

# INTERESTS AND ETHICS IN POLITICS

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*I examine the place of self-interest in political life as given by a conception of politics that invokes ethics. This conception portrays each citizen as an individual with unique hopes and desires who is at the same time joined with others—part of, and continually giving shape to, a shared social and political life. It sees in political diversity and controversy not just conflicting interests but also competing claims about what "we"—unique individuals, linked to particular others through social roles and relationships, and together forming a single citizenry—ought to do or seek. Research that simply adopts a broad conception of utility or interest to admit nonselfish preferences or that employs typologies contrasting self-interested with non-self-interested motives will reveal neither the significance nor the limits of self-interest in this politics. Rather, we must explore how citizens' interests are both championed and challenged by the understandings of "good" and "right" to which our politics gives voice.*

> Perhaps what characterizes political life is precisely the problem of continually *creating* unity, a public, in a context of diversity, rival claims, unequal power, and conflicting interests.
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> —Hanna Pitkin, *Wittgenstein and Justice*

Mathematical and empirical scholars of political behavior have frequently subscribed to what James Coleman describes as the "central postulate of economic theory," conceiving of the political actor as *homo oeconomicus*, a "rational man attempting to pursue his selfish interests" (1986, 15). Yet empirical evidence for this self-interest assumption has often been weak, and skeptics of a self-interest-based politics abound (Bellah et al. 1986; Citrin and Green 1990; Cohen 1986; Dagger 1986; Dobel 1986; Elster 1986; Goodin 1990; Grofman and Feld 1988; Kingdon 1988; Mansbridge 1980, 1990a; Reich 1988; Sagoff 1986; Sears and Funk 1990; Sunstein 1990; Tyler, Rasinski, and Griffin 1986). Those rejecting a conception of political actors as self-serving egoists have reached out in two prominent directions.

The first approach retains an assumption that citizens seek to satisfy their preferences, or maximize their utility, or advance their interests, while redefining preferences, utility, or interests. Rational and social choice modelers have commonly rejected the stipulation that preferences reflect only self-regarding or selfish desires by placing no substantive constraints on utility whatsoever: utility can embrace anything that an individual might value (e.g., Arrow 1967; Becker 1976; Downs 1957; Hechter, Opp, and Wippler 1990). As Mancur Olson explains it, "To say that rational decision-making maximizes 'expected utility' says little more than that decision-makers take *all* of their objectives, material and intangible, selfish and altruistic, into account" (1987, 206; emphasis original).[1] Comparable strategies have arisen among scholars who consider the content of "interests": interests need not necessarily be self-regarding but might be other-regarding or principled, as well (e.g., Connolly 1983; Flathman 1966; Held 1970; Mansbridge 1980; Schlozman and Tierney 1986).[2]

The second approach preserves a narrow conception of what constitutes self-interest and then explores the significance of a number of motives each held as conceptually distinct from self-interest. Work in this genre has generated a number of motivational typologies, each contrasting self-regarding or selfish preferences with those reflecting nonselfish concerns: "varieties of unselfishness" (Jencks 1990), duty and love (Mansbridge 1990b), symbolic predispositions (Sears et al 1980), sympathy and commitment (Sen 1990), and justice (Tyler 1990), among others.

Both of these approaches replace a conception of citizens as purely self-regarding or selfish with a more generous view of the ends people might be seeking in politics, while providing different accounts of "self-interest." The first rejects a narrow (and objective) version of self-interest, while retaining the premise that people do seek whatever it is that they find to be in their interest. It conceives of political actors as egoists but not as egotistical. They pursue their interests, but those interests may not be entirely selfish. The second adopts a narrow (and objective) account of self-interest as self-regarding, seeking to understand its unique empirical significance vis-à-vis alternative bases of public opinion and political choices. By confining what it counts as self-interest, it carves out a space for a nonegoist politics.

I offer an alternative account of the place of self-interest in political life, one based upon a conception of politics that invokes ethics. In this politics, I will argue, citizens are not simply seeking to satisfy their personal preferences, be they self-regarding or not; but neither are they simply setting aside their personal preferences or self-regarding interests and adopting some non-self-interested aim. The citizen, instead, must attempt to resolve what Nagel identifies as the central problem of ethics: "how the lives, interests, and welfare of others make claims on us, and how these claims, of various forms, are to be reconciled with the aim of living our own lives"

(1986, 142). When judged against the perspective on citizenship that I will sketch here, simply adopting a broad conception of utility or interest to acknowledge that political preferences might not be purely self-regarding, or employing typologies that contrast self-interested with non-self-interested preferences, are each inadequate as a response to the failures of the economic approach. The first fails to recognize judgments of value that are articulated as public and not personal claims; the second imposes a dichotomy that is either false or incomplete. We limit our understanding of both interests and ethics in politics when we either subsume anything citizens can value under the rubric of personal preferences or focus on adjudicating between rival explanations defined by some conception of a self-interest/altruism divide. Instead, we need to bring conceptions of interests and ethics *together* as we seek to develop a more comprehensive account of public opinion and political choices.

## PREFERENCE, JUDGMENT, AND JUSTIFICATION

Bringing ethical ideas to the study of American public opinion and political action means exploring a particular conception of politics and political actors. This politics is not simply an arena where citizen preferences are articulated and aggregated but one where public goals and policies are debated and political choices must be publicly justified.[3] When citizens assess public policies, events, and leaders or consider their own political choices, they are not merely trying to figure out what or who they like or what it is they want. They are also trying to figure out what or who is *good* or what is *right*. The objects of judgment are political, but these questions are ethical.[4] And the answers to ethical questions rest upon justifications.[5]

Ethical justifications may take many forms and may make any number of substantive claims. Consequentialist moral arguments, for example, rest the conclusion of right on a theory of the good: that which is right maximizes good. Utilitarian consequentialists apply a single metric when representing what is good in states of affairs, looking to maximize social utility.[6] Nonutilitarian consequentialists deny the practical intelligibility and moral significance of the reductive utility metric, recognizing multiple standards of value. But such arguments still rest the description "right" on the choice with the best consequences. From nonconsequentialist or deontological perspectives, in contrast, what is right is not what maximizes the good. Instead, some conception of nature, or persons, or rationality, or divine will might be cited as supporting claims about rights, duty, obligation, or justice. Quite apart from the consequences of an action (under any description of consequences), these premises serve to establish a judgment that the action (or practice or policy) is, at least prima facie, right or wrong.

