics.

[10] For a striking discussion of how adherence to Kantian principles can go wrong, see J. Annas, 'Personal Love and Kantian Ethics in *Effi Briest*', *Philosophy and Literature* 8, No. 1, 1984, 15–31.

2 Remorse, contrition, regret, guilt

It's important, to begin, that the Episodic sense of self is not absolute in the way Wilkes imagines. Episodics vary greatly among themselves, from extreme to moderate, and one's general sense of one's temporal being may also vary considerably depending on what one is doing or thinking about, or one's chemistry or mood.[11] There are things in what is for most people the remoter future—e.g. their death—and the remoter past—e.g. moments of great embarrassment—that even strong Episodics may tend to figure as involving themselves*. They may for example apprehend a past triumph as involving themselves* and feel satisfaction. They may apprehend dubious actions in the remoter past as involving themselves* and duly feel remorse or contrition.

Remorse and contrition seem particularly important, when one asks whether an Episodic can be a fully moral being. They seem to be emotions to which one ought to be susceptible in certain circumstances. Neither of them, however, depends on any sort of Diachronic connection with one's remoter past, for both are often felt intensely immediately after action, and are for that reason alone as available to a strong Episodic as anyone else. Nor is either of them essential to the moral life. One can rightly regret things one has done without any special experience of remorse or contrition (in many cases neither is appropriate), and a morally good agent may never have occasion to feel either.

> – Isn't the *capacity* to feel remorse or contrition, at least, essential to the moral life?

The first reply is that an Episodic may have this capacity as robustly as anyone else, as just remarked. The second reply is No. There is, for one thing, a distinctively moral species of sinking feeling that lacks the special phenomenology of remorse and contrition although it possesses in equal measure anything that is good about them. There is a certain distinctive negative thud of realization of what one has done that has the same ethical value, whatever exactly that value is. There is a kind of dismay of which the same is true, and one's own actions can occasion sorrow or sadness in one in an ethically influential way, and in a way in which others' actions (or indeed news of disaster) would not, without being self-concerned in the manner of remorse or contrition or mortification. There is, again, a kind of matter-of-fact moral

[11] See e.g. Strawson, op. cit. note 4, 419–21.

self-criticism that is not a morally inferior way of experiencing one's own wrongdoing even though it may have very little of moral emotion in it (in so far as it is accompanied by emotion this is not a matter of remorse and contrition, but rather a kind of condemnatory exasperation or crossness with oneself, a feeling of severity).[12]

When this sort of moral self-criticism occurs in an Episodic like myself it is directed at me* experienced as something existing in the present, even if it is thought about the past that brings it on. But it doesn't follow from the fact that it is thought about the past that brings it on that I do really and in spite of my assertion of my Episodicity think of myself* as there in the past. For one thing, thought about the past can bring it on because I am as I know a person of a certain kind and my GS-past can be a very good indicator of what kind of person I(*) am (it is an understatement to say that my GS-past has special relevance to me as I am now). The content of the experience is plain: the object of my attention is simply me* now, and I have no sense that I* was there in the past. My concern in this moral self-criticism is with my* moral nature or being, and this no more includes my past than my present physical being includes all the particles of matter that have previously made me up. I* was not there in the past. But this is not to say that I(*) cannot feel bad about past harm I have done to others; I(*) can.

> – Shouldn't this feeling become indistinguishable, in an Episodic, from feeling bad about past harm that others (strangers) have done?

It might in some Episodics, but it need not—to any extent that it should not. Feelings are not bound by consistency or rationality considerations, although they can certainly respond to such considerations, and it is, as just remarked, an understatement to say that my GS past has special relevance to me as I am now. If, then, some difference remains between my feelings about my own past wrongdoing and my feelings about others' past wrongdoing, we need not be surprised.

We should also bear in mind that contrition, appropriate and attractive as it can be, is the more attractive the more fully it involves grasp of and sorrow about the harm done, and the less it involves focus on the fact that it was oneself who did it. This last element cannot disappear altogether if the feeling is to count as contrition, but the focus on self grows suspect if the emotion

[12] It may also be accompanied, dangerously for some, by self-disdain, self-contempt.

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persists too long, and even contrition can easily become entangled with elements of self-indulgence. The same is (all too) true of remorse and feeling mortified, which are emotionally thicker than contrition along a certain dimension, but a good thing for the same reasons.[13] These moral emotions may be instrumentally useful both personally and socially, in as much as they dispose people to future good behaviour; they are, so far, good things in their place. And we feel warmly about contrition and remorse even when we consider them non-instrumentally, especially in so far as they are fuelled more by an awareness of harm to others than by an essentially negative attitude to oneself. Susceptibility to such feelings is not, however, a necessary ground of future good behaviour, nor a very good one, even when it is practically effective.

Certainly *guilt* adds nothing—nothing good—to moral being. It is a common feeling, but it is rightly not mentioned by Wilkes. Cyril Connolly has guilt-trouble —

> When I contemplate the accumulation of guilt and remorse which, like a garbage-can, I carry through life, and which is fed not only by the lightest action but by the most harmless pleasure, I feel Man to be of all living things the most biologically incompetent and ill-organized. Why has he acquired a seventy years life-span only to poison it incurably by the mere being of himself? Why has he thrown Conscience, like a dead rat, to putrefy in the well?[14]

— but the fact that experiencing guilt is disagreeable does not alter the fact that there is in the end nothing in it that is not essentially superficial, essentially self-indulgent (especially when associated with religious belief) and above all petty, as Connolly would be quick to grant. It is, to be sure, a chimpanzee thing, and wholly so, an ancient adaptive emotional reflex in social animals, encrusted, now, with all the fabulous complications and dreadful superstitions

[13] Nietzsche attacks remorse, predictably, but fails to distinguish it sufficiently from guilt. See his 'Against Remorse' (1887), *Writings from the Late Notebooks*, K. Sturge (trans.), R. Bittner (ed.) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1885–8/2003).

