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SUFFERING, WELL-BEING AND MORAL CONSIDERATION

SUFFERING, WELL-BEING AND MORAL CONSIDERATION

By

JUSTINE AJANDI, B.A. (Hons.)

A Thesis

Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies

in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

for the Degree

Masters of Philosophy

McMaster University

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MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY (2011) McMaster University

(Philosophy) Hamilton, Ontario

TITLE: Suffering, Well-Being and Moral Consideration

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NUMBER OF PAGES: vi, 120

ABSTRACT

Suffering is often awarded a prominent place in many conceptions of ethics as a consideration worthy of moral concern. This is done however, without a thorough understanding of what suffering is, or why suffering is morally significant, as full accounts of the nature and moral significance of suffering are few and far between. Our attention in this project is on elucidating what suffering is, and why it is morally significant, as well as understanding suffering's complex relationship to well-being. Additionally, we also utilize what has been established about suffering to begin to understand and outline what the ramifications of treating suffering as a separate consideration might be for morality.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Departmental

To my advisor, Dr. Violetta Igneski: Thank you for your comments, extensive insight and hard work on this project. Your expertise and perspective on these issues have been invaluable to this thesis, and I have benefitted greatly from your guidance.

To: Dr. Stefan Sciaraffa: Your insight and helpful support on this project have been extremely valuable, and it is much appreciated.

To. Dr. Nancy Doubleday: I am so grateful to have had a chance to work with you. Your faith in others, kindness and dedication to working towards peace is inspiring.

To Dr. Mark Vorobej: Your guidance and mentorship, both academic and otherwise has been valuable beyond words, and I can't possibly thank-you enough.

To Kim and Daphne: Thank you for always making sure I was sorted, with more good humor and pleasantness than I could ever ask for.

Friends and Peers

To Dustin Olson: I wouldn't have made it this far without your friendship, support and humor. Rochester is lucky to have you, and Hamilton sorely misses you.

To Terra Lightfoot, Mallorie Edward, Kate Garrett and Matthew Kettings: Your good humor, patience, support and kindness have always gotten me through. Thank-you for putting up with me.

*Fami*ly

To my parents, Rosemary and Frank Ajandi, and my sister Tara: I would never have gotten here without your unceasing support, guidance and love. Thank-you for everything you have given me for the last twenty-five years.

To my grandfather, the late Joseph M. O'Grady: Thank-you for all of the lessons you taught me, particularly those about the value of education. I would not be who I am today, or where I am without your love and guidance.

Contents

Introduction 1

1. Suffering 6

2. Suffering and Well-Being 48

3. Suffering and Moral Consideration 79

Bibliography 118

Introduction

I. The Problem

There are millions of individuals who endure suffering on a regular basis. Those individuals who lead lives riddled with material deprivation, those afflicted with disease or illnesses, those who are subjected to torture, violence, abuse, or oppression undoubtedly experience suffering. However, individuals who are impacted by some of life's more (comparatively) banal occurrences - periods of severe stress or anxiety, serious disappointments or humiliation, severe loneliness or low self-esteem all suffer. Nearly everyone is vulnerable to suffering at some point or another in his or her life. Some individuals suffer rarely – and mildly, but others who are less lucky spend much of their lives suffering, often intensely.

Witnessing the suffering of other individuals often moves us to sympathetic response. This response can range from an emotional response i.e. feeling bad for the individual who suffers, to actions to alleviate the suffering that we witness. We often

believe that some suffering yields some instrumental good- we tend to believe that some art, say - music, literature, or visual art would not exist if those who created it were not suffering[1]. That said, even the suffering that yields instrumental goods, still seems *bad* – we are still moved by it. It is clear then, that suffering seems significant, but what remains unclear is what this significance is, or what this significance might mean for morality. Full accounts of the nature and moral significance of suffering in philosophy remain few and far between.

Similarly, those who are badly off in absolute terms also move us to sympathetic response. In other words, those who live their lives at low levels of well-being also seem to demand our moral consideration to some extent. Unlike suffering however, accounts of well-being – what it means to fare well and what the moral significance of well-being is are many and diverse. Different theoretical accounts define our duties to those who are badly off in very different ways, and different accounts offer radically differing explanations of what it means to fare well. Often the significance of suffering is thought to be explained in terms of its relation to well-being. This would mean that the badness of suffering is conditioned by the fact that it makes individuals badly off in a global sense. That said, work by Jamie Mayerfeld in his book "Suffering and Moral Responsibility" and Dennis McKerlie in his paper "Dimensions of Equality" both suggest that suffering bears its own moral significance, separate from its relationship to overall well-being. This is a complicated claim that as it stands isn't fully developed in the literature. To understand the motivation for claiming that suffering has moral significance aside from its impact on global well-being, consider the following example: imagine an individual

[1] I have in mind here examples like the poetry and prose of Charles Bukowski, or the art of Vincent Van Gogh.

who is extremely well-off under any plausible conception of well-being. This individual has a happy family life, enjoys a close circle of friends, a career that they enjoy and are good at, etc. - the details can be filled in any way we like. Now imagine that this individual is being forced to endure a day of gratuitous severe physical and psychological torture. This torture will cause the individual to suffer a great deal while enduring it, but because this individual leads such a good life otherwise, even if the event has a negative impact on their well-being, they will still be considered quite well-off. That said, it still seems as though morally speaking, if we were able to, we ought to intervene and prevent this individual from being tortured for this individual's own sake. This seems to be a very strong 'ought', as torture is generally regarded as a very terrible thing for any individual to experience. The fact that an individual has to experience being tortured seems very bad – a badness that is outpaced by a negative impact on their well-being. I believe that some of the perceived 'badness' in this scenario is that the individual being tortured is forced to endure severe suffering. Part of what is so wrong with torture, is that victims of torture are lead to suffer- regardless of any lasting impact on well-being, the individual who is tortured still feels bad – and this alone seems to have its own moral significance.[2]

The central aim of this project then will be to present suffering as an independent moral consideration that comes apart from well-being. Once the case has been made that suffering has moral significance in its own right, over and above its relationship with well-being, I will then attempt to draw out some of the possible implications of their status as separate considerations for moral theory. In order to do so a thorough account of

[2] This is not to claim that suffering and a decline in well-being are the only morally significant units of concern in instances such as torture. There are certainly other aspects of torture that might be morally problematic, the claim I want to make here is that a negative impact on well-being and causing suffering are two things about torture that are particularly bad for persons.

what suffering is and why it is morally significant must be given. Additionally, an exploration of the various leading conceptions of well-being and an explanation of the role of suffering in these accounts is necessary to then allow us to understand why well-being can't adequately take account of the moral significance of suffering, and what it might mean for morality to take account of the significance of suffering in the right way.

II. Outline

The first chapter of this project will deal with the concept of suffering – what we mean when we say that someone is suffering, how suffering comes about, and what it means for morality. To suffer roughly speaking, is to feel badly overall. This is the basic idea behind the definition I advocate in this chapter, but it needs to be developed further. This chapter will focus on the work of Jamie Mayerfeld, from his book "Suffering and Moral Responsibility". This book is the only thorough and comprehensive work in philosophy on the nature of suffering and its moral significance. Accounts of suffering given by Eric J. Cassell and others will also be considered, but these other accounts are brief and lack the detail of Mayerfeld's. Drawing on the literature, this chapter will attempt to formulate a definition of suffering – one that lines up with intuitions and common sense understandings of suffering but is also suitable for academic discourse. Intuitions will play a vital role in this discussion simply because we already make judgments regarding suffering on a regular basis. We will also explore the moral significance of suffering. I will defend the thesis that suffering is morally problematic in two ways. I argue that suffering is instrumentally bad – in that it can have a negative impact on well-being and on individuals' characters, but I also make the further and more contentious claim that any instance of suffering is intrinsically bad. Both of these claims

deal with the moral significance of suffering, but they differ in important ways. If suffering were only morally problematic in an instrumental sense, accounts of well-being would be able to adequately address the problem of suffering. It is the second way that I believe suffering to be bad that necessitates treating suffering as morally significant in its own right.

In the second chapter my aim is to explore some of the leading conceptions of well-being, and attempt to locate what role (if any) suffering can be plausibly understood to play in these accounts. This chapter will discuss objective list accounts of well-being, hedonistic accounts of well-being, desire satisfaction accounts and Sumner's happiness/satisfaction account of well-being, and the role that suffering plays in each of these. Through this discussion it will be demonstrated that none of these accounts are able to take account of suffering in the right way. Through these discussions, it will be demonstrated that suffering is best understood, not only as a component of well-being, but also as a consideration that can compete with well-being as a unit of moral concern.

In the third and final chapter, I will discuss what the implications of the information outlined in the previous two chapters are for moral theory, and what it will mean for ethics to take account of suffering in the right way. In this chapter I will discuss what it means for suffering and well-being to be considered as separate considerations and examine cases where these two considerations might compete for moral attention. Drawing on what has been established about suffering in Chapters One and Two, I will discuss what it means for suffering to be counted as a moral reason, discussing when the fact that someone suffers generates a moral duty, and when it doesn't.

1 – Suffering

Despite the importance of suffering to many conceptions of ethics, full accounts of the nature and moral importance of suffering are few and far between. That said we often make judgments about suffering. We can tell when we ourselves are suffering, and we can often tell when those around us are suffering. Additionally, we also seem to be able to make rough comparative judgments about suffering. We have an idea of which individual is suffering more or less than another, and we can also make judgments regarding our own suffering – i.e. we can tell whether or not a period of suffering we've endured was more/less intense than another. We seem to do this however, without having a very thorough conception of precisely what suffering *is.* We seem to be able to know it when we experience it, and often we know it when we see another individual experiencing it, but the nature of suffering is something that is not often explored in detail.

In addition to being able to make these sorts of judgments about suffering, individuals also tend to be able to agree that suffering is a negative experience. That is,

suffering feels bad for the individual who suffers. This is not to claim that suffering can't yield some instrumental good(s) – we often think that suffering can have positive consequences. For example, we often think that experiencing a period of suffering can help build character for an individual, and there are cases where individuals may accept a certain amount of suffering in order to gain something else that they desire. In these cases we might hesitate to say that suffering is something bad for the person who suffers – but there is still something bad about experiencing the suffering itself. Additionally, some suffering is instrumentally bad – it can make people worse off, and it can stop people from doing certain things or fulfilling certain goals. More will be said about this later on in this chapter. Because of this instrumental badness of suffering for persons, the suffering of other individuals moves us psychologically, and also gives us moral reasons to act to alleviate it. Additionally, because the very experience of suffering is so negative, we can also make a further claim that the fact that individuals suffer is bad, period. This intrinsic badness of suffering also gives us strong moral reasons to work to alleviate suffering.

Just as we may feel compelled to assist those who are badly off, there also seems to be something morally important about helping those who are suffering. Just as it appears to be the case that those who are faring poorly have a special claim to assistance, those who are suffering appear to have a similar claim. At first glance it might appear that this is exclusively because suffering makes individuals badly off – that the badness of suffering is conditioned by its relationship to well-being. This is true to an extent. One of the reasons that suffering is often bad is because some suffering does have a negative impact on global well-being. However, I want to advance the claim that suffering has its

own moral significance, separate from its relationship to well-being – this might seem like an odd way to think about suffering, but take the example from the introduction of the individual being tortured – we feel as though we need to assist him even though globally his life is going well. It's important to note that this is not to claim that suffering does not have a bearing on well-being – on the contrary, as will be discussed over the course of this project suffering can have quite a bit to do with how well our lives go. Instead, the claim is simply that suffering, or the fact that someone suffers can act as a separate moral consideration from reasons that deal with their global well-being. In many important respects, suffering and faring well will come together, but it's important to note that they can – and do – come apart.

This chapter has three main aims. The first of these is to explain the nature of suffering – to investigate differing definitions of suffering and explain what suffering actually is, how it differs from pain, and to try to get familiar with some of its causes. The second of these aims is to give an account of the moral significance of suffering and the third will be to explain and make a case for the moral asymmetry of happiness[3] and suffering - it is important to clarify that the sort of happiness that I'm discussing here should not be confused with L. W. Sumner's account of happiness as well-being. The happiness I'm discussing as a contrast to suffering is to be understood as feeling happy – or feeling good overall. It's also important to note that because so many of the claims that

[3] See Sumner, L. Welfare, Happiness, and Ethics. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996. , pages 144 – 145 for Sumner's full distinction between the happiness that he is associating with well-being, and the sort of happiness that I'm focusing on in this chapter. The happiness that I'm referring to is similar to categories 1 and 2 that he describes. To be happy in the sense I am using it, is to be happy overall with what we are currently experiencing – we need not be happy with our lives as a whole to feel this way, however. Even those who are not satisfied with their lives (not including those who are extremely badly off) undoubtedly experience spells of happiness.

are made in this chapter are foundational claims about value and suffering, intuitions will play an important role in the grounding and justification in some cases.

The Nature of Suffering

It's important to note prior to beginning this discussion on the nature of suffering that for the purposes of this project we are assuming that all human experience can fall somewhere on the happiness- suffering scale. That is, at any given time an individual's overall feeling can be classified as belonging to intense suffering (somewhere near the bottom), mild suffering (further up), neutral (in the middle – which Mayerfeld calls the hedonistic zero) or as any happy feeling starting with mild happiness and going all the way up to the most intense feelings of happiness. This is not to claim that this is the only important dimension of human feeling, but it is one with particular moral importance[4].

The Meaning of Suffering

Before any meaningful discussion of suffering can take place, it's important to be clear about what suffering actually is. In most academic and everyday discourse the meaning of suffering is left implied, as though the meaning of the term is obvious[5]. In everyday discourse, we tend to identify the emotional reaction individuals have to certain events as suffering, in other words, we expect people to suffer when certain things happen to them. Additionally, we also tend to identify suffering with a wide range of emotions that people experience, such as with grief, loneliness or anxiety. We don't tend to identify suffering with the mere experience of these emotions, however. We tend to

[4] As Mayerfeld notes, this dimension of human feeling fails to capture some very salient human emotions, such as intense anger, frustration or excitement. In fact, in most lives, Mayerfeld believes, most of our time is spent at around the hedonistic zero with periods of mild suffering and mild happiness. I'm not sure what to make of Mayerfeld's latter claim, as it's a claim about human psychology that I'm not prepared to make.

[5] I have in mind philosophers such as Peter Singer, who does not explicitly define suffering – despite the concept having a very prominent place in much of his work.

identify suffering with significantly negative events in our lives, and correspondingly with intense negative emotions or physical sensations. We have a rough idea of what suffering is, but no concise definition to adequately express this understanding. Academic accounts don't seem to leave us in a better position - and fully developed philosophical accounts of suffering are few and far between, and different definitions are offered by several authors. In some cases these definitions are essentially the same, and are only worded slightly differently. In other cases, however, the definitions are different in more significant ways. The task for this section will be to explore several of these definitions, and settle on a plausible account of what it means to suffer.

The first of these definitions is one offered by Eric Cassell in his book *The Nature of Suffering and the Goals of Medicine*.[6] According to Cassell suffering is "distress brought about by the actual or perceived impending threat to the integrity or continued experience of the whole person" (24). When Cassell speaks about the whole person he is not only referring to the physical body of that person, he is also referring to those things that people do that are central to their very understanding of themselves (24 – 26). These capabilities can range from simple motor functions (i.e. picking up a pen) to more complex functions like performing one's job.[7] These capabilities can also include mental

[6] Gary Madison and Wayne Sumner both approvingly cite Cassell's definition in their books – see Madison, Gary. On Suffering. Hamilton, Canada: Les Érables Publishing, 2009. and Sumner, L. Welfare, Happiness, and Ethics. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996. respectively. His definition is a good one – even if just for the fact that he effectively distinguishes pain from suffering, a discussion which literature on suffering very commonly lacks. I imagine much of the endorsement of this definition stems from the fact that he makes this distinction, and makes it convincingly.

[7] David Boeyink offers a similar definition of suffering in his paper "Pain and Suffering" but offers no defense or account of why his definition is accurate. For Boeyink suffering is "an anguish we experience not only as a pressure to change but also as a threat to our composure, our integrity and the fulfillment of our intentions" (pg, 86). Because he does not develop this account further, it's unclear what is meant by "a threat to our composure". The other threats appear to be in line with what Cassell is claiming, making this definition vulnerable to the sorts of counter-

ones – such as one's ability to think and reason. For Cassell, suffering is the negative emotional response we experience from an actual or perceived threat to the capabilities that are central to our understandings of ourselves. For example, central to an Olympic runner's conception of his identity will likely be his ability to run – if he felt this ability was being threatened, under Cassell's definition, he would more than likely suffer to some degree. Cassell's definition is rooted in an understanding of suffering from a medical point of view, although he makes no qualifications so as to restrict the application of his definition to discussions of suffering borne out of illness, injury and disease. His definition of suffering is certainly a compelling one, however it seems to have one significant shortfall.

Cassell's definition of suffering doesn't seem to cover all instances that we are inclined to commonly count as suffering.[8] Not all emotions that are commonly counted as suffering seem to be related to threats to personhood. For example, severe grief over the death of a loved one is commonly counted as suffering, but the suffering experienced in relation to grief does not seem to always or even often deal with our understanding of our own personhood.[9] It is true, as Gary Madison claims in his book "On Suffering" that the death of someone close to us often reminds us of our own mortality – which can lead to extremely negative feelings. These feelings might be understood as a response to a

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examples that Cassell's definition is vulnerable to. See Boeyink, David. "Pain and Suffering." *The Journal of Religious Ethics* 2.1 (1974): 85 – 98.

[8] This may seem circular at first glance, after all, when searching for a definition it may seem counter-intuitive or sloppy to appeal to what sorts of things we already believe should fall under it – that said, we already have pronounced intuitions about suffering, and some of them deal with what sorts of feelings commonly count as suffering, and without a doubt, severe grief is almost always counted among them.

[9] It's true perhaps, that part of what we suffer over in these instances might deal with our own identity – i.e. if a wife loses her husband she might struggle with the idea of no longer being someone's wife in the future, to be sure. But I don't think these sorts of thoughts often or even ever constitute the extent of the suffering that is felt in these situations.

perceived threat to our personhood, but we should refrain from overstating exactly how negative such a thought may make us feel (35). Thoughts like these do not generally constitute the cause of our suffering after someone we love dies – and in cases where they do, I would contend that this certainly departs from feelings of grief as they are commonly understood. When a loved one passes away, part of why we suffer might be because we know that this particular individual died a painful death, or because they died too early, or simply because we're troubled because they have died – this simple thought alone can make us extremely sad. If the reason why we suffer after someone's death is because of the aforementioned, it becomes difficult to connect our suffering to threats to conceptions of our own personhood. It's true that events that threaten our personhood – such as serious illness that threaten say, our abilities to perform our favourite activities may cause us to suffer, but this doesn't seem to catch all instances we want to group under the heading of suffering. Other instances of suffering may not match up to this definition either – take for example, the feelings of someone who suffers as a result of someone else's suffering or hardship. This may seem like an unlikely occurrence, but consider how a parent may feel when one of their children is suffering or not faring well. When a parent observes their child in emotional (or physical pain) a parent often suffers in a corresponding way. To characterize the suffering of a parent in relation to their child as an issue surrounding their own personhood seems like an error.[10] Cassell's definition then, is too limiting to match up with some (but certainly not all) of what we already accept about suffering. It's true that suffering can be accurately described as distress - or anguish- and that often this suffering is a result of a threat to an individual's conception

[10] Again, it is possible that some of the suffering in these situations is the result of a perceived threat to personhood, but some of the suffering in these instances seems to have little to do with our conception of ourselves or the various things that we are able to do or be.

of their own personhood or identity – but this doesn't appear to tell the whole story behind suffering.

There are several other possible definitions found in the literature that do not focus exclusively on threats to personhood. Described by Laurel Archer Copp in her article "The Spectrum of Suffering" suffering is "the state of anguish of one who bears pain, injury or loss" (35). David DeGrazia and Andrew Rowan define suffering as "the unpleasant emotional response to more than minimal pain or distress" (199).[11] For Jamie Mayerfeld suffering is simply the state of feeling bad overall (14).[12] Mayerfeld's definition is overly simplistic – it doesn't add much (if anything at all) to our understanding of suffering. Given the simplest and roughest understanding of suffering (that it doesn't feel good) it is plainly true that if someone is suffering they feel bad. This definition is too broad. It offers us no real (or new) information about what we might mean when we say someone is suffering. Archer Copp's definition characterizes suffering as anguish, but it's not clear (and she doesn't make this clear) if suffering can be as a result of injury or loss that is only felt but not actual, whereas Cassell's does allow for this, as do Mayerfeld's and DeGrazia and Rowan's. This is an important feature of a definition of suffering, which I will discuss later. DeGrazia and Rowan claim that suffering is a feeling that arises out of 'more than minimal pain or distress' – but they offer no specific description of what sort of thing suffering is other than 'an unpleasant

[11] Again neither DeGrazia and Rowan nor Archer Copp offer a defense or account of these definitions – they offer only the definition on its own. DeGrazia and Rowan situate their definition in an account of the suffering of animals – which could account for the vagueness of the term "unpleasant emotional response".