Judgments expressed in the evaluative language of ethics as to what is "good" or "right" lay claim to what *we* should value or what *one* should value, resting upon interpersonal justifications that we can (and often do) disagree about.[7] If, for example, you suggest that busing is a good policy, it implies that you have reasons that sustain that evaluative conclusion, reasons that express your understanding of that policy and what it is that you see as *of value*. In contrast, subjective preferences, offered in the first person as a claim about what "I" value (want, like, desire), are intrinsically personal, implying no interpersonal standard for assessment and no basis for public discussion.[8] They simply express what appeals "to me." Different evaluations or opinions, taken subjectively, indicate only diversity among preferrers, not disagreement about what can justifiably be sanctioned as good or right.

Of course, we can give reasons for our likes and wants. We can explain our personal preferences, autobiographically. Or we can explain our preferences by identifying the features in them that we find valuable. I can say "I like George Bush more than Mario Cuomo," for example, and explain that preference by referring to Bush's position on abortion and defense spending, his partisanship, and his previous experience in office. I can insist that these are characteristics that I value, and no one need quarrel with me. But if I claim, further, that George Bush is *better* than Mario Cuomo as a choice for president, then I am making a judgment of value that goes further in implying that my reasons for liking Bush call upon interpersonal standards of value that others must acknowledge.

Scholars employing subjective conceptions of value often recognize an equality among opinions that derives from a conception of equality among persons. Social choice theories express this notion by giving equal weight to the subjectively conceived utility of each person they recognize. Opinions (as expressions of utility) can be criticized relative to each person by reference to procedural norms of rationality, but no social or interpersonal standard of value provides a basis for criticism. According to a subjective perspective, good opinions in politics are opinions that can pass a test of procedural rationality, that evidence some desirable bond to the person giving them expression. If value is conceived subjectively, what people need for political expression are the resources to know, in some thick sense, what they care about.

But an ethical perspective recognizes distinctions among opinions by virtue of social standards of justification, expecting more of public opinion. Opinions must be sustainable by reference to justifications that can be offered to others, expressing value judgments that find some social niche. They must provide a basis for challenging alternative contentions about what is good or right. The issue here is not one of knowing what you want—of having formed a preference in that sense—but of having what it takes to make an arguable case. To express themselves or act politically, individuals must not merely "know them-

selves" but have the resources to express themselves in ways that are compelling to others in society.

When reflecting upon his interviewing experiences, Converse commented that "very many respondents could not understand that a battery of pure opinion items had no objective 'right–wrong' scoring" (1974, 650). This phenomenon loses what oddity it may otherwise have once we conceive of opinion as that which others can and do judge, critique, and even condemn. When we understand opinions as claims requiring justification, claims that compete with alternative views in conveying that which is good or right, we cannot rely on a simple notion of equality among persons to reach a conclusion that one opinion is just as good or valid as any other. Opinions can and will be criticized on grounds that question their roots in facts and values, and citizens will feel discomfort when expressing opinions that they feel may be inadequately bolstered.

The differences between ethical judgments and personal preferences are tied to the kinds of reasons that are offered to sustain them and to how each kind of claim functions in public discourse. Ethical disagreements (disagreements about what is of value or whether some person or act or policy has value) reflect disagreements that can be probed by examining the nature of the justifications upon which they rest: factual premises, fundamental goals, understandings of the consequences that flow from action, and guiding principles of right.[9] Ethical judgments rest on interpersonal justifications and not just on unique personal explanations. They appeal to others and do not just describe the self.

## SELF-INTEREST *AS* ETHICS

Justification is always at the root, if not at the forefront, of ethical claims. If we simply begin with that premise, then it is clear that there is no inherent contradiction between self-interested and ethical claims, no reason why self-interest could not be cited in attempting to justify some outcome or action as right. Indeed, if by virtue of serving one's self-interest a political choice could be sanctioned as justified, then there would be no incompatibility between the dictates of self-interest and ethics. Some version of self-interest—that it is "what I want" or "best advances my interest in X"—could be invoked as an ethical argument (or a necessary component thereof), advanced to sustain a judgment that a policy or course of action is right.

I will take a brief look at three different arguments that each try to justify self-interested action as invariably right: Sidgwick's *ethical egoism*, Ayn Rand's *objectivist ethics*, and a *utilitarian* perspective on self-interest. I do not present these perspectives as exemplars of the kinds of ethical arguments we might find people adopting empirically. Indeed, the notion of equating self-interest and ethics in this way may well seem odd if not downright preposterous.[10] The purpose of considering these arguments is, instead, to dislodge any impression that acting on ethical grounds invariably requires setting aside self-interest and at the same time to expose the difficulties encountered by a self-interest-based ethics. Acting ethically does not require a subversion of self-regard or interest, but it does minimally seek a reconciliation of that self-regard or interest with the self-regard and interests of others. It is in the face of this requirement that self-interest-based ethical arguments fail.

Ethical egoism, in a 1907 formulation by Henry Sidgwick, is the view that morally, one ought to pursue one's self-interest. Self-interested choices as self-interested are justified as right.[11] Following Sidgwick's account, this means that an individual should choose from among the alternatives faced the course of action that would yield "the greatest surplus of pleasure over pain" (1981, 121).[12] For the egoist, "a tendency to promote his own interest is the sole possible, and sufficient, justification of all his actions" (Moore 1988, 97) and also serves to justify the moral rightness of self-interest-based action by others. The egoist as actor is doing that which is morally right in choosing actions, in politics or in private life, that maximally advance his self-interest. The egoist as observer or judge of others, must, as such, conclude that they, too, are justified in pursuing their self-interest if he allows that his justification is as valid as one that any person might offer. It does not matter if these self-interests collide. Each is nonetheless justified in pursuing their individual aims. Margolis elaborates the egoist's stance: "The ultimate justification the egoist is prepared to offer is that he is uniquely himself, that what suits *him* justifies his conduct since no one else is, ex hypothesi, sufficiently like him (being different from him) to extend the justification to another in suitable circumstances. . . . [The egoist] does what he pleases, but there may be no other significant regularities that may be singled out [to justify the conduct]" (1971, 180–82). The ethical egoist cites no features of any action or choice when justifying it as good or right. Instead, the egoist defends his choices with the simple justification, "It is what *I* want."

As a public account of what is right, ethical egoism suffers from one primary flaw. Precisely when the egoist would be called upon to justify some action or proposal (when people's self-interests are in conflict) he will, in fact, fail to justify his conduct to others. The egoist, says Kalin, is thus "doomed to frustration . . . because justifying his behavior in terms of [his self-interest] gives an opponent no reason to cease his opposition if maintaining it would be in his own interest" (1970, 82). Falling back upon the subjective plea, "It is what I want," fails to serve as a justification at all. If challenged, the egoist can do little more than continue to repeat that simple claim.