[14] C. Connolly, *The Unquiet Grave* (New York, NY: Persea Books, 1944–51/2005).

of human consciousness, but otherwise unchanged, an internal prod that evolved among our remote but already highly social ancestors.[15]

Some think that it's impossible for anyone who takes such a negative view of guilt to be fully moral. They think that such a view shows a basic failure of moral understanding. This, though, is an unfortunate charge, because it proves in its proponents what it charges in others. The negative view of guilt isn't a strategy of self-exculpation. It isn't a view held by moral flippertygibbets or strident self-styled 'Nietzscheans', or by those who don't themselves feel guilt. It's at least as likely—perhaps more likely—to be held by those who are susceptible to guilt. It isn't a comfortable self-protective truth. It's an uncomfortable self-exposing truth (at least at first). It is much less comfortable than guilt for the millions who make their comfortably uncomfortable home in guilt, and grasping it is, perhaps, the beginning of genuine personal morality.

> – I agree that there's a great ocean of unwarranted guilt, bad guilt, narcissistic, masochistic guilt. But what about feelings of guilt that occur in people because of genuine wrongdoing on their part? Aren't these feelings of guilt, at least, intrinsically morally good, rather than (at most) instrumentally valuable?

Surely not. There can be sorrow and remorse without guilt, as already remarked. There can be regret and contrition and just self-reproach. None of these things is self-indulgent or self-important in the way that guilt is, and the same is true of shame, although shame is delicately balanced. It has forms that are not in any way self-indulgent (their availability is as likely to be a matter of cultural differences as of individual psychological differences), but it can, like self-hatred (fatally easy for some, unimaginable for others), degenerate fast into a particularly insidious form of self-indulgence.[16]

[15] My father and eldest son once startled me by maintaining that there is nothing more to feeling guilty than fear of being found out. Reflecting on this view is a good exercise for those given to guilt, but it cannot be wholly right because one can feel guilty about actions performed in full view of others, and feelings of guilt can persist even when one's misdemeanour is discovered. We need to add fear of being ill thought of and punished, at least, to the fear of being found out.

[16] Guilt in the Christian manner seems irredeemably obnoxious, but there is a Jewish cultural tradition that treats it as an object of rueful humour in a way that makes it seem positively charming.

It is a striking fact that a capacity for negative self-concerned moral emotions (remorse, guilt, and so on) is widely thought to be essential to fully fledged moral being—especially, I have found, when the issue of Episodic ethics is raised—while there is much less tendency to hold similar views about the indispensability (or even importance or desirability) of positive self-concerned moral emotions.[17] We don't really seem to have words for attractive, positive, distinctively moral self-concerned emotions, although we have a rich way of talking about unattractive ones—as when we say that people are self-satisfied, smug, self-righteous, complacent and holier-than-thou.[18] We tend to be overcome by the idea that if positive self-concerned moral emotions were in any way agreeable to those who felt them then they would diminish or destroy the value of the very thing that would otherwise justify them, as when a child's charm is spoilt by the fact that she is aware of it. We are too aware of how such emotions might constitute a suspect motive for being moral, or become infected with self-deception. Our model of morally good people seems to require that they be somehow ignorant of the fact that they are morally good, on pain of corruption; or at least that they be utterly unmoved by it. If positive moral emotions are to be a matter of occurrent feeling at all, then they must somehow be ghostly to the point of invisibility. If we posit as attractive an emotion of quiet happiness in doing justice, say, it must not know or examine itself, it must somehow ignore itself.

It is not as if there is no room at all, in our ordinary moral scheme, for positive feeling to flow from, and in that sense be concerned with, one's moral behaviour. Everyone—even Kant—can agree that good deeds may give one a sense of being in harmony with things, and with oneself, and that this is a good and desirable thing, that virtue in this sense can be its own reward.[19] Few would find anything wrong in a person's being filled with happiness by being kind and thoughtful. Once again, though, it seems that these feelings cannot themselves be moral feelings in the sense that they

[17] It is an ancient idea that you have to like yourself—well enough—to live a good life, and similar ideas are common in present-day psychotherapy; but they do not usually extend to positive self-concerned emotions that are specifically moral in character.

[18] 'Pride' names something good as well as something bad, but it is hard for us to think that 'moral pride' might be a good thing.

[19] I'm interpreting the dictum narrowly and psychologically as a statement about the positive effects of virtuous action on one's subjective state. A wider reading finds rewards beyond any subjective effects.

involve a moral opinion about oneself. It is all right to feel oneself to be morally bad, but it is simply too dangerous, according to our ordinary scheme, to feel oneself to be morally good.[20] Even when theorists allow that a sense of harmony deriving from good conduct may have considerable intrinsic and instrumental value—against the standard background of the view that negative self-concerned moral emotions are important or essential to fully moral being—one hears little or nothing of the correlative idea that susceptibility to such positive emotions might be important or even essential to being a genuinely moral agent.

Well, I'm not at all sure it is essential, but why is there this sour bias? Why isn't the disposition to feel the negative emotions also judged to have instrumental value at most, and to be otherwise regrettable and in any case inessential to full-fledged moral flourishing? The answer lies in part in the difficult domain of evolutionary psychology. Here it is enough to note that the question bears immediately on the question of Episodic ethics, for if I am right that ethical wellbeing and responsibility don't require susceptibility to the negative emotions then it does not follow, from the claim that these emotions require a Diachronic outlook, which is in any case dubious, that only Diachronics can be fully moral.

Suppose we think that susceptibility to the positive emotions is a good thing, but not a morally good thing. Should we continue to maintain that susceptibility to the negative feelings is specifically a morally good thing, even after having abandoned the idea that it is essential to fully moral being—continuing to insist that an individual's possession of a disposition to have the negative feelings is not merely instrumentally valuable but also makes that individual an intrinsically better person, morally speaking? This seems utterly dubious. It may at first be thought to connect with and derive support from the venerable idea that morality is at bottom to be negatively defined,[21] as a device to counteract egoism, say, but that doctrine typically incorporates a strongly instrumental attitude to morality, and is vulnerable to Nietzschean polemic and Aristotelian puzzlement.

It may be added that an instrumentally valuable negative attitude to one's own wrongdoing need not involve any particular moral

[20] Perhaps there are cultural differences at work here—American/European differences, for example.

