Impartiality or Oikeiôsis?
Two Models of Universal Benevolence

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Abstract: 'Universal benevolence' may be defined as the goal of promoting the welfare of every individual, however remote, to the best of one's ability. Currently, the commonest model of universal benevolence is that of 'impartiality,' the notion promoted by Peter Singer, Roderick Firth, and others, that every individual (including oneself) is of equal intrinsic worth. This paper contends that the impartialist model is seriously flawed. Specifically, it is demonstrated that impartialist accounts of benevolence (1) attempt to draw positive moral conclusions from negative premises, (2) draw actual conclusions from merely counterfactual premises, (3) fail to live up to stated claims of naturalism, and (4) give no compelling account of moral motivation. By contrast, I propose an alternate model of universal benevolence, grounded in the Stoic, cosmopolitan theory of oikeiôsis, i.e. 'appropriation.' Such a model, in contradistinction to impartiality, would see benevolence as the positive identification between moral agent and moral patient, rather than a charitable sacrifice of oneself for a distinct but equal other. An ethics of oikeiôsis has the further benefit of avoiding each of the four abovementioned conceptual pitfalls common to impartialist theories.

Keywords: impartiality, oikeiôsis, Peter Singer, stoicism, Spinoza, utilitarianism.

I define 'universal benevolence' as the goal of promoting the welfare of every individual, however remote, to the best of one's ability.[1] A lovely sounding concept, it is remarkably unpopular amongst professional ethicists today. The notion is frequently criticized as being overly idealistic, impersonal, impractical, and even politically dangerous (Narveson 2003; Miller 2004; Ebels-Duggan 2008).[2] What of the concept's few defenders? The advocates of universal benevolence have, with few exceptions, grounded their view upon a principle of impartiality.[3] Admittedly, there are a number of sophisticated variants of this principle, but Peter Singer expressed its essence plainly enough in his early, yet pivotal article "Famine, Affluence, and Morality." "If we accept any principle of impartiality… we cannot discriminate against someone merely because he is far away from us (or we are far away from him)" (Singer 1972, 232). No individual

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[1] I use the term 'benevolence' in the same manner as some ethicists use the term 'beneficence.'
[2] Narveson (2003) encapsulates most of these critiques, claiming that a strong principle of benevolence is not only impractical, but also grates against his libertarian political values.
[3] Likewise, criticisms of universal benevolence have often taken the form of objections to impartiality. See, for example, Walker 1991; Friedman 1989; Luo 2007.

is inherently more valuable than any other, and certainly an individual's proximity to us (whether geographic, cultural, religious, etc.) does not change this fact.

The breathtaking impact of Singer's argument lies in this: An intuitively credible principle of impartiality, if taken to its logical conclusion, implies an ethical outlook drastically out of step with common practice. Namely, it implies an imperative to pursue the interests of any number of unfamiliar, alien persons, possibly at great expense to oneself, one's loved ones, or local community.

Nonetheless, I contend that a doctrine of impartiality, though it is by far the commonest basis for universal benevolence, is inadequate for that end. As such, this paper will argue for the viability of an alternate model, one based instead upon the Stoic, cosmopolitan theory of *oikeiôsis*, i.e. 'familiarization.' This alternate model of benevolence emphasizes the positive identification of the ethical agent with the ethical patient. We choose to aid other individuals not because they are of equal import to ourselves, but rather because we no longer see them as substantially 'other' than ourselves in the first place.

Our natural egoism, or self-concern, is therefore not the enemy of benevolence, but is instead its basis. Hence, the Enlightenment philosopher Baruch Spinoza, in continuing this Stoic line of thought, asserted that the "striving to preserve oneself is the first and only foundation of virtue." (Benedictus de Spinoza 1985, E4 P22, Cor.)[4]

This is in stark contrast to the impartialist framing of ethical dilemmas, wherein charity always implies a personal sacrifice for the benefit of a distinct, but equally important 'other.' Giving, on the impartialist view, essentially comes down to a question of marginal utility; I forfeit some luxury or enjoyment so that an equally worthy recipient may gain the necessities of life.[5] The ultimate end of oikeiôsis, on the other hand, is a personal identification with all moral subjects, and not merely the recognition of our formal equality with them. Thus, instead of altruism, sympathy, or sacrifice for those worst off, it promotes a positive and universal solidarity.

Affirming the oikeiôsis model does come at a cost; for it requires accepting a certain metaphysics as its basis. This ontology is the deterministic monism of the Stoics, later adopted and modified by certain Enlightenment rationalists, especially Baruch Spinoza. Still, the benefit of this rather more speculative approach is that it will be seen to avoid many of the conceptual pitfalls which

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[4] For purposes of clarity, original works by Spinoza will be cited according to the standard abbreviations. ('E' for the *Ethics*, 'TTP' for the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*, and 'Ep.' for selected Letters). In the case of the *Ethics*, the letters D, A, and P indicate definition, axiom, and proposition, followed by their respective number.

[5] See for example Dale Dorsey's 'strong' principle of impartial beneficence in (2009, 139). His formulation was that, "Persons of affluent means ought to give to those who might fail basic human subsistence until the point at which they must give up something of comparable moral importance."

currently plague impartialist arguments. Specifically, impartialist theories are problematic in that they (1) attempt to draw positive moral conclusions from negative premises, (2) draw actual conclusions from merely counterfactual premises, (3) fail to live up to stated claims of naturalism, and (4) give no compelling account of moral motivation. In short, it is precisely by affirming oikeiôsis, the admittedly more speculative and radical model, that an ethics of universal benevolence can be made viable at all.

The 'Expanding Circle' of Benevolence

In *The Expanding Circle*, Peter Singer outlined the case for his very demanding moral outlook (Singer 2011b). It is to this account that we now turn, for it is largely paradigmatic of the impartialist strategy. Breaking new ground in 1981 and thoughtfully updated in the 2011 edition, Singer was amongst the first ethicists to take seriously the contribution of sociobiology to our understanding of morality. As will be seen, engagement with sociobiology extended to his recent collaboration, *The Point of View of the Universe* (de Lazari-Radek and Singer 2014). The central contention in *The Expanding Circle* was that the origins of impartial ethical concern are in fact natural, and specifically, that they can be traced back to our species' evolutionary past. Importantly, Singer's argument was always meant to be 'metaphysically unproblematic,' avoiding the need for transcendental moral principles, and requiring no comprehensive view of 'reality as such' beyond our ordinary empirical observations (Singer 2011b, 200).This is in keeping with many earlier proponents of impartiality, notably William Godwin, Jeremy Bentham, Henry Sidgwick, J.S. Mill, and Roderick Firth, who likewise had strongly empiricist proclivities.