Because of this key problem, it is implausible to expect that contentions about the significance of preference satisfaction will provide compelling justifications for the existence or the form of political action.[13] Self-interest (as given by ethical egoism) fails to provide a sufficient basis for policy choices if we

understand those choices as requiring public justification. It doesn't fail *because* the actions are self-interested, however. It fails because subjective claims of want are baldly devoid of any compelling interpersonal basis for support.[14]

But ethical egoism does not exhaust the ways in which someone might try to justify self-interested action as right. Ayn Rand's (1964) objectivist ethics, an ethics of "rational selfishness," sidesteps the problems facing ethical egoism. Her egoist must adopt a "rational, objectively demonstrated and validated code of moral principles which define and determine his self-interest" (p. xiv). That code incorporates three cardinal values: reason, purpose, and self-esteem, which entails that people act rationally, act productively, and aim to "acquire the values of character that make . . . life worth sustaining" (p. 22). According to Rand, these are the "values required for man's survival *qua* man—which means: the values required for *human* survival" (p. 28). According to her ethics, "the *rational* interests of men do not clash" (ibid.); hence no contradiction is implied by a person advocating egoism as the moral stance that each person should adopt. Her version of egoism ostensibly avoids the dilemma of conflicting self-interests and provides explicit (if contentious) standards of moral justification, allowing for the possibility of moral appeal and debate.

Early utilitarian theories, modern welfare economics theories, and social choice theories offer us yet another perspective by which we might sanction self-interested action. This normative vision understands the collective welfare as maximally advanced if each individual strives to attain his or her own interests.[15] An individual accepting this causal theory would view acting on her self-interested preferences as justified because that self-interested preference should merge with others' preferences to produce the collectively best outcome. (Of course, such an individual would argue that others should be acting on their self-interest, too.) Formally, this is not an egoist normative theory because the contention that an action advances one's self-interest is not itself invoked in justification; rather, the justification for self-interested action derives from collective considerations. Nevertheless, action aimed at advancing one's own interests is instrumentally justified as better able to achieve collective well-being.[16]

Armed with Ayn Rand's account of self-interest or this utilitarian justification, self-interested citizens would act not as consumers of the goods of politics but as individual legislators of the good. These ethics do not subvert egoism. On the contrary, each perspective develops a conception of morality that is consistent with its conception of each actor's self-interest and thus gives self-interested action moral justification. By joining self-interested value and moral right they provide self-interest with a language of public justification.

Ethical egoism, Rand's objectivist ethics, and this utilitarian account each confronts—and putatively resolves—a central problem that also guides the development of nonegoist moral theories, namely, the problem of formulating an understanding of self-interest and of morality such that acting on the demands of morality does not require that individuals subvert their own good. Kurt Baier refers to this problem as the "inconsistent triad" where:

1. Proving the rationality of some conduct to someone consists in showing him that it would be for his good.
2. Compelling moral considerations sometimes require us to do things quite irrespective of whether doing them would be for our good.
3. Moral considerations could not require this unless one could be shown that acting from them was rational whereas ignoring them was not. (1986, 13)

The problem of an incompatibility between self-interested and moral dictates is central to ethics, the philosophical solution elusive.[17] Yet (as I will argue shortly) the existence of this dilemma yokes our moral arguments to a concern for individuals and their interests.

We have no good reason to expect that our actual moral beliefs and conceptions of self-interest constitute a system that has overcome this dilemma. It is unlikely that either Ayn Rand's theory or the utilitarian conception capture our ideas about self-interest and morality. Nor is it likely that we always recognize some other form of compatibility between what we care about as individuals and the moral considerations that we find ourselves confronted with. Just as this dilemma permeates moral theorizing, it may well be a basic tension in many individuals' lives. Faced with this tension, the ethical individual does not simply evaluate and act so as to produce a maximally advantageous state of affairs for herself. But she need not ignore her own welfare or autonomy, or integrity when taking moral claims seriously and offering public justifications for her judgments and choices. What public justification requires is, instead, some account of how those interests are to be *reconciled* with the interests of others—some recognition of the requirements of community life.

Thus, while we may find it hard to imagine that human motivation could be at odds with the interests of the self, recognizing Baier's dilemma as a real, empirical dilemma means allowing for moral imperatives that confront and challenge one's interests. Even those who would confine the role of public justification in politics to the context of justifying democratic procedures for the aggregation of citizen preferences (as per social choice theory) must still acknowledge the limits to egoism that this recognition of the collectivity introduces. Consider, in this respect, how we might conceive of the point of justification in the social choice project.

First of all, establishing the goodness of some procedure might be something that could be used in a normative appeal to urge citizen compliance with its outcomes. This, however, makes no sense if people are pure egoists. They would not be willing to accept any particular outcome of a "good" or "just" demo-

cratic procedure if it were contrary to their own interests (however defined).[18]

Alternatively, we might see the mass public as never willing to go along with the outcome of any democratic procedure if it contradicts their interests. Questions of justice and good procedure do not matter to these "ordinary" people; they matter to certain disinterested parties in academia or in positions of legislative or judicial power. If these elites can certify procedures as just, then the weapons of the state can be legitimately used to enforce compliance among the egoists (citizens). This appears to be the view of Jules Coleman and John Ferejohn, for example. They suggest that "to assure *voluntary* compliance in a joint venture, cooperation must be to each person's advantage"; that in order to achieve successful collective action, policies "must be coercively enforceable"; and also that "coercion requires justification" (1986, 6). According to this interpretation, there really is no reconciliation problem for individuals but simply different kinds of individuals. Someone with the power to implement collective decision rules cares about justice (a dictator perhaps?), but the rest of the citizens, who will be subject to those rules, do not. Given the egalitarian premises represented in social choice axioms, this elitist interpretation introduces a certain irony—if not an inconsistency—into the social choice project.

If, therefore, advancing a conception of political actors as egoists, social choice theory's own account of the problem of justifying democratic procedures becomes problematic. However, we might, instead, understand social choice theories as saying that citizens are egoists in all circumstances *except* when it comes to questions of democratic procedure. Then they reveal a concern with justice or other standards of moral right and will go along with the outcome of any procedure that in the abstract, does a "good" job of aggregating preferences even if it conflicts with what they want. While this particular division between egoism and ethical concern does admit of a reconciliation problem facing citizens, it is also, of course, ad hoc.