[21] See e.g. T. Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Richard Tuck (ed.) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1651/1996); G. Warnock, *The Object of Morality* (London: Methuen, 1971).

emotion. As for the supposed instrumental value of guilt—the belief that one has done something wrong can motivate one to act without any trace of the feeling of guilt, and I would back clear belief over guilt any day, if there is any hope of the wrongdoer making things better. And consider dear Lucy, who has, regrettably, performed some action A. Suppose that she is thinking that A-ing is wrong, and suppose she has acquired a particularly vivid sense that A-ing is wrong specifically because she herself has A-d in the past. This can be so without her being in any way disposed to fix on or give special weight or attention to the fact that *she herself* has A-d.[22] Even if it is the experience of actually performing the action that has provoked her sense of its wrongness she needn't be specially fixed on the fact that it was she herself who A-d, and it is better if she isn't.

She may be Diachronic or Episodic, Narrative or non-Narrative; it makes no difference. Newly acquired moral understanding, like many other kinds of understanding, can be integrated into how one is without being explicitly tagged as deriving from something one did in the past, even if it is the fact that one did it in the past that has made its wrongness especially plain to one. There is a powerful, phylogenetically ancient psychological mechanism by which many of us learn vividly about morality from our own actions, and the attendant sanctions of others, but the learning of the lesson does not depend on any marked or sustained self-concern, or any persisting sense of oneself* as having been the agent of those actions. The operation of the mechanism may be accompanied by such forms of self-concern in Diachronics and may seem to depend on them, but it does not.

3 The Emotional Priority Thesis

When we consider the complexities of conscience and moral emotion specifically as they relate to a person's past, I think we are in danger, as theorists, of getting things the wrong way round. It may seem to us that these feelings depend essentially on possession of a Diachronic sense of self (although not necessarily on Narrativity). But the true dependence, I suggest, runs the other way. The grounds of the mechanisms—the feeling-mechanisms—of conscience and responsibility are ancient. They predate the

[22] She may be equally likely to acquire a vivid sense that A-ing is wrong from being the victim of someone else's A-ing.

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Diachronic sense of self, both phylogenetically and ontogenetically, and they are in that straightforward sense independent of it and can operate without it. Rather than being essentially dependent on the Diachronic sense of self, which is after all something that can exist only in creatures like ourselves that have evolved into fully fledged concept-exercising self-consciousness, they are among its deep foundations.

One might call this the 'Emotional Priority Thesis'. It states that the past-concerned moral emotions, and in particular the feeling of responsibility, do not in their basic forms presuppose a Diachronic outlook, although we tend to conceptualize them in ways that make it seem analytic that they do. It is because the independently and phylogenetically grounded feeling of responsibility is so salient and vivid among the many things that nourish and structure the Diachronic outlook, in those who have it, that the former comes to seem to depend on and presuppose the latter.

There is a clear parallel between the Emotional Priority Thesis and P. F. Strawson's argument in his famous paper 'Freedom and Resentment'.[23] We all ordinarily believe that people are free agents in some strong, straightforward and unequivocal sense given which they are truly and wholly and ultimately responsible for what they do in some equally strong, straightforward and unequivocal sense, and this belief is vividly manifested in what Strawson calls our 'moral-reactive' and 'personal-reactive' attitudes to other people—our feelings and attitudes of gratitude, resentment and so on. It seems plain that such reactive attitudes are unwarranted, inappropriate, out of place, fundamentally mistaken, if people do not really have 'strong' free will of the sort just outlined: it seems plain that the reactive attitudes depend logically on the belief in strong free will for their full appropriateness.

There is, however, an extremely powerful argument, which I will not give here, that shows that strong free will of this sort is incoherent, logically impossible.[24] Does this mean that we should give up the reactive attitudes? The question does not really arise for us, as Strawson points out, for it raises the question whether we can give them up, and the answer to that question is, for all practical purposes, No. And although the reactive attitudes do clearly

[23] P. F. Strawson, 'Freedom and Resentment', *Freedom and Resentment* (London: Methuen, 1962/1974).

[24] See e.g. G. Strawson, 'The Impossibility of Moral Responsibility', *Philosophical Studies* 75 (1994), 5–24, where I offer a further characterization of strong free will.

depend logically on the belief in strong free will for their full appropriateness, in spite of the fact that feelings are not bound by logic, it does not follow that they depend *causally* on this belief in such a way that it must in some sense precede them and give rise to them and sustain them. It seems, on the contrary, and as Strawson says, that it is the other way round. The reactive attitudes are the primary and prior phenomenon. They are the true foundation of the typically wholly unexamined and utterly-taken-for-granted belief in strong free will, rather than being founded on it. Logically, the reactive attitudes depend on belief in strong free will for their full appropriateness. Causally, the dependency is the other way round.[25]

It is not just that the reactive attitudes clearly precede any clear and explicit formation of a belief in free will, both phylogenetically and ontogenetically, and standardly persist untouched in the face of extremely powerful theoretical arguments directed against the possibility of free will (arguments that lead many to say, quite sincerely, that they do not believe in free will). The further claim is that the belief in free will actually arises from the reactive attitudes (it is perhaps best seen as a kind of conceptualized *post hoc* expression of the reactive attitudes, rather than as an independent element in a person's mental economy). The corresponding claim about Diachronicity is that feelings that apparently presuppose Diachronicity—embarrassment, guilt, resentment, remorse and so on—actually precede it. They are not essentially posterior to Diachronicity and dependent on it. They are part of what drive and vivify Diachronicity in those who are Diachronically inclined.[26] Most strongly put, the claim is that the Diachronic outlook is not the necessary ground of the feelings it seems to be the ground of. It is, rather, grounded in them—in those who have it at all.

The parallel between the Emotional Priority Thesis and Strawson's argument is partial, for in the free will case it is not only the reactive attitudes but also the belief in free will itself that seem to survive acceptance of the force of the argument that free will is

[25] I differ from my father in suspecting that the most fundamental source of the continuing conviction of strong free will is one's experience of one's own agency rather than from one's experience of one's reactive attitudes to others (see G. Strawson, *Freedom and Belief* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), ch. 5). I will drop the word 'strong' from now on.

[26] By the same token, people who are naturally low in the feelings that most powerfully underwrite the Diachronic outlook may be less Diachronic for that reason alone.

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impossible; the reactive attitudes and the belief in free will are very tightly locked together. In the present case, by contrast, the starting assumption is that the person is Episodic and simply does not have the belief that constitutes the Diachronic outlook, and the question is to what extent moral feelings and attitudes that seem to presuppose the Diachronicity belief can survive or even exist in such a person.