Building off the work of E.O. Wilson, Singer noted that evolution favors a limited concern for others. 'Kin altruism' is the readily observable phenomenon in which animal parents act selflessly to rear and protect their offspring, even at the cost of their own lives. This is not altogether surprising since natural selection involves the survival of genes and traits, rather than individuals. Thus amongst early humans, far from a 'war of all against all,' evolution favored this limited benevolence towards offspring, likely offspring, as well as brothers and sisters who share as much of one's own genetic makeup (50%). Singer went on to outline how more expanded sorts of concern, 'reciprocal altruism' and 'group altruism,' might have subsequently been selected for. For instance, small groups within a species that practiced food-sharing and common defense would tend to thrive, and have an improved chance at transmitting their genes to the next generation, compared to other less cooperative groups (Singer 2011b, 16-20). Hence, empirically verifiable facts help to explain the gradually 'expanding circle' of our moral concern.

Thus far, a similar thesis could be attributed to the popular works of any number of neuroscientists, evolutionary biologists, or eliminative-materialist philosophers. The goal of explaining (or explaining away) common morality

through genetic makeup, brain structure, or evolutionary history first gained wide notoriety in Richard Dawkins' *The Selfish Gene* (1989), with iterations of the same theme readily seen in Michael Shermer's *The Science of Good and Evil* (2005), Sam Harris' *The Moral Landscape* (2011), and more recently, Patricia Churchland's *Touching a Nerve: The Self as Brain* (2013).[6]

Nonetheless, Singer objected to the 'takeover bid' approach of some in the hard sciences who claimed that ethics ought to consist solely in a scientific description of the causes of human sociality or non-sociality. Hence enters the significance of human reasoning, and the advent of a genuine principle of ethical impartialism. According to Singer, as humans developed language and the ability to reflect upon their actions and the actions of others, something new occurred. For the very first time, instead of simple growls and snarls, individuals were compelled to 'make their case' to their fellow human beings in the context of reciprocal agreements (Singer 2011b, 93). That meant appealing to rules and customs in a disinterested way.[7]

This requirement to speak 'as though we cared about being impartial,' allegedly gave genuine ethical reasoning a strong foothold in our evolutionary development. Like a genie let loose from a bottle, once we started to reason (even for flagrantly political and selfish ends), we were condemned to continue reasoning, even to ourselves, even in private. As Singer explained, "... if we sense an inconsistency in our beliefs, or between our beliefs and our actions, we will try to do something to eliminate the sense of inconsistency, just as when we feel hungry we will try to do something to eliminate our hunger…" (Singer 2011b, 143)

Once we realize that we are "just one person among many," and that my interests are "no more important, from the point of view of the whole, than the similar interests of others within my society," then our circle of ethical concern is set to expand even further. For just as I am only one person amongst many, so my society is only one of many. As such, the interests of individuals close to me are no more important than the similar interests of individuals the world over. "Ethical reasoning, once begun, pushes against our initially limited ethical horizons, leading us always toward a more universal point of view." (Singer 2011b, 119) Reasoning elevates 'disinterested impartiality' from a mere survival

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[6] It should be noted that these authors, along with Singer, share something else in common as well. Namely, they tend to equate moral behavior with 'altruism.' By using this term, they denote something rather more specific than my preferred term 'benevolence.' While benevolence simply means acting to benefit the welfare or interests of another, altruism assumes the further idea of their being also a cost to oneself. Therefore, such writers uncritically preclude the moral alternative which this article ultimately proposes (i.e., a positive identification of my welfare with the welfare of others).

[7] As Singer here illustrated, "I cannot say that I may take nuts from others because it benefits me, whereas when others take nuts from me, I lose. If I hope to gain the assent of the group as a whole, I must at least give my case an impartial guise." (Singer 2011b, 93)

technique – a way of verbally convincing group members to your aid – into a genuinely held ethical principle.

The Drawbacks of Impartialism

The essence of Singer's approach was this: Natural processes propel us to imagine a perspective outside of our own narrow subjectivity, a 'third-person' or bird's eye view of the world. This external perspective is then sufficient to yield genuine moral judgments. Similarly, other impartialists, in seeking to define correct moral judgment, have employed the image of an 'ideal observer.' Such a figure is conceived as omniscient, and so aware of every descriptive fact, both actual and possible, while transcending the particular interests and biases of specific individuals (Hare 2011, 44; Robinson 1982).[8] The key in both cases is that a disinterested observer needn't possess any special moral knowledge, noble character, charitable disposition, or any other such trait in order to yield veracious judgments, and to recommend just actions. As Roderick Firth emphasized, "The adjective 'ideal' is used here in approximately the same sense in which we speak of a perfect vacuum or a frictionless machine as ideal things; it is not intended to suggest that an ideal observer is necessarily *virtuous*…" (Firth 1952, 321)

This consistent naturalism is certainly a potential strength of impartialist ethics. If such an ethics could be worked out, it would have the distinct benefit of avoiding recourse to ineffable moral duties, unseen transcendental principles, or unverifiable intuitions. It would render morality a true science, or at least, a field of inquiry strongly illuminable by the quantitative disciplines. The question remains, however, as to whether it does work. Can impartialism truly underwrite a universal imperative to be benevolent?

There are two initial reasons to doubt that this is the case. First, the impartialist illicitly attempts to derive a positive moral claim from negative empirical premises. 'I ought to promote the interests of all' is clearly not entailed by the empirical discovery that 'I am not the only person with interests.' Singer's evolutionary narrative tells a story (perhaps a true one) of how early humans adapted to think disinterestedly about the facts, i.e. to imagine a perspective beyond their own. The 'ideal observer' image represents the perfection of such disinterested objectivity, wherein we take objective note of every diverse concern around us. However, as Richard Brandt neatly put it, "Obviously a person with no particular interests will not be inclined to favor himself or his friends in his decisions. Indeed, he might not, as far as the definition goes, have *benevolent* attitudes either." (Brandt 1998, 226) Put otherwise, the mere disinterested awareness that others have interests implies no positive

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[8] The favored image of R.M. Hare was that of an archangel. H.M. Robinson offers an extended and compelling argument in favor of viewing Hare's ethics as a form of naturalism, despite perennial claims to the contrary in the current literature.

imperative whatsoever. We may coolly acknowledge this descriptive fact and, quite consistently, be entirely indifferent to the wellbeing of others. Indeed, our very 'disinterestedness' tends to imply such a result.