[12] Mayerfeld states that this is a rough definition of suffering, but despite his full treatment of the significance of suffering, the causes of suffering, and our duties surrounding suffering, this is the only definition he gives. This is odd, as the rest of his treatment of suffering is fully developed, but his definition appears not to be.

emotional response'. For all of these authors, distress or anguish are feelings associated (or equated) with suffering. These are strong descriptive terms, and their use points to the fact that suffering is an intense, negative feeling.

Although these latter definitions avoid the issues that Cassell's had with being too limiting, these definitions are too broad, adding little to our understanding of suffering. Archer Copp, Rowan and DeGrazia offer no account or explanation of their definition of suffering, which simply leaves us without enough detail to get an account of suffering off the ground. In their vagueness, these definitions are not necessarily incorrect, but they simply don't tell us enough. On the other hand, Mayerfeld does not tell us what it actually means to feel badly overall – despite providing a well-developed and important account of suffering otherwise.

Certain elements of these definitions certainly seem accurate. Commonly suffering is understood as a very negative feeling – when we use the term our purpose is to set the feeling we're talking about apart from just feeling sad, or just experiencing pain. Archer Copp sets suffering apart by using the term 'anguish' as does Cassell by using the term 'distress'. Mayerfeld also appears to be getting at something similar with his usage of 'feeling bad overall'. Additionally, these definitions all deal with subjective feelings, but some of these definitions might be more subjective than others. All of these accounts link suffering to a negative feeling that occurs as a response to actual or perceived states of affairs. The definitions offered by both Cassell and Archer Copp refer to suffering as a response to certain events or states of affairs, whether they are actual events, or simply perceived. Mayerfeld's definition, on the other hand doesn't relate feeling badly overall to states of affairs necessarily, although throughout his account he

makes the connection between negative events and suffering. As the vaguest of accounts, Mayerfeld's definition is a good way to describe suffering. That said, it doesn't give us enough to go on. As it stands, these accounts don't give us the proper tools to identify suffering – to set it apart from mere negative emotions. Additionally, none of these definitions begin to really explain how suffering arises – if it's not identical with negative emotions such as sadness or anxiety, or with physical pain then it's unclear how these emotions or sensations can be seen to cause suffering or even how they relate to suffering at all. The concept itself still remains largely a mystery.

Leaving these definitions behind, I would like to offer my own definition of what suffering is. Suffering is most accurately defined as: An overall bad feeling, caused by the unmitigated experience of negative emotion(s) or negative physical sensation(s), arising from either real or merely perceived events. This definition essentially consists of four important parts – each one significant to my understanding of suffering. Each part will be discussed in some detail below, to demonstrate the importance of each component, and to show why I judge this definition to be superior to others that have been offered.

Overall Bad Feeling

It's currently unclear what it means to characterize suffering as an overall feeling. In Jaime Mayerfeld's book he claims that no explanation of what it means to feel badly overall is necessary, because we already know what it means (19). This might be true, but it's important to be clear on what we mean when we use the expression. When I claim that to suffer is to feel badly overall, I mean that the negative emotions I'm currently experiencing are felt to a degree that causes me to characterize my current emotional state

as a negative one.[13] In many cases we can experience negative feelings at the same time as positive ones. Depending on many factors, the positive feelings can outweigh the negative ones – or at least temper them, which stops us from feeling badly overall. For example, take the case of an individual who is extremely sad over the loss of their job, but also excited over a new job opportunity. Would we say that they are suffering? Perhaps, but perhaps not - if the excitement about the new job stops the individual from feeling badly overall, and their assessment of their current overall feeling is positive – or neutral, then the sadness or disappointment from losing their job is outweighed by the positive feelings of excitement.

Mitigation

To mitigate, according to the Miriam-Webster dictionary, is to "make less severe, serious or painful." I propose that negative emotions or sensations can be mitigated in two specific ways that result in them not leading to suffering. The first of these is simple. In some cases negative emotions are not intense or serious enough for us to be inclined to call them suffering. We can feel sad, or disappointed, or anxious on occasion, but not think it accurate for us to say that we are suffering. At first glance this might not appear to be an instance of mitigation at all – it might appear that this is simply the result of an emotion not being negative enough, or intense enough to bring about suffering. I think this however ignores a certain characteristic of feelings – that they are experienced by persons, and persons have radically different attitudes that influence the impact of emotions on themselves. The same quantity or intensity of pain, sadness or loneliness can cause some individuals to suffer and others not to suffer at all. I think it's most accurate

[13] This is unclear in the way that it applies to pain, this will be discussed and clarified in a later section of this chapter.

to characterize this as sort of an 'unconscious mitigation' the individual themself is not really aware that they are doing it, but their response to the emotions is conditioned by their very character and attitudes. The same will go for pain – individuals can experience pain that should be considered identical in kind, intensity and duration and some will suffer because of it, while others won't (Cassell, 113).

The second sort of mitigation I have in mind for my definition of suffering is an active mitigation – the mitigation that occurs when individuals are actively trying to alleviate the negative impacts of emotions and sensations. When people are upset or disappointed by something, they often try to distract themselves by focusing on what is going well in their lives, or by drawing on their support networks – friends, family, partners and the like. The same often goes for people who are in pain. Those who have the psychological resources to distract themselves from pain or to 'compensate' in a sense for the way they are currently feeling will be able to endure pain better than others in some cases. Eric Cassell makes the case that what causes an individual to suffer when they're in pain isn't the pain itself, but the meaning that individuals assign to their pain that causes their suffering (35). More will be said about the relationship between pain and suffering in a later section, but it seems as though pain can be mitigated through its meaning for the person. If we know what the pain means – and it's something positive, such as in the case of childbirth, the pain doesn't cause us to suffer, despite its intensity.

Negative Emotions and Negative Physical Sensations

The emotions that are often counted as causing or constituting suffering vary greatly. Individuals can suffer because of loneliness or abandonment, physical pain or illness, guilt, anxiety, fear, grief, stress, all sorts of acts of violence – or the fear of

violence, guilt, or disappointments. That said - feeling these negative emotions (or unpleasant physical sensations) does not always cause us to say that we are suffering. We can experience physical pain and not suffer, we can experience some degree of guilt or anxiety and not suffer, it seems in fact that we can experience all of those emotions listed above - to some degree at least - without suffering. What suffering appears to be is the experience of any of these emotions or sensations, or some combination of them (and others, to be sure) experienced in a quantity or degree that causes us to feel badly overall. Suffering then, is not its own distinct emotion - there is no one uniform notion of suffering. Instead, suffering is when an individual experiences any number of negative feelings that causes them to feel badly overall – or, perhaps more poignantly to feel anguish or distress. Severe grief can cause suffering – as can severe physical pain – as can severe anxiety, provided these emotions or sensations lead us to feel negatively overall. Mayerfeld's rough definition is accurate – but very vague and incomplete.[14]

Real vs. Perceived Events

All of these definitions provided of suffering – my own included - are subjective. This means that the identification of suffering relies exclusively on the feelings of the individual in question. Since suffering is a feeling experienced by persons it is necessarily subjective. Judgments about suffering are made based only how the individual in question feels at a given point in time. To determine if someone is suffering, they do not have to look outside of themselves for a cause of their suffering. Because of the subjectivity of suffering – the fact that it relies exclusively on the way an individual feels the cause of suffering can either be from some 'real event', such as the

[14] In sections of his book Mayerfeld eludes to causes and hints at how suffering might work – at points it seems as though this is what he had in mind, although he never explicitly makes these claims.

death of a loved one, or from the pain resulting from an illness, or its causes can be entirely internal to the agent – 'merely perceived events' resulting from mistaken beliefs about states of affairs. The suffering of an individual that is caused by say – their nagging (but untrue) belief that they are inadequate, and will never accomplish anything with their life can cause an individual to feel just as bad as suffering that has a 'real cause'. If suffering – understood as a feeling is the proper unit of moral concern, and not its various causes, then the suffering from perceived events is morally equivalent to that resulting from actual events - because it feels just as bad. Focusing on the badness of suffering understood as a feeling yields this result.

This new definition borrows much of what is plausible from the accounts of suffering already reviewed, along with some features of common sense understandings of suffering. The definition captures the fact that suffering is an essentially negative feeling – one that is more severe or intense than mere sadness or other negative emotions. It also captures the fact that it is caused by the experience of negative emotions or from feeling negative physical sensations – but that it is not merely equivalent to them. It also gives us some more information about how suffering occurs – suffering is not just the result of experiencing negative feelings – it's what happens when individuals aren't able to mitigate these negative feelings. This allows for an understanding of suffering as a subjective feeling, helping to explain why different events cause some individuals to suffer and not others. This definition is more specific than that offered by Mayerfeld, and other theorists – but also less limiting than Cassell's, allowing for a wider range of important experiences to be included under the heading of 'suffering'.

Suffering and Pain

One of the reasons that suffering is not commonly properly understood is that individuals tend not to differentiate it properly from the concept of pain. To equivocate the two however, is to commit a conceptual error. An individual can be in pain, perhaps even a high degree of pain, and they still may not suffer. Conversely individuals can experience minor pain and report suffering as a result – the relationship is highly variable Pain as a phenomena, is something that individuals are generally able to identify fairly quickly, described by Arne Johan Vetlesen pain is

> synonymous with being affected by something negative, something undesirable. Pain presents itself as something which by its very nature is *against* me; therefore my spontaneous response is to be *against* pain. Pain… [is] the opposite of everything I desire for my own existence. (8)

This account of pain neglects the fact that individuals may enjoy pain, or seek pain out in certain cases. Generally speaking, however, this is how individuals tend to react to pain. Pain is spontaneous and immediate, we know what it is as soon as we experience it – it demands our immediate attention.

Pain is essentially physical; according to Eric Cassell it is something that happens to bodies (38 – 41). It is a localized sensation, localized to our bodies, for one, but also generally localized to specific parts of bodies – i.e. stomach pain, the pain from a broken bone, or back pain. Pain can serve various useful purposes – it can present itself as a symptom, drawing attention to a condition or a problem that needs attention. Additionally pain can serve as a warning to cease or change our behaviour. For example, if we experience certain pains during physical activity it can signal us to cease what we are doing to avoid further injury. Pain then, can be useful, despite the fact that it feels bad.

Pain then is a sensation – differing from suffering which is best understood as an overall feeling. The sensation of pain is certainly a factor that contributes to suffering, but the existence of pain doesn't necessarily signify suffering, nor directly condition the extent to which individuals suffer when we find suffering as a response to pain. Pain, if intense enough often causes suffering, and pain is often regarded as a very common cause of suffering. To characterize the sensation of pain as a direct cause of suffering is slightly misleading, however. Pain does not have a uniform effect on how much people suffer. Many other factors mitigate the extent to which pain may make someone suffer. Pain can often not seem so bad if for example, we know its cause, or if we know that relief is on the way, even if the cause of the pain is such that it seems as though the pain should be far worse. Eric Cassell explains this variation in the relationship between pain and suffering with the concept of meaning (38 – 42). That is, what actually causes us to suffer when we experience pain is our perception of what this pain means for us – if it means something negative, such as in the case of pain associated with serious illness or death it can cause us serious suffering – however, if the meaning of the pain is something positive such as in the case of pain from a strenuous work-out, or from the intense pains of childbirth, we don't suffer in a psychological sense, despite experiencing intense pain. This is an extremely plausible way to characterize the relationship between pain and suffering – it explains those cases where suffering is absent even in the presence of intense physical pain, and also the opposite – why we may see suffering in cases where there is much less intense physical pain (such as when children suffer as a result of relatively minor injuries). Our overall feeling during a period where we're in pain can

still be a positive one – because meaning plays such a important role in conditioning the relationship between the two.

Additionally, being in pain differs from suffering because it does not always define our overall feeling at a time because we may be in pain and still enjoy what it is we are doing. For example, we may be experiencing a serious headache, but still be enjoying a movie or the company of friends (Mayerfeld, 15). Our overall feeling during a period of our life then, may still be positive even if during that period of life we were in pain. This occurs often with minor, unimportant pain – aches and pains or headaches, or other pains that are easy to ignore.

We can also see where suffering comes apart from pain because the causes of suffering are much more diverse and varied than things that may cause us pain. That is, suffering necessitates attention to a much wider variety of causes than pain does. Certainly severe stress, the death of a loved one, bouts of serious anxiety or depression and a myriad of other causes are frequent causes of suffering in the lives of individuals, but these things can cause suffering without causing the sensation of physical pain at all. In fact, many factors that seem to cause us to suffer most intensely are unrelated to physical pain completely. As David Boeyink notes in some cases suffering is brought about because of a 'sensory lack', such as what we experience in cases of loneliness or extreme boredom (88). This is a stark contrast to pain, due to the very fact that pain is necessarily an intense sensory experience.

Instrumentalism

Suffering is an overall bad feeling, however we can suffer while also gaining positive things at the same time. Again, we could be suffering from a painful illness but

also enjoying the company of a friend or loved one. In some cases it seems as though the suffering itself is necessary for an individual to gain a positive outcome overall. Individuals might have to suffer in order to gain some sort of good that is valuable (i.e. knowledge, personal improvement or achievement). So, even if an individual suffers, enduring the suffering might be worth it because of what it will yield. The suffering still feels just as bad as it would otherwise – but avoiding the suffering might lead to the worse outcome overall for that individual. Take for example, the treatment of cancer using chemotherapy. The patient might suffer extensively, both emotionally and physically from their treatment – but without it they will die. In cases like these, accepting the suffering – even a great deal of suffering, might be the better outcome.

Additionally, take, for example the case of a criminal who has to suffer through punishment in order to learn a valuable lesson and improve her life. This example is especially plausible if we consider cases of young offenders - we might say that punishment is positive for the prisoner because even though the individual suffers as a result of punishment they receive, they gain something through it that would otherwise be unavailable to them. The fact that suffering can be instrumentally good is not to be confused with the claim that the suffering itself becomes a good thing. It's important when discussing these cases to keep the suffering itself (which is negative) distinct from the positive goods that might be gained from it. Additionally, this claim is not to be confused with the claim that all suffering is instrumentally good – some suffering yields no instrumental goods – suffering like that endured by those who suffer and/or die of starvation, suffer from painful diseases, or live with debilitating mental illnesses likely gain little from the suffering that they consistently endure.

Causes

Because of the subjective nature of suffering different events will cause certain individuals to suffer, but not others. Sometimes the same or similar events will cause individuals to suffer to varying degrees. Take the example of a successful businessman who loses his job – he enjoys a happy family life, a circle of close friends and high self-esteem. Now imagine another businessman, one with no close friends and no immediate family to speak of. This individual has poured all of his time and energy into the job that he has just lost – for this individual losing his job may cause him to suffer in a way that the first businessman does not. A lot of varying factors can cause differences – sometime large differences in the way that individuals are impacted by negative emotions.

As a result of the diversity of events that can cause individuals to suffer, generalizing and producing a list of causes of suffering may appear difficult. It does seem however that there are a number of events where under "normal circumstances"[15] individuals will more than likely experience suffering. Some of these such events are obvious – it is safe to assume that those who are subjected to serious violence - international and civil war, genocide, torture, consistent abuse and rape suffer as a result of this violence, but as Mayerfeld notes victims of less serious violence – say bullying, for example, and those who are forced to endure the consistent threat of violence are also vulnerable to suffering. Additionally, those who are subjected to cruel or unfair treatment, oppression, slavery or unfair, particularly unsafe or unpleasant labor conditions, those who live with various afflictions that are characteristic of material

[15] By normal circumstances I mean those circumstances where individuals are reasonably well off, and are either at or around what Mayerfeld calls the 'hedonistic zero' on the happiness-suffering scale. Those individuals who are not faring well, or who are already suffering, may be affected more severely by minor events than those who are faring well or are feeling reasonably happy.

deprivation (starvation, disease, feelings of insecurity and fear, and vulnerability to violence), those who suffer from a wide range of mental illnesses or from low self-esteem, as well as those who are dealing with a painful loss, separation or are grieving from the death of a friend or loved one are very likely to suffer to varying degrees of intensity and varying duration.

However, sometimes those who endure the worst of these events will not suffer in the psychological sense – the trauma that they experience is so bad that the overall bad feeling that we would expect them to experience is absent (Mayerfeld, 13). Cases such as these might appear to present a problem for this psychological/subjective account of suffering. Under this view, the plight of those who are subjected to what we tend to regard as some of the worst moral catastrophes are not of concern for an ethical account of suffering. This is only a serious problem however, if suffering is designated as the only thing worthy of moral concern. That said, perhaps those who are subjected to long-lasting torture, abuse or assault who don't suffer in the psychological sense can be seen as being too badly off to suffer. Their plight however, is captured if we are receptive to those who are faring poorly. Additionally any number of other moral principles could capture what is morally amiss with the circumstances that these individuals find themselves in.

The Moral Significance of Suffering

Suffering is often represented as the sort of thing that has moral disvalue. In fact, some theories privilege suffering as the sole moral evil. These theories specify feelings as the appropriate unit for moral concern. These hedonistic or feelings-based theories of value represent one possible way to ascribe moral value, or more accurately, disvalue to the experience of suffering. Suffering however, can also be situated as one source of

moral disvalue among others, perhaps even among many other – often competing – considerations. Deciding what these other considerations might be is too broad of a concern for this project[16]. Instead, I will focus on the claim that suffering does have moral disvalue, since this has yet to be established here. There are two distinct ways that suffering can be bad. The first of these is that suffering can be instrumentally bad. This means that suffering can lead to states of affairs or outcomes that are bad. The second way that suffering can be morally bad or undesirable is that suffering can be intrinsically bad – this means that the fact that suffering exists is bad on its own, aside from its instrumental disvalue[17]. I believe that suffering is morally disvaluable in both of these ways, and I will discuss both of these below.

Instrumental Badness of Suffering

Suffering can be instrumentally bad in two distinct ways. The first of these is that suffering can have a negative impact on our well-being. Roughly speaking, suffering can influence how well our lives go. For most understandings of well-being, in both common sense and formal theories, happiness is commonly among those components that contribute to individual well being (it is sometimes counted as the sole component). As a result, depending on how a specific account of well-being takes happiness into account, suffering will play a role of varying importance, since when we suffer we necessarily aren't happy. Being happy, roughly defined is an overall good feeling. Individuals can

[16] I will say that it seems unreasonable to privilege suffering as the only moral disvalue. This does not appear to the be a plausible suggestion for the place of suffering in morality. Other things also must matter, morally, alongside suffering. This project focuses on suffering merely because I believe suffering has been underrepresented in moral philosophy but not because suffering and happiness are the sole moral disvalues and moral values, respectively.

[17] The term 'extrinsic' might be more concise in this case, given the contrast with intrinsic value. That said, in this chapter we've already referred to suffering having an instrumental quality, so for consistency's sake I will continue to use 'instrumentally bad'.

be happy about something specific – such as a certain event in their lives, or they can sometimes just feel happy. The complex relationship between well being and suffering is the topic for Chapter Two – as depending on what conception of well-being is adopted the extent that suffering is understood to make people worse off will vary considerably. Under some accounts how well-off individuals are will be conditioned directly by how much happiness they experience – with suffering contributing negatively to well-being under these accounts. For other accounts, however suffering may play a negligible role, or the role of suffering might be dictated by the individual whose well-being is under consideration. Because of this considerable variation in importance, the interaction between suffering and well-being requires a detailed discussion to understand how it works. For the purposes of this chapter, it's enough to assert the vague claim that some suffering can make one's life go worse to a certain degree. Again, this is amenable to common sense understandings of what it means for a life to go well- if one spends a considerable amount of time in an extremely negative emotional state, at some point this will factor into whether one's life is going well overall.[18]

Additionally, even if suffering does not factor into a conception of well-being in a prominent way, it can still have an impact in a less direct way. Consider a case where an individual has suffered immensely from the result of a nasty divorce. Recalling this suffering, the individual in question avoids romantic relationships for fear of the relationship ending and having to endure similar suffering again. Now consider an account of well-being (that quite plausibly) includes having and enjoying meaningful,

[18] It is possible to deny the claim that happiness is important to well-being, and therefore deny the claim that suffering is often detrimental to well-being, but I think this is an extremely implausible claim. When dealing with prudential value – how well a life is going for that person, happiness should be understood to play *some* role.

romantic relationships with others as a significant contributing factor. If this individual is unable to participate in romantic relationships for fear of enduring further suffering, this negatively impacts their level of well-being. The same can go for other goals or goods that contribute to well-being. Experiencing suffering can cause individuals to change their behaviour in dramatic ways. In instances such as these it is not the suffering that directly has an impact on the well-being of an individual, but instead it has an indirect impact.