4 Responsibility and conscience

I do not need to show that this is possible in the case of feelings that are not essential to fully moral being, for my aim is only to show that Episodics can be fully moral. But even when we have put aside guilt, and even remorse and contrition, there are some feelings—feelings of responsibility, feelings of obligation, feelings involved in having a conscience—that may seem to be essential to fully moral being and, equally, to depend essentially on the Diachronicity belief; especially, perhaps, in so far as they depend for their full expression on a sophisticated conceptually articulated outlook.

I will begin with responsibility, where the central point is quickly made, because the heart of moral *responsibility*, considered as a psychological phenomenon, is just a sort of instinctive *responsiveness* to things, a responsiveness in the present whose strength or weakness in particular individuals has nothing to do with how Episodic or Diachronic or Narrative or non-Narrative they are. Moral responsibility in this fundamental sense is non-historical. Fully moral being, fully felt awareness of moral right and wrong, no more depends on a sense of one's past, or on a sense that one* was there in the past, than mathematical knowledge.

> – I disagree. Episodics will inevitably lack a proper sense of responsibility if they don't feel that it was they themselves* who performed their past actions.

Not true. Full moral responsibility is in no sort of conflict with an Episodic outlook. If my past acts have given me obligations, including obligations of reparation, these are obligations I* now fully feel myself to have without any sense that I* performed those actions. This is an experiential fact for many Episodics, make of it what you will.[27] A proper sense of responsibility for my (GS's) past

[27] It is worth noting that fulfilling legitimate expectations is for many people a pleasure and is not experienced as a burden.

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actions is lodged in me* as I am in the present, even though I do not feel that it was I* who performed those actions, just as memories of my (GS's) past experiences are lodged in me* as I am in the present, although I have no sense that it was I* who had those experiences. This is hardly surprising, if only because I know as well as any Diachronic that other people have legitimate GS-related expectations in the present—and what more could one need for a proper sense of responsibility? *Nothing* depends on my sense of myself in the past. I am and now experience myself as myself*, who was not there in the past, but I am also GS, and I know this, and I know that others know this, and I know that I am for others fundamentally GS, the continuing person and human being, and there is for this reason alone a straightforward respect in which that is how I primarily figure myself when I am engaged with others. Although there is a sense in which my primordial referential intention always cleaves first and foremost to I*, my overall referential intention can equally well embrace both I* and GS, and when I am thinking about and mentioning myself in public I certainly and solidly mean GS, whatever else I mean. One might say that the GS reference is automatically secured for me by the pragmatics of the context, independently of the way I figure myself in my referential intention; but there is more to it than this, because I am of course aware of the context and this awareness is active in my referential intention.[28]

Consider the sense one has that one ought to do what one has said one will do because one has said one will do it. If Lucy tells Louis she will do A, and dear Louis is expecting or relying on this, then, other things being equal (A is not, for example, something bad), she ought to do A. Anyone who agrees with this should agree that the fact that she ought to do A does not depend on her having a Diachronic sense of herself. But nor does Lucy's sense or feeling that she ought to do A depend on her having a Diachronic sense of herself. All she needs is an awareness of the fact of obligation, given the fact of expectation. If it is true that she has an obligation, it is a truth that is independent of the particularities of the way she

[28] The intended reference of 'I' in everyday thought and talk is sometimes oneself*, sometimes the whole human being that one is, sometimes both these things, and sometimes indeterminate. It is a common mistake in analytic philosophy to think that it can only be to the whole human being (see e.g. G. Strawson, 'Postscript to "The Self"', in *Personal Identity*, R. Martin and J. Barresi (eds.) (New York: Blackwell, 2002), 363–70).

experiences herself in time. And just as there is no difference between Diachronics and Episodics, in such cases, in respect of the fact that they have an obligation to do what they have said they will do, so too there is no systematic or significant difference between Diachronics and Episodics in respect of the strength of their feeling that they ought to do what they have said they will do.

If the brakes fail in my car through no fault of mine, and it damages another car, I feel full responsibility for the damage, even if I also think I have had bad luck. This is worth noting because it shows the facility of the feeling of responsibility, but it should not be misinterpreted. In having a normal—strong—sense of responsibility for one of GS's past failures I do not as an Episodic have any sense in the present that it is my* bad luck that GS did whatever regrettable thing he did; nor do I lack awareness of the fact that I have some sort of special connection with the action that I do not have with my car or its brakes.

There are other relevant facts of this sort, such as the way in which people feel responsible for (ashamed of, proud of) the actions of members of their family or community, country or species, even though they did not perform the actions themselves. We can, though, put all such things aside, for the basic fact is simply that there is a phenomenon of natural transmission of a sense of responsibility that does not depend in any way on Diachronic self-experience.

Turning to the notion of conscience, one might put the point by saying that conscience is not essentially retrospective. The thing for which it is best known—the stab from the past, the essentially retrospective 'agenbite of inwit'[29]—is not its essence, or what constitutes it. It is simply one of its consequences. Conscience casts its lines into the future as readily as the past and is in its most general, original sense simply a matter of inner mental self-awareness in the present.[30] Taken in a slightly narrower sense it is a faculty of self-awareness specifically concerned with thought or action, by means of which one is aware of what one is up to when

[29] The re-bite of conscience, 're-bite' deriving from Latin *remordere*, from which we get 'remorse', a word which has since (like 'poignant') acquired a softer meaning. James Joyce famously uses this phrase eight times in *Ulysses* (J. Joyce, *Ulysses* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1922/1986)).

[30] In French 'conscience' still means 'consciousness' as well as 'conscience' in the English sense. The 'con-' prefix introduces the reflexive element. See e.g. J. Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, P. Nidditch (ed.) (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1689–1700/1975), 2.27.9.

one is up to it, and a small further narrowing brings us to the standard meaning: conscience is a matter of being aware of what one is up to *within a specifically moral frame of thought*, a matter of moral self-awareness. But here too it is in the basic case wholly directed on the present moment. It is nothing other than the self-aware play of moral sense or understanding on the situation in which one finds oneself. It need not involve any memory of one's past actions at all (you are not deprived of your conscience in suffering amnesia), let alone any Diachronic or Narrative sense of involvement with them. It is neither an essentially backward looking faculty nor an intrinsically recriminatory one.