Second, this disinterested perspective is, by the impartialist's own lights, a mere counterfactual image. It is thus a dubious basis for actual moral imperatives. Whether we consider Peter Singer's fully 'expanded circle' or the 'ideal observer' figure proposed by other impartialists, their status is the same. Empiricism cannot support the reality of a universal, disinterested perspective. All knowledge is rather conditioned by our finite, concrete experiences. Accordingly, all talk about transcending one's own sense experience is, by the empiricist account, either erroneous or merely a counterfactual aid to the imagination. At most, the impartialist can counsel us to act 'as if' we had transcended our particular, situated set of experiences. We will be universally benevolent *if we imagine* a perspective beyond our own. Of course, an even more consistent empiricist will simply object that in fact we do not, and in principle cannot, ever have such a universal perspective; for such a perspective is simply not real.

These are fairly standard objections and require no lengthier exposition here. What is far more instructive is the manner in which Singer himself both recognized, and sought to overcome, such difficulties. Here we have a rare opportunity to witness the long evolution of a single argument in the hands of its original author. For it is in the new materials, added to the 2011 edition of *The Expanding Circle*, that Singer expressly engages with the types of criticisms outlined above. These are modifications which Singer retained, moreover, in *The Point of View of the Universe* (2014). However, as we will see, this revised strategy only further illustrates the inherent inability of impartialism to underwrite a universal, moral imperative of benevolence.

In 2011 Singer made two crucial departures from his original, straightforwardly empiricist argument. These moves were inspired by Derek Parfit's massive work *On What Matters*, published that same year (Parfit 2011). To begin with, Singer now asserted the need for objective normative truths in ethics, arguing that without positing these, we inevitably fall into moral skepticism (Singer 2011b, 201-3; cf. Parfit 2011, 1:47-48). For the mere historical fact that evolution favored a limited altruism does not itself entail that one ought to be altruistic today. Likewise, a mere apprehension of empirical facts, however thorough or disinterested, gives no positive guidance in the way of moral praxis.

Objective moral truths are supposedly a remedy to such deficiencies. Just as it is objectively true that one ought to accept the conclusions of sound arguments, likewise, we can supposedly assert as a matter of objective truth, that there are certain ends which we simply ought to pursue. We ought, for instance, to save many lives instead of indulging in frivolous luxuries. We ought, as a matter of objective normative truth, to seek the overall greatest happiness

possible. Thus, a sociable benevolence, the trait which originally proved a successful survival strategy amongst *homo sapiens*, in the end turns out to match up rather neatly with a trans-historical, fixed moral truth. It is a truth, moreover, which is potentially accessible today to any reasoning person, anywhere in the world.

Singer thereby avoids the charge of moral skepticism. However, he does so at great cost, exposing himself to a third major objection. Namely, the ambitious naturalism of his original argument is all but lost. The objectivity of his ethical claims clearly no longer rests upon the factual description of human beings, their evolution, or the non-moral facts of the world they inhabit.

In *The Point of View of the Universe*, Singer gives a lengthy discussion of how evolution may explain some local forms of sociality, but never the universal sort of benevolence he is after (de Lazari-Radek and Singer 2014, 185-96). Instead, certain self-evident moral maxims are required. Evolutionary facts now occupy a negative, contrasting role only. Indeed, as early as "Ethics and Intuitions," Singer claimed that separating rationally-based moral imperatives from evolutionary-inspired ones is the "only way to avoid moral skepticism" (Singer 2005, 351). Ethical objectivity must instead be guaranteed by *sui generis* moral imperatives, of which we have independent rational, rather than empirical, bases for affirming (cf. Parfit 2011, 1:110).[9] Unfortunately, Singer gives no account as to precisely why or how these independent 'oughts' are indeed objective features of existence.[10]

Yet even if we grant that impartial benevolence is an objective moral truth, we are posed with a new problem. Namely, there are apparently some mentally competent individuals who are fully aware of the preventable suffering of their fellow human beings. Nonetheless, they fail to alleviate this suffering, even at little expense to themselves. This casts doubt on whether there really are such objective, rationally accessible moral truths after all.

To avoid this difficulty, Singer is forced to make yet another costly move, again inspired by Parfit. He separates the objective reasons for impartial benevolence from people's actual motivation to behave in such a manner. In Parfit's own words, "we have such reasons even if we would not be moved or motivated to act upon them" (Parfit 2011, 1:110). Again, in *The Point of View of the Universe*, Singer continues this thinking, asserting that "it seems impossible to prove that normative reasons actually do motivate human beings directly." (de Lazari-Radek and Singer 2014, 55) This is a significant departure from

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[9] Singer's move appears to be specifically modeled after Parfit's notion of 'object-given value-based reasons'.

[10] Indeed, it seems that such axioms and principles are not 'features of existence' at all, but rather self-evident moral intuitions, following the lead of Henry Sidgwick (de Lazari-Radek and Singer 2014, 120).

Singer's original account of moral motivation which, we recall, he compared to the desire to eliminate a feeling of hunger, i.e. *an internally compelling force*.[11]

A fourth objection against impartialism is therefore one of insufficient moral motivation. Since reasons and motivations are uncoupled, one may understand that acting to promote the welfare of all is objectively correct, and nevertheless choose to act egotistically instead. To use Platonic parlance, Singer is pushed into accepting some strong version of *akrasia*. Selfish actions are not the product of mere ignorance, but rather of a weak will, a flaw in one's moral character. The impartialist is thus left in a rather impotent position. Faced with a world of diverse, often selfish individuals, he is left only with his formal rule as comfort.

Impartiality is thereby transformed from a neutral manner of viewing the world, to now an objective imperative. The impartialist comes full circle: He begins as a hard-nosed ethical naturalist, *but through the inherent limitations of his original position*, transforms into the ultimate transcendental moralist. The impartialist starts off decrying the formalism of deontological ethics, and the ineffability of moral intuitions. Yet what he ends up with is precisely a duty or command – one which he calls objective – but which is not reducible to the ordinary facts describing human beings or nature. It is simply a rule, standing on its own, allegedly rational and binding for all, though not always compelling positive action from actual persons.

An Alternative Basis: Oikeiôsis

As stated earlier, there is an alternate model for universal benevolence which entirely avoids each of these four objections. For nearly five centuries, the doctrine of 'oikeiôsis' served as the principal foundation for Stoic cosmopolitanism. Unlike impartialism it seeks to utilize, rather than moderate, our natural impulse towards our own welfare (*hormê*), and those things congenial to our own wellbeing (*oikeion*). Instead of seeking a disinterested perspective external to oneself, it endeavors to establish benevolence through an expansion of the self, and of our inherent self-concern. Its movement originates from the inside and expands outward, an ever-increasing annexation and identification with the surrounding ethical subjects. As we will see, this oikeiosis model is both fully naturalistic and sufficiently motivating, and moreover, relies on positive, (not merely counterfactual) premises for its universal moral conclusions.