## SELF-INTEREST *IN* ETHICS

Acting on the basis of ethical concerns may conflict with acting on the basis of self-interest. What cases of divergence we recognize will, of course, first depend on how we define and study "self-interest" and the demands or dictates of ethics. That given, whether their dictates converge or diverge, and for whom, will also depend on the particular empirical circumstance at hand. In any given context, that which is to someone's material benefit, or maximizes someone's relative advantage over others, or satisfies someone's personal preferences may or may not be what that person or others judge as right or good—may not best advance the welfare of persons taken collectively, may not be best for society under some alternative consequentialist construction, may not be fair, may violate some right, and may not adequately fulfill commitments made to particular people or those made as a citizen.

I will look more closely at the possible divergence and (especially) convergence of self-interested and ethical claims. I will not say anything as yet about the purely circumstantial convergence of self-interested and ethical directives. Nor will I return to egoist arguments that always stipulate a convergence between the dictates of self-interest and ethics. Rather, I will discuss more limited ways in which preserving or advancing one's self-interest might be sanctioned by ethics. For even though some conceptions of good and right might confront and challenge our interests, we may also turn to normative arguments in their defense.

We might begin by defining "self-interest" as whatever it is that an individual values, noting that moral claims of goodness or moral directives of right may conflict with value as *defined* by the self. Wollheim conveys the essence of the subjective claim:

> The wants which the citizens' choices express need not, of course, be selfish or egotistical wants. When a man decides that he wants policy A more than policy B, he may well be moved not just by his own interests but by a concern for the welfare of others. But all the same, in choosing A he is not asserting that others want A, nor that A is in their interests, nor that A would be an ideal solution, nor that A ought to be realized; he would be asserting *tout court* that he wants A. (1964, 76)

This version of self-interest refers simply to that which an individual wants or desires—in rational choice language, that which yields maximal personal utility. It focuses not on personal welfare (as self-regard) but on personal autonomy (as self-definition). Analytically significant here is not the substance of what I value but that it is what *I* value, given recognition simply because it is mine. A disjuncture between self-interested and moral claims will arise if one's personal preference (whether self-regarding or not) fails to coincide with that which is justified as right or good. What I want to do might not be right (according to some persons, some argument, or some government); or what I like might not be that which I or others judge good.[19]

Yet these personal preferences need not be silenced by the din of contradictory moral claims. Our ethics recognizes the moral significance of personal desires *qua* personal, a significance that philosophers have represented by making a distinction between agent-neutral and agent-relative justification (Nagel 1986; Parfit 1984). Agent-*neutral* justifications base judgments of right in reasons that make no special reference to particular persons or their preferences, yielding *impartial* judgments. Bernard Williams describes such justification as requiring

> abstraction from particular circumstances and particular characteristics of the parties, including the agent, except in so far as these can be treated as universal features of any morally similar situation. . . . The motivations of a moral agent, correspondingly, involve a rational application of impartial principle and are thus different in kind

> from the sorts of motivations that he might have for treating some particular persons (for instance, though not exclusively, himself) differently because he happened to have some particular interest towards them. (1981, 2).[20]

Agent-*relative* justifications, in contrast, pay particular attention to the identity of particular persons, endorsing *partial* judgments. Focusing attention on the nature of social roles and relationships, some relative justifications sanction preferential treatment or concern for people who stand in particular relationships with the agent, under any number of descriptions, including friends, spouses, children, colleagues, and in some contexts, fellow citizens (call these group-relative). Other relative justifications give special attention to the dignity and worth of individuals and, consequently, to the subjective preferences of the agent (call these self-relative). It is by making such arguments about the dignity and worth of individuals that self-interest-as-subjective-preference finds its own normative voice.

In an important sense, however, both self- and group-relative justifications pay attention to the (judging, evaluating) self. Group-relative justifications do so by locating the self in social roles and relationships, giving special recognition in moral argument to a person's particular concern for his family, friends, colleagues, and so on. When set against impartial dictates, a concern for these individuals (or one of these individuals) is something of particular importance to the self. For example, what I or others judge fair might conflict with what I owe to my family; or my concern for some person *qua* person might conflict with my concern for another person who is my friend. Group-relative arguments about duty and obligation speak in defense of these partial concerns.

When set against subjective wants, however, those same partial concerns can be restrictive to the self. What I want may conflict with what I owe to my family or friends, or my interests may conflict with those of some group to which I have ties.[21] And these same subjective wants may also conflict with moral right defined in impartial terms. I may want to keep the wallet I found in the corridor, to forgo paying taxes, or to hire persons who look just like me; but these may not be the actions that an impartial morality sanctions as right.

Confronted with such conflict, the agent might defend acting on the basis of her personal preference by drawing on self-relative normative arguments—commonly, by appeals to a principle of autonomy or freedom.[22] Consider an example. A homeowners group proposal, if accepted, will dictate that each homeowner must build the same kind of fence. As a single homeowner, I may have a purely personal preference for a fence different from that described under the proposal. In fighting the proposal, I would not back away from an understanding of my preference as subjective by arguing that my fence preference is the preference that everyone should adopt or that it is not just my preference but is better in some way (of course I might, but the point here is to assume I won't). But in recognition of the conflict between my preference and the proposal, I might appeal to some understanding of property rights or rely on some other general (and agent-relative) argument about autonomy in an effort to protect my fence preference and defeat the proposal.

Partiality toward oneself has received a great deal of recent attention among philosophers (e.g., Nagel 1991; Railton 1988; Raz 1986; Scheffler 1982; Williams 1973, 1981, chaps. 1, 3). For example, Scheffler (1982) has argued that morality must recognize an "agent-centered prerogative" that releases people from acting in accord with the dictates of an impartial moral rule when it conflicts with important personal projects and commitments. He describes the potential conflict:

> People typically acquire and care about their commitments quite independently of, and out of proportion to the value that their having them and caring about them is assigned in an impersonal ranking of overall states of affairs. . . . Each person has a point of view, a perspective from which projects are undertaken, plans are developed, events are observed, and life is lived. Each point of view constitutes, among other things, a locus relative to which harms and benefits can be assessed and *are* typically assessed by the person who has the point of view. This assessment is both different from and incompatible with the assessment of overall state of affairs from an impersonal standpoint. (pp. 9, 56)

Incorporating such self-partiality within a moral argument allows a conception of subjective self-interest as "important personal projects and commitments" to bear some moral weight when in conflict with other moral claims. Thus, my commitment to nonviolence—rather than nonviolence per se—is accorded moral status. Or my hard-earned money is given status as mine, something central to my plans of achievement, not to be transferred unconditionally to meet a neutrally justified goal.