This isn't a hopeful piety or a revision of ordinary understanding. It records a fundamental part of our most ordinary understanding of what conscience is. The affective snap of the agenbite of inwit is, as remarked, merely one of the consequences that having a conscience has in certain circumstances. One's past can be preserved, active, in conscience, just in so far as one has a negative (or positive) attitude to certain sorts of actions partly because one has oneself performed them in the past. One need not have any sense that one* performed such an action, nor, of course, any sense of guilt (pride). Human beings can grow and deepen in ethical efficacy by a kind of unstudied osmosis that draws particularly on their own past performances without any explicit book-keeping or any Narrative or Diachronic sense of themselves and their deeds. Certainly Episodicity and non-Narrativity are compatible with profound constancy of character, personality and general outlook, and with a deep, steady and unwavering sense of who one is (which need not, of course, be something that one reflects upon, or could easily express in words). This is my own experience, although I am not I think an extreme Episodic. There may even be a connection between the two things, in as much as felt steadiness of personal identity removes any need for one of the things that Diachronicity and Narrativity may exist to provide.

– You claim that one can have a proper sense of responsibility for one's past actions although one does not feel or believe that one* performed them. But it seems to me that to have a proper sense of responsibility with regard to one's past actions just is—*eo ipso*—to have a Diachronic outlook. Diachronicity is not a merely theoretical attitude to oneself, it is expressed in action; essentially. If this is not so given your definition of 'Diachronic', then your definition is wrong. I agree with your criticism of views that tie a proper sense of responsibility to a capacity to feel

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guilty, chronically remorseful, and so on. The fact remains that any viable definition of Diachronicity must register the fact that it is a necessary precondition of a proper sense of responsibility, that if you have a proper sense of responsibility you must have a Diachronic outlook. What is your definition? You say that to be Diachronic is simply to 'have a sense that one* was there in the past and will be there in the future'. So be it. I say that having a proper sense of responsibility just shows that one does have a sense that one* was there in the past and will be there in the future—*even if it can somehow seem to one that one does not* (I'm not doubting the sincerity of your claim to be Episodic, or to have a proper sense of responsibility so far as your past actions are concerned).

Our disagreement is clear.

– But you can't just leave it at that! There's a great deal at stake. One loses a vital moral constraint on action if one cares little about one's past.

Many have made this objection, but it is a mistake. One doesn't have to care about one's past in any essentially self-concerned way, still less feel or conceive it as one*'s own, in order to act well or be disposed to act well. What matters morally in any situation one is in is the moral structure of that situation. In some cases facts about one's past actions are part of the moral structure of the present situation, in which case one's own past is part of what matters, but, again, one will not need to care about it in an essentially self-concerned way, or now conceive it as one*'s own. There is no more difficulty in this idea than there is in the idea that Louis can be and feel legally and morally related to Lucy in such a way that he can inherit her debts and obligations. The legal and moral relation can hardly be stronger than it is in the present case, for one is of course the same person in 2000 as one is in 2020, legally and morally and bodily speaking, just in so far as one is the same human being, and one is also (barring certain sorts of brain lesions and major changes in brain chemistry) fundamentally the same in respect of character and personality, however spectacular the phenomena of personal revolution; however Episodic one is.

One does not, then, lose any vital constraint on one's action if one does not care about one's past in any self-concerned way or feel or conceive it as one*'s own. Nor does one have to be governed by concern about one's *future past* (the past one will have, and have to live with, in the future) in order to be a fully moral being, or to act

well. I encountered this objection the first time I defended Episodic ethics in a lecture in 1997, but it seems particularly unfortunate and is positively at odds with most moral outlooks (it has affinities with the idea that it is a good thing if people are worried about their fate in the 'afterlife' because it helps them to stay morally in line). Being a moral agent makes one responsible in the future for what one has done in the past, but it does not follow, and is not true, that one's sense of oneself as an agent confronted in the present with a moral issue need include any sense of oneself(*) as something having a future. Many people, I believe, find concern about their future past *completely* absent from the phenomenology of moral engagement. Many also find concern about their actual past as irrelevant as concern about their future past. Most, in so far as they are moved by moral considerations, find that their concern is simply to do what should be done because it is what should be done, or—omitting the Kantian layer—simply to do what should be done. Judgements about what to do obviously require one to take account of the consequences of one's actions and so to look to the future, but, equally obviously, Episodics can do this as well as Diachronics. One can take account of the future without having any clear sense that one* will be there in the future.

One can even adopt Nietzsche's doctrine of the eternal return considered specifically as a technique of moral seriousness (the idea is that when you are facing a choice about which action to perform you should have it vividly in mind that whatever action you choose to perform will be repeated by you for ever in the eternal return) without any trace of a Diachronic or Narrative outlook. One can care passionately about the moral quality of the action, and about the fact that performing it will not only make it part of the history of the universe for ever but will in addition cause similar such actions to occur over and over again, for ever, without thinking about oneself or one's moral standing at all.[31] To factor in the eternal return when trying to decide what to do is certainly to look to the future, and to give weight to the thought of the future, but, once again, one need not conceive it as one*'s own future in Diachronic fashion in order to be strongly motivated to avoid bad actions.

[31] This use of the doctrine of the eternal return as a technique of moral guidance is of course strictly speaking incompatible with its status as a deterministic metaphysical doctrine to which the appropriate ethical response is *amor fati*, for one is already just repeating one's forever unalterable pattern. (There are obvious connections, here, with the psychology of strict Calvinism.)

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Episodics are less likely to suffer in Yeats's way:

> Things said or done long years ago,
> Or things I did not do or say
> But thought that I might say or do,
> Weigh me down, and not a day
> But something is recalled,
> My conscience or my vanity appalled[32]

but if Diachronics propose that the inability of Episodics to be weighed down in Yeats's way is a moral failing, Episodics may be provoked to reply that when it comes to the past, most of what is thought to be conscience, and so good, is merely egoism and vanity—not good at all. It does not make one a better person if one is, or capable of being, weighed down like Yeats. It certainly does not make one a better person in some internal spiritual sense, in respect of 'beauty of soul'. As for the idea that Narratives or Diachronics may behave better overall, morally speaking, than non-Narratives or Episodics, that is an empirical claim, and evidently false.