Suffering can also be instrumentally bad in a second, perhaps less significant way. Suffering can make individuals worse in terms of character. This is distinct from but often related to making individuals worse-*off*. Enduring bouts of suffering may make people callous, resentful, or jealous of the happiness of others. Some suffering may make people better – more compassionate or empathetic, but this may not always be the case. Depending on what conception of well-being is in play individuals being worse in terms of their character may align with them being worse off – but the two can still count as separate considerations. An example of this might be those who turn to drug or alcohol abuse as an escape from suffering. Major suffering that someone experiences can cause them to become dependent on their addiction to try to alleviate it. This dependency can produce negative character traits in individuals – they may cease to care about responsibilities or obligations that they hold to others, or they may simply become worse to be around. I don't think examples such as this showcase what is most important about the badness of suffering – what is most important about the plight of individuals like those who engage in substance abuse to cope with suffering is that their suffering has

caused them to fare poorly. That said the suffering also seems to negatively impact their character, which can have moral importance in a variety of ways[19].

Intrinsic Property View

The second claim I'd like to advance is that suffering is bad in itself – without reference to the way it impacts well-being. To claim that suffering is intrinsically bad is to claim that the fact that individuals suffer is bad, period. In Jamie Mayerfeld's work, he asserts the claim suffering is intrinsically bad because of how bad it feels for the individuals who must endure it. He states that he can offer no argument for this claim (85). In line with Mayerfeld, I agree that suffering is intrinsically bad precisely because of how bad it feels, but more can be said about this intrinsic badness than he offers in his book. Consider again the example from the introduction, the badness of the experience of torture is outpaced by the negative impact it has on the individual's well-being. Designating suffering as intrinsically bad explains this fact.

To some, the evil of suffering hardly seems debatable (James, 4). This is not an unfamiliar claim, ethicists such as Peter Singer and Henry Sidgwick[20] posited suffering as the sole consideration possessing moral disvalue, thereby reducing our moral duties exclusively to the prevention and alleviation of suffering, and the promotion of happiness. Others such as Thomas Nagel have claimed that pain is intrinsically bad – solely because it is a negative sensation. According to Nagel, everyone can appreciate the badness of pain, and because it is such a vividly negative feeling, "it cries out for its own

[19] This fact can be morally important in different ways. Perhaps the fact that suffering has made an individual worse in character is morally significant because they do things that are morally undesirable – they are worse moral agents as a result.
[20] See Singer, Peter. The Life You Can Save. New York: Random House, 2009. and Sidgwick, Henry. The Methods of Ethics. Indianapolis: Hackett Pub. Co, 1981. respectively.

relief" (160 - 62). For Nagel this badness is indefensible – he declares it to be self-evident. During this discussion of pain, Nagel's language oscillates between applying his claims to pain and suffering. He doesn't make it particularly clear which one of the two he believes to be intrinsically bad. Whether the claims are about the badness of pain, or the badness of suffering, the two are intimately related and lend support to claims about the intrinsic badness of suffering

Pain is an effective candidate for being regarded as intrinsically bad because we all identify pain easily, and as I discussed earlier also commonly identify pain as negative. That said, recall our earlier remarks regarding the difference between pain and suffering. Although pain is essentially a negative sensation – sometimes we don't seem to mind pain – such as in the case of pains associated with a strenuous work out. Generally what we mind is extremely intense pain, or as Eric Cassell explains pain with a meaning that troubles us. The pain of childbirth or other pains that don't signify anything negative and might instead signify something positive, don't seem to be intrinsically bad – particularly if the individual who experiences them doesn't mind the pain. If the pain being experienced is 'not minded' it's hard to say what could be intrinsically bad about pain in every case.

Considerations such as these seem to point to some problems with regarding pain as intrinsically bad – as not all pain seems to be bad at all. Some pain seems morally neutral, to say the least. This isn't to say that all pain is completely morally insignificant– there is something compelling about the situation of those individuals who experience pain. Perhaps it would make more sense to instead focus on the pain that makes individuals feel bad or on the overall effect that the pain has on individuals. It may be

mistaken to focus on pain as a unit of moral concern – but this doesn't mean we have to give up on viewing feelings or mental states of people as deserving of moral attention in and of themselves. Perhaps it may make more sense to call the suffering that often accompanies pain intrinsically bad instead – because the relationship between pain and 'badness' is not one of perfect correlation. On the other hand, suffering *always* feels bad for the individual who experiences it – because of what suffering is, it's impossible to 'not mind' our own suffering. Suffering then, is a more plausible candidate for a feeling that should be considered intrinsically bad. If it didn't bother us, it wouldn't be suffering at all. It is because of how bad suffering feels that gives rise to its intrinsic disvalue - Mayerfeld calls this feature of suffering its "immediately felt badness (62). Perhaps some remarks on exactly how bad suffering feels may help make a case for accepting it as something that is bad in itself.

Mayerfeld claims that suffering can be so bad that it can be extremely difficult for individuals who are not currently experiencing suffering to appreciate the plight of those who are (101). For most individuals, in order to recall an instance of real suffering they have to think back to some of the worst, or the absolute worst times in their lives in order to do so. For privileged individuals who lead relatively stable lives, free of deprivation, mental or physical illness and violence, it is hard to imagine what the plight of those who live through these experiences is actually like. I would hazard that most of these aforementioned lucky individuals more than likely have trouble fathoming what experiencing even a day of the suffering that those who suffer the most intensely is like.[21]

[21] I for one do not think that I can accurately imagine what the suffering of someone who lives a life of chronic hunger or chronic pain, or even what the suffering of an individual who experiences severe anxiety or depression is like. I can extrapolate from my own experiences of feeling badly overall, but I can't truly appreciate what it must be like to feel suffering of that

If we then consider that for many people this intense suffering goes on for much longer than a day, weeks, or even months or years, we may start to get a vague picture of how wretched suffering feels.

Suffering gains its intrinsic disvalue because of how negative an experience it is for those who must endure it. This disvalue can certainly be outweighed by instrumental goodness or other considerations surrounding the suffering, but the fact that an individual must experience the suffering is bad in itself. This is a strong claim. Some suffering appears to be intrinsically bad, while other instances of suffering seem as though they may not be. We tend to characterize the suffering of those who we consider to be innocent or undeserving as bad, while we may not see suffering as bad if we believe the individual did something to deserve it, or is responsible for bringing it about. For example, intense suffering that children endure seems to be easily classified as bad. Additionally, it's hard to dispute that the suffering endured by those individuals who lack the necessities of life – food, water, healthcare is also intrinsically bad. [22] We tend to think that suffering is bad when it is undeserved but less bad, or perhaps not bad at all when the suffering is the result or consequence of an individual's choices – we may tend to think the suffering endured by a murderer in solitary confinement is not intrinsically bad because the individual did something that makes us feel as though they deserve it. According to these claims, the badness of suffering is context dependent. This is a fair line of reasoning. However, in line with Jamie Mayerfeld I believe it to be mistaken (88-

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intensity. I can imagine that it is probably very bad, but I'm not sure that I can appreciate what that feeling is actually like.

[22] This of course is Singer's paradigm case. Singer states that this sort of suffering is bad in and of itself, and he limits his discussions to this type of suffering in most of his work, however as a utilitarian, it's safe to assume that Singer's scope of concern is neccessarily much broader than those cases that he explicitly discusses.

89). The appeal of this claim, I believe is that we want to have room to claim that some suffering ought to happen for moral reasons. That is, we tend to think that it is morally permissible or even obligatory to allow suffering to exist, or even to inflict suffering in some cases. This belief however, is not inconsistent with the claim that suffering itself is intrinsically bad. We can still claim that the suffering of a prisoner ought to occur for moral reasons that can outweigh reasons generated by the moral disvalue of suffering– perhaps our specific conception of justice or a commitment to a principle of desert requires punishment resulting in suffering, or perhaps as a consequentialist our moral convictions tell us that the suffering incurred by the prisoner is offset by the positive consequences of punishment– it may placate members of society, help a victim's family recover, or make the criminal better in terms of character. This suffering of course is still bad in itself for the person who has to endure it. This personal badness does not change with the context of the suffering, suffering that is classified as 'deserved' is still suffering. In cases such as punishment the suffering can still be intrinsically bad – only its badness is outweighed by other considerations that are more contextually important. I fail to see a case where it the suffering itself ceases to be bad in and of itself. In all cases of suffering, other things being equal, it is in itself better if suffering was not part of the picture.

Impersonal vs. Personal Badness

There is another distinction that can be made to help elucidate the moral disvalue of suffering. Suffering can be considered bad from both the impersonal, and the personal points of view. To claim that suffering is impersonally bad is to claim that individuals

who are not experiencing suffering can still appreciate its moral disvalue[23]. Both Nagel and Mayerfeld regard the impersonal badness of suffering[24] as a fundamental moral claim, and have trouble giving reasons to defend it. Nagel, in fact, asserts that the claim that suffering is impersonally bad is a claim that we need arguments to doubt, not arguments to convince us to accept its truth (Nagel, 162). Although I share these authors' view that this is a fundamental claim, I do think there is more that can be said about it.

Nagel offers some reasons for why we should accept the claim that suffering is impersonally bad, according to him "The pain can be detached in thought from the fact that it is mine without losing any of its dreadfulness. It has, so to speak, a life of its own. That is why it is natural to ascribe to it a value of its own" (160). According to Nagel, we can appreciate the badness of pain or suffering even when we are not the ones experiencing it – or, I will claim further, even when have not experienced pain or suffering similar to what we are attempting to evaluate. I can appreciate that it is bad that there is a large degree of suffering in the world even when the suffering does not belong to me. For example, I can appreciate that it is bad that there is so much suffering due to starvation in the world, without caring or even knowing about whom that suffering belongs to. As this example illustrates, I can even appreciate the badness of suffering when the suffering is extremely removed from my personal situation. I can also appreciate the fact that suffering is impersonally bad even when it is instrumentally good

[23] For a good, in- depth discussion of impersonal value see: Scheffler, Samuel. The Rejection of Consequentialism. Oxford Eng.: Clarendon, 1994.

[24] Nagel uses both 'pain' and 'suffering' in his discussion of impersonal badness in "The View From Nowhere". Under Mayerfeld's interpretation of this section, Nagel is in fact talking about suffering just as Mayerfeld is. Whether or not Mayerfeld is correct in assuming this, Nagel's remarks on impersonal badness could still apply to suffering as they apply to pain. See: Nagel, Thomas. The View from Nowhere. Oxford Oxfordshire: Oxford University Press, 1989.

- these comments on the impersonal badness of suffering show that it seems that we can appreciate the badness of suffering when it is out there in the world, without having to experience it ourselves.

That said, regarding personal badness, the claim is very clear. Suffering is bad from a personal perspective because individuals value *not suffering*. This has to do with both the intrinsic badness of experiencing suffering, and also with the instrumental badness of suffering persons. It is easy to see how suffering is bad from the personal perspective – suffering is a very negative feeling, one that individuals naturally prefer to avoid. It's important to note that the intrinsic badness of suffering, both from the personal and the impersonal perspectives deals at least partially with the "immediately felt badness' of suffering. That is the intrinsic badness of suffering corresponds to how bad it feels while it is being experienced – without needing reference to any of is possible lingering impact. Additionally, in so far as individuals care about how well their lives go, avoiding suffering is generally in their best interest.

Factors that Influence Moral Badness of Suffering

According to Mayerfeld, the proper 'calculation' of the quantity of suffering is intensity x duration x number of individuals who suffer. The intensity of suffering is the measurement of just how badly an episode of suffering feels for the individual who experiences it. Just as suffering is a subjective feeling, the measurement of its intensity for individuals must also be subjective. The most logical way to measure the intensity of suffering is based on individuals' intuitive assessments of how bad their suffering feels – whether the suffering they are currently enduring is more or less severe than other

suffering they've experienced, or based on how they rank their suffering as very bad, bad, tolerable, etc.[25]

Many different factors will influence how intense a bout of suffering is for an individual at a given time. Just as different factors will dictate whether or not an individual does suffer because of a certain event, these same factors will influence how badly the bout of suffering feels for that individual. According to Mayerfeld, as suffering increases in intensity the degree to which it is worth avoiding outpaces the degree to which it feels bad (19). His reasoning behind this is that moral weight attributed to gains in happiness/reductions in suffering is not evenly distributed along the happiness-suffering scale – moral weight instead accumulates at the bottom of it (135). This claim is intimately related to other claims surrounding the asymmetry of happiness and suffering that will be discussed later. As suffering becomes more intense or as a bout of suffering feels worse it becomes morally more important/urgent to relieve that suffering. A direct consequence of this is that sometimes it will be more important to make smaller reductions in more intense suffering, rather than larger reductions in less intense suffering – even when the reductions in the quantity of suffering in the latter situation would be greater than those in the first. More will be said about this in the following section, but I will say that this claim has some very strong intuitive appeal – in deciding whom to help first, we often feel as though we should help the individual who suffers more, even when we can help them less.

Duration also has an impact on how bad a bout of suffering is for the individual who experiences it. The longer that a bout of suffering lasts, the worse it is for that

[25] There are obviously difficlties with measuring intensity, as precision is not possible when measuring subjective feelings.

person. Additionally, the intensity of suffering may get worse the longer that suffering goes on. As a period of suffering drags on, that individual might begin to feel worse as a result. For example, take an individual who has sustained torture for an extended period of time, if they reflect on just how long their plight has continued on, this might cause them to feel worse. The longer a bout of suffering goes on, the more an individual might start to lose hope that relief will ever come – causing them to feel worse overall. People may object to this line of reasoning, claiming that individuals often get used to the circumstances that surrounding suffering – causing them to suffer less. This may be the case some of the time, but I don't think it's fair to assert that individuals that are subjected to torture, excessively cruel treatment, or who suffer from starvation 'get used' to their plight and suffer less as a result. It is plausible that this may happen in some cases, or that in some cases individuals may cease to dwell on it, or find distractions that allow them to focus on other things than their plight. Its unlikely however, that this happens in all or even most cases of intense suffering. Mayerfeld claims that this is a statement that those who don't suffer use to placate their consciousness – that is, we feel better about the existence of suffering out in the world if we tell ourselves that individuals will eventually feel better about their terrible circumstances. I think however, that perhaps we do this because it is difficult for most people to imagine prolonged intense suffering – not because it placates our consciousness. That said, duration is also morally significant from the standpoint of the intrinsic property view because the longer a bout of suffering lasts, the more it contributes to the overall quantity of suffering.

Because suffering causes instrumental harm to individuals who experience it and because it is intrinsically bad, there are two distinct reasons for why suffering should be

treated as morally significant. The fact that someone suffers provides us with moral reasons to alleviate or reduce that suffering if we are able to do so. The strength of these reasons will depend on certain factors about the situation, such as intensity or duration of the suffering – and also on other considerations unique to the context of the suffering. Intense, long-lasting suffering will provide us with weighty reasons to assist those individuals who are suffering – both to reduce the harm inflicted on individuals – both because of the instrumental harm that suffering does to persons and to reduce the intrinsic badness of suffering, whereas very minor or short-term suffering will provide us with none or very weak reasons to alleviate that suffering. The strength of our reasons will depend on the intensity of the suffering that we're dealing with; the greater the intensity, the stronger our moral reasons to alleviate it become.

Asymmetry of Suffering and Happiness

Classical utilitarian theories treat suffering and happiness as morally symmetrical. That is, if given the choice between bringing about a certain amount of happiness, or eliminating an equal amount of suffering utilitarians hold these options as morally equal – there is no moral reason to prefer one outcome over another (Sidgwick, 413). This strikes many individuals as counter-intuitive. In "The Open Society and Its Enemies" Karl Popper articulated this intuition and claimed, "from the moral point of view suffering and happiness must not be treated as symmetrical" (235). As a result, Popper claims, our duties regarding happiness and suffering actually lie with minimizing the suffering that individuals experience, and not with promoting the happiness of

individuals.[26] That is, there is a moral asymmetry between happiness and suffering that has a bearing on our moral duties.[27]

This claim enjoys substantial *prima facie* plausibility. Consider the following examples. Imagine two individuals - Individual A is enduring fairly severe suffering – they have a painful medical condition that although not life threatening, causes them to endure suffering for periods of time. Their condition is treatable, but this individual can't afford the treatment on their own. Now imagine a second person, Individual B, they're neither particularly happy nor are they suffering. They've always wanted to go on a vacation to Europe, going on this vacation would make them extremely happy – but they don't have the money. In fact, the increase in happiness they would experience if they were to go on vacation, would be the same size as the difference in feeling that Individual A would experience if they were able to access their treatment. That is, the reduction in Individual A's suffering would be the same size as the increase in Individual B's happiness. Now imagine we can help one or the other – Individual A or B to feel better. What do our intuitions tell us about this case? If happiness and suffering are symmetrical, then the choice between the two – barring any other morally significant considerations[28] - is morally equivalent. This answer however, seems counter-intuitive.

[26] James Griffin addresses this claim in his paper "Is Unhappiness Morally More Important than Happiness?" but dismisses the claim (despite the fact that he believes it is intuitively on-side) because he can't find a way to plausibly incorporate assymetry claims into morality. See Griffin, James. "Is Unhappiness Morally More Important than Happiness." *The Philosophical Quarterly* 29.114 (1979): 47 -55.

[27] I don't wish to claim that this proposed asymmetry entails that happiness is morally worthless. Without getting drawn into a full discussion, I want to posit that it is in itself good if individuals are happy. This goodness can be outweighed by any number of considerations, but generally speaking, it is good if individuals feel good overall.

[28] Here I am thinking of possible considerations of desert with regards to the two individuals. In this example, for simplicity's sake I am assuming that both individuals are deserving of happiness and avoidance of suffering.

If all other things are equal – doesn't it seem morally important to benefit the individual who is currently suffering?

This example begins to tease out our intuitions behind suffering. It shows that we tend to think that the alleviation of suffering is morally more important than bringing about the same amount of happiness. The intuitions surrounding the asymmetry happiness and suffering may go further, however. Imagine that the money for the holiday would bring the Individual B slightly more happiness than the amount of suffering that would be taken away from Individual A if we gave them the money to treat their painful condition. If this was the case than the symmetry view would necessarily hold that we have to benefit the individual whose experience would produce the highest balance of happiness over suffering. From the point of view of the symmetry thesis the goodness of an outcome, is dependent wholly on the amount of happiness in a given outcome. If the outcome resulting from giving Individual B the resources to go to Europe instead of giving the resources to Individual A contains a greater amount of happiness, this is necessarily the better outcome. However, intuitively, it seems as though we still have moral reasons to reduce suffering instead of bringing about the greater amount of happiness. What about cases where the suffering we could alleviate is about half that of the happiness that we could instead bring about? It still seems, such as in the case given of the two individuals, that even if alleviating the suffering of the first individual would result in a reduction of suffering equal to roughly half that of the happiness that we could instead promote by giving the money to our Individual B for her vacation that there are still weighty reasons to give the money to Individual A.

Additionally, asymmetry also requires that we will often favour a reduction in more intense suffering, over a larger reduction of more intense suffering. As was noted earlier, this is because under our understanding of suffering, moral weight accumulates at the bottom of the happiness-suffering scale. Take the example of Individual A with her painful medication condition again – imagine another individual, Individual C whose suffering is roughly four times as much as Individual A's, caused by a similar condition. With treatment Individual C's suffering will be reduced, but not eliminated. Imagine that offering treatment to Individual C would result in the reduction of about a third of her suffering – she will still suffer, and will continue to suffer more intensely than Individual A, but treatment will help to alleviate at least some of her suffering. In this example we are forced to choose between bringing about a smaller reduction of more intense suffering, rather than a larger reduction of less intense suffering. All things considered, it would seem the money should go to the second individual since she is suffering so intensely. The second individual seems to need our assistance more - this is not to claim that the suffering of the first individual is not morally significant, just that Individual C needs the help more because of how badly she feels.

The difficult task at hand now, is to elucidate what these intuitions mean. The case for claims regarding asymmetry will be based on our intuitions surrounding the nature of suffering. Asymmetry claims are foundational claims about the nature of happiness and suffering and how we should value them. Examples will help to strengthen a case for accepting both kinds of asymmetry that Mayerfeld discusses – both intrapersonal and interpersonal. There are two separate cases that can be made for asymmetry here, both of which are plausible. The first of these is that our duty to relieve

suffering is weightier than our duty to promote happiness, the second of these is that our moral duties surrounding suffering and happiness correspond *only* to the alleviation of suffering, and not with the promotion of happiness at all. This section will focus on the first of these cases. The asymmetry claim stems from the nature of suffering itself – the asymmetry (both intrapersonal and interpersonal) is generated by the fact that suffering is intrinsically bad for those who experience it. This badness of suffering is accelerated as suffering gets more and more intense. As suffering gets more intense the degree to which it is worth avoiding outpaces the increases in intensity. An episode of suffering that feels twice as intense as another episode, in other words is more than twice as bad for the individual who experiences it.