Some components of our ethics seek to bind the community of individuals, construing moral right in terms that are authoritative and transindividual, placing demands on people that may constrain them from pursuing their personal interests, whatever they may happen to be.[23] Other components seek to recognize the dignity and worth of each individual and of their particular intracommunity ties, providing individuals with a voice of dissent against the dictates of an impartial morality. By distinguishing among impartial, group-partial, and self-partial claims, we can capture the tensions that may erupt. What some person, because of her individuality, particular goals, and life experiences, has come to value may diverge from other partial claims (what one must recognize as owed to others by virtue of particular ties and relationships with them) or from impartial claims (what "anyone" must recognize as right or good). A member of Congress, for example, might judge a policy as best for *his or her* constituency (a group-partial claim) but not best for *any* constituency or for society writ large (impartial claims), nor for his or her own inter-

ests. In the face of such conflicts, personal interests are not inherently trumped by any properly "moral" claim.[24] If impartial or group-partial moral dictates contradict personal preferences, then some resolution must be sought; and such resolutions may delineate trade-offs that are defended as *justified*.[25]

Thus, by appealing to principles of freedom or autonomy, we may defend acting on the basis of our purely personal preferences when doing so conflicts with that deemed right on other grounds. My preference may not be that which I or others deem good or right, but it is nonetheless morally significant *as mine*. We embrace our own individuality in calling upon such principles, while acknowledging the individuality of every other citizen, as well.

But we might instead deny our uniqueness or individuality when speaking in defense of our interests. People may (and perhaps often will) appreciate what they value as *valuable*—commendable for reasons that others should acknowledge. Personal "preferences" may not be purely personal. Our member of Congress, for example, may *want* what he judges best for his constituency or deems best for society as a whole. Under such circumstances, value as assessed by the self may be value defended as "good"; actions of interest to the self may be actions defended as "right". Any distinction we might want to make between an individual's conception of her interests and her conception of moral good or right could collapse.[26] Consider some examples.

Parents who value what they deem good for their children may argue, further, that what is good for their children is good for any child or good for all of the children who live in their community. For example, in expressing a wish that their child be educated in small classes, parents may not be merely offering a personal preference. They may contend that others must recognize—and government must protect—such education as a *good*. Or, while someone may favor a policy that prohibits logging in United States parkland, they may further defend that position as *right*.[27]

Equally well, one's self-regarding interests may themselves be defended as good or right. For example, people might advocate public health care provision while defending that policy through arguments citing "urgent interests" (Scanlon 1975), needs, or rights. Or, consider the poor and the wealthy each turning to government in search of economic advancement. They may not *simply* be seeking to advance their "self-interest" (*qua* material gain). Some argument about distributive justice might be invoked to justify the efforts of the former (though not the efforts of the latter). Some utilitarian account, calling upon supply-side economics, might be invoked to justify the efforts of the latter (though not the efforts of the former). Even if we bring to our political inquiries some self-regarding definition of self-interest, we are not defining something that falls outside of ethics.

Thus, while some understandings of what is good or right will sanction policies that do not maximize a person's self-regarding concerns or that fail to coincide with a person's personal likes or wants, people may also turn to normative arguments in defense of their interests. They may defend acting on their purely personal preferences or their concern for particular others. They may defend what they value as "good" or "right". Absent any smooth resolution of Baier's "inconsistent triad," we will find our interests to be both challenged and championed by our ethics.

## CONFRONTING THE ETHICAL CYNIC

"All this talk about ethics is baloney," says the ethical cynic. The cynic recognizes the existence of moral views—expressions of concern about other's interests, assessments of goodness and right, claims of virtue and obligation. But, to use Kenneth Thompson's characterization of the "realist," the cynic sees these as "calculation, rationalization and self-justification concealing the taint of self-interest" (1987, 12). Moral concepts only muddy the picture of what truly can only be understood as the operation of self-interest. Individuals who purport to take moral values seriously are either insincere, or sincerely misguided, or simply confused. But that does not mean that researchers should be taken in.

I have several responses to the cynic. First, if moral claims are all rhetoric and mystification, of no significance to anyone, then how could they become a strategic tool? Why is self-interest something that must be concealed? How could normative arguments facilitate self-interested achievements? If everyone were purely self-interested and immune to moral claims of value, they would be of no strategic value whatsoever. Why would we "speak the language of morality, impressing upon our fellows their duties and obligations, urging them with appeals to what is right and good, if we could speak to the same effect in the language of prudence, appealing to considerations of interest and advantage?" (Gauthier 1967, 460). Ultimately, then, if Grofman and Feld are right that "politicians obviously recognize that appeals to 'right', 'good', and 'fair' policies have some political appeal" (1988, 572), then at least *some* of the people whose evaluations and choices we study cannot be ethical cynics themselves.

Second (as I have already argued), there is no simple division between moral and self-interested claims. Self-interest is not something that always lurks sneakily beneath moral rhetoric. In many cases, particular interests are a critical and acknowledged component of the moral justification itself. In such cases, in fact, one problem is to provide a sufficiently compelling argument about the interest involved, so that the preservation or enhancement of the interest can be given a rights-based justification or one that makes use of liberal ideas about need or harm.[28] In other circumstances, of course, the justification for right action will not make reference to the interests of the actor, and the conjunction of interest and moral value can be a problematic one. One variant of this problem cites the importance of intention to the

judgment of acts and persons. The evaluation of acts and actors can be sensitive to the imputed intentions of the actor, recognizing, for example, distinctions between an act of charity designed to enhance one's political popularity and one undertaken with charitable intentions. If the overlap between moral and self-interested value is a transparent one, then even the "sincere" charitable actor might want to conceal the coincidence of personal gain.