5 Loyalty, vengefulness, resentment, hatred, friendship, gratitude

I have argued that a Diachronic outlook is neither necessary nor sufficient for a proper sense of responsibility. Diachronic personalities are certainly not more punctilious than Episodic personalities. Diachronics can fail to feel properly responsible for their past actions even though they feel that it was they* who performed them; Episodics can feel properly responsible for their past actions even though they do not feel that it was they* who performed them. Diachronics can fail to take responsibility for their past actions even if they do feel that it was they* who performed them; Episodics can behave highly responsibly, given their past actions, even though, once again, they do not feel that it was they* who performed them. There is no significant positive or negative correlation between either Diachronicity or Episodicity and responsible behaviour.

I am now going to downplay the real and important differences between 'Episodic' and 'non-Narrative', on the one hand, and

[32] W. B. Yeats, 'Vacillation', from *The Winding Stair and Other Poems* in *Selected Poems* (London: Macmillan, 1933/1950), 284.

'Diachronic' and 'Narrative', on the other. I will use 'EN' to join the former pair and their lexical cognates and 'DN' to join up the latter pair and their lexical cognates. 'EN' and 'DN' may be read to mean 'Episodic or non-Narrative' and 'Diachronic or Narrative' where 'or', as in classical logic, does not exclude 'and'.[33] The question, then, is whether there are any essentially DN moral traits. Guilt is not an example, and nor is shame, if only because both can be rapid reactions as available to ENs as to DNs, as powerful in acute (short-lived) form as in any chronic form. The same goes for almost all moral-psychological traits: they can be rapidly manifested in their fullest form, and they are not less themselves for being immediate.

Isn't loyalty, at least, an essentially DN virtue? Not. Loyalty may be deep and intense in those who are Episodic and picaresque and it has a non-Narrative form as strong as any Narrative form. Loyalty is a matter of one's attitude and relation to a person in the present, and the EN/DN difference is no more than the difference between those whose loyalty happens to be psychologically linked in some way to an ability or tendency to think about the past they share with those to whom they are loyal and those whose loyalty is not so linked. The phenomenon of loyalty may be grounded in the past in the EN case as much as it is in the DN case, but it need not be bound up with any tendency to think of the past, still less with any tendency to think of one's own past specifically as one*'s own.[34]

It is worth adding that loyalty, like other virtues, has intensely powerful false forms. A great deal that passes for loyalty is a blend of self-love, narcissism and fear. Those who genuinely possess the virtue are slow to attribute disloyalty to others and tend to react to evidence of disloyalty with doubt, and to proof of disloyalty with grief and regret. Those who possess the mixed vices masquerading as the virtue are quick to suspect disloyalty where there is none and have a strong tendency to react to disloyalty to themselves (real or imagined) with sulkiness, anger, accusation and a desire for revenge.

What about resentment, vengefulness, susceptibility to humiliation or insult? Are these essentially DN emotions, in the sense that

[33] One might say that the [A or B] form is best understood to abbreviate the following more complex form: [[A or at least B] or [B or at least A]].

[34] It is a striking fact (neutral for the purposes of the present case) that intensely powerful feelings akin to feelings of loyalty can spring up almost immediately in human beings who have been divided into different teams for a game.

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a DN outlook is a necessary condition of their instantiation? Not: they all have EN versions in their acute form, although not their chronic form. If it is taken to be definitive of resentment that it requires a present sense that one* has been insulted, humiliated, cheated or otherwise done down, then ENs are not able to sustain it very well, and there is a way of brooding over past wrongs that is not available to them. To the extent that resentment is wrongly thought of as an essentially chronic condition, ENs are not very good at it.[35] ENs may mistrust, or dislike, or have a sinking feeling about, individuals who have wronged them in the past if they think of them, or come up against them in the present, but one can mistrust or dislike someone—this being a standing condition—, and dislike them specifically because of past wrongs, without any persisting feelings of resentment or vengefulness, insult or humiliation, just as one can be put off a food for life after it has made one ill (the mechanism is essentially the same).

So much the better, for every second spent on vengeful feelings—after the heat of the moment—is a further defeat by the person who inspires them in one. Some exult in chronic resentment and thoughts of revenge; it gives form to their lives. Others see perseveration in such feelings as what it is—a form of subjugation to the one resented. 'Pleasure in revenge is proof of a weak and narrow mind', as Juvenal says; 'revenge is sweeter than life itself—so think fools.'[36] Whole cultures can be weak, fools, narrow in this way. Retaliation may sometimes be necessary, as the Dalai Lama in his wisdom has observed about the school playground, but retaliation is not a feeling.[37]

[35] For some people, resentment is balefully cumulative, but this is no part of its essence. In others resentments are intense but short lived, vanishing on the air as if they had never been.

[36] 'Semper et infirmi est animi exiguique voluptas Ultio', *Satires* XIII: 189–190; 'vindicta bonum vita jucundius ipsa nempe hoc indocti', *Satires* XIII: 180. See L. Blumenfeld, *Revenge: a Story of Hope* (New York: Washington Square Press, 2003) for some remarkable stories of vengefulness.

[37] Alas for cultures that say 'revenge is a dish best eaten cold', or that a person who has waited thirty years to take revenge has been 'hasty'. The fundamental ground of chronic vengefulness is boredom: as a specifically cultural phenomenon it dates back to a time when there was far less to entertain people outside their work. This is vividly observed by Gorky in his *Autobiography*, I. Schneider (trans.) (Amsterdam, the Netherlands: Fredonia Books, 2001).

Plainly all this could be true—ENs could have special immunity to chronic forms of these disagreeable emotions—while the individuals who were in fact least touched by them, on this earth, at this time, were predominantly Diachronic and Narrative.

> – But if ENs are not much good at chronic resentment, because they do not feel that they* were there in the past, presumably they are not much good at lasting gratitude either, and for the same reason. Surely they must fall down badly here?

Gratitude is the greatest *prima facie* problem for Episodic ethics. I will approach it by way of fidelity, love, and forgiveness.

Fidelity, like loyalty, is equally available to both sides. ENs are far less likely to experience fidelity as a kind of answerability to or honouring of the past, but this offers no support to the idea that they experience the emotion of fidelity with any less strength than DNs. Fidelity of heart, including true sexual fidelity, is a matter of present commitment, a matter of present feeling, and is found equally on both sides with equal strength.