In "Suffering and Moral Responsibility" Mayerfeld outlines two types of asymmetry. According to Mayerfeld, the asymmetry view can hold within individual lives, between different lives, or the asymmetry can hold between both individual lives and separate lives. The latter is Mayerfeld's own position (131 – 160). In order for a moral asymmetry to hold within lives, something like the following would have to be true: It is morally more important to reduce someone's suffering than to promote that same person's happiness at a different time in his or her life. Additionally, it is morally more important to reduce someone's more intense suffering, rather than less intense suffering even if the reduction is smaller in quantity than in the former case. In order for the asymmetry to hold across lives, on the other hand, something like this would have to be true: It is morally more important to bring about a reduction of suffering in an individual's life than to promote happiness in the life of *another* individual. Additionally, it is morally more important to reduce one individual's more intense suffering, rather than

the less intense suffering of another individual, even if the reduction in quantity is smaller in the former case. Both of these types of asymmetry will be discussed in the following sections.

Asymmetry Within Lives

According to Mayerfeld the asymmetry thesis holds within individual lives, meaning it is morally more important to relieve an individual's suffering than to increase his or her happiness. Mayerfeld maintains this claim irrespective of what a given individual would prefer. Take our previous example of Individuals A and B; now imagine that it is the same findividual that we are considering benefitting at two different times – T1 and T2. At T1 Individual A is suffering from a painful medical condition, and at T2 they are longing to (but not suffering from the unfulfilled desire) go on vacation in Europe. According to the asymmetry thesis, it is morally more important for me to benefit Individual A at T1 in order to help to relieve her suffering. Again this holds regardless of what this individual would prefer we do. Relieving the individual's suffering is morally more important, regardless of her attitude towards us benefitting her. This consequence of the asymmetry view may seem counter-intuitive. It seems odd to say that a benefit to an individual matters irrespective of his or her opinion of the benefit in question.

This seemingly odd consequence can be explained two different ways. Firstly, we can claim that even if an individual thinks they prefer to be benefitted by a gift that allows them to go on a vacation, they might in fact be mistaken about their own interests in this case. Perhaps experiencing suffering would be far worse than they had imagined,

and it would be more important for them to avoid it than they had originally believed.[29] Alternatively, we can still claim it matters more to eliminate an individual's suffering regardless of their attitude towards it, because suffering is intrinsically bad. This latter line of reasoning appears somewhat circular, as we are trying to find evidence for the claim that suffering is intrinsically bad to a degree that outpaces the goodness of happiness. This circularity however is a result of the fact that this is a foundational claim about morality. I can only hope that enough individual's intuitions match up with my own in this instance. Perhaps another way to understand the asymmetry of happiness and suffering is that as individuals feel worse overall, they reach a specified threshold that designates them as an individual deserving of moral consideration. This threshold could be outlined as where suffering starts – or perhaps at a point where mild suffering ends on the happiness-suffering scale. Benefitting those individuals who fall below this threshold can be regarded as morally obligatory – whereas the promotion of happiness – although morally desirable is good, but not obligatory regardless of individual preferences.

Setting aside objections dealing with personal preference, we can offer another example that supports asymmetry both within and across lives. According to Mayerfeld, if we invented a drug that induced (consequence free) euphoria for people, the provision of the drug to people would not appear to be morally compulsory. We do however, administer anesthesia for patients so that they can avoid the pain and suffering they would otherwise experience without it – if we have it available, it appears as though it would be morally repugnant not to administer it to people (133). Our responsibility to

[29] This seems plausible if we consider our earlier remarks about how difficult it is to know what a period of suffering feels like if we haven't endured it.

prevent pain and suffering for people then, appears to be weightier than our responsibility to promote their happiness or pleasure.

As the previous example demonstrates, the negativity of suffering for individuals supports the asymmetry view as it pertains to intensity - take the example of a choice between a day of severe torture versus a few months of low-intensity suffering, with a proper understanding of what the suffering associated with severe torture would actually feel like, the several months of low intensity suffering seems preferable solely because of how bad the 12 hours would feel. It's safe to assume that the individual in question would be in severe distress. Even if the amount of suffering in the case of the months of low intensity suffering was far greater than that of the 12 hours of suffering, the former still seems as though it would be far worse to endure. From the personal perspective, this makes it morally more important to help the individual while he or she is being tortured, and less important while he or she is feeling bad, but not suffering as intensely.[30] Our duty to help an individual increases in strength as the amount that they need help increases. The amount an individual needs help, increases as their suffering feels worse. Individuals need help when they are suffering, because of the bare fact of how bad suffering feels.

Asymmetry of Suffering Across Lives

Mayerfeld also asserted that the asymmetry of happiness and suffering holds across different individual lives. In the original formulation of our example regarding our Individuals A and B, this was the intuition that we were trying to get at. Given the

[30] In this case some sort of reason to help the individual would still exist, but if we were in a situation with scarce resources, and could only help this individual at one time or another, we should do so when they are suffering extremely intensely, because of how incredibly negative their experience would be.

situations that our two friends find themselves in, the plight of the individual who is suffering seems to be more morally urgent than the plight of the individual who desires to go on holidays. This proposed asymmetry between happiness and suffering that operates across lives has the same two major implications for the way that we should look at suffering just as it did for the asymmetry within lives. The first of these is that just as was elucidated earlier in most cases it seems morally more important to alleviate someone's suffering than to produce the same or sometimes even a greater amount of happiness for another individual. The second of these implications is that in many cases it seems as though we should often favour a smaller decrease in more intense suffering for an individual rather than a larger increase in less intense suffering for a different individual.

Returning to the original example of Individuals A and B, one of the reasons it seems as though we should help the individual who suffers, is that there seems to be something unfair about refusing to help an individual who suffers in favour of bringing more happiness to someone who is already happy or 'neutral'. Although this claim is about fairness in some sense – the reason it would be unfair to benefit some individuals while allowing others to suffer, is again, because of how badly suffering feels, and the harm that it does to persons. Simply put it strikes me as morally wrong, all other considerations being equal to make one person happy (or happier) when they aren't suffering, while ignoring the suffering of another individual. The case for intra and inter-personal asymmetry both rest on fundamental claims about the intrinsic badness of suffering, and the harm that it does to persons. The nature of suffering, and facts about what suffering is like for those who experience it generates moral reasons to alleviate it, that outweigh our duties to promote happiness in at least in some cases.

In this chapter we have accomplished several aims. We have elucidated what it means to suffer, differentiated suffering from pain, and attempted to understand some of its causes and the way that it impacts people. We have established a basis to assert both that that the asymmetry of our duties surrounding happiness and suffering hold within lives and also across different lives. This chapter has also given us reasons to accept that suffering is morally important in two distinct ways – it is intrinsically bad, and it is also bad as it causes harm to individuals who endure it. As a result considerations involving suffering appear to be sufficient to give us reasons – and often weighty reasons – to act. In the next chapter I will use what has already been established about suffering, to determine the way that suffering interacts with well-being.

2 – Suffering and Well-Being

Questions regarding well-being essentially deal with how well (or poorly) an individual's life is going. Well-being deals with the prudential value of a life – how good a life is overall *for the person who lives it*. Distinguishing prudential value from the other types of value a life may have is important. A life can be morally valuable, or aesthetically valuable, even if it isn't particularly prudentially valuable (Sumner, 20- 25). For example, we can say that someone who makes extensive sacrifices for others might lead a life that is high in moral value (because of the good that they do for others) but low in prudential value because that life may not be good for them. When we talk about well-being we are concerned about the value of the life for the person who leads it – not the other types of value that I mentioned. It's possible that these types of value coincide with one another in some cases, but in others cases they will come apart.[31] We make

[31] For some individuals, under some accounts of well-being the life that is high in moral value will also be high in prudential value. For example, consider the life of Mother Theresa – her life was high in moral value because of all the people that she helped. Presumably, under many

judgments about well-being frequently, whether about our own well-being, or about the well-being of others around us. It often seems clear when a life is going well, or when a life is going poorly – particularly if the life in question is our own. Despite the fact that we make these judgments about well-being on a regular basis, philosophical accounts of well-being vary considerably in their explications of what human well-being consists of.

Broadly speaking, accounts of well-being can be usefully divided into two families of theories: objective and subjective accounts of well-being. According to L.W. Sumner, subjective accounts of well-being depend at least partially on a welfare subject's attitude towards the conditions of her life. For a life to be going well under a subjective account, the individual who leads it must be favorably disposed to it in some specific way that is dictated differently by different accounts. Objective theories, on the other hand, lack this attitudinal component, denying the connection between an individual's favourable or unfavorable attitude towards her life and how well her life is going (38 – 39). For objective accounts of well-being, an individual's life can be going well even if they are completely dissatisfied with it (Parfit, 499).[32]

Considerations of well-being are generally awarded an important position in moral theory. For some theories how well people fare is the sole consideration for

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accounts of well-being, her life was also going well for her. Additionally, for most conceptions of morality, prudential value will also have moral value, but this isn't necessarily the case.

[32] There are also subjective/objective hybrid theories – where an individual's well-being depends both on possessing certain objectively good things, or having certain objectively good experiences, as well as on the individual's attitude towards these states of affairs. Although these theories are referred to as 'hybrid' theories, under the aforementioned classification system, they will be counted as subjective accounts. An example of one such account is one endorsed by Ted Honderich in Honderich, Ted. T., Terrorism for humanity: inquiries in political philosophy. London Sterling, Va: Pluto Press, 2003. In this account human well-being consists of satisfying desires in six categories that are objectively good. These accounts, although interesting are not able to take the significance of suffering into proper account for the same reason that other accounts of well-being surveyed here - how bad suffering feels while it is being experienced.

morality, while for others it may play a significantly smaller role. According to Sumner concern for the well-being of others is a prominent feature of common-sense morality (2). Furthermore, as T.M Scanlon mentions well-being is commonly understood as the basis by which an individual's interests are taken into account in moral argument (103). In other words, when a decision we make is going to impact individuals in some way, what we ought to be concerned with how it will impact their well-being – whether it will make them better or worse off overall. In Chapter One I made the claim that suffering experienced by persons should be understood to have its own moral significance over and above the role it plays in conditioning well-being. However this claim runs counter to the aforementioned role that well-being is understood to play in moral decision making. I believe that there are strong reasons to understand suffering as a separate consideration apart from well-being. The most important of these reasons is the immediately felt badness of suffering – how bad suffering feels at the time it is experienced, by the individual who is experiencing it. In order to cite this as a reason to give suffering its own separate consideration however, it's necessary to show that the most plausible and widely accepted accounts of well-being are not able to take account of the immediately felt badness of suffering.

In Dennis McKerlie's paper "Dimensions of Equality" he cites two arguments that suggest that when applying the values of priority and/or equality to individual lives global well-being is the proper unit of consideration (and not separate dimensions of lives such as health, suffering, wealth, etc)[33]. According to McKerlie these are the argument

[33] Although his discussion centers around applying values of equality and priority to lives, these arguemnts also give support to the claim that speaking generally moral concern for individual's

from compensation, and the argument from prudence (268 – 269). Roughly speaking, the argument from compensation claims that if individuals experience disadvantages or handicaps in specific dimensions of their life, provided they are compensated by some sort of advantage in another dimension of their life – resulting in their overall well-being still being high, this renders the dimension in their life that lacks value morally insignificant. For example, we might think an individual is adequately compensated for not having a particularly successful career by having a happy family life or a fulfilling commitment to religion or community. In other words, if everything 'evens out' overall, moral concern for individuals should lie with their global well-being, and not with its constituent parts. The argument from prudence, on the other hand states that individuals must always rationally choose an increase in their overall well-being rather than a benefit that improves their lot in a specific dimension of their life (269). If this is true - that individuals must always rationally prefer an increase in well-being instead of an improvement to a specific dimension of their life, than this suggests that well-being must remain the proper unit of concern[34]. According to McKerlie, for another dimension to warrant moral consideration facts about that particular dimension would have to give us reasonable answers to the arguments from prudence and compensation, as well as offer compelling reasons as to why the dimension is important enough to warrant moral consideration alongside global well-being (269). In his article, he goes on to claim that suffering seems to be the most plausible candidate for a dimension that warrants its own consideration – as facts about suffering provide us with the resources to answer the

interests should consist of being concerned for their overall well-being, and not with how well they are doing in specific dimensions of their lives.

[34] Although this argument might offer a reason to accept well-being as the only morally significant dimension of lives, if we granted that another dimension had intrinsic value or disvalue, this would hold regardless of indivdidual attitudes towards benefits.

arguments from prudence and compensation[35]. I agree with McKerlie – but he makes this claim without situating his discussion in reference to any specific account or understanding of well-being. Without explaining what is meant by well-being this claim can't be substantiated, for some accounts of well-being, the arguments from compensation and prudence can't be answered at all, while in others the answers to the arguments, and the arguments themselves even look quite different than the arguments that McKerlie briefly outlined in his paper.[36]

In the following sections I will discuss four different accounts of well-being; objective list accounts, hedonistic accounts, desire-satisfaction accounts and Sumner's global happiness/satisfaction account of well-being, explain the place of suffering in each, and also explain how facts about suffering can account for the challenges provided by the arguments from compensation and prudence in the context of each account considered. To reiterate, in Chapter One I defined suffering as 'an overall bad feeling, caused by the unmitigated experience of negative emotion(s) or negative physical sensation(s), arising from either real or perceived events.' This psychological understanding of suffering is the one that I will be using in this discussion. Again, in the previous chapter I made claims regarding the badness of suffering – the most important of these is that suffering is intrinsically bad because of how bad it feels for the individual who experiences it – 'its immediately felt badness'. As well, I made the claim that both

[35] For McKerlie the specific fact about suffering that enables us to answer the arguments from prudence and compensation is that when soemone suffers we cease to care about how the rest of their life is going for them (272). I agree that this is true, but he falls short of explaining that this is because of how bad suffering feels while it is being experienced.

[36] Since McKerlie doesn't explore this claim in any significant depth, it's not clear if he had a particular account of well-being in mind throughout this discussion, or if he thought that the arguments from compensation and prudence applied uniformly regardless of what account of well-being is being considered.

within lives and across lives suffering is worse (i.e. more morally significant) the more intense it gets. As a result, both within lives and across lives we may have reasons to alleviate more intense suffering over less intense suffering – even if the total amount of leftover suffering is greater as a result of this choice.[37] It will be important to keep these important features of suffering in mind for this discussion.

Objective List Accounts

According to objective list accounts of well-being, what makes an individual's life go best is the attainment or possession of some specified list of privileged goods that themselves are objectively good (Sumner, 45-46). For objective list theories possession or attainment of these goods contributes to well-being regardless of the individual's attitudes towards those goods. The more that individuals have of these specified goods, the better their lives are going for them. Since objective list accounts claim that what makes a person's life go well is fixed independently of an individual's attitudes or opinions the items on the objective list are there (and have value) independently of whether the individual in question has favourable attitudes towards them or judges that the items are valuable to them (Arneson, 9). The rough outline of how these accounts work enjoys some initial plausibility – after all, we tend to think that there are some goods that always seem to contribute to our well-being. Things that contribute positively to our health for example, or success in one's career, or cultivating meaningful relationships seem to contribute positively to anyone's well-being. In cases where goods

[37] Perhaps the torture victim from our initial example would prefer to instead endure 8 days of suffering that is seven times less intense than the one day of very intense suffering. The overall quantity of suffering is greater in the case of the eight days of suffering – but the one day of extreme suffering still seems worse, because the suffering is concentrated into one very intense episode.

such as the aforementioned are involved whether or not an individual has a favourable attitude towards these things seems insignificant in comparison to the benefit that we understand these goods or events to have for people's well-being. On the other hand, this exact same aspect of objective list accounts seems troubling when considering certain other types of goods. For example, it seems quite counterintuitive to claim that some other types of goods or events influence how well someone's life goes for them regardless of their attitude towards them. It's difficult to explain how the acquisition of knowledge makes an individual's life go better for them if they're disinterested in acquiring this knowledge. If we're indifferent or unfavourably disposed to certain goods or events, it's hard to explain how these things make our lives go better for us at all. Putting this issue aside, there are a few fully developed accounts of such theories that offer a list of what these valuable goods might be. One of these accounts, as well as a modified version of it, will be discussed below.

John Finnis offers one such account of these goods in his book *Natural Law and Natural Rights*. According to Finnis there are seven categories of fundamental human goods, and fulfillment or acquisition of goals/goods that fall under each of these categories contributes positively to well-being. According to Finnis there are seven broad categories of goods that contribute to human well-being, these are: life, knowledge, play, aesthetic experience, sociability, practical reasonableness and 'religion' (88 – 89). Each of these categories serves as a broad heading under which we can group more specific goods. Under life falls of course, having a life, but also physical health and in some cases having and rearing children. Under knowledge falls the acquisition of any sort of knowledge, which Finnis deems desirable for its own sake. Under the category of play

falls any activity that we do for its own enjoyment, such as games, recreation or hobbies. Those goods under aesthetic experience overlap frequently with goods under play – but aesthetic experience can also include appreciation of nature, the appreciation of art and other experiences involving the appreciation of beauty for its own sake, which have little to do with 'play'. Goods under the category of socialability involves the quality of interaction with other individuals – at the very least the good of socialabiltiy involves getting along reasonably well with others, and also all of our relationships – close friendships, romantic and others, membership in communities and groups would also fall under socialability. Under practical reasonableness Finnis includes both using one's intellect to bear on something positive, but he also seems to imply that it includes having a healthy mental life – being aware of one's own hopes, wants and needs. Finally, Finnis includes the good of 'religion'. By 'religion' Finnis means an organized belief system that unifies one's understanding of value, and the universe that is in accordance with common sense (86 – 89). According to Finnis these categories are exhaustive – anything that contributes to prudential value should either be understood as belonging to one of these categories, or as a ways or means to pursue one of these basic values (90 – 92). Additionally, these goods are all equally fundamental for an individual to fare well (92). As we are supposed to understand these things as constituting human good, then we can understand their absence (or the presence of their opposites) to take away from well-being.

It's clear that none of Finnis's categories directly address suffering (or happiness for that matter). Instead, Finnis's account should be understood as taking account of suffering indirectly. Suffering, under this example of the objective list account can be

understood as bad in so far as it may inhibit the pursuit or achievement of goods in several of the categories of fundamental good or good in so far as it may assist individuals in attaining those goods on the objective list. Suffering then, for Finnis can act as a means to things that are objectively good or as an inhibitor to gaining these things. Instances of suffering then are instrumentally bad or good, but have no intrinsic value or disvalue. The relation between suffering and some of the categories of fundamental good is more straightforward than others. In so far as a decline in our physical health can cause us to suffer, suffering can be related to the fundamental good of life. It is in itself good for this account if our health is intact, so some of the causes of suffering can be considered intrinsically bad – but it is important to note there is no mention of the significance of suffering itself. Additionally, suffering could plausibly be understood as related to the category of play - it's plainly obvious that we don't enjoy ourselves during periods of suffering. Again, these are indirect relations between the experience of suffering and well-being. The badness of the experience of suffering is not taken into direct account here.

The relationship of suffering to some of the other categories of fundamental good may be more remote. For instance, it's unclear how the good of knowledge relates to suffering. As has been discussed, suffering is often understood as an important means to the end of the acquisition of knowledge in some cases. Suffering may be an important means to the fundamental good of knowledge - but there may be still other cases where suffering could interfere with the acquisition of knowledge[38]. For example, in cases where an individual is suffering very severely, they may be unaware of what is going on

[38] Perhaps the experience of some suffering can help individuals to access sorts of knowledge that deal with compassion or understanding, for instance.

in the outside world – immersed instead, in thoughts of how badly they feel. For Finnis, suffering neither contributes positively or negatively to well-being directly, but is only capable of having an indirect impact. Finnis' objective list account takes account of the instrumental badness of suffering then, but takes no account of the intrinsic badness that suffering should be understood to have.

That said, it's possible that a different objective list account of well-being could give a more thorough account of suffering. Using Finnis's account as an outline, we could add on another category of fundamental good – that of happiness. If we added this category, suffering plays a direct role for well-being. Although it might not be plausible to posit happiness as the sole constituent of well-being, it is a plausible candidate for one constituent of well-being. Including happiness as one of the fundamental goods is not, in my opinion a far-fetched proposal by any means. In everyday language when we speak of how well our own (or someone else's) life is going, we often take into account whether or not they are happy with it. If we considered happiness to be a fundamental good, then instances of suffering would count negatively against well-being. This relationship however is still somewhat unclear. It isn't clear how much suffering it would take to negatively impact an individual's well-being, nor how much it would impact an individual's well-being if and when it did. The addition of happiness to such an account would make it only one consideration among seven (or however many others) which makes it difficult to determine how much suffering would impact individual well-being. Presumably, the absence of one fundamental good does not immediately render someone badly off. Precisely how this example of an objective list account would take suffering into account is not of particular importance – regardless of how the theory is constructed,

there are still reasons to treat suffering as a separate consideration from well-being. This may seem like an overly quick dismissal, but in objective list accounts the badness of brief instances of intense suffering gets lost among other considerations of fundamental good.