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[11] In this, Singer and Lazari-Radek do not argue that normative reasons can never motivate action, especially indirectly (a criticism they hold against Hume). Nonetheless, this revised ethical thesis is that normative principles are not necessarily motivating in themselves, and that objective knowledge of right and wrong may not even be accompanied by any subjective feelings whatsoever. This is addressed in the authors' discussion of psychopathy (2014, 55-58).

Modern scholars translate the term in a number of different ways. Its root, '*oikos*,' originally denoted a central room in a family dwelling, and later came to signify the household or family itself. As such, the moral concept '*oikeiôsis*' can well be translated as 'familiarization,' though the term 'appropriation' is more common (Long and Sedley 1987, 1: 351). Like Singer, the proponents of oikeiôsis have sometimes illustrated their concept through the image of an expanding circle. Most notably, the Stoic philosopher Hierocles depicted each individual as being surrounded by several circles, concentrically arranged, and encompassing various spheres of reality.

> The first and closest circle is that which each person draws around his own mind, as the center... The second after this one... is that within which our parents, siblings, wife, and children are ranged. Third, after these, is that in which there are uncles and aunts, grandfathers and grandmothers, the children of one's siblings, and also cousins... next that of one's fellow citizens, and so, finally, that of those who border one's city and that of people of like ethnicity. The furthest out and largest one, which surrounds all the circles, is that of the entire race of human beings. (Ramelli 2009, 91)

For Hierocles, as with the other Stoic cosmopolitans, the point of ethical development is to draw in progressively larger and more distant circles of reality into one's own domain of comprehension and self-interest, ultimately identifying oneself with the interests and welfare of all humanity. We see in the theory of oikeiôsis an attempt at establishing a principle of benevolence, equally demanding as that proposed by impartialists like Singer, Firth, Sidgwick, or Godwin, yet based upon a nearly opposite view of the role of egoism and self-concern. What was the primary obstacle for the impartialist is the necessary springboard for an ethics of oikeiôsis.

It is fair to ask, of course, why contemporary moral philosophers ought to buy into such an odd concept in the first place. In fact, it is hard to pin down any one, precise defense of the oikeiôsis doctrine in Stoic literature. Interpretations vary in myriad ways, from Zeno of Citium's early fragments, through the Roman moralists Cicero and Seneca, and within the later historical works of Diogenes Laertius.[12] Contemporary ethicists, in any case, are likely to be skeptical of an ethical system involving ecstatic sounding notions such as the 'expansion of the self' or the real identification of one individual with another. To twenty-first century ears this smacks of ancient mysticism, or at the very least, a highly speculative and counterintuitive view of reality, appropriate only to antiquity.

Nonetheless, it must be remembered that elements of Stoic ethics, including the concept of oikeiôsis, were enthusiastically adopted by some of the most rigorous and systematic philosophers of the Enlightenment era. Notably

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[12] Indeed, a focus on metaphysics was more pronounced in the early, now fragmented works of the Greek 'Old Stoa.' Later Roman Stoics enthusiastically expounded on issues of morality, politics, and the good life, but spent comparatively little time grounding their own moral claims upon a thoroughly worked out system of nature (Sorabji 2006).

Francis Hutcheson, following Cicero's *De finibus*, wrote of the innate sociability of human nature (Hutcheson 2006). He further developed Lord Shaftesbury's concept of *sensus communis* (itself borrowed from Marcus Aurelius), whereby we naturally rejoice in the wellbeing of others, and are saddened by their misfortune (Earl of Shaftesbury 1999, 167-88). Likewise Joseph Butler affirmed the unity of self-love and benevolence, and of a "natural principle of attraction in man towards man" (Butler 1726, Sermons 1, 10). Butler went so far as to equate the expansion or contraction of one's own spirit to the degree of compassion one shows others.[13] Indeed as late as the 19th century, Ludwig Feuerbach would exclaim that "Love is objectively as well as subjectively the criterion of being... The more one is, the more one loves, and vice versa" (Feuerbach 1986, 54). Finally, Karl Marx, hardly an ancient mystic, sought to identify the very being of man with the whole of humanity.

> ... the essence of man is the true community of man... men, by activating their own essence, produce, create this human community, this social being which is no abstract, universal power standing over against the solitary individual, but is the essence of every individual, *his own activity, his own life, his own spirit, his own wealth*. (Marx 1992, 265 Emphasis is mine.)

Rather than chastising egoistic self-interest, it is through 'activating their own essences' that people recognize their real identity with the whole of humanity. Notably, unlike the empirically-minded impartialist, human community is here no mere aggregation of individuals, a sterile placeholder, or 'useful fiction,' as Bentham would have it, but rather constitutes the actual essence of individuals from their very beginning. Man is irreducibly, not incidentally, a social being. What's more, it is the activity of individuals which manifests this common identity, a mutual projection of ourselves ever outward. Or, to use Marx's own words once more, "Our production would be as many mirrors from which our natures would shine forth. This relation would be mutual: *what applies to me would also apply to you*" (Marx 1992, 278).[14]

However, it is upon the rationalist metaphysics of Baruch Spinoza that a modern ethics of oikeiôsis is most systematically, and satisfactorily, grounded.[15] Though Spinoza is well known for advocating a prudentialist form of ethics,

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[13] To this we may also add Hugo Grotius' concept of 'appetitus societatis,' likewise borrowed from Cicero's *De finibus.* For an excellent discussion of Grotius' continuation of Ciceronian thought, as well as its applications to Just War theory, see Benjamin Straumann (2003).

[14] I would like to thank my colleague, Harrison Fluss, for bringing this quotation to my attention.

[15] Recent trends in Stoic literature have tended to deemphasize the necessary connection between Stoic ethics and metaphysics (Annas 1993; Irvine 2009; Pigliucci 2017). However, this approach obscures the original intent and unique strength of Stoic thought: Educating the practitioner on how to comprehend, and to live in accord with, objective reality. In Cicero's formulation, 'all duties derive from principles of nature.' This crucial aspect of Stoic thought is well highlighted by other contemporary commentators (Brunschwig 1994, 72; Cooper 1996).

where self-love is the guiding principle, he notably promoted a strikingly universal form of benevolence as well.