The same is true of love. Enduring love of a person is, at any moment, a matter of present disposition. Its manners and customs may be shaped by the past, but it does not require any tendency to engage in explicit recollection of the past, nor any trace of any Diachronic sense that one*—or the one* one loves—was there in the past. (The deep reason why Jill matters to Narrative Jack, unfortunately, is that Jill is part of *Jack's* life and past; his feeling is fundamentally about himself. He feels safe—validated and at home—in his sense or story of his past and clings to things, including people, that it contains principally for reasons of self-love and self-support, or out of fear of the unknown.)

The same goes for friendship. Michel de Montaigne, a great Episodic, renowned for his friendship with Etienne de la Boétie, famously gave the best possible answer, when asked why their friendship had been what it was: 'because it was him, because it was I'. A gift for friendship doesn't require any ability to recall past shared experiences, nor any tendency to value them. It is shown in how one is in the present. Montaigne judges that he is 'better at friendship than at anything else' although

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> there is nobody less suited than I am to start talking about memory. I can find hardly a trace of it in myself; I doubt if there is any other memory in the world as grotesquely faulty as mine is![38]

He finds that he is often misjudged and misunderstood, for when he admits he has a very poor memory people assume that he must suffer from ingratitude: 'they judge my affection by my memory', he comments, and are of course quite wrong to do so. 'A second advantage' of poor memory, he goes on to note, 'is that ...I remember less any insults received.'[39]

> – Narrative or Diachronic lovers and friends can be present in the present in every way in which their Episodic counterparts are, but they also have something more—their sense of themselves(*) as together in the past. Their history can be alive in their thought as their(*) history, and this is a great good unavailable to Episodics.

Episodics may reply that this may be so, but that the dangers of sentimental falsification and confabulation are awesome, and that they also and equally have something more—a way of being present in the present in which the past is present without being present as the past—that is unavailable if one's shared history is or tends to be alive in one's thought as one*'s shared history. Each side may concede that there is something they cannot know, and all will be well on all sides as long as no one proposes that Narrative or Diachronic love is somehow essentially deeper or more powerful than Episodic and non-Narrative love, or forgets that many couples are happily made up of a DN and an EN. (Explicit recognition of this fact can be helpful.)

Forgiveness? Once again, neither side is intrinsically more disposed to be forgiving than the other. One can't, perhaps, forgive if one has forgotten, but one may have forgotten because one has already forgiven. It may be said that one must not only remember what was done to one, in order to be able to forgive, but must also feel that it was oneself* who was there in the past—so that ENs may lose opportunities for forgiveness even when they have excellent memories. But I can see no reason to believe this. There do not seem to be any deep differences, specifically so far as the phenomenon of forgiveness is concerned, between the case in

[38] M. de Montaigne, *The Complete Essays*, M. A. Screech (trans.) (London: Penguin, 1563–92/1991), 32.
[39] Ibid, p. 33.

which one forgives a wrong done to oneself(*) and the case in which one forgives a wrong done to another (unlike someone who says 'I cannot forgive him for what he did to her'). And if this is so, then even if one does not think that it was one* who was there in the past, one's capacity for forgiving a wrong is not touched; only the emotional accompaniments are different. And if there is after all some sense in which ENs do lose opportunities for forgiveness, in spite of having excellent memories, these will be opportunities of which they have no need. 'Mirabeau had no memory for insults and vile actions done him and was unable to forgive simply because he—forgot ... Such a man shakes off with a single shrug many vermin that eat deep into others.'[40]

What about the wrongdoers, in such cases? They may feel a need for forgiveness, and feel that it is denied them by ENs. But they already have it in sufficient measure, for the ENs no longer feel wronged, although they remember what happened, and that is forgiveness. If a DN wrongdoer wants something more, and feels that a wronged EN individual is not really giving it to her, her desire is merely selfish—and perverse.

Can one fail to forgive a past wrong done to one even though one genuinely doesn't feel that it was oneself* who suffered it in the past? Perhaps one's present actions could make this seem the best thing to say. Others, though, may interpret these actions differently. What such a behaviourally manifested failure to forgive shows, they may say, is that really one does still have a sense that it was oneself* who was there in the past, and deludes oneself when one denies it.

This is an objection in a by now familiar pattern. It assumes that an adequate explanation of the unforgiving feelings that have been attributed to one (perhaps wrongly) on the basis of one's behaviour

[40] Nietzsche, quoted in T. Sommers, 'The Objective Attitude', *Philosophical Quarterly* 57, 2007, 1–21. Some are less able to forgive a wrong done to someone else—whether or not it is someone they know well—than a wrong done to themselves, but it is not as if something good lies behind this. It is rather something extremely dangerous, very ugly, and very human, the most dangerous force in all human public affairs: righteous indignation in the pejorative sense, righteous indignation felt on behalf of others or on behalf of the group of which one is part. Righteous indignation of this sort often incorporates a sense of absolute justification precisely because its object is not oneself—a sense of purity of justification that seems to those who feel it to license absolute violence. Its deep root, no doubt, is anger felt about one's own life or situation, anger that, once disguised in this way, is able to express itself without any inhibition.

must cite a belief that it was oneself* who was there in the past; so that one can after all infer a fundamentally DN outlook from indirect behavioural evidence of the presence of unforgiving feelings. I think, on the contrary, and in line with the Emotional Priority Thesis, that the existence and naturalness of such feelings may be a crucial part of what gives rise to or sustains the DN outlook, and that such feelings can persist, though perhaps only in a relatively attenuated form, even in the absence of the DN outlook. As P. F. Strawson observes, moral emotions like resentment and gratitude *effortlessly* survive acceptance of the force of the argument that the (strong) free will that they presuppose is impossible. So too, moral emotions like gratitude and resentment may exist in an Episodic who genuinely does not feel that it was he* to whom good or ill was done in the past, even if such moral emotions seem logically to require that he does think that it was he* to whom good or ill was done in the past.