Firstly, recall our initial motivation for considering suffering as a dimension deserving its own moral consideration - the example of the torture victim who leads a life that by any reasonable account is a good life. In our example the individual has been enduring very intense suffering as a result of severe torture for several hours, and will continue to do so for around a day without assistance. If this individual has satisfied the other categories of fundamental goods to a fairly high extent, it's safe to say that a day of suffering won't significantly impact his well-being, certainly not to the extent that he would require moral attention (if we were being attentive exclusively to his well-being). Again, regardless of the negligible impact of the day of suffering on the individual's overall well-being, the moral significance of the suffering he experiences outpaces the small impact on his well-being, because of how bad the individual feels during that time. Attention to the small impact the day of torture would have on an individual's well-being according to an objective list account doesn't adequately account for the significance of this event. This is true even if we consider an objective list account that counts happiness as a category of objective good, particularly if the individual in question has experienced a large amount of happiness in his lifetime. Objective list accounts can't properly account for the significance of the brief instance of intense suffering – whether happiness is included on the list of fundamental goods or not. If the individual in our example is suffering intensely, we care very little about how the rest of their life is going (McKerlie,

272). We don't take how much knowledge they have amassed or how good the quality of their relationships are into account - all that matters is that they are suffering. Objective list accounts are simply unable to take account of this important feature of suffering.

Additionally, consider the argument from compensation in light of objective list accounts of well-being – imagine an individual who has suffered a great deal in their life from a painful but non life threatening medical condition. She's spent months enduring fairly severe suffering as a result of it– which has impacted her overall well-being. However, imagine that she is well off in other dimensions – for example, perhaps for the most part she possesses expansive knowledge, and many close, healthy friendships, and she is able to use her knowledge and intellect for a career that she finds worthwhile and rewarding. Because of these details, the individual in question can be considered well-off in spite of her episodic suffering. In these instances does it appear that the individual was appropriately compensated for her suffering with advantages in other dimensions of her life? There is still something bad about the fact that she has suffered, even if she is compensated by advantages in other dimensions. For some individuals this compensation might be considered adequate – but for others this might not be the case. This may be true from the perspective of the individual who suffers, but also from the perspective of others who witness the suffering from the outside.

In terms of answering the argument from prudence, the answer is just as straightforward as in the argument from compensation. In the case of the individual being tortured, imagine that we could either relieve them of their suffering by preventing them from being tortured for a day, or benefit them in a way that would grant them a more significant gain in their well-being. For example, perhaps the individual could be

benefitted in terms of the quality of their friendships, or their knowledge. For some individuals it might be obvious that they would prefer the gain in their well-being – but others may decide that they'd much rather avoid the suffering, and this choice doesn't appear to be irrational. Considering how bad intense suffering feels while it is being experienced, it is reasonable (but perhaps not necessary) for an individual to prefer a reduction in their suffering rather than an increase in their overall well-being. Choosing to avoid suffering, even at the cost of gaining another good found on the objective list does not seem irrational.[39] An objective list account, it appears, whether it includes happiness as a fundamental good or not, can't seem to fully take account for the badness of suffering. From the context of an objective list account we can still give answers to the challenges presented by the arguments from prudence and compensation – and also give compelling reasons to give suffering separate consideration.

Hedonism

Hedonistic theories of well-being, such as those advocated by Henry Sidgwick and John Stuart Mill[40] hold that the well-being of individuals is contingent entirely on the experience of pleasure or happiness and the avoidance of pain or suffering. The extent to which we are faring poorly or well depends on our overall balance of happiness over suffering. Experiencing pleasure or happiness contributes positively to our well-being, and experiencing pain and/or suffering takes away from our well-being. According to Sidgwick, pleasure or happiness is defined as "a feeling which when experienced… is at

[39] Claims regarding the argument from prudence deal with individual attitudes towards suffering and well-being. Some individauls may choose a reduction in their suffering, while others will choose an increase in their well-being. The claim only states that it could be rational for an individual to prefer a reduction in their suffering – not that this is what indivdiuals must all prefer.
[40] See Sidgwick, Henry. The Methods of Ethics. Indianapolis: Hackett Pub. Co, 1981.
and Mill, John. Utilitarianism. Indianapolis: Hackett Pub, 2001 respectively

least implicitly apprehended as desirable or – in cases of comparison – preferable." (127). The range of feelings that this definition covers then, is quite broad. By happiness then, these accounts are able to cover everything from the pleasure we experience by eating an ice cream cone to the happiness we feel when spending time with a loved one. Pain then, should be understood to be necessarily as broad in scope. Different hedonistic accounts will define pleasure and pain in different ways. However, all hedonistic accounts of well-being work roughly in the way described. Pleasure/happiness and pain/suffering are the only considerations that influence the extent to which our lives go well or poorly.

Hedonistic theories of well-being obviously make happiness/suffering their primary concern[41]. In hedonistic accounts any quantity of suffering always counts negatively against our well-being. Any episode of suffering diminishes our well-being, while any episode of happiness improves our well-being. Setting aside any concerns with hedonism stemming from descriptive adequacy[42], hedonism initially shows considerable promise for taking the moral significance of suffering for persons into account. Recalling

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[41] I'll be considering the formulation of hedonism that could most plausibly take the moral significance of suffering into account – the one that defines well-being as a function of suffering/happiness as I've defined it here – with happiness defined as feeling good overall, and suffering defined as feeling badly overall.

[42] Both James Griffin and Wayne Sumner discuss these issues in depth in their books Griffin, James. Well-Being. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986. and Sumner, L. Welfare, Happiness, and Ethics. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996. respectively. There are two broad issues with hedonism – the first is that hedonism forces individuals to always value pursuing happiness and avoiding suffering, but this doesn't appear to constitute well-being fully – individuals can value other things as well that may conflict with happiness. James Griffin expresses this effectively in his well- known Freud example. Additionally, as demonstrated by Robert Nozick in his experience machine thought experiment people also seem to value having authentic experiences – this is an issue for hedonistic accounts of well-being because they associate well-being entirely with our states of mind, which don't necessarily have to correspond to actual events see Nozick, Robert. Anarchy, State, and Utopia. New York: Basic Books, 1974. These two broad issues present serious obstacles for hedonistic accounts of well-being, which appear insurmountable for these accounts. Given these serious objections it might seem counter-intuitive to include hedonism in this discussion, but at first glance hedonism seems as though it might be the most likely account that can accommodate the moral significance of suffering, so its inclusion is important.

the torture case, it's plausible that some of the reasons we may have to help the individual who is suffering deal with the fact that the experience of suffering counts negatively against this individual's well-being. That said – even though hedonism makes well-being a direct function of an individual's subjective experiences of happiness and suffering it doesn't appear to be able to fully take the moral significance of suffering into account in the right way. This may seem counter-intuitive, but recall our primary reason for claiming that suffering is intrinsically bad – because of how bad it feels while it is being experienced. Consider that the individual who is being tortured is quite well-off by hedonistic standards, even after we take the suffering into account. This is possible because well-being is the measure of how well the life as a whole is going. That is, if we examined his life as a whole, we would find it contained a large quantity of happiness. Because well-being is not a binary concept – but one that admits degrees, this brief instance of suffering will not render our torture victim badly off if he is already leading a happy life– worse off, perhaps, but not to the extent so that he be considered badly off by a hedonistic standard.

As a result, it's not clear that concern for a hedonistic account of well-being is what motivates the claim that the torture victim needs help. Assuming that we have some sort of duty (in at least some cases) to assist those who are badly off, a slight decline in the well-being of a very well-off individual would give us very weak – if any reasons at all to assist them. However, considering the torture victim, we seem to still have very strong moral reasons to assist them while they are suffering - at the very least, the strength of these moral reasons seems to outpace the badness of the individual's slight decline in well-being. The same would be true for an individual who leads a happy life

overall but is currently suffering as a result of some painful condition that isn't particularly serious or life threatening[43]. This is an odd consequence of hedonism, to be sure, but an important one. Hedonistic theories aren't able to account for the chief quality that makes suffering so bad – its immediately felt badness.

The answers to the arguments from prudence and compensation with hedonism in mind are more complicated than in the previous account considered. It might appear that when adopting a hedonistic account of well-being, suffering no longer ceases to be able to be considered as a separate dimension. This is because if we understand happiness/suffering to be the exclusive constituents of well-being, but it isn't the case that some cases of suffering can't be treated as a separate dimension. Hedonistic theories of well-being deal specifically with the quantity of happiness and suffering in a life – the good life is the one with the greatest balance of happiness over suffering. Consider that in the previous chapter we gave strong reasons to accept the claim that sometimes it may be more important to alleviate more intense suffering, rather than less intense suffering, even if the quantity of suffering that still exists is larger if we do so – I also made a case for this claim holding within lives. If it's true that this claim holds within lives, then it's possible for the reasons to alleviate suffering to be different than reasons to increase well-being in some cases, even if we are dealing with happiness/suffering in both instances. Again, the question to ask here in attempting to answer the argument from compensation

[43] Here I have in mind conditions such as arthritis, kidney stones, back problems that are treatable such as herniated discs, skin conditions such as shingles or psoriasis that may flare up from time to time, serious burns (that don't cause serious health complications) and any other number of painful conditions or illnesses that may cause intense suffering for brief periods of time without significant impacting well-being. These instances of suffering caused by severe pain or discomfort still seem significant, even if they are brief. If we had the means to assist them or relieve their suffering – i.e if we had pain killers or some other treatment available, we ought to do what we can to alleviate this suffering.

is whether or not an individual is always adequately compensated for periods of intense suffering in their life, if periods of happiness experienced by them lead to their overall well-being still being quite high. Periods of intense suffering do seem like the sort of thing that aren't always made up for by future (or past) periods of happiness. Consider the torture victim again – even if for the week following (or the week prior to) their suffering they experienced significant happiness – enough to 'cancel out' their suffering in the hedonic calculus, the suffering they experienced still seems bad in a significant way. In other words, the badness of periods of intense suffering are not cancelled out by periods of happiness. The badness of the day of suffering outpaces its impact on well-being, even when well-being is directly conditioned by suffering. The suffering is still morally significant solely because of how bad the individual felt at the time the suffering was experienced.

Additionally, regarding the argument from prudence, it does seem possible for individuals to rationally choose a reduction in their suffering (at the time that they are suffering) rather than an increase in their overall well-being. Again, this sounds counter-intuitive – as a decrease in one's suffering would positively contribute directly to one's well-being. However, an individual could plausibly desire a decrease in their more - intense suffering (while it is being experienced) rather than a decrease in the total quantity of their suffering. Imagine that the torture victim could choose between experiencing a day of severe torture, or experiencing the same or a larger quantity of suffering, but experienced at a lower intensity, over a longer period of time. Perhaps this would mean that the individual would suffer for say, a week but the suffering would not

feel nearly as bad. Such a choice would be a rational one.[44] For instance, imagine that the individual could choose between experiencing the day of torture, or experiencing say, eight days of suffering that is around seven times less intense. The eight days could be consecutive, or could be spaced apart as discrete instances of suffering – this claim deals with the quantity of suffering, which would be the same regardless of temporal considerations. I don't think either choice is necessarily more rational than the other – only that one or the other could be a rational choice for an agent. It is the immediately felt badness of suffering that causes suffering to work in this way – the badness of suffering outpaces increases in its intensity. As a result, the degree that suffering is worth avoiding for individuals outpaces the increases in intensity, this is why it can be rational for individuals to choose the greater quantity of suffering, in order to avoid feeling quite as bad as they would with the lesser quantity.[45] In the case of hedonism, as well as in the other accounts surveyed, the immediately felt badness of suffering is what allows us to give convincing answers to both the arguments from prudence and compensation.

Although hedonism seems to take full account of suffering by making happiness and suffering define how well or poorly our lives go, hedonistic accounts do not take account of suffering in the right way because of their exclusive attention to the quantities of suffering experienced by persons. It is still possible for individuals to wish for a reduction in their intense suffering regardless of the quantity of their suffering which

[44] It would be the rational choice if it was the one the individual preferred. Whether or not an individual would prefer to avoid intense suffering at the cost of a greater quantitiy of happiness will depend on individual attitutdes towards suffering/happiness. The claim here is not that avoiding suffering is necessarily the more rational choice – only that is a rational choice. In cases of extremely intense suffering, I think many individuals (if fully informed about how bad suffering feels) would choose to avoid the intense suffering.

[45] In other words, suffering that is five times as intense as the suffering resulting from a migraine, is more than five times as bad – or more than five times more undesirable.

enables us to still treat some episodes of suffering as a separate dimension of individual lives. Additionally, it doesn't seem as though individuals are always compensated for their suffering by episodes of happiness even if they are compensated according to the hedonic calculus – the suffering is still bad, regardless of how happy their life is as a whole[46].

Desire Satisfaction Accounts

The second subjective account of well-being I will discuss here is the informed desire account. Desire accounts claim that our well-being is a function of the extent that our desires are satisfied or frustrated (Griffin, 10). This is the simplest version of a desire account of well-being. As both Griffin and Sumner note in their discussions of the desire account, this simple formulation is open to several serious objections.[47] In response to various objections James Griffin moves to an informed desire account. This account is one that rules out errors in judgment. The informed desire account requires that we have adequate information regarding what would make our lives go well, and this information then shapes our desires (11 – 13). This requirement for information of course does not mean perfect information – just enough information so that any further information about what makes our lives go well wouldn't radically change the nature of our desires. As Griffin notes, the account has to sustain a balance between informed and actual desires – that is the satisfaction of a desire only counts positively towards our well-being if we

[46] It's possible that periods of intense suffering are morally worse when experienced by those who already have a high quantity of suffeirng in their lives. The claim I wish to make here is only that the suffering of those who don't suffer substantially can also be morally significant. If an individaul who leads a relatively happy life suffers as a result of a painful medical condition or as a result of a particularly stressful time period of their lives is still morally significant because of its felt intensity.

[47] For a detailed account of the problems with this view see Sumner's discussion found on pages 129 – 131.

actually have the desire in question. Since desires only count for our well-being if we do in fact have them, those events that deal with the satisfaction of desires that we merely *should* have – have no positive impact on our well-being. Conversely, our well-being is negatively impacted when our desires are frustrated. For example, if one had a desire not to endure suffering, and they had to endure a period of suffering his well-being would be diminished to some extent. The extent to which an individual's well-being is diminished or enhanced by the fulfillment of desires is contingent solely on how important the desire that is being frustrated or satisfied is to the individual in question. Those desires that are most important to us will impact our well-being more than those that are not particularly important to us.

Informed desire accounts, because of their subjective nature do not treat suffering uniformly across all cases. In so far as individuals have a desire not to suffer, or feel badly, when they do suffer this contributes negatively to their well-being. It's safe to say that in nearly all cases, individuals have a desire not to feel bad[48]. The desire to avoid suffering, we can assume would increase in strength in relation to the intensity of the suffering in question - the more intense suffering is, the stronger the desire to avoid it. Individuals tend to want to be happy or to feel good, and to avoid feeling badly or suffering. For many people this is a strong desire – it is their chief aim or desire to lead a happy life, as free from suffering as is possible. However, consider what was said earlier regarding suffering's possible instrumental goodness – that individuals may rationally accept suffering for the sake of attaining other goods. If individuals have a strong desire

[48] It's hard to imagine a case where an individual would have an informed desire to suffer. Perhaps in cases where an individual feelas as though they deserve to suffer, but it's not clear whether or not this would qualify as an informed desire or not. If an individual was fully informed as to how bad suffering would feel, they might change their mind about what they desired.

to attain a good that is only available to them if they endure a certain amount of suffering, the suffering they must endure might be 'worth it' in terms of their well-being because of how strongly they value or desire the other good in question. In these cases suffering will still count negatively against well-being, but their well-being will still be higher because of the satisfaction of their more deeply held desire For example, consider the case of an individual who has been in a serious accident and must undergo intense physical therapy in order to walk again. This therapy would be long, frustrating, and painful resulting in a significant amount of stress and suffering for the individual. That said, although this individual would desire not to suffer, their desire to walk again would more than likely be much stronger – causing them to accept the suffering to attain the good(s) that are more important to them. For the informed desire account then, suffering does play a role in well-being, but this role is dictated directly and exclusively by the desires or preferences of the individual agent in question. This is a product of the subjective nature of informed desire accounts – if well-being is conditioned by how individuals rank the importance of particular goods (through the strength of their desires) suffering will impact individual well-being in different ways. It's safe to say that because of how we've described suffering – as an overall bad feeling, suffering will always impact well-being in an informed desire account some extent – in some cases its impact may be negligible, but in others it will be much more significant.

The answers to the arguments from prudence and compensation again look different in the case of informed desire accounts. Because of the particular nature of informed desire accounts there is no coherent way to answer the argument from prudence. Because well-being is dictated by desires (which are necessarily subjective) if

an individual desired a reduction in their suffering over and above an increase in their well-being, the satisfaction of this desire would then contribute positively to their well-being – making the reduction or alleviation of suffering the prudent decision for an individual to make. I don't think that this is an embarrassment to the claim that suffering has its own moral significance over and above how suffering impacts well-being in an informed desire account. It is merely the consequence of the particular structure of this sort of account. Because of the fact that this account of well-being is based solely on attitudinal considerations individual's attitudes towards suffering are giving full consideration, and the prudent choice is the one that takes these attitudes into account.

However, as was shown to be the case with both other accounts of well-being examined in this chapter, it does not appear that individuals are adequately compensated for periods of suffering by the satisfaction of other important desires in their lifetimes. Although the satisfaction of these other desires might be more important to the individual in question, to them, and to outsiders, the suffering they endured still seems bad. Returning to the torture victim example, even if this individual satisfied his important desires in many spheres of his life, this does not make up for or negate the periods of suffering he endured (even if it does so when considering his well-being). The suffering he endured (even if just for a day) should still be considered as a negative aside to his life going well overall. Again, consider the individual who has to suffer through painful physical therapy, this individual satisfies their stronger desire to walk again, but their suffering still seems bad.

Informed desire accounts take some features of suffering into proper account – that it can be instrumentally good, and that individuals desiring not suffering is part of

what makes it bad. As well, informed desire accounts effectively factor in indivdiaul attitutdes towards happiness and suffering, allowing for variation in the extent to which suffering impacts individual well-being. That said, as with the other accounts of well-being considered, the informed desire account can't take account for the immediately felt badness of suffering, meaning that if one accepts an informed desire account of well-being, suffering must be accounted for in a different way.

Refined Happiness Theory

L. W. Sumner offers an alternative subjective account of well-being in *Welfare, Happiness & Ethics*. According to Sumner well-being is a function of the extent to which we are authentically, autonomously happy or satisfied with the way our lives are going (172). When Sumner claims that our well-being consists in our authentic endorsement of conditions in our lives, he means that something – a condition, a situation, an event enhances our well-being to the extent that we are satisfied with it. He does not mean fleeting or brief episodic happiness when he refers to us being happy or satisfied with an event or period in our life. When Sumner refers to happiness he means the state of being globally happy or satisfied with whatever the individual is considering – whether that is a relationship, an event, a resource or any other component of a life. For example, take the instance of a friendship coming to an end – if we were to take stock of this friendship, we would have an overall feeling about the relationship itself. We don't judge whether or not it is good for us based solely on the happiness we experienced during the friendship, or solely on the way it might have ended. We might weigh many things against each other when trying to decide our overall satisfaction with it – the happiness we felt, the lessons

we might have learnt, the experiences we had, the way it ended – all of these factors will play a role when assessing our overall satisfaction with something. Although Sumner interchangeably uses the terms "satisfaction" and "happiness" to describe well-being, I will be using "satisfaction" when referring to Sumner's account- even though he oscillates between using both terms - to avoid complications with the other uses of the term happiness used in this project.[49]

Sumner also tacks on a two-fold information/authenticity requirement to qualify his account of well-being. The first half of the authenticity condition basically requires that in order for someone's satisfaction with their life to count towards their own well-being it has to be informed to a certain extent. Again, just as in Griffin's informed desire account, Sumner requires not that we need perfect information, only enough information. For Sumner this criterion for information is fulfilled when we reach the point where we have enough information to the extent that more information would not drastically change our endorsement of a given situation in our lives (160 – 161). If we have this sort of information, then our satisfaction with our current situation will count as informed.

Additionally, As Sumner notes, sometimes people are so badly-off (in cases of battered children, people living in severe poverty, etc) that we may be inclined to think that they can't accurately make decisions about their well-being. Their life experiences and current situation have skewed their perception of what it is to be faring well or faring poorly to such an extent that we are inclined to say that they no longer have 'jurisdiction'

[49] When Sumner refers to having a happy life, he is not referring to episodic happiness, which I have understand to be the opposite of suffering as I've defined it. Sumner is instead referring to having a happy life, or being satisfied with one's life – the opposite of which is not suffering, but being dissastisfied with the conditions of one's life. Again, it might be true that suffering will influence how happy or satisfied an individaul is with their life, but it does not exclusively dictate this well-being. How suffering bears on an individual life will be a highly subjective issue.

in a sense to decide if their lives are going well or not. If well-being is entirely dependent on individual satisfaction with the conditions of their lives it seems as though we might have to allow certain people who live seemingly terrible lives (by our own personal standards) to maintain that their lives in fact are going well by their own standards – and we also have to grant that they are correct in their observations given the nature of subjective accounts. In order to get around this issue, Sumner introduces the second half of his information/authenticity requirement for assessments of our own well-being. According to Sumner individual's assessments of their own well-being can only be accurate if they are – in addition to being adequately informed – made by an autonomous subject. That is, if there are significant reasons to believe that an individual's life is such that their experiences have oppressed them in such a way that their preferences or happiness can no longer even be construed as their own anymore, then their endorsement of their life circumstances is no longer authentic.