> ...a man strong in character hates no one, is angry with no one, envies no one, is indignant with no one, scorns no one, and is not at all proud. For these and all things which relate to true life and Religion are easily proven... that Hate is to be conquered by returning Love, and that *everyone who is led by reason desires for others also the good he wants for himself*. (Benedictus de Spinoza 1985, E4 P73, Schol. Emphasis is mine.)

Indeed, it pertains to Spinoza's metaphysics that personal self-interest comes to be expressed through a substantial identification with others.

> Man, I say, can wish for nothing more helpful to the preservation of his being than that all should so agree in all things that the Minds and Bodies of all would compose, as it were, one Mind and one Body; that all should strive together, as far as they can, to preserve their being; and that all, together, should seek for themselves the common advantage of all. (Benedictus de Spinoza 1985, E4 P18)

A thorough accounting and defense of Spinoza's philosophy goes well beyond the scope of this paper. Instead, what follows is an exposition of how two key aspects of Spinoza's system form the foundation of a modern oikeiosis doctrine. These are first, *Egoism*, and second, *Weak Individualism*. The contextualizing of oikeiosis within such a modern, rationalist system will then allow us to more seriously determine whether we have here a viable alternative to the impartialist model.

Foundation I: Egoism

Like the Stoics before him, Spinoza's anthropology was marked by a thoroughgoing egoism. That is to say, human beings necessarily seek their own welfare, and only engage in self-destructive behavior because of countervailing, external factors. This is illustrated in Spinoza's consideration of suicide, especially that of the Stoic Seneca at the behest of the Emperor Nero:

> Someone may kill himself because he is compelled by another, who twists his right hand (which happened to hold a sword) and forces him to direct the sword against his heart; or because he is forced by the command of a Tyrant (as Seneca was) to open his veins, i.e., he desires to avoid a greater evil by (submitting to) a lesser; or finally because hidden external causes so dispose his imagination, and so affect his body, that it takes on another nature, contrary to the former... (Benedictus de Spinoza 1985, E4 P20, Schol.)

For most of the Stoics, and certainly for Spinoza, there is no room for *akrasia*, or willfully choosing what is suboptimal, let alone self-destructive.[16]

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[16] One may object that Epictetus does appear to hold a doctrine of *akrasia*. However, this is not the same as the notion of akrasia most famously affirmed by Aristotle, or of modern discussions of 'weak will' (*astheneia*). Epictetus instead expounded on the phenomenon of *propeteia*, which did not involve voluntarily acting against the prior counsel of reason, but

This stance is grounded in a determinist ontology, wherein the universe is governed by *logos*, or intelligible natural laws (Sharples 1992, 22-25). Determinism, applied consistently, precludes a 'weak will' since all apparently self-destructive decisions must originate, instead, from some definite, intelligible cause in the world. Positively, Stoic doctrine asserts that our own intentions can aim only at our increased welfare and continued existence; for the will cannot be considered as independent from our faculty of reason. *Logos*, or divine rationality, permeates the microcosm of our minds just as well as the macrocosm of the universe at large (DeBrabander 2007, 14). Hence, according to Diogenes Laertius, that sentient beings are egoistic is not merely an empirical fact, nor an accident of our biology, but a necessary consequence of Stoic metaphysics.

> An animal's first impulse, say the Stoics, is to self-preservation, because nature from the outset endears it to itself… for it was not likely that nature should estrange the living thing from itself or that she should leave the creature she has made without either estrangement from or affection for its own constitution. (Laertius 1925, 2:7.84-85)

To be sure, this claim may strike the modern reader as exceedingly providential. Indeed, the Stoics often spoke in teleological terms, attributing to nature a purposive goal for each of her creations – a claim starkly inconsistent with the contemporary insights of evolutionary biology. Yet this is precisely why Spinoza's system is such a vital conduit for the reception of Stoic thought today. His thoroughgoing naturalism consistently eschews all teleological language, while still preserving the fundamental assertion that all sentient creatures have an innate impulse toward self-preservation (*hormê*).

Spinoza accomplishes this through a consideration of monism, or the idea (shared by the Stoics themselves), that the universe is a singular, infinite, and eternal entity, of which we are but dependent modifications (cf. Aurelius 2011, 31). If monism obtains, then our human essence is not something *sui generis*, but rather who we are – the very definition of 'human being' – is derived from the essence of Nature itself. If this is the case, then intentional self-destruction, excluding all external causes, becomes an ontological absurdity. For as all things derive from the positive, non-contradictory essence of Nature, then it follows that "the definition of any thing affirms, and does not deny, the thing's [own] essence." (Benedictus de Spinoza 1985, E3 P4, Dem.) This is the basis of Spinoza's famed 'conatus doctrine' wherein our very essence, or definition, is bound up with our continued striving to persevere in our being (1985, E3 P6).

Indeed, the notion of egoism is so dominant within Spinoza's system that he assigns it as our fundamental psychological drive, not subordinated to any further end, whether moral or material. "No one strives to preserve his being for

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instead, simply acting without the benefit of rational deliberation at all. This involves none of the metaphysical problems which come with the former conception of 'weak will,' which clearly grates against the causal determinism common to Stoic thought (Salles 2007).

the sake of anything else." (1985, E4 P25) "No one can desire to be blessed, to act well and to live well, unless at the same time he desires to be, act, and to live, i.e., to actually exist." (1985, E4 P21)

Politically, this same indelible striving, or *conatus*, compels us to actively reach out to our fellow human beings. The underlying monism of Spinoza's system makes it clear that we cannot ever escape infinite Nature or her immutable laws. However, if we combine forces with creatures like ourselves, then it is at least possible to maintain one's existence without, at the same time, greatly changing oneself (1985, E4, Appendix 7).

That is, we can continue to live as rational, bodily individuals so long as we mutually rely upon others within a lawful society. This is not altogether dissimilar from the Stoic claim that, just as food and drink are appropriate to our continued existence, so is the company of other human beings. They are both, equally, our 'oikeion' insofar as we can ably supply each other's wants and needs (Cicero 1999, 1.12). In this way the Newtonian phrase, *Conatus centrifugus* is altogether fitting, even as eccentrically applied to human affairs (Newton 1850, 311). For it neatly captures the unity of our inner drive for self-preservation, and the centrifugal impetus to seek outward those things appropriate to us.

Nevertheless, Spinoza's language when it comes to social relations is consistently prudentialist. "Men still find from experience that by helping one another they can *provide themselves much more easily with the things they require*, and that only by joining forces can they avoid the dangers which threaten them on all sides..." The phrasing is always of there being "more advantages than disadvantages" in forming a common society. (1985, E4 P35, Appendix 14. Emphasis is mine.) Our cooperation with others is never a question of magnanimity or charitable disposition, but always one of self-satisfaction.