It is, however, far less clear that these emotions can remain untouched in the case of Episodicity, as compared with the case of belief in (strong) free will. In the latter case it seems that not only the moral emotions but also the very belief in free will survive acceptance of the force of the argument that free will is impossible. In the former case, by contrast, and as remarked, the starting assumption is that the person genuinely lacks a Diachronic outlook (this is the parallel to genuinely lacking the belief in free will) and the question is to what extent the moral emotions that seem to presuppose the Diachronic outlook can survive in such a person.

My own experience, self-deluded or not, is that the feeling of gratitude survives while the feeling of resentment does not.[41] Resentment of a person can quickly decay into negative affect that entirely lacks the peculiar phenomenology of resentment and on into neutrality (it may yet leave one specially tuned to resent that person for new reasons). Gratitude, by contrast, standardly survives in a form of liking whose special tone distinguishes it quite clearly from liking that has no foundation in gratitude.[42]

[41] The word 'gratitude' is not only used to denote a feeling—one can say truly that one is grateful to someone without any feeling of gratitude—but I will put aside this other use. (It is a question whether one can really feel gratitude to someone one doesn't like. It seems so—at least at first.)

[42] It is perhaps diagnostic of the emotion of gratitude that it can persist, in the face of disagreeable behaviour on the part of its inspirer, in cases where mere liking does not persist.

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Montaigne, evidently, felt the same, and I have seen it in many others. But how is this asymmetry possible? Well, it can't be any more surprising than the asymmetry found in people in whom resentment persists even while gratitude decays, and this second asymmetry may be said to restore a basic symmetry between gratitude and resentment, in as much as either can decay while the other does not. I like to think that empirical tests would show that gratitude is more robust than resentment in the population as a whole, given reasonable conditions of life (including sufficient means of entertainment—see note 36), and other things being equal; but there are, certainly, those in whom resentments and grudges accumulate year on year, whether or not gratitude decays.[43] This last fact, though, has no special bearing on the Episodic predicament, where my sense, to repeat, is that gratitude is more likely to persist than resentment, in a form of liking that has a special tone.

It may be said that resentment can persist in a similar fashion, in a form of dislike whose special tint distinguishes it quite clearly from dislike that has no foundation in resentment. This doesn't seem accurate to me, but it is plain that this could happen to some Episodics, given other features of their personality and circumstances. The question whether it is the glow of gratitude or the stain of resentment that is more robust in Episodics is open to empirical test. Some people are immune to bitterness, others are made of it, but what happens in an individual case may be more a function of external circumstances than fundamental character.

Could it be that resentment decays because it is a psychological burden (and a waste of time), while genuine gratitude is not? It is plain that a person's psychology can have this happy disposition, but it is no less plain that it can lack it. So too, some retain memories of other people's kindness and lose memories of their ill-doing, while others are the other way round. There is nevertheless something in this idea. In the long run, I think, many people have a lot of good sense. They have, in particular, a fundamental capacity for *acceptance*, where this does not involve any sort of capitulation or admission of defeat or retreat from humanity, but is rather a matter of wider perspective, an increase of humanity, of realism, an understanding, however late, that some

[43] There are also those in whom reasons for gratitude become causes of resentment. Some fear that this process is inevitable and universal; see e.g. Joseph Conrad as described in F. M. Ford, *Joseph Conrad, A Personal Remembrance* (New York: Ecco Press, 1924/1989), 131ff.

things are indeed a waste of time. Acceptance of this sort undermines resentment by its very nature, while having no adverse effect on gratitude. One reason why we may underestimate its presence and force in human life, I think, is that it receives far less attention in novels, films and songs than most other important features of human psychology.

So I continue to believe that there is a positive asymmetry. And this belief finds further support, perhaps, in an apparent asymmetry between gratitude and resentment that has nothing to do with their rates of decay. We often feel grateful—the quality of the emotion is unmistakable—for a cool breeze or an outbreak of sun, but we are certainly not resentful, rather than disappointed, when the breeze drops or the day turns muggy.[44] Gratitude, it seems, has a greater natural reach than resentment. The case cannot be cordoned off by saying that there are two kinds of gratitude, personal and meteorological (impersonal), and that the first is independent of the second, and that the second impersonal kind cannot really ('logically') be the real thing. We use the same word for the cool breeze and the kind act because it is the same basic feeling, whatever other differences of feeling are found in the two cases.

I don't think we have to personify nature to have this feeling of gratitude, animistic and anthropomorphizing though we are as a species. (If meteorological gratitude depended on surreptitious personification, we would, *ceteris paribus*, expect meteorological resentment in equal measure.) To this extent it seems that gratitude has, in some way, an impersonal or at least larger field, while resentment remains essentially personal. This does not mean that one can't resent one's washing machine; only that one has to adopt a psychologically anthropomorphic attitude to it. But perhaps the weather is a special case; for I do not think one could feel gratitude towards one's washing machine without some sort of animistic attitude to it.

There are no strong generalizations to be made in this area. Our moral-emotional personalities are too complex and too varied. Obviously it seems very neat for an Episodic like myself to claim that he can't manage to sustain significant resentment for more than a few days (although it can be reanimated in conversation) but has no such trouble with gratitude. I am nevertheless going to leave you with that claim.

[44] See T. Sommers, *Beyond Freedom and Resentment: An Error Theory of Free Will and Moral Responsibility*, PhD Thesis, Duke University (2005).

6 Conclusion

My larger claim is that Wilkes is wrong to think that the EN life could not be richly moral and emotional. There is I suggest no interesting correlation between moral worth and being Episodic or Diachronic, Narrative or non-Narrative, although ENs and DNs may experience morality in significantly different ways. There is no special connection, let alone a necessary connection, between [a] a lack of felt connection with one's past of the sort characteristic of Episodics and [b] a propensity to behave badly or, more particularly, [c] a propensity to behave worse than those who have a characteristically Diachronic sense of connection with their past. All moral traits have both EN and DN forms of expression, even if some achieve their fullest or most familiar expression only in ENs or DNs.[45]

[45] Some have suggested an association between Episodicity and depression and dissociation (J. Lampinen, T. Odegard and J. Leding, 'Diachronic disunity' *The Self and Memory*, D. Beike J. Lampinen and D. Behrend (eds.) (New York: Psychology Press, 2004)). It may be, though, that while this is characteristic of depressed and dissociated Diachronics, the reverse is true in the case of Episodics—in whom greater Diachronicity could be a form of dissocation.

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