Again, just as was seen to be the case in the last subjective account of well-being we examined – that of informed desire – the impact of suffering on individual well-being in Sumner's satisfaction account will vary from individual to individual, because it is based on individual attitudes and preferences. For some individuals experiencing bouts of suffering will impact their level of life satisfaction in significant ways – while other individuals may be more likely to overlook periods of suffering when considering their overall satisfaction with their life. This will depend on a variety of factors – their outlook on life, the quality of their other experiences or interactions, and a host of other factors.

Two individuals who suffer roughly the same amount from similar medical conditions, may have radically different reactions to such suffering – for some it will

significantly impact their assessment of their global well-being, while for others they may put the suffering behind them fairly easily. Sumner awards high importance to the exercise of individual agency for determining how a life is going, and correspondingly individuals are solely responsible for dictating the importance of certain dimensions of their lives or events for their well-being, including the place that suffering is to have in their lives (175).

Suffering may colour parts of lives negatively, causing individuals to be dissatisfied with certain temporal parts of their lives, without it necessarily having a significant impact on their life as a whole. Sumner does state that episodes of suffering are intimately tied up with assessments of well-being in that individuals are less satisfied with their lives the more suffering that is involved in them. However, Sumner also recognizes that suffering and happiness (understood as the opposite of suffering, or feeling happy) are too episodic to be understood as the main constituents of well-being (145). Though Sumner might be correct in claiming that instances of suffering contribute to conditioning well-being, the extent to which it does so will vary so considerably that it's hard to comment on just how much suffering will influence how satisfied individuals are with their lives –especially when some suffering might yield some instrumental goods.[50] Because of the episodic nature of suffering, some periods of suffering may not 'linger' on the minds of those who endure them, causing them to have little impact on well-being once they have past. Conversely, for some individuals periods of suffering

[50] Because the attianment of goods arising from suffeirng would contribute positively to an individaul's satisfaction with their life as a whole, it's hard to pinpoint how much of an impact suffering would have on well-being across specific cases.

may linger in their minds for much longer – causing them to have a considerable impact on the well-being of individuals[51].

As was the case with the other accounts of well-being that have been surveyed here, the satisfaction account of well-being is capable of taking the fact that suffering can be instrumentally good into account. Take the example of a young offender who has been rehabilitated after a jail sentence, in deciding whether or not they are satisfied with the conditions of their life, the suffering they might have endured from punishment, might be overshadowed by the instrumental good they gained from having that experience. On the whole, this individual might be quite satisfied with their life as a whole – and they might overlook the suffering they endured – but they can do so without having to claim that the suffering itself wasn't a bad thing. The suffering was still bad while it was being experienced, but this badness can be overshadowed in terms of well-being if the individual gains other significant goods – ones that make them more satisfied with their life as a whole.

Regarding the argument from prudence, as was the case with the informed desire account of well-being the argument from prudence can't be properly answered. With Sumner's account of well-being in mind if an individual preferred a reduction in their suffering instead of an increase in their well-being, naturally this is the choice that they would be most satisfied with overall. If it is the case that an individual would be more satisfied with the life that contained a reduction in their suffering than the life that contained a benefit in another dimension of their life, then that life would contain the highest possible balance of well-being – making it the prudent choice. Again, just as is the case with the informed desire account, this consequence arises as a result of the

[51] Again, these are facts about individual psychology, making it difficult to make concise claims.

attitudinal component that is central to subjective theories. The prudent choice might be the one that includes less suffering, but whatever choice an individual makes and is satisfied with overall will always be the prudent one.

Again, in the case of the argument from compensation, despite how satisfied an individual is with their life, their suffering still seems bad, all things considered. The life that an individual is satisfied with may include a large quantity of suffering which was still bad while it was being experienced. At the risk of being repetitive, returning once again to the case of the torture victim - he may be very satisfied with his life overall – and the day of torture might not change that to any significant extent, but this does not make up for the intense suffering that he will experience. His suffering still demands moral attention at the time it is being experienced, regardless of the negligible impact it will have on his overall well-being.

In all accounts of well-being considered here the most important feature of suffering is not taken into proper account – that of its immediately felt badness. On my account of suffering, as well as Mayerfeld's this is the aspect of suffering that makes suffering intrinsically bad. Because well-being deals with the overall evaluation of a life, it is difficult for accounts of well-being to take brief instances of suffering into full account. In a sense, the badness of suffering gets 'lost' when we talk about well-being. There are two reasons for this. The first is that some individuals may be less likely to accurately recall how bad suffering was when they reflect on it - which can considerably distort its badness (particularly if we are considering Sumner's account). The second reason that the badness of suffering gets lost in accounts of well-being is that well-being deals with all of the factors that cause a life to go well or poorly, as well as the entire temporal extension

of a life – making it next to impossible to factor in the badness of fairly intense suffering that only lasts for a day, or a few days (or any other brief period).

This may sound as though it is intended to act as a criticism for the aforementioned accounts of well-being, but this is not the case. Perhaps some further comments on the nature of each of these considerations will help to elucidate what is meant by the claim that 'suffering' gets lost in considerations of well-being. I've claimed that some of the badness of suffering is a result of how bad it feels at the time it is being experienced – and not as a result of its lingering impact. As a result, some suffering (the sort that has no significant lingering impacts) is only bad while it is being experienced. In instances where an individual only suffers for say, a few days or even weeks its badness is only present for a short period of time – even if it the badness associated with this episode is significant. This is the case in the torture example. There may, in fact be lingering impacts from the day of torture that the individual experiences, but much of the badness of that scenario is a result of the experience of the suffering while it is going on – even though it only lasts for a day. On the other hand, consider the fact that well-being is responsible for taking all of the factors that cause a life to go well or poorly into full account. Additionally, not only does well-being take all of the factors that cause a life to go well or poorly into account, it is also responsible for taking the entire temporal extension of a life into account as well. Because of the global scope of considerations of well-being, it is not able to take the intrinsic badness of suffering as it has been outlined here into account. Again, this is not the fault of accounts of well-being, it is simply the result of the natures of both of these considerations.

It may be plausible, in light of the aforementioned, to question what significance suffering may have when it doesn't have a lingering impact on individual well-being. Perhaps, if an instance of suffering doesn't impact how a life goes overall, it doesn't have any moral significance on its own – instead, instances of suffering only *seem* morally compelling. [52] It's true that instances of suffering are psychologically compelling, we are moved when we witness the suffering of individuals – even when the individuals are remote from us. However I don't think that instances of suffering are only psychologically compelling, in Chapter One I discussed the badness of suffering - particularly the badness associated with very intense suffering. Recall again, the example of the torture victim. If we can help the individual who is suffering, it is unfair not to, even if the individual's life is going well overall. Put simply, suffering is a bad thing for individuals to endure, and if we can prevent something bad from happening to someone, we should do so. This is an extremely simple line of reasoning but it's difficult to say much more. This claim stems directly from the badness associated with the experience of suffering. There will be limits on our duties surrounding suffering, to be sure, but suffering gives us *prima facie* reasons to assist individuals who experience it.

Some accounts of well-being are, of course better at taking account of the significance of suffering than others. The highly subjective accounts of well-being such as Sumner's account and informed desire accounts effectively take individual attitudes towards suffering into consideration – which is incredibly important for taking suffering into proper account, but it isn't the whole story. Hedonism also takes some account of the badness of suffering, but it is unable to take proper account of the immediately felt badness of suffering, as it is only able to deal with quantities of suffering and happiness,

[52] I am indebted to Dr. Violetta Igneski for pointing out this objection in an earlier draft.

and also fails to take full account of the badness of some episodes of extremely intense suffering. Additionally, by making happiness/suffering the sole constituents of well-being, hedonism also sacrifices its plausibility as an account of what it is for a life to go well. Objective list accounts can also take some account of the badness of suffering to some degree – but not for the badness associated with enduring brief periods of intense suffering that don't significantly impact our well-being – such as in the case of our torture victim.

As none of these accounts of well-being are adequately able to account for the badness we associate with the situation of the torture victim's suffering. What remains to be seen then is how we should take the moral significance of suffering into account, if we can't take it into proper account of it through attention and concern with how well people's lives go overall. If suffering is to act as a separate moral consideration, there may be significant ramifications for moral theory, and to our understanding of what it means to take individual interests into proper account during moral decision making. The beginnings of how the moral significance of suffering should be taken into proper account will be the topic for the next chapter.

3 – Suffering and Moral Consideration

It was established in the previous chapter that the most plausible accounts of well-being are unable to take the moral significance of suffering into proper account. Though it is possible that this failure is a flaw of contemporary accounts of well-being, I don't think that this is the case. The intrinsic badness of suffering is rooted in how bad suffering feels at the time it is experienced. Because some of the badness of suffering deals with this intrinsic badness and not with its lingering impact[53], this particular aspect of its significance gets 'lost' in the midst of all of the other considerations that cause individual lives to go well or poorly. As a result of the global character of considerations of well-being, such accounts are not able to take the significance of suffering into proper

[53] This is not to downplay the instrumental badness of suffering, as the impact that suffering can have on well-being can be significant. That said, the way that suffering is bad independent of considerations of well-being is relatively under-represented in moral theory, which is why it is my focus here.

account. As it stands, it is unclear how considerations surrounding suffering are to factor into morality.

In order for morality to take account of suffering in the right way it must be attentive to why suffering is morally significant, but it must also be attentive to some features of suffering as a feeling – how it works, and what the common causes of suffering are. Firstly, morality must account for the immediately felt badness of suffering. In Chapter One I argued that this is where the intrinsic badness of suffering comes from. In Chapter Two it was established that accounts of well-being are unable to account for this badness. Even hedonism, which makes happiness and suffering its primary concerns, is unable to plausibly account for this important feature of suffering.[54] As a result morality must account for the immediately felt badness of suffering in a different way. Additionally, morality must also account for the instrumental badness of suffering. As I discussed in Chapters One and Two suffering may have a direct or an indirect impact on well-being. This feature of suffering, however can be adequately taken account of by endorsing any theory of well-being that includes happiness/suffering as a component of the account, or in some cases, some other attitudinal component that can take account of happiness/suffering.[55]

Additionally, any account of morality that is to plausibly be said to take account of suffering must also be capable of accommodating the fact that relieving more intense

[54] Recall that hedonism wouldn't allow for individuals to rationally choose a smaller reduction in their more intense suffering rather than a larger increase in their quantity of suffering – which neglects how bad intense suffering feels.
[55] It seems as though informed desire accounts also effectively take account of the instrumental badness of suffering via the fact that it takes individual attitudes towards happiness and suffering into direct account through attention to individual desires.

suffering is morally more important than relieving a larger quantity of less intense suffering. It's not clear however, what this importance means for morality. There may be cases where this importance can be outweighed – in cases where the quantities of suffering involved are very large, or if significant numbers of individuals are suffering intensely this may be the case. This fact deals with the asymmetry claims that were discussed earlier, but it needs to be developed further. Even if it is clear that there are strong reasons to accept asymmetry claims made in Chapter One, it's unclear what the claims will mean for how we are to treat suffering, or the fact that someone suffers as an event that is worthy of moral consideration. These asymmetry claims regarding suffering appear to run parallel to claims endorsed by Dennis McKerlie, Thomas Nagel and Derek Parfit[56] about an important intrinsic property of well-being – namely that increases in well-being carry more moral weight when the benefits given are given to those who are badly off overall.

In addition to discussing what features of the moral significance of suffering morality will need to take into account, I will also discuss a claim that Jamie Mayerfeld makes: that attention to suffering necessitates a wider sphere of moral concern (106 – 107). In other words, according to Mayerfeld a concern for suffering requires that we are attentive to a wider range of afflictions, hardships and conditions that we might not have a special concern for were it not for an understanding of the moral significance of suffering as it has been outlined here This claim stems from the fact that the causes of suffering are extremely diverse, and that all individuals are vulnerable to experiencing

[56] See McKerlie, Dennis. "Dimensions of Equality." *Utilitas* 13.3 (2001): 263 – 287, Nagel, Thomas. Equality and Partiality. Oxford Oxfordshire: Oxford University Press, 1991 and Parfit, Derek. "Equality or Priority." *Ratio* 10. 3 (1997): 202 – 221 respectively.

suffering regardless of their lot in life, simply in virtue of being human. Suffering then, in some cases may broaden the sphere of moral attention to include those individuals who overall are faring very well – a group that is often exempt from the sphere of moral concern when benefits and/or assistance are concerned.[57] I think that these are important claims but what Mayerfeld seems to miss in his (brief) discussion, is that the most significant role that attention to the badness of suffering plays is that it reinforces the badness of many events or scenarios that common sense morality already labels as bad. Attention to suffering can help explain this badness, and also strengthen our reasons to assist individuals in many instances.

If we accept what has already been said about suffering here and the claim that well-being is in itself a consideration worthy of moral concern, then there are now (at least) two separate dimensions of lives that must be taken into account. These dimensions may coincide with one another in many cases - just because accounts of well-being are not able to adequately take the moral significance of suffering into account does not mean that the two are not intimately related. Often those who suffer the most intensely will be those who are badly off. The reasons for this are two-fold. The first of these reasons is that the causes of suffering are often those things that make individuals badly off. Serious medical or mental health issues, living in dire poverty or living under the persistent threat of violence or oppression – these things can cause individuals to suffer, but under many conceptions of well-being they will also cause individuals to fare poorly in a global sense. These things can limit opportunities for gaining positive experiences,

[57] By sphere of moral attention or moral concern I mean that groups of individuals who we generally regard as needing or deserving moral concern when we make decisions regarding assisting individuals or distributing benefits amongst them.

achieving certain goals or attaining valuable goods. The second of these reasons is that for some accounts of well-being (particularly the subjective accounts surveyed in the previous chapter) large amounts of suffering can cause individuals to fare poorly overall. Exactly how much suffering is required to cause individuals to fare poorly overall will be contingent on the account of well-being in place, and often on the attitudes of the individual being considered. These cases, where those who are suffering are the same as those individuals who are faring poorly, are generally the cases that are easier for morality to deal with – in these cases viewing suffering as a separate consideration causes no change to our moral concern or attention except in the sense that it may strengthen our moral reasons to assist those who are both badly off and suffering. In very particular cases, the actions required to alleviate suffering, may be different than those required to increase an individual well-being. These are rare cases, and are quite complicated. [58]

However, in other cases there will be instances of significant suffering in the lives of individuals who fare very well overall. In these cases our moral duties might be less clear – we might have reasons to alleviate an individual's suffering in spite of the fact that they are faring very well overall, but how will this impact our moral duties? If we have reasons both to alleviate the suffering of individuals (even if they are faring well in a global sense) but also reasons to benefit individuals who are faring poorly overall, and these two groups of people are not one and the same in all cases, it appears that we will be left with instances where these reasons to assist those who are suffering will conflict with reasons to assist those who are faring poorly overall. So far, there are no established

[58] Sometimes when this is the case actions to benefit individuals in terms of their well-being may be different than those actions that we take to alleviate their suffering. In fact, these actions to increase an individual's well- being may sometimes cause them to suffer more. Again, these cases are rare, and this is a complicated claim – examples will be discussed later in this chapter.

criteria to privilege reasons that deal with suffering over reasons that deal with well-being. In this chapter I will consider cases where one might privilege suffering over well-being, and attempt to explain why suffering may sometimes take priority over well-being.

In this chapter I will explore the beginnings of how morality must take suffering into proper account. Additionally, I will also discuss what the moral significance of suffering means for determining who is deserving of moral attention – exploring when the reasons to relieve suffering will generate a duty to alleviate suffering, and when they might be outweighed by other considerations. I will also explore a possible problem with the significance of suffering as it has been outlined in this project, and defend the position that has been advocated here against this possible objection. The objection stems from the highly subjective nature of suffering specific to the account that has been given here, and it is not to be taken lightly.

Necessary Suffering

Before I discuss some instances where a duty to alleviate suffering might be necessary, I will discuss some cases where the badness of suffering does not result in a duty for its alleviation. The facts about suffering that have been surveyed in previous chapters were not intended to imply that all instances of suffering require moral attention or assistance. I've claimed that the badness of suffering generates moral reasons for individuals to work towards its alleviation, but these reasons are not absolute, and can often be over-ruled by other moral considerations[59]. In some instances, some periods of

[59] To privilege suffering as a moral consideration that can not be over-ruled would be implausible. This would mean that whatever actions that were necessary to alleviate suffering

brief suffering will provide very weak reasons for alleviation or intervention. Suffering that will resolve itself on its own, or passes very quickly without any assistance or intervention will generate very weak or no reasons at all for intervening action. These instances still carry some badness, but not enough to warrant action on the part of other agents. Many instances of day to day suffering may fit this description. For example, periods of intense self-doubt or anxiety that result in suffering that only last a day or so, and pass on their own may fit this criteria. Additionally, some instances of suffering might be morally required. There are several types of instances wherein suffering may be necessary. For one, reasons to alleviate suffering can be over-ruled if an individual chooses to accept a certain amount of suffering to gain some other goods. Additionally, some instances of suffering might be necessary because of other moral considerations involved – perhaps because of considerations of justice, desert or fairness[60]. Some of these cases will be discussed in detail below.[61]

Recall in the first chapter we discussed the fact that some suffering may yield instrumental goods – if individuals want certain goods they may have to suffer to attain them. In these cases, it won't be morally required to alleviate. According to Mayerfeld this is a result of the fact that the value of individual liberty can take precedence over the

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would be necessary – violence, theft, dishonesty, virtually anything that would result in the least amount of suffering would be acceptable.

[60] There may be other moral considerations that may cancel out our duty to relieve or alleviate suffering. Mayerfeld mentions prohibitions against violence, or duties generated by our own special obligations to family members that may interfere with our duties towards happiness and suffering. Additionally, a commitment to the value of well-being may over-rule the importance of suffering in some instances. These other values that may 'cancel-out' our duties surrounding suffering will depend on whatever values are endorsed besides a commitment to alleviating suffering, and will vary drastically as a result.

[61] Additionally, there is some suffering that can't be helped – perhaps in some cases of suffering other individuals aren't capable of aiding the individual(s) who is suffering. In cases like these the suffering experienced is neecessary, but not quite in the same way as the suffering discussed in the examples in this section.

significance of suffering - if individuals wish to accept suffering for some reasons that are important to them, other individuals must not intervene, and must instead respect this decision (194). In other words, reasons that deal with respecting individual liberty will trump reasons that deal with the badness of suffering, resulting in no duty to alleviate the suffering of an individual in these cases. Provided that we have no significant reasons to believe that the individual's choice is not autonomous or drastically misinformed with regards to the nature of suffering or the goods that the individual desires, we have every reason to accept their decision. Consider the example that James Griffin gives to demonstrate inadequacies with hedonistic accounts of well-being - in the example that Griffin gives us Sigmund Freud preferred to suffer through intense pain near the end of his life in order to retain his capacity for clear thought (Griffin, 8 – 9). In this case, Freud preferred the good of clear thought over and above avoiding suffering. Although the suffering he experienced is still bad, respect for the value of Freud's liberty dictates that he be allowed to make this choice without interference. This example, of course relies on the assumption that Freud would report an overall bad feeling in this example. Consider a second example, where there is an individual on their deathbed, who can either slip away quietly practically unconscious on morphine, thereby avoiding suffering. If they decide to slip away on morphine however, they wouldn't be able to properly say goodbye to their loved ones, and perhaps it is important for them to do so. Perhaps they would choose the latter option, not because it would make them happy - they would suffer greatly if they were conscious, they would be in a high degree of pain and they would also experience significant fear and anxiety because they knew that they were dying. In this case however, it is more important for them that they say goodbye to their family,

even if they have to suffer to do so. If we grant, as Mayerfeld does that individuals should be allowed to decide what goods or experiences are most valuable for them, then individuals must be allowed to dictate in what instances they want to accept suffering. In turn, an individual's decision to accept suffering will overrule any duty we have to alleviate their suffering. I can see no plausible objection to the claim that individuals should be able to decide what they want in cases such as these. Of course, there may be exceptions – we commonly don't extend respect of this sort for liberty to children, or other individuals who aren't autonomous or adequately informed. However, in normal cases, suffering that is willingly accepted for the sake of other goods should be considered morally necessary.[62]

Additionally, some suffering might be morally required for other reasons. Again, as was discussed in Chapter One suffering that results from deserved punishment does not seem to create a duty for alleviation or relief for those individuals who witness it. The experience of those criminals that are placed into solitary confinement or endure other punishments that are known to cause severe suffering don't seem to create a duty to alleviate it because their punishment, and often the suffering that is associated with it serves an important purpose. The knowledge that a criminal is suffering may placate families of victims, or individuals who have been victimized by the criminals, or it may placate society as a whole. Additionally, in other cases, the suffering of some criminals can also be seen as a by-product of necessary action. Perhaps in some cases it is not the suffering that is important during punishment, but the segregation of the individual from

[62] That said if we were capable of easing Freud's pain with a drug that did not cloud his thought-process, this would change the circumstance in our example, meaning that we would then have a duty to ease his suffering.

the rest of the population – in this case the punishment of the individual is necessary, while their suffering as a result of it may just be an unfortunate result of the necessary punishment. In these cases the value isn't in the suffering itself, but in the fact that the individual is being punished. The suffering experienced by criminals may be considered necessary in many cases, resulting in no duty for alleviation. That said the suffering experienced by the prisoner is still bad, only in these instances its badness is outweighed by other important considerations.