Foundation II: Weak Individualism

Thus far, monism may appear incompatible with a genuine ethics, let alone universal benevolence. Spinoza's naturalism seems, instead, to anticipate a Nietzschean ethos of mastery, wherein other people are overcome, or strategically used, in the pursuit of one's own desires.

Elements within Spinoza's writings do lend credence to such an interpretation. He does, for example, consider the concepts 'just,' 'unjust,' 'sin' and 'merit' to be merely extrinsic notions, and 'right' is repeatedly equated with the sheer power to act (1985, E4 P37, Schol. 2; 2007, TTP 195). There is, moreover, a denial that abstract ethical principles pre-exist our concrete longings; "it is clear that we neither strive for, nor will, neither want, nor desire anything because we judge it to be good; on the contrary, we judge something to be good because we strive for it, will it, want it, and desire it." (1985, E3 P9, Schol.) This has led critics to complain, along with Schopenhauer, of Spinoza's wanton misuse of words. Where he says 'justice' he actually means 'power' (Schopenhauer 1974, 1:13). It has led contemporary Spinoza scholars to

question whether the esteemed author of *Ethica* could be considered a true moralist at all (Melamed 2011; Chomsky and Foucault 2006, 51).[17]

Nonetheless, Spinoza's naturalism is not of the Nietzschean sort. This is clearly shown through his 'weak' or functional concept of the individual. It is this weak individualism which transforms a consistent egoism into a genuine affirmation of universal benevolence. Here we notice a certain degree of elegance within the monistic worldview. For it is this very same monism which entails *both* the positive striving of each individual, and also that each finite individual is merely a dependent entity, rather than an atomistic being. If Nature is the one, self-affirming substance, then all other entities must not only be affirmative in themselves, but at the same time, also dependent upon Nature for their positive definition and existence. Finite things are considered the modifications of a Nature common to them all, each an integral part of one, mutual identity (Benedictus de Spinoza 1985, E2 P8, Schol.).

A colorful illustration of this, in one of Spinoza's most famous letters, may help to clarify matters. He asks us to imagine a small worm living inside someone's veins, and observing his surroundings. The blood, of course, is not uniform but composed of several distinct elements. The movements of these individual elements would be seen, by our worm, as the product of their mutual interactions. That is, "each particle, on colliding with another, either rebounds or communicates some degree of its motion, and so forth." (1995, Ep. 32) Each one is perceived as a whole, affecting other distinct wholes.

The worm's insights end there, for the blood stream is to our worm his entire universe. He would not see, as we do, "how all the parts are controlled by the overall nature of the blood" and thus compelled to adapt themselves according to the overall character of the blood stream. (1995, Ep. 32) By extension, we can notice also that the blood is not merely a whole, but is itself also a part. It is a part of the body, and is thus determined to move according to the body's overall structure, i.e. the organization of veins, capillaries, and arteries, the beating of the heart, and so on.

The point of the letter is easily missed. It is not that the worm is simply wrong about the interactions of elements within the blood. These are, in fact, real and determinate. It is only that this view is incomplete: For no determinate, finite things are ultimately wholes unto themselves; but all are parts of an overall,

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[17] Melamed draws a line from Spinoza's consistent naturalism and prudentialism to the conclusion of amoralism. Considering Spinoza's equation of 'right' with 'power,' Melamed opines that, "Fortunately, Spinoza did not believe that there are species of human beings that are superior… to other humans; for otherwise Spinoza would have to be counted among the fathers of modern racism."

Similarly, in his 1971 debate with Noam Chomsky, Foucault asserted: "I would like to reply to you in terms of Spinoza and say that the proletariat doesn't wage war against the ruling class because it considers such a war to be just. The proletariat makes war with the ruling class because, for the first time in history, it wants to take power." In other words, power is understood as entirely detached from questions of justice or morality.

unchanging Nature. Put otherwise, "the whole of nature is one Individual, whose parts, i.e., all bodies, vary in infinite ways" without Nature itself changing at all (Benedictus de Spinoza 1985, E2 "Physical Digression," Lemma 7, Dem.).

It is this unchanging character of the universe, its intelligible laws, which immanently determine the essences of all finite individuals which subsist within it. Likewise, Epictetus will affirm that individual human beings should not be viewed 'in isolation,' but rather as part of a 'community of gods and men' – just as integrally connected to the whole as is a person's foot to their body (Epictetus 2008, 2.5.24-26). An individual's form, essence, or 'internal *ratio'* is only comprehensible with reference to these conditioning factors (Benedictus de Spinoza 1985, E2 D7; "Physical Digression," Lemma 5).[18]

This is yet another example of how Spinoza's system extends (even while desacralizing) a basic precept of Stoic doctrine, namely that of '*pneuma*,' or cosmic breath. *Pneuma* denotes Nature considered as an intelligible, patterning force, actively giving intelligible form to all material things (Sedley 1999, 388). Unlike theistic notions of *creatio in fieri*, this posits no personal creator outside of the world, but instead a pantheistic, self-patterning monism. Specifically, *Pneuma* serves roughly the same function as '*Natura naturans*' (the active principle of nature) in Spinoza's system (Benedictus de Spinoza 1985, E1 P29, Schol.). Importantly, the Stoic imperative to 'live in accordance with nature' necessarily involves our rational apprehension of *pneuma*, and by extension, our common identity with all that it patterns.

While this patterning of nature is often spoken of with reference to our physical bodies, the same holds for our minds as well. My faculty of reason is not something unique to me, my Western culture, or even *Homo sapiens* as a whole. Rather, my ideas, and how they are necessarily connected to one another, are but a part of an infinite domain of objective ideas which precede my finite mind altogether (Benedictus de Spinoza 1985, E2 P11, Cor.). My mind is only a local participant in this 'infinite intellect,' this ubiquitous intelligibility of all things. (cf. Baruch Spinoza 1995, Ep. 32).

It is in this sense, and only in this sense, that the monistic worldview embraces a concept of eternal life. It is not that our body or our specific personality has a duration beyond our natural lifespan. Rather, our comprehension of eternal truths (the formal essences of things) itself transcends time, space, and duration (Benedictus de Spinoza 1985, E5 P23, 34). When we attain the apex of rational power, what Spinoza called 'intellectual intuition,' then we come to understand ourselves as having real identity with 'God or Nature' as a whole. "Insofar as the Mind knows itself and the Body under a species of eternity, it necessarily has knowledge of God, and knows that it is in God, and is conceived through God." (1985, E5 P29 Schol, E5 P30; E2 P45)

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[18] This is because discrete parts have no ontological priority in Spinoza's worldview, and so do not determine the essences of things. It is rather the 'form' or internal ratio of matter that makes something what it is.