None of this means that all moral claims are necessarily sincere. *Any* policy given sanction as "right" will always have consequences that affect people differently. If we take self-interest to be concerned with self-regarding consequences, then we can always divide people into categories according to some objective understanding of how favorable or unfavorable the consequences are for them. It is this inevitable overlap that raises the specter of ethical claims advanced purely in the service of one's self-interest. But as I see it, this establishes nothing except, perhaps, to point to a problem that moral justification is invoked to solve: It is because we are different and yet interdependent that we call upon moral argument to justify political outcomes, seeking solutions upon which all can agree. What matters to the sincerity question is not the convergence or divergence between self-interested and ethical dictates but the consistency with which ethical principles find application across circumstances under which they might be invoked:

> They must not recognize some particular principle as important and weighty in one case and then wholly ignore it or treat it as inconsequential in another, refusing to apply it even though no other, competing principle of comparable power is involved. That kind of incoherence is hypocrisy; someone who is unwilling to apply a principle consistently does not really accept it, and so has no genuine justification even for those decisions in which he claims to be following it. He cites the principle then only to disguise the fact that his decision has some other, less creditable, basis.[29]

Moral arguments might be used by some simply as a tool for the advancement of their personal interests; but such insincerity does not simply follow from the recognition that any claim of ethics can be described as advancing some, and not others', interests. We should recognize the necessary overlap between these consequences for "self-interest" and moral sanction and subject it to careful theorizing and investigation.[30]

Scholars typically solve this problem of overlap by defining it away—commonly by stipulating that explanatory priority belongs to explanations based on self-regard (the *insincerity strategy*). For example, Citrin and Green classify as self-interested "those choices that enhance the actor's own welfare regardless of whether others, including his reference group, benefit or suffer" (1990, 6). And Schlozman and Tierney reason as follows: "When professors plead for a strong university system in the name of . . . general benefits, there is an ambiguity to their position. On the one hand, they surely believe sincerely in the importance of higher education to the good of the nation; if they did not, they probably would not have become professors. On the other hand, their own livelihoods are at stake. Hence, it is not unreasonable to consider their seemingly public-spirited rhetoric as merely a cloak for the cynical advancement of their own private interest" (1986, 34). If a moral justification is available for actions or policies that advance the interests of the self, the former is deemed irrelevant by definition. Others place explanatory priority on competitors to self-interested explanations (the *sincerity strategy*). For example, in Sears, Hensler, and Speer's "symbolic politics" alternative, "whether or not the issue has some tangible consequences for the adult voter's personal life is irrelevant" (1979, 371). In such cases, so long as evidence for an alternative to self-regarding explanations is available, the existence of any self-regarding benefit is immaterial.[31]

Aside from the fact that they simply define away the problem, each of these stipulative strategies is vulnerable on other grounds, as well. The insincerity strategy has potent normative implications since *selfish* is itself a normatively loaded term. Poor people supporting poverty programs, women supporting abortion rights, disenfranchised groups seeking the vote, and slaves seeking freedom cannot be "sincere" in this view. Only the wealthy, the male, the franchised, the slaveowners can express a "disinterested" point of view. The sincerity strategy, in contrast, mutes a number of questions about how—and for whom—self-regarding and moral claims overlap. Especially if some moral claims are insincere, perhaps, but even if all moral claims were sincere, we would want to know how features of society (historical traditions, contemporary institutions, political elites) constrain what constitute "good reasons" or "acceptable justifications" so as to advance the interests of some and not others.[32]

## CONCLUSION

Viewing citizens as ethical actors is not the perspective of a hopeless idealist. Though rejecting a conception of politics based wholly on self-interest, it does not deny the significance of personal preferences and self-regarding interests or imply a blanket acceptance of all normative justifications as sincere. Nor does it wander off into other absurdities by, say, denying the reality of political conflict and controversy and presuming a citizenry oriented happily toward the pursuit of common interests. It means regarding each citizen as an individual with her own unique hopes and desires who is at the same time joined with others, part of and continually giving shape to a common social and political life. It sees in political diversity and controversy not just conflicting interests, but also competing claims about what "we"—unique individuals, linked to particular others through social roles and relationships, and together forming a single citizenry—*ought* to do or seek. It challenges us to bring

to political inquiry an account of interests and ethics that allows us to explore how they merge and diverge, an account that neither denies the real concerns of individuals nor disregards the exigencies of society and the requirements of communal life.

When judged from this perspective, simply expanding our notions of interests or utility to include "global values and group identification"; "the desire to maintain an established pattern of social relations or to defend distinctive cultural values and practices"; or "a concern for the welfare of reference groups or the pursuit of solidarity, status, self-respect or cultural hegemony"[33] is not a sufficient response to the failures of the economic approach. We cannot just expand our understanding of what an individual might value without recognizing how these values might uniquely function in sustaining political claims. If we reject the subjective account of value as an adequate representation of our experience of valuing, then we must recognize that evaluative judgments vary in intelligibility to others and in the force of the justifications that sustain them.

At the same time, going beyond self-interest in accounting for public opinion and political choices requires more than the application of typologies which juxtapose self-interested and non-self-interested concerns. Characterizing politics as ethical does not invoke "something that is not self-interest"; and the project of studying ethics in politics does mean adopting an ethical account of the bases of political judgment and choice to serve as a competitor to a self-interested account. Such typologies impose a dichotomy that is false, erasing from our inquiries the very questions about interests that are raised by an account of politics that invokes ethics, namely, to what extent *do* citizens find their interests to be challenged by what they or others deem good or right? And how are such contests resolved?

In practice, invoking ethics in politics means expanding our understanding of the criteria by which the citizen may judge political options, recognizing that together with any consequences for one's "self-interest" are features that one's ethics might commend or condemn. We might, for example, bring survey or intensive interviewing techniques to bear on these questions by asking people to judge persons or policies both on relevant moral grounds and in terms of the consequences for their lives.[34] This would allow us to investigate whether similarly situated individuals vary in their perception of whether some policy advances their interests (as they themselves define them); whether people differ in the extent to which they see any policy or option as meeting some criterion for justification (e.g., some, but not others, might see a policy as violating a particular right or causing a particular harm); and whether there are variations among people in the weight they give to different moral criteria when forming their policy opinions (e.g., appeals to autonomy or obligation might be more significant among those whose autonomy or commitments to others are in fact challenged by some policy or proposal, compared to their significance among those situated otherwise).

If politics articulates interpersonal standards of value and justification and if political expression requires justifying one's views as good or right, then we must recognize these judgments as significant to political behavior research. This challenges empirical researchers to recognize that doing social science does not mean that we should avoid anything remotely "normative" but, in a way, the reverse. Public standards of value found in the discussions of moral and political theorists must be incorporated into empirical work, finding service in an explanatory role. As we proceed with our political inquiries, we will want to develop an account of self-interest that is faithful to the concerns of real people and also a sophisticated account of the conceptions of good and right to which our politics gives voice. These developments are necessary if we want to expand our understanding of how interests and ethics function in a politics that requires public justification.

## Notes

I would like to thank Gordon Adams, Henry Brady, Clem Brooks, Jay Budziszewski, Bruce Cain, Scott Corey, Judy Gruber, Don Herzog, Kent Jennings, Felix Oppenheim, Bob Powell, Meta Mendel-Reyes, Lynn Sanders, Paul Sniderman, Charles Stein, and Joan Tronto for their helpful comments on earlier drafts of this paper and Elizabeth Anderson, Don Kinder, and John Kingdon for our earlier discussions about, and their comments on, some of the issues I raise here.