It may also be plausible to claim that suffering that is the result of seemingly frivolous causes is not morally significant – and therefore does not generate a duty of alleviation. That is, it's plausible to claim the badness of an individual's suffering in some instances may be outweighed by the fact that the suffering is not borne out of significant causes, or perhaps even further some might claim that this suffering carries no badness at all if its causes aren't themselves significant. This is a result of the highly subjective nature of suffering as it has been outlined here – and as such can serve as a serious objection to this view. If the only suffering that we have reason to alleviate is that suffering that is caused by events that are objectively significant, or objectively bad, this would undermine the badness of suffering as it has been outlined here – removing the badness of suffering from the feeling, and instead aligning the badness of suffering with its causes instead – which I have explicitly set out to avoid.

Consider the following example: imagine the famous socialite Paris Hilton, through some misfortune she and her family lose their entire fortune – in order to get by, Paris is forced to get a full-time job – say, waiting tables at a diner. As a result, she is no longer able to go out and socialize on a nightly basis, take extravagant vacations or go on

shopping sprees - any money that she makes must go towards her rent for an apartment, paying the bills and buying groceries and a small amount of savings. Paris now leads what is really, 'a normal life.' However, considering what Paris' life was like before these events, as a result of her new life circumstances, Paris suffers. Her new life is dramatically different from her old life, and dramatically below her expectations.[63] As a result, Paris doesn't only suffer intensely for a day or a few days – her suffering continues on over a period of weeks, as her life has ceased to live up to her expectations. If Paris suffers intensely, and for an extended period of time, by the account given here Paris' suffering would generate strong moral reasons for individuals to intervene in or alleviate Paris' suffering. This however seems counter-intuitive – as Paris' suffering may seem morally insignificant because its causes appear frivolous.

Jamie Mayerfeld responds to cases such as these by claiming that what individuals experience in these instances is not actually suffering – her feelings would instead be more suitably described as 'surface feelings' that deal with the mere frustration of desire or mere sadness (49, 90 – 92). That said, given the account of suffering endorsed by Mayerfeld, and outlined here, I don't believe that this is a line of defense available to those who are concerned with suffering as it has been described by myself and Mayerfeld. For Mayerfeld to make this claim, I think he neglects to pay adequate attention to a point that he himself makes – that an individual's levels of suffering will vary across cases, because different people have radically different attitudes, preferences and life circumstances some seemingly minor or frivolous events will cause

[63] Examples such as these also pose problems for some accounts of well-being, such as Sumner's. We can imagine in such a case as this one, that Paris would be quite dissastisfied with her life overall, which would force us to claim that Paris is badly off, which doesn't seem particularly accurate.

psychological suffering. If suffering is as subjective as it has been claimed, it's likely that Paris would experience suffering as a result of these dramatic life changes. Consider Paris's regular life circumstances, her attitudes, preferences and the like – losing her fortune and being forced to radically change her lifestyle to one that she would find unpleasant would more than likely cause her to feel badly overall. Cases such as these leave the account in a vulnerable place. Before I continue, I should say that even if this example may seem contrived, consider other cases of suffering that stem from fairly insignificant causes (compared to suffering endured by those who live in abject poverty, or who live in war-torn countries, or under oppressive regimes). Here I have in mind those who suffer while their lives are seemingly going quite well by objective standards, or those who aren't experiencing serious obstacles. Take the example of those who suffer as a result of events such as not getting the promotion they wanted at their job, or those who experience periods of suffering as a result of their unrealistic expectations or desires –such as in the Paris Hilton example. Recall in Chapter One I claimed that the causes of suffering are irrelevant when discussing the badness of periods of suffering, because I've focused on the significance of suffering as a feeling – given this commitment, the criticisms offered above are serious.

Additionally, contrast the suffering of Paris with the suffering of that individual who is being tortured – I highly doubt that the intensity of both cases of suffering would be the same, but if we consider that Paris' suffering may carry on for several weeks, her suffering is still very bad, even when compared to the suffering of the original torture victim (paying strict attention only to the feelings and not the circumstances that the suffering takes place in). In fact, if Paris suffered for several weeks, the quantity of her

suffering may in fact surpass that of the individual who is being tortured. Although it may be true that we have stronger reasons to alleviate the torture victim's suffering (because it feels worse) the quantity and duration of Paris' suffering would make her experience morally significant – and would give us reasons to alleviate it. It seems then, that this account of suffering is in some trouble – if attention to the significance of suffering tells us that these instances of suffering are both similarly bad, this signals a problem with such an account.

Those individuals who wish to defend the significance of suffering as it has been outlined in this project without having to admit that the case of Paris Hilton and the case of the torture victim are similar in terms of their badness, have several plausible ways to differentiate cases such as these. Those who wish to continue to endorse these accounts have to rely on attention to other moral considerations in order to account for why the case of the torture victim seems so much worse – and requires moral attention, while Paris Hilton's situation does not, or at least it doesn't to the same extent (we must be able to say that the plight of the individual being tortured is much worse than Paris' situation for this account to maintain its plausibility).

Consider, first the torture example. The individual being tortured suffers intensely, which is bad, of course, but there's more badness associated with the torture example than just the individual's suffering. The torture scenario may also be bad for a number of other moral reasons. For example, torture is a violent act perpetrated by people against other people – attention to the badness of perpetrating violence can also help to elucidate the badness of torture. Many individuals ascribe to moral principles that condemn acts of violence – especially those acts of violence that are perpetrated against

innocent individuals (such as in our torture example). Certainly under most conceptions of morality the violence perpetrated against him is particularly morally heinous. Additionally, the individual being tortured has no autonomy in this scenario – he is held and tortured against his will for a full day – which is also bad. Again, if the autonomy of individuals is considered to be important in and of itself, then torture is bad for yet another reason. Also, this instance of suffering does not seem to carry with it the opportunity for the sufferer to gain any instrumental goods – it is just bad through and through.

Conversely, contrast the torture example with Paris Hilton's suffering. The conditions of Paris Hilton's suffering are not objectively bad in any significant sense. It may be bad to some extent that misfortune has befallen the Hilton family, but their misfortune certainly wouldn't qualify as a calamity. Paris suffers as a result of being forced to live through normal, everyday circumstances, unlike the man being tortured. However, this is not enough to show that there is no duty of alleviation – she still suffers in a very real sense, even though there are no other considerations surrounding the suffering that significantly contribute to its badness as there are in the torture case. Consider however, the fact that Paris Hilton's suffering has possibilities to yield significant instrumental goods – this is a scenario rich with opportunities for the acquisition of important knowledge – knowledge about the importance of hard work, money management, and perhaps most significantly knowledge of the experience of average, hard-working individuals. In previous examples we've discussed the value of instrumental goods in the context of the individual who suffers desiring these goods. That said, even if Paris doesn't desire these goods, it still might be objectively good for

her to gain them. If this is true, it might be morally more important to allow Paris to endure suffering to gain this knowledge – even if at the time of her suffering she isn't interesting in attaining it. Additionally, perhaps a commitment to economic equality could offset the badness of Paris' suffering. It may be in itself good if Paris is no longer extremely wealthy, and instead is at a similar economic level to everyone else – recall that she is not a level of deprivation, she is able to make ends meet. The suffering she endures is still bad, to be sure, but perhaps a serious commitment to the value of equality can at least help to overshadow the badness of Paris Hilton's suffering.

Furthermore, perhaps the badness of Paris' suffering does in fact generate a duty for other individuals to alleviate it. Again this duty might not be as strong as an individual's duty to aid the individual being tortured, but there is still badness associated with Paris' plight – her life is drastically different than she desires, and very different from the circumstances that she has undoubtedly grown accustomed to, and even if the causes of her suffering seem frivolous from the outside, she still feels extremely bad –and this itself is significant. This is not to claim that individuals would have a duty to restore Paris's life to the standards that it was at before, but perhaps those individuals close to her have a duty to be supportive towards her while she gets used to her new life. If some of the badness of Paris' suffering can still be mitigated without going to heroic lengths, it should be done. In cases such as these, the duty individuals have to alleviate or relieve suffering then, may not correspond to the cause of the suffering itself, but instead to mitigating the experience of suffering.

This is important to observe because sometimes when individuals have a duty to alleviate suffering, they won't be able to do anything about the actual cause of suffering –

such as in cases where an individual suffers as a result of grief. The cause or the situation that has resulted in suffering can't be rectified sometimes – but the badness can be mitigated. I don't believe that these are far-fetched claims. This is different from the torture case, however – in his case we have a duty to alleviate the individual's suffering by addressing its causes and removing this individual from his circumstances. As this demonstrates, different instances of suffering will result in very different duties that correspond to its badness. Additionally, what this example also demonstrates is that attention exclusively to the significance of suffering, while ignoring other moral principles generates an implausible account of morality – one where the badness of Paris Hilton having to get a job is on par with that of an individual who is being tortured.

Along the same lines as the Paris Hilton case, there may be other instances of suffering where individuals will have to suffer in order for a better outcome to exist. Again, even in some cases where an individual is not interested in gaining instrumental goods from suffering, it still might be the case that it is morally better if the individual has these goods – whether they want them at the time or not. Claims such as these may be especially plausible if we consider some cases of children's suffering. Children suffer often and easily, frequently from minor causes. It is easy for children to feel badly overall – children often have strong negative emotional reactions to the events in their lives that they find difficult to understand. For example, children will often suffer when their parents or teachers rightfully punish them. The parents of children who are being punished are easily capable of alleviating their suffering – simply by ending their punishment (taking children out of 'time-out' situations, or allowing them to go out and play when they are grounded). That said, even if a parent can alleviate their child's

suffering, this may not always be the right thing to do. In terms of punishment, parents may avoid alleviating the suffering of their children while they are punished because if they end their punishment – and correspondingly, their suffering - children won't learn valuable lessons of all sorts – lessons that help children to be successful in their adult lives. In these cases, even if children don't desire the goods they can gain while suffering, it still might be important for them to have them, which negates the duty to alleviate their suffering in these specific cases.

In the previous section I discussed instances where our moral duties to alleviate suffering may be outweighed by more important considerations surrounding the broader context that the suffering occurs in. Again, in these instances the suffering that is experienced is still bad, but this badness is outweighed. The instances surveyed may not provide an exhaustive list of instances where the badness of suffering is outweighed by other considerations – it is merely a sample of them. What other factors will provide individuals with reasons to neglect to alleviate instances of suffering will depend on the broader account of morality that individuals endorse (alongside a concern for suffering).

The Badness of Suffering

In order for morality to properly account for the badness of suffering, attention has to be paid to individuals while they are experiencing suffering. As we noted in Chapter Two, the immediately felt badness of suffering is what accounts of well-being are unable to take adequate account of. This is an important claim regarding suffering and morality, and the reasons for this are two-fold. The first of these reasons is that suffering feels bad for individuals while they are experiencing it – how bad a bout of suffering

feels for an individual varies with the felt intensity of their suffering. Because the intrinsic badness of suffering occurs while it is being experienced, this is when suffering must be addressed. The second of these reasons is that individuals can't be adequately compensated for the suffering they experience after it has already occurred. Even when gaining instrumental goods is involved in the experience, the suffering individuals endure is still bad[64]. Because individuals aren't adequately compensated *before* or *after*[65] suffering for the experience, this means suffering must be dealt with while it is happening. In order to explain this claim, return again to the case of the individual being tortured, it is important to intervene in the individual's torture to alleviate his suffering while it is occurring – as benefitting the individual after the period of suffering will not mitigate the badness of the occurrence. There is something urgent about benefitting the individual during the instance of torture, to get his suffering to cease. This urgency again, corresponds to the immediately felt badness of suffering - the more intense the suffering is, the more urgent its relief becomes. Because suffering feels so bad while it is going on, it is urgent to address it when it can be relieved – because, in the words of Nagel it is 'crying out for its own relief' at the time that it occurs (160 – 162).

To claim that attention has to be paid to individuals while they are suffering, is not to claim that compensation is not also suitable for cases of suffering in all instances, only that the badness of suffering can't be completely 'canceled out' after the suffering has already occurred. For example, even if the individual from the initial torture example

[64] Individuals may prefer to endure this suffering to attain goods, but the suffering they endure is still bad – even if they willingly accept it.
[65] Recall from our discussion of hedonism that individuals can not be adequately compensated for intense suffering with periods of happiness that occur prior to or after the suffering occurs, even if the quantities of each 'cancel each other out'.

was benefitted after he endured the day of suffering – say he received some monetary compensation[66] for his experience- it would not cancel out the badness of the occurrence. It would still be bad that the individual endured the period of suffering. Along the same lines, consider the example of cases where an individual is wrongly convicted and punished for a crime that they had nothing to do with. After a long period of time spent suffering through undeserved punishment, this individual has their name cleared, and is compensated for what they endured by whomever is deemed responsible for this mistake. Even if the individual is compensated with large amounts of money, apologies, or anything else that is deemed suitable, the suffering they endured is still bad – even if the compensation given is significant.[67] This is not to claim that the compensation they receive in this case or in any similar cases isn't morally required, or that it isn't a good thing – only that the suffering they experienced is still bad regardless of actions taken after suffering has taken place. This is why intervention and alleviation are so integral to proper attention to suffering. Once suffering has occurred its badness is 'out in the world' so to speak.

The methods of alleviation or intervention that are necessary in cases of suffering will vary considerably from case to case. As I've claimed, sometimes the duty to relieve suffering will correspond to addressing the cause of the suffering, while in other cases it will instead correspond to simply mitigating the badness of the suffering. This is because of the diverse array of causes of suffering - different causes will result in different actions

[66] This occurs when people sue for pain and suffering in the legal system – even if individuals win their court case against whomever has caused their suffering, it is still in itself bad that they were harmed – even if the benefit is very large.
[67] This is not to claim that the individual's suffering is the only morally significant aspect of what they endured, but it is an important part of the experience.

being necessary to alleviate or intervene in certain cases of suffering. Some causes of suffering will be very particular in the sense that they can only be alleviated by very specific actions. For example, in cases of suffering from pain borne out of medical conditions, and in other cases that deal with suffering stemming from illnesses or injury the methods of alleviation or intervention are very specific and suited only to specific groups of people (i.e. medical professionals). That said, there still might be possibilities for intervention for other individuals – the duty to alleviate suffering in cases of medical conditions and illnesses might require that some individuals participate in its alleviation in other, less direct ways – perhaps it might require them to donate money to charities that help to fund medical treatment[68] or to charities that make enduring disease or illness easier.[69] Additionally, family and friends of the sufferer can help to alleviate suffering by simply being supportive to those who suffer – this may not address the cause of the suffering itself, but it still may help to alleviate some of the feelings associated with it. The same will go for suffering that is borne out of mental illnesses. According to Mayerfeld, this is an area of particular concern for the duty to relieve suffering, as it causes a large amount of intense suffering and its badness is frequently overlooked (107). Those who suffer from mental illness require very specific treatment, meaning the duty to relieve suffering borne out of mental illness will again pertain to a very specific group of individuals – those who have the special training required to help in these cases. Regular

[68] Here I have in mind charities such as Doctors Without Borders, or the Red Cross that directly treat medical conditions overseas, or groups like Oxfam that attempt to prevent suffering from medical conditions by offering programs that improve access to safe, clean drinking water or access to mosquito nets to prevent malaria.

[69] I have in mind charities such as the Make A Wish Foundation, or Ronald McDonald House, these charities allow family members of those who are suffering from illness or disease remain close to their loved ones during treatment – which can help to alleviate some of the suffering that those who are ailing endure.

individuals, so to speak can still play a role in alleviating some of this sort of suffering however, by being more sensitive to the plight of those who suffer from mental illness – and attempting to decrease the stigma that follows those who endure mental illness. The significance of suffering then, creates a special duty to alleviate suffering for those who have the special capacity to do so. In Eric Cassell's book *The Nature of Suffering and the Goals of Medicine* he claims that alleviating suffering is a commonly neglected goal in the practice of medicine. In fact according to Cassell, little attention is paid to the psychological phenomena of suffering, which in his opinion should be remedied. In other words, medical professionals should be more attentive to the causes of psychological suffering – which can often include both the ailment being experienced, and the treatment itself (30 – 32).[70] The important claim that these examples point to, I think is that those individuals who possess the specific skills and/or knowledge required to alleviate specific instances of suffering have a special duty to do so when they are able. This is in virtue of the fact that they are capable of alleviating this suffering, but also that in many instances these individuals are committed to occupations that – at least in part – deal in a particular way with the alleviation of suffering. Those who are involved in the medical professions, those who do psychiatric work, and often those who work for charities, or in development or social work, accept the duty to relieve suffering as part of their life's work.

The duty to alleviate some suffering however will often fall on those who know, or are close to the individual who is suffering. Those who are closest to the suffering individual – such as their friends and family, best attend to those instances of suffering

[70] To illustrate this issue Cassell describes the example of a woman with breast cancer who suffers as a result of the physical symptoms of her cancer, and anxiety and fear surrounding her illness – but she also suffers because of the side effects of her treatment.

that result from 'everyday' problems such as disappointments, humiliation, grief or the cessation of relationships. Although these are often causes of significant suffering, these instances are not of particular concern for this project because moral duties in these instances are already adequately accounted for in common sense morality. It is generally considered 'a given' that if those close to us are suffering that we have some sort of duty to try to alleviate or try to mitigate their suffering. Consider our feelings towards the suffering of family members and close friends – we instinctively want to mitigate the suffering that they experience when we can, and we often feel as though we have a duty to do so because of the special relationship we have with these individuals.

The methods of alleviation and intervention then, are as diverse as those things that cause suffering. Sometimes suffering can be relieved or alleviated by anyone who witnesses the suffering in question. Other times, however it must be alleviated by those who are familiar with the person who is suffering, or by medical professionals, or by others who are specifically trained to address the cause of the suffering in question. Additionally, those individuals who have specific skills or knowledge pertaining to alleviating certain causes of suffering have a special duty to alleviate suffering based on their knowledge, and based on their occupation in many cases. Regardless of who is able to address the suffering in question, I've claimed that in order to mitigate the badness of the suffering we have to work to intervene in episodes of suffering when it's going on. Compensation - although important in some cases – can't fully 'cancel out' the badness of an episode of suffering.

Numeration and Intensity

Recall the claim from Chapter One that the asymmetry of happiness and suffering results in the consequence that it is morally more significant to relieve more intense suffering rather than less intense suffering. This claim could work in one of two different ways. This claim could mean that more intense suffering will always take priority over less intense suffering. If this were true, the commitment to more intense suffering would be absolute, and the alleviation of the more intense suffering of one individual would always take priority over the less intense suffering of any number of other individuals – regardless of the number of individuals involved. On the other hand, this claim could mean that it is morally more important to give priority to more intense suffering over less intense suffering, but this precedence would not be absolute, instead it would only mean that the benefits given to those that suffer more are more important, but this importance could be outweighed by the number of other individuals suffering, and the quantity of suffering involved.