Thus, Spinoza affirms that from this highest point of view, it is clearly perceived that "substance is not manifold, but single," and with regards to individual things which compose Nature, that "*each individual part* has a more intimate union with its *whole*." (1995, Ep. 12, 32. Emphasis is mine) This, likewise, accords with Marcus Aurelius' view that "there is a single harmony that embraces all things [and that]… all bodies combine together to make up this single great body." (Aurelius 2011, 37)

Such holism is in stark contrast to the empiricist view, wherein each person is an atomistic unit, and subsists in a universe that is at most an aggregate of such discrete elements. Instead, monism asserts that we cannot adequately conceive of ourselves without at the same time recognizing the unitary Nature from which our essence proceeds. The corollary to this, of course, is that we cannot think of ourselves without also thinking *immediately* of the other beings who likewise proceed from this same Nature. Each such being shares in a substantial identity with all the others.

The Ethical Consequences of Monism

What, then, is the ethical import of affirming 'egoism' alongside 'weak individualism'? It is primarily this: If we rationally identify with the whole of Nature, it follows that our innate egoism takes on an entirely new expression. For our self-affirmation cannot, if we are fully rational, be limited to our own skin or finite mind. Rather, it would be fully generalized; The "intellectual Love of God [i.e. Nature] is part of the infinite Love by which God loves himself." (Benedictus de Spinoza 1985, E5 P36) [19] An infinite understanding is accompanied by an equally infinite self-identification, and thus self-affirmation. We have here our original egoism, only now writ large.

The major ethical consequence is that "God's love of men and the Mind's intellectual Love of God are one and the same." (Benedictus de Spinoza 1985, E5 P36, Cor.) Or to use a secularized vocabulary, we may say that once we comprehend our substantial identity with Nature as a whole, then we necessarily also *affirm* the entirety of Nature (as ourselves), and so we cannot help but to identify with and affirm those persons who likewise arise from this common Substance. Again, we affirm all persons as quite literally one with ourselves. [20]

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[19] Again, this must be understood in an entirely non-theistic sense. Spinoza's monism does not allow for any personal (i.e. personally reciprocal) relationship to a deity (Benedictus de Spinoza 1985, E5 P19).

[20] It may be objected that all of this proves too much. For if we do identify with all of Nature, then why not also affirm the wellbeing of buildings, boulders, and mud, all of which are undeniably equally a part of Nature as any human being. Here I would note an interesting, if momentary, convergence of Spinoza's thought with that of Peter Singer (2011a, 50). Singer here similarly argues for taking a universal perspective when determining moral action. However, he excludes inanimate objects from ethical consideration. His rationale is that, even if one takes a fully universal perspective, this makes no practical difference when considering

The process of oikeiôsis, then, operates at two distinct levels given a monistic worldview: On one level, I do appropriate the things around me for straightforwardly practical ends. I procure food, absorb sunlight, breathe air, and assimilate all these within my body in order to thrive. So too, do I familiarize myself with other people, and join with them in order to secure the safety and benefits of civilization. Mentally, I comprehend my surroundings out of a straightforward prudence. I familiarize myself with the "order and connections" of my environment, and in noting this intelligible order, can better provide for myself, and "conquer fortune," as Spinoza would put it (1985, E4 P47, Schol.).

In addition, I mentally appropriate my surroundings so as not to be inordinately disturbed when unavoidable setbacks befall me; for these too would be tranquilly understood as a necessary feature of this intelligible order. All of this is a great personal boon, secured through the diligent use of ordinary, discursive reasoning.

Yet at the level of intellectual intuition, our highest rational faculty, oikeiôsis takes on a whole new significance. We not only draw in foreign elements and assimilate them, but we come to see ever larger spheres of reality as not at all foreign to begin with. Whereas before we appropriated material, people, and ideas for narrowly pragmatic ends, now the formula is reversed. We immediately identify with the beings around us, and thus apply our indelible prudence to them.

We desire the welfare of all other people, not for indirect, instrumental reasons, but now in a direct and immediate fashion (Brennan 2005, 159).[21] For at this height, I see clearly that such persons are, literally, me. Therefore, it is equally true that reason "demands that everyone love himself, [and] seek his own advantage," and also that "everyone who is led by reason desires for others… the good he wants for himself." (Benedictus de Spinoza 1985, E4 P18, Schol.; E4 P73, Schol.) There is no contradiction or compromise here; no balancing of personal interests with the interests of others. Instead, both imperatives flow from the very same monistic premises. Indeed, the former statement both motivates, and is perfected within, the latter expression.[22]

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such objects. As he says, "It would be nonsense to say that it was not in the interests of a stone to be kicked along the road by a schoolboy. A stone does not have interests because it cannot suffer. Nothing that we can do to it could possibly make any difference to its welfare." As such, we can sympathize with or even identify with the stone all we like, and this is not itself illicit, but only rather useless. It would have no practical effect on our actions since the stone, itself, has no degree of self-reflection, and thus no interests at all. A similar distinction may likewise save Spinoza's ethics from an absurd solidarity with any given object in Nature.

[21] Brennan distills this insight thusly: "When we add something to the list of things that are *oikeion* to us, whether it is our soul, our reason, our cousin, or our fellow citizen, we are not elaborating our conception of what is good for us, we are expanding our sense of whose welfare matters to us."

[22] In an analogous way, Hierocles asserts our immediate concern for the community at large with the illustration of a fool who saves one finger at the expense of his whole hand. Such a

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The Benefits of Oikeiôsis over Impartiality

The obvious cost of accepting an ethics of oikeiôsis is affirming the monistic metaphysics upon which it is based. Frankly, few contemporary ethicists will find this to be an attractive option. Systematic metaphysics, especially of the strongly rationalist sort, has had few serious proponents in the English-speaking world since the dawning of the age of positivism in the last century. This tendency is even more pronounced amongst applied ethicists and social theorists. These individuals will naturally see substance monism as, at best, a costly hypothesis which has little to do with the concrete interpersonal relations about which they are primarily concerned.

Nevertheless, if universal benevolence is to be successfully defended, then the oikeiôsis model clearly has several advantages over the 'less costly' model of impartialism. First, an ethics of oikeiôsis avoids the logical fallacy of deriving positive conclusions from merely negative premises. For such an ethics, grounded in a metaphysical monism, asserts that we will promote the welfare of others because of our positive identity with them, and our positive *conatus* to improve our condition (i.e., egoism).