1. Relatedly, some speak of "a taste for honesty" (Frank 1990, 93) or argue "[that] individuals have different tastes, that one man's meat is another's endangered species" (Schlozman and Tierney 1986, 23).

2. Interests are usually not equated with desires or wants but, rather, functionally related to them. A policy or action is in some person's or some group's interest if it is instrumental to the attainment of something that they (individually or collectively) desire or want (Barry 1965; Held 1970).

3. Those arguing recently for a conception of politics that deemphasizes preference aggregation and emphasizes debate over, and judgments about, public goals and policies include Cohen 1986; Dagger 1986; Grofman and Feld 1988; Mansbridge 1980; Sagoff 1986; Sunstein 1990; and Waldron 1988.

4. The normative questions of politics are not, however, merely the questions of ethics asked in politics. Moral justifications define social dictates but not necessarily political solutions; and "political", not "ethical", justifications speak directly to the functioning of political institutions and to the bases and scope of government action. While I will speak of "ethics," much of what I have to say refers more generally to publicly justified (or justifiable) judgments, whether political or moral.

5. Of course, ethical judgments may not always be accompanied by public justifications; but they are implicit and may be called for in a context of discussion and debate. Clearly, public justification will be most evident in some institutional settings (e.g., Congress, courts, juries, public meetings).

6. The structure of utilitarianism is identical to that offered by rational choice theories' calculi of decision tying maximum personal utility to choice. Whereas the utilitarian looks to social utility when formulating the judgment of right, the rational actor looks to personal utility in determining what is the best alternative. Although their theories of value divide them, their formal framework is otherwise the same.

7. While I will speak of good versus bad and right versus wrong, these are not the only evaluative categories important

to ethics and thus to the general conception of evaluation I am advancing here. Our evaluative language is much richer than is revealed by these dichotomies, as those working in a virtue-theoretic tradition have emphasized (e.g., Meilaender 1984; Pincoffs 1986).

8. On this point, see also Gaus 1986 and Parks 1982. By saying that ethical claims of value are different from personal desires, I am edging toward issues of major philosophical controversy. That controversy centers on the ontological status of value and the epistemological status of judgments of value. The philosophical literature on these issues is vast, fluid, and replete with many terminological nuances. One recent review addresses eleven relevant "isms" (Sayre-McCord 1988, intro.). Here, I am simply trying to sketch distinctions we might find empirically important, rather than adopting one or another of the positions in these philosophical controversies. I give closer attention to these issues in Stoker 1990.

9. This is so whether evaluative conclusions are conceived as resulting from deliberation about justification or not; for even if they arise from other processes (e.g., learning processes), justificatory premises and beliefs may hold them intact.

10. Numerous scholars have contended that in democratic politics, self-interested claims simply cannot be advanced to justify political outcomes. Anderson, for example, suggests, "One cannot justify a policy recommendation on the ground that 'it would make me and my friends richer'. However refreshing the candor of such an argument may be, it does not and cannot stand as a legitimate warrant for public action" (1979, 718). Elster maintains, "There are certain arguments that simply cannot be stated publicly in the political setting. In political discussion, it is pragmatically impossible to assert that a given solution be chosen simply because it favors oneself or the group to which one belongs" (1983, 35). Citrin and Green contrast the "normative and institutional contexts" of political and economic choices, suggesting that in politics, "people are frequently expected to decide issues on the basis of principle, to make decisions about what is right or wrong, . . . to behave in the general interest and to justify their choices in ethical terms" and that "selfish actions are often viewed as illegitimate" (1990, 20).

11. Ethical egoism does not assert that people *are* motivated by the singular pursuit of their self-interest (however understood). Nor does it advocate that people adopt, merely for themselves, a self-interest maximizing principle of action. Such a person may be acting on principle, but not a moral one. Ethical egoism requires that a person adopt the self-interested maxim as alone prescribing morally right action and, further, advocate that maxim for all persons. The ethical egoist's justification of self-interested action as "right" requires acknowledging the force of those reasons for defining the right action of others. This extension to others of the egoist's justification reflects what moral philosophers refer to as the universalization of moral judgment. Without such universalization, the egoist arbitrarily restricts the set of persons given access to his justification, saying, "I am justified in doing what I want, but you are not justified in doing what you want." With this arbitrary restriction, the view is not a moral one; and if some restriction is justified, the theory is no longer ethical egoism.

12. For Sidgwick, *pleasure* is "taken in its widest sense, as including every species of 'delight', 'enjoyment', or 'satisfaction'," where "all qualitative comparison of pleasures must really resolve itself into quantitative" (1981, 93–94). Ethical egoism could, of course, be formulated nonhedonistically. (Sidgwick was not writing as an unequivocal advocate of ethical egoism; he also found utilitarianism rationally compelling.)

13. When considered in empirical terms, ethical egoism's implausibility is also found in its inability to account for significant components of our ordinary moral thinking and debate, namely, the components that identify value in actions or states of affairs not just on the grounds that it "advances my interests" or "is what I want" but on the grounds that it is "fair," advances collective welfare, and so on.

14. In contrast, we can, for example, envision the following (Pareto optimizing) claim being offered in defense of some policy: "It will be to my benefit and not impose any costs on anyone else." Notice that ethical egoism does conceive of citizens as agreeing that "each should pursue his or her interests." That general contention can ostensibly be interpersonally justified. But when the egoists find themselves with incompatible wants, they are left without any argument about how to proceed.

15. The prisoner's dilemma, a strategic circumstance that contradicts this normative conclusion, is a "dilemma" defined within this framework. Rational self-interested actors will not opt for actions that are collectively best. Because the prisoner's dilemma outcome is also not individually optimal, this context often raises a different claim about the convergence between morality and self-interest (one also found in utilitarian thought), namely, that self-interested people may best achieve well-being by not always directly aiming to achieve their own well-being. Axelrod's (1984) work on iterated prisoner's dilemmas might be seen as suggesting this conception of self-interest and morality. Strategies that are "nice" and "forgiving" are evolutionarily successful.

16. Sen (1987) focuses some (critical) attention on the empirical accuracy of this kind of claim. Hirschman (1977) traces the historical development of the idea.