For Mayerfeld, this priority is not innumerate – in other words, although more intense suffering is more important than less intense suffering, this priority can be outweighed by large amounts of suffering (172 – 175). He offers reason for this, according to him if the suffering of one is bad, then the suffering of one more, or any other number of others must be twice, or however many times as bad. Consider the following scenario: return to the example of the individual enduring torture for a day, now imagine that there is another individual being tortured who is experiencing suffering

that is say, half as severe in intensity, but still quite intense. Without assistance, this second individual will also be forced to endure torture for a full day. The plight of both individuals is very bad, and both surely deserve moral attention. Imagine however, that we can only assist one of these individuals (say due to insufficient resources, or the like). The badness of suffering dictates that we should help the individual who is suffering more severely, on account of how badly he feels – if the first victim is suffering more intensely, he must be aided. However, imagine that if we aid the first individual, then there will be two individuals who will be tortured who will both suffer half as much than the original victim, but will again suffer for the same duration. In this instance, it seems as though we should still aid the individual who suffers more. However, once we add more individuals to the situation, our moral duties surrounding this situation become less clear. Imagine then, that we add another torture victim, or perhaps a fourth or fifth – at some point it seems that our duty dictates that we must help the larger amount of people who are suffering – but it isn't clear when.[71]

In line with Mayerfeld I agree that the duty to assist those who are suffering more intensely is not absolute, but this agreement doesn't make the picture much clearer. It's not clear when it becomes more important to help the larger group of individuals who are suffering and neglect the individual (or individuals) who suffer more intensely. Unfortunately, I don't feel as though there is an exact way to resolve the lack of clarity when it comes to these cases. More examples may help, however to elucidate where intuitions land in hard cases – return to the case of the individual who is being tortured

[71] Parfit makes a similar claim with regards to the priority view and well-being, stating that he's unsure when our intuitions regarding assisting those who are badly off change when we add more individuals to our examples. See Parfit, Derek. "Equality or Priority." *Ratio* 10. 3 (1997): 202 - 221

severely, and contrast his case with that of twelve individuals who are suffering as a result of pain from serious migraines. Their suffering is nowhere near as intense as the individual who is being tortured – say that it is roughly ten times less intense[72]. Now imagine again, that we can help either the torture victim, or the twelve individuals who are experiencing migraines. In the previous case we considered, if there were twelve individuals experiencing suffering from torture that was half as severe as our one original torture victim, I think attention to suffering would dictate that we should save the ten from the less severe torture instead of the original one. Now, return to the case of the twelve individuals with the migraines and our one individual being tortured –it seems then, as if our moral duties will continue to correspond to the plight of the individual who is being tortured – even if as a result twelve others will suffer instead. This is because of how intense the suffering of the one individual is in our original case. Although these examples produce no clear principle or algorithm to dictate whom to help when, it seems unfair to allow the one individual to suffer intensely while relieving the less intense suffering of others. That said, in cases where we may choose to eliminate the less intense suffering of a large group of individuals, allowing the one individual to suffer intensely, there is still badness associated with this decision.

What can be said about these cases, then is that when comparing two cases of intense suffering the numbers are important, however when comparing suffering that is not intense, among large numbers of individuals to cases where suffering is extremely intense among one or a small number of individuals, the numbers don't seem particularly

[72] This is not to downplay the suffering that comes along with the experience of migraine headaches, but only to reinforce the severity of suffering associated with experiencing serious torture.

important. I'm not sure if principles can offer strict guidance in these cases, instead cases have to be assessed on an individual basis, by individual agents. That said, perhaps attention to other moral principles could help to elucidate our moral duties in cases concerning the intensity of suffering. Perhaps attention to considerations of fairness could help to elucidate moral duties in difficult cases such as the case we examined with our original torture example and three individuals who are suffering roughly half as much. Perhaps it is unfair for our one individual to endure extremely intense suffering while we aid those other individuals whose suffering is significantly less intense. Perhaps pairing the fact that suffering matters more the more intense it is with other principles could result in greater clarity. It seems that attention to the significance of suffering alone can not tell us enough about what to do in tough cases – I don't believe this to be an embarrassment to this view on suffering, only evidence that points to the fact that attention to other moral principles is still important in the face of suffering. How these other principles will work however, will depend on what other moral principles individuals accept alongside the significance of suffering.[73]

There is no clear algorithm to dictate what the better or worse outcome is in these cases. The best that can be done in terms of clarity with these claims is to state that the numbers do matter to some degree, but it's impossible to dictate precisely when the greater number of individuals suffering takes priority over the more intense suffering of one, or just a few people. Again pairing other principles along with considerations of suffering may also help individuals to come to decisions regarding their moral duties in a given situation.

[73] This is an important topic, but one that is necessarily beyond the scope of this project.

Conflicts Between Relieving Suffering and Promoting Well-Being

Throughout this project I've claimed that those who suffer the most are often those who are faring poorly overall. The causes of suffering are often the same as those things that cause individuals to fare poorly overall – as well, suffering can directly cause individuals to fare poorly. As a result, significant instances of suffering will often occur in the lives of those individuals who live at low levels of well-being. In other instances however, significant instances of suffering (significant in terms of intensity and duration) will occur in lives that are going well overall. Consider again, our torture example. I've claimed that this individual leads a life that is high in well-being – by any of the accounts of well-being that we considered in Chapter Two, – and it will continue to go well, even if he suffers through a day of serious torture without intervention. In this instance, suffering and not faring well come apart in an important way.

Now, consider the claim that those individuals who are faring poorly have some special claim to assistance in virtue of the fact that their lives are not going well for them overall. This claim holds regardless of what account of well-being one chooses to endorse. The claim here, is simply that the plight of those who aren't faring well in a global sense gives other individuals reasons to assist them to try to improve their level of well-being. [74] Accepting what is commonly said about well-being – that it matters, morally at least to some extent, and what has already been claimed about suffering in the

[74] It's not clear what these reasons mean for morality. For Sumner, well-being is ultimately the only consideration worthy of moral concern, that said, for others well-being is best understood as one consideration among many. For this discussion it's enough to assert that well-being matters to some degre – that in some cases the plight of those who live at low levels of well-being results in a duty for others who can help, to assist them.

project means there are (at least) two dimensions of individual lives that warrant moral consideration: their overall condition, and suffering. As I've mentioned, often concern for these two dimensions will coincide with one another, but in our torture example, they come apart.

Imagine then, that we have a case where we can either assist our torture victim, or we can help an individual who is at an overall low level of well-being, In this instance the second individual isn't experiencing psychological suffering at the point in time that their interests are being considered. Imagine that assisting the torture victim requires the expenditure of some financial resources – perhaps his tormentors are holding him for ransom. Then imagine that in order to help our second individual, money is also necessary. Perhaps this individual is faring poorly because they don't have the necessary financial resources in order for them to attain certain goods – either ones that would contribute directly to well-being (such as those goods on the objective list accounts), or perhaps the money would provide them with a means to something that they desired, or perhaps the money would provide them with the means to access goods that would make them more satisfied with their life as a whole. In our example, the individual in question is living their life at a level of well-being, that designates this individual as belonging to a particular 'sphere of moral concern', perhaps there is a critical threshold that they've fallen below[75] in terms of well-being, or perhaps morality dictates that individuals be concerned with maximizing the amount of well-being in people's lives. Either way, this individual's plight gives reasons for individual's to act to increase their well-being. As

[75] In sufficiency accounts, those individuals whose well-being dips below a certain designated critical threshold are worthy of moral concern. See Casal, Paula. "Why Suffciency is Not Enough." *Ethics* 117.2 (2007): 296 – 326, Crisp, Roger. "Equality, Priority and Compassion." *Ethics* 113. 4 (2003): 745 – 763 and Frankfurt, Harry. "Equality as a Moral Ideal." *Ethics* 98.1. (1987): 21 – 43 for examples and discussions of sufficiency principles.

well, as we've established in this project, the intense suffering of he individual being tortured also gives individuals reasons to work to assist them.

Imagine however, that we can help one individual or the other – we can help our torture victim with our money, or the individual who isn't faring well overall – but who isn't suffering. Our torture victim gives us reasons to help because he feels so badly in the moment, whereas the other individual's plight gives us reasons to assist him because his life as a whole contains less well-being. Our first individual's plight is important because of the intrinsic badness of suffering (ignoring, for the moment, the earlier reasons that we gave for torture being bad). In this instance, because the first person's' suffering is so intense – or more simply put, because it feels so bad our reasons to help him appear to be stronger - this is not to downplay the fact that the other individual is not faring well, but instances of intense suffering carry their own, significant importance because of their immediately felt badness.

I think that this may appear counter-intuitive, at least to an extent, because the ordeal of the torture victim will be over in a day even if they are left unassisted whereas, presumably the second individual from our example will still be faring poorly after a day has past. That said, it's important to be attentive to exactly how bad the suffering associated with an instance of severe torture would be. The individual from our example would naturally be terrified, and he would also experience a high degree of pain and an extremely intense feeling of anxiety about when their torture might cease – or what might become of him when and if it did come to an end, and so forth – for 24 whole hours. Because of just how bad this suffering would be, I believe we have stronger reasons to assist this individual than we do to assist the individual who is not faring well. It is still

bad that we can't help the second individual, but the torture victim's plight is simply more urgent because of the intensity of his feelings. As Nagel claimed regarding pain/suffering, his situation is so dire that it "calls out for its own relief" (160 – 162).

That said if we are considering cases where the suffering in question is lower in intensity our moral duties might change. Consider a case where we can either assist the individual who isn't faring well (but isn't faring terribly), or assist an individual who is suffering as a result of a fairly serious – and very painful burn (imagine that this individual would also suffer for a day). We can assume that this individual would suffer quite intensely from the pain – but not nearly as intensely as the individual who is enduring torture. Perhaps his suffering would be roughly half as intense. In this case, I believe our duties are much less clear. To be sure, the individual's suffering from their burn is bad – but is it as bad as the plight of the individual who is faring poorly overall? I think that in this instance, the plight of the individual who is not faring well is more important – but it's difficult to offer precise reasons as to why that can be applied in similar cases. As well, it's plausible that other individuals can disagree with my assessment of moral duties in this instance. I'm not sure if morality can offer directives on precisely what to do in this case, or in cases similar to this one. What these examples do tell us is that sometimes concern for suffering can offer reasons that cause it to compete with concern for well-being.

Perhaps the picture becomes slightly clearer if the individual who is not faring well is at a lower level of well-being in our examples. If the individual in question is faring extremely poorly – perhaps their health is poor, they have trouble making meaningful connections and maintaining healthy relationships with other individuals,

they've consistently had financial problems and they do not enjoy or do well in their career – their life is not going well for them. I don't think, in this instance that the individual who is suffering from a painful burn deserves moral attention over and above this individual then, and as the second individual's level of well-being drops lower and lower, it will start to become more and more clear where our moral duties lie. This comes about as a result of what Dennis McKerlie refers to as an intrinsic property of well-being – that benefits matter more, the worse off an individual is overall (262).[76] The worse off individuals are then, the more deserving they are of moral concern. This claim of course, is parallel to the claim that we've made about suffering – that relieving suffering matters more, the more intense that suffering is. Unfortunately, this means that our reasons to address both issues work in the same way – which can complicate matters further. To understand why this is the case, consider the example of our torture victim. As his suffering becomes more and more intense, or as his torture becomes more and more severe, the more pressing it becomes for us to intervene to alleviate his suffering – our reasons to assist become stronger. Now consider the case of an individual who is not faring well, the worse they fare, the stronger our reasons become to assist him. If we are dealing with cases where we can assist only one individual or the other, it's clearly a problem when we have strong reasons to assist both individuals. In those instances where we are dealing with two individuals – one who is suffering very intensely, and one who is faring very poorly, I believe that it is more important to assist the individual who is faring

[76] This property of well-being is at the heart of prioritarian claims. See Parfit, Derek. "Equality or Priority." *Ratio* 10. 3 (1997): 202 – 221, Temkin, Larry. "Equality, Priority or What." *Economics in Philosophy* 19. (2003): 61 – 87, Crisp, Roger. "Equality, Priority and Compassion." *Ethics* 113. 4 (2003): 745 – 763, and McKerlie, Dennis. "Dimensions of Equality." *Utilitas* 13.3 (2001): 263 – 287 for several accounts of priority based theories.

poorly, in light of the fact that they will continue to fare poorly, while the other individual's suffering will eventually end.[77] It is obviously still bad if an individual is left to suffer for a period of time in this case, but I think it would be worse to allow the other individual to continue to fare so miserably for an extended period of time. That said, given the fact that those who fare poorly often suffer intensely, cases where these two values will completely conflict in this manner would be rare. If individuals are faring extremely poorly, they will very likely be suffering as well, resulting in our duties being more clear.

These examples offer little clarity in terms of how to treat the considerations of suffering and well-being when the two compete for attention. What they do offer, however is reasons to accept the claim that in some cases, some of the time, it will be morally more important to relieve an individual's suffering, rather than to promote an individual's well-being. I don't think that morality can offer (reasonable) precise directives regarding how to treat conflicts between these two values, just as was demonstrated to be the case where we must attempt to decide between alleviating cases of more intense versus less intense suffering it's necessary for individuals to make difficult choices when it's unclear what morality would dictate our duties to be.

Suffering and Moral Concern

In the introduction I alluded to Mayerfeld's claim that attention to suffering necessitates an increased sphere of moral concern – I think that it's true that attention to suffering requires some shifts in moral priority, but I also do think that in many ways

[77] Of course, if the individual's suffering does not end nd carries on for an extended period of time, then this will likely overlap with considerations of well-being. Here I am referring to cases where the individual is only going to suffer for a specific period of time.

concern for suffering is already built into common sense morality. As I mentioned earlier, concern for the suffering of those individuals close to us is already a feature of common sense morality – we tend to pay more attention to friends, family members and significant others if we know that there is something in their lives that is causing them to suffer. Such cases are the easy ones. In obvious cases where we expect individuals to suffer- when they are seriously ill or injured, or when they unexpectedly lose a close friend or family member we respond intuitively to aid or assist them when we can. It is the instances of suffering that result from causes that are less obvious that attention to the badness of psychological suffering is able to highlight.

Additionally, in line with Mayerfeld's claims regarding mental illness, it seems fair to assert that more attention should be paid to advancing research and development in effectively treating mental illness, additionally, as I mentioned, on an individual basis people should attempt to be more receptive towards those who suffer from mental illness and treat these instances with more compassion and understanding. In Mayerfeld's discussion he focused on those who battle depression or anxiety disorders – but I also think that more attention should also be paid to those who have serious drug and alcohol addictions[78]. Often those who are afflicted with addictions endure severe suffering as a result of living with their addiction – as a result of missed opportunities, anxiety, and physical symptoms resulting from substance abuse. However, those who are addicted to drugs or alcohol may also suffer from struggling with the identity of being an addict – this can be extremely difficult, both in the sense that the self-identification might bring shame and embarrassment but also because addiction often carries with it discrimination

[78] This is not to equivocate addiction with mental illness, only that in terms of psychological causes of suffering, Mayerfeld seems to overlook this one, despite his attention to mental illness.

from other individuals – society tends to identify these individuals as 'problems', responsible for their own plight and in some way guilty because of it - instead of as individuals who are often suffering quite seriously, and correspondingly are worthy of moral concern, attention and compassion.

Similarly, as Cassell claimed, medical professionals need to not only focus on healing the causes of suffering, but also being more attentive to the fact that many treatments of illnesses themselves can often cause increased suffering. For Cassell, the paradigm case of this is cancer – cancer treatment often causes suffering in its patients, as a result of the physical symptoms it causes, but also as a result of the emotions that often come along with the side-effects of treatment – many individuals struggle with losing their hair, or other changes in their physical appearance. As well, consider cases where women are forced to undergo mastectomies for treatment for breast cancer – this often causes significant suffering, even if it is considered necessary action in order to eradicate the cancer and save their lives. As such, this is an instance of one of the cases mentioned earlier where actions required to increase an individual's well-being are different than those actions required to reduce that individual's suffering. In these instances the two values conflict. Undoubtedly, treating an individual's cancer will be an increase to that individual's well-being – particularly if the action is required to save his or her life. The treatments available, however may increase this individual's total suffering for reasons that have already been mentioned. In these instances preservation of the individuals life more than likely will take precedence over reducing the amount of suffering that they will experience, however, one can imagine cases where individuals might choose to refrain from treatment – for example in cases where treatment will only lengthen a life for a brief

period of time, the individual in question may not find undergoing the suffering from treatment 'worth it' for them. In these cases, I think the right thing to do – in line with Mayerfeld – is to act in accordance with this individual's liberty – doing for them what they would prefer was done.

Additionally, consider my earlier claim that attention to suffering extends our moral concern to those who fare very well overall, but are currently suffering intensely. As the torture case we initially considered in the introduction is constructed, the victim of the day of torture leads a life that is very good overall by any account of well-being. To demonstrate this claim, imagine that this individual has lead a life where he has a happy family life, healthy relationships, a rewarding career, good health – both mentally and physically, and spare time to pursue hobbies and leisure activities – we can fill in the details of this individuals life with whatever considerations are convincing to signify that this individual is extremely well- off. That said, when this individual is being tortured, the fact that he his suffering is still morally significant. We abstract away all of the considerations I previously mentioned when we're thinking about this individuals suffering. All that matters is that he is suffering – and this alone makes him worthy of our moral concern – no other details are necessary because of how bad intense suffering feels[79].

In other cases, instead of widening the sphere of moral concern, I think attention to suffering acts to reinforce some areas that are already areas of moral concern, and also help to enforce their status as deserved of this concern. I believe that this is the case when

[79] That said, in instances where we have to choose between alleviating one case of suffering over another, the surrounding details will become important. The important point here is just that the fact that an individual is faring well doesn't render his suffering insignficant.

discussing the plight of those individuals that live in poverty, material deprivation might be bad in itself, and so might any number of things involved in cases of dire poverty, such as inequality, low levels of well-being, etc, however the fact that these individuals suffer is also bad – giving us another reason to be concerned about those who live in abject poverty. Additionally, attention to suffering also gives us more reasons to be attentive to instances of violent crimes, such as rape, assault or the like. These crimes might be bad for any number of reasons, but one of the main reasons that they are so bad is that the victims of them suffer – often quite intensely. The same goes for the badness of natural catastrophes, such as earthquakes, hurricanes and tsunamis that can result in loss of life, serious damage to property and widespread disruption in the ways that individuals lead their lives. The same goes for periods of civil war, political unrest or violent uprisings – and the instability often inherent in the time periods after these events. Suffering goes hand in hand with all of the aforementioned events – all of these things can cause wide-spread suffering, and this serves to reinforce their badness.

Attention to the badness of suffering also serves to widen our moral concern to the difficulties individuals face in regular life. Traditionally, philosophical literature on the importance of suffering has focused on specific instances of suffering. Philosophers such as Peter Singer focus on the badness of suffering associated with those who live in dire poverty, and Eric Cassell's account of suffering deals with suffering that is borne out of serious medical conditions specifically. However, in virtue of being human all individuals are vulnerable to experiencing intense suffering at some point in their lives - even if they manage to avoid living in poverty or experiencing serious medical afflictions. The suffering from these causes is significant, to be sure but other suffering

from frequently overlooked causes is significant as well (I mentioned suffering from addiction and mental illness – these are important cases). This attention to the badness of suffering should cause individuals to be more receptive to the more subtle suffering of those around them. I've discussed how suffering may generate reasons to alleviate it that correspond in a duty just to be supportive towards those who are currently experiencing suffering. This is again, a component of common sense morality - but it's very important, attention to causes of suffering such as anxiety disorders and low self esteem can help individuals be more receptive to quiet (but intense) suffering, that may often be overlooked on a daily basis.

Suffering then, can be understood to both reinforce existing areas of moral concern, adding emphasis to situations that we already recognize as deserving of moral attention. In other cases however, suffering can illuminate different events or situations as morally significant, that otherwise wouldn't garner as much – if any moral attention. The preceding chapter was intended to highlight some of the features of what a duty to relieve suffering, properly understood would look like. In the previous sections, I claimed that sometimes we have reasons to alleviate suffering over promoting an individual's well-being. However, it's unclear when exactly we have reasons to alleviate suffering over promoting well-being. I've claimed that often very intense suffering will take priority over considerations of well-being, but these cases must be addressed on an individual basis – adherence to a strict principles in these instances is simply not plausible. The same goes for instances where we have to choose between alleviating more intense suffering over a larger quantity of less intense suffering – there are reasons to alleviate the more intense suffering of one or a few individuals rather than the less intense

suffering of a greater number of individuals. Again, however strict adherence to principles regarding suffering in these cases will not be plausible. Facts about individual cases in both of these instances will be integral to making decisions in difficult cases. Perhaps this is not ideal – as it leaves a considerable amount of decision making up to individual agents, however as was demonstrated, the significance of suffering is quite complicated – and correspondingly, duties surrounding suffering will also be quite complicated.

To give a full account of a moral theory that takes the significance of suffering into full and proper account is necessarily beyond the scope of the project. What has been offered here helps to lay the foundation for developing such an account. I've sought to give an account of suffering that is both academically rigorous, as well as intuitively plausible in order to help to elucidate what about suffering is morally significant. As well, I sought to demonstrate that considerations surrounding well-being are unable to take account for the moral significance of suffering as I've outlined it here – both by discussing how suffering factors into particular accounts of well-being, and also by discussing the nature of suffering and well-being as moral considerations.

I've established that the badness of suffering is such that attention to suffering must be given while an individual is enduring suffering but also that compensation may be necessary in some instances. Additionally, I've established that a concern with the significance of suffering will look differently depending on what other moral principles are endorsed alongside a commitment to alleviating suffering – but also that a commitment to alleviating suffering without attention to other principles is simply implausible. Suffering provides individuals with reasons to alleviate it – but these reasons

that are generated by suffering can be outweighed by any number of competing moral reasons. A full account of morality that takes suffering into full account will have to be receptive to the issues that have been explored in this chapter.

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