By contrast, impartialist theories are generally not grounded upon such a positive metaphysics, monistic or otherwise. Rather, they are most often based upon a simple denial that our interests are uniquely important. As Henry Sidgwick summarized, "The good of any one individual is of no more importance, from the point of view (if I may say so) of the Universe, than the good of any other." (Sidgwick 1981, 382) Yet, as we have seen, such purely negative premises can never imply a positive imperative to act one way or another. Our not being more important than others entails nothing, on its own, about positively aiding other people.

Second, an ethics of oikeiôsis avoids drawing actual conclusions from merely counterfactual premises. Sidgwick's above caveat 'if I may say so' is not an incidental phrase, but rather highlights a serious deficiency in impartialist thinking. For in eschewing speculative metaphysics, and maintaining a basic empiricism, such theorists cannot affirm the reality of a universal viewpoint. Yet this viewpoint is supposed to be the basis for all subsequent moral judgments. This is true whether we consider Firth's ideal observer, or R.M. Hare's omniscient 'archangel' figure, or in politics, John Rawls' famous 'veil of

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person, who would save himself before his community "in addition to doing what is unlawful, is also senseless, since he desires things that are *impossible*…" (Ramelli 2009, 69-71. Emphasis is mine.)Critically, Hierocles not only considers such an act imprudent, but entirely absurd since one's own good is entirely inseparable from the good of the community. That is, there is more than a mere incidental convergence of interests between individual and community; there is instead a real identification.

ignorance.' It may even be traced back to Plato's Noble Lie wherein the populace is told a 'Phoenician tale,' about universal brotherhood.[23]

The common feature among all these diverse images is that they are, indeed, mere fictions. We are to act 'as though' we were all brothers, 'as though' we were ignorant of our particular station in life, 'as though' we were a disinterested observer on high. By contrast, monism holds the universal viewpoint to be not only real, but in a sense *more* real than its particular modifications. The body of Nature precedes and determines our own finite bodies, just as infinite Reason precedes and determines our individual intellects. It is precisely this *reality of the universal* that motivates and effectively secures a modern ethics of oikeiôsis.

Third, an ethics of oikeiôsis successfully maintains naturalism. As we recall, this was originally one of the professed strengths of impartialist theories. That is, our imperative to aid others was supposedly born out of the empirical observation that we are but one of many individuals, and that our interests are but a small subset of all worldly interests. Nonetheless, such empirical observations were shown to be insufficient to ground universal moral imperatives. Thus, (at least in the case of Singer) a departure from naturalism was ultimately deemed necessary; there was instead an affirmation of objective normative values, not reducible to the ordinary descriptive facts of reality. On the other hand, our modern oikeiôsis theory is consistently naturalistic, while also maintaining ethical universalism.

This last point may strike the reader as surprising. After all, it is commonly thought that moral naturalism goes hand-in-hand with empiricism. That is, to have a naturalistic outlook is to reduce all moral claims to what one observes with one's senses. This, however, is a misrepresentation of the concept. The essence of ethical naturalism does not have to do with the source of moral knowledge (*a priori* or *a posteriori*), but rather with the status of moral claims. Specifically, can moral imperatives be reduced to descriptive facts, or not? In fact, it is precisely a rationalist worldview which can best support a naturalistic ethics. For only reason can provide universally descriptive facts, such as that all rational beings are egoistic, or that all finite beings share in the same substantial identity. Only these kinds of universal descriptors can support equally universal moral imperatives – such that we will act (insofar as we are rational) to promote our own welfare, as well as the welfare of all persons. For on the monistic view, Nature itself is not neutral but, we may say, 'positively charged.' It is a self-positing, self-determining entity in which we necessarily participate.

By contrast, all that an empiricist may claim about the world is that most people are observed to desire their own welfare, most of the time, or that people are often social, or that, evolutionarily, it has often been an advantage to act

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[23] Compare the Noble Lie sustaining Plato's *Republic* to Zeno of Citium's own (stoic) *Republic*. In the latter, an egalitarian society is sustained by the *actual* common nature of each citizen, and their common participation in Nature's rational essence (Laertius 1925, 2:8.32-34).

impartially within a local group. The empiricist, because of the very nature of empirical claims, can never assert any of these features to be wholly ubiquitous, indelible to our character or to the character of the world. Hence there arises the need to eventually assert non-naturalistic values, to 'stand above' nature, as it were, and to demand our conformity to said ideals.

Fourth, and finally, an ethics of oikeiôsis solves the vexing 'motivation problem.' We saw earlier that the inability of the impartialist to maintain naturalism meant, in the case of Singer, a recourse to non-reducible 'moral truths.' But that there exist such objective moral truths, and that nonetheless people frequently ignore these in practice, in turn necessitated a Parfitian separation between ethical knowledge and our actually acting morally. We never really answer the question, 'Why be moral?' Perhaps it is more reasonable to be moral; perhaps good people are the sorts of people who act morally. However, this only delays the question and does not answer it. For we may respond, 'Why be reasonable?' 'Why be a good person?' This is the perennial difficulty of all formalistic ethical systems.

The monistic worldview directly answers the motivation problem. We simply *do* desire our welfare and the welfare of all others, insofar as we are rational. This is a metaphysical certainty. Not only this, but we could never choose to be irrational (even as our environments sometimes induce this result). For reason is a power, and intellectual intuition is the height of "the Mind's power, or nature, or its greatest striving." (Benedictus de Spinoza 1985, E5 P25, 27, 42)

The goal of the ethicist, on this account, is therefore quite different than under the impartialist scheme. It is not to 'speak truth to power,' or to confront people's selfish acts with objective moral rules. It is rather to empower people by putting them in touch with their own rational faculties. Ethical behavior will follow as a matter of course.

Ultimately, there may be a great overlap in how impartialists and proponents of oikeiosis actually act. Admittedly, both groups will likely disdain the common forms of chauvinism and parochialism endemic to society today. Positively, both groups will likely do what they can to aid those most in need. However, to quote that most famous of impartialists, J.S. Mill, "It really is of importance, not only what men do, but also what manner of men they are that do it." (1989, 59) Not only our actions, but our motivations for acting, and how we conceive of ourselves while acting, actually matters. For the sake of intellectual integrity, it counts whether or not we have coherent reasons behind our benevolent endeavors. This alone should recommend the import of the above discussion.

Yet, even at the level of praxis, how we think about benevolence may very well influence the specific ways in which we act. We will approach those in need in concretely different ways whether we view them as a victim, whom we must serve and sacrifice for, or else as a fellow rational being, with whom we must

have solidarity with in order to secure a better, common future. Perhaps what is finally needed is not only an ethics of oikeiôsis, but a politics of oikeiôsis as well.

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