17. This tension is vividly evident in Brock's definition of *morality*: "Morality in the narrow sense: includes all those principles that restrict the individual's personal goals and his advancement of his self-interest. Morality in the broad sense: is 'the art of life', that is, the precepts instructing people as how to live, and what makes for a successful, meaningful, worthwhile life" (1988, 570). In other words, morality is both limiting individuals' pursuit of their "self-interest" and telling them what it is!

18. Social choice theorists might, of course, claim that the outcomes of a good or just procedure will always be in the interests of each citizen. But this would be simply denying the possibility that people will ever face a problem of reconciliation.

19. The latter, among other things, captures purely expressive conflict. It recognizes that we sometimes want to preserve our opinions from outside scrutiny and remove them from a context of public justification. We sometimes say, "It's just my opinion." We fall back on a subjective account of value that while it may or may not be rooted in some principled objection to an objective metaphysic, has the main consequence that it takes our opinions out of the public spotlight, attempting to protect them from the criticism of others.

20. Williams is writing here about "the moral point of view" and does not use the term *agent-neutral justification*. When writing about these issues, others speak of judging from the "impersonal standpoint," of "impartial justification," and so on.

21. Altruism (persons' forgoing their self-regarding interests in favor of the interests of others) is captured by this tension between self- and group-partial claims. As such, contrasting altruism with egoism does represent the potential for conflict between some claims of morality and of self-interest. But they are conflicts of a particular kind and presented by a particular, and perhaps narrow, collection of circumstances, namely, those where we can establish a discrepancy between self- and other-regard, where gain to the self may be denied to enable others to profit instead. Altruism is also particularly suited to addressing the philosophical question whether it is ever rational to deny one's self-interest (e.g., Nagel 1970). Altruism finds its niche here, not in somehow representing the "essence" of morality.

22. Speaking more generally, partial claims justified in agent-relative terms can be formalized into rules or principles, which are then justified in agent-neutral terms. Acting on the basis of one's subjective preferences can, as such, be neutrally justified if universalized for any person or persons so described. "It's what I chose" could (in some specific context) be defended as important, universalized for any "I." Similarly, while group-relative justifications take note of the particular

identities of persons by virtue of socially defined relationships, they also can be universalized to refer to any particular set of persons so described (Nagel 1986).

23. Such claims may be advanced in the name of maximizing social welfare (as in utilitarianism) or some larger set of intrinsic goods or in the name of some conception of community, nature, God's will, or the like.

24. A philosophical caveat: How to give weight to partial and impartial claims of value is always explicitly or implicitly resolved by philosophical theories of ethics, but they do not always recognize partial claims as "moral." There are two bounding perspectives. The first sees morality as yielding dictates grounded in impartial justification (as with a utilitarian morality), with partial concern for the self or others lying outside morality. If the interest of the self does not coincide with that deemed morally right, a contest between self-interest and morality ensues. The second seeks to bring partial claims within the bounds of morality, giving self-referential partiality the force of moral justification when it confronts other moral dictates. While the first sees the individual as asking, "Why should I be moral?," the second sees the person as asking, "What does morality require?" According to either perspective, the person may reject group-partial or impartial dictates in deference to his self-interest, but the second might sanction such choices as moral. Still other ethical theories might accept some forms of partiality as moral (e.g., partiality to one's children) but exclude partiality to oneself. In such cases, the individual is still asking, "Why should I be moral?" However, a distinction is maintained between self-relative and group-relative partiality. The distinctions among self-partial, group-partial, and impartial judgment are important whether the lines of confrontation are drawn across, or within, the boundaries of "morality."

25. If the individual's personal latitude is too narrowly constrained, individual integrity (Williams 1973) and autonomy (Raz 1986) may be threatened. Yet widening that preserve draws accusations of self-serving egoism: "In defending the legitimacy of agent-relative principles we must guard against self-deception and the escalation of personal claims simply to resist burdensome moral demands. It is not always easy to tell, for example, whether a morality that leaves extensive free space in each individual's life for the pursuit of personal interests is not just a disguise for the simplest form of badness: selfishness in the face of the legitimate claims of others" (Nagel 1988, 170). Scheffler imbeds the agent's prerogative to pursue his own commitments in an otherwise demanding ethics, combining strong consequentialist claims on an individual's attention with a special preserve where the individual's own conceptions of the good may predominate. This hybrid between a strict consequentialist and a purely rule-based approach flips the usual emphasis of the latter. Rule-based deontological views (like most accounts of liberalism) often narrowly demarcate the zone of moral constraint, leaving a wide field of individual prerogative.

26. The distinctions among partial and impartial judgments depend on the identity of the evaluator, not on the substantive reasons underlying a personal or a moral evaluation. As such, there is no inherent conflict among the policies or outcomes that each evaluative perspective may sanction as best: the evaluation of the self *qua* self, may coincide with the evaluation of the self *qua* located in some role or relationship and of the self *qua* person. In other words, it is entirely possible to conceive of a person's own evaluative claim as capable of being supported by group-relative or -neutral justifications.

27. Lurking in these examples are further possible distinctions. For example, we might find important a distinction between people who value something *because* it is good or right and those who value something for some other reason ("It happens to be what I like") but argue its moral or political significance on the basis of its goodness or rightness.

28. These are, of course, only compelling as liberal standards and in a liberal society such as ours.

29. Ronald Dworkin to the Editor, *New York Review of Books*, 1991. p. 65.

30. The question of sincerity will not be easy to settle empirically. First of all, we would need data that meet the comparative requirement set out in the text. Further, the consistent application of a principle or rule does not imply that we will observe a series of judgments or decisions each manifestly instantiating that rule. Countervailing moral considerations particular to certain circumstances may undermine any simple principle–decision correspondence.

31. Things are sometimes murkier than this—at least in part because of the statistical methodology often used to study these questions and the corresponding application of statistical controls. Nevertheless, the conjunction of self-interested and non-self-interested reasons is not itself usually studied (but see Kinder and Kiewiet 1981; Tyler 1990).

32. Examples of systematic convergence between interests and ethics abound. Individuals may enter adulthood with or without the character that our society rewards, an aspect of what Nagel (1979, chap. 3) and Williams (1981, chap. 2) have called "moral luck." The American moral culture defines the maternal role as more constraining to women than the paternal role to men, delineating gender-specific trade-offs between the interests of selves and duties toward children.

33. Quoted values come from Citrin and Green 1990, 11, 17, 23.

34. We might also pursue these questions using observational methods, albeit in a more limited fashion, by applying to a set of public policies some objective coding scheme defining whose self-interests are advanced and what moral arguments might be mustered to sustain support or opposition. Making comparisons across policies would allow us to observe how support varies with the interests that are served by them and with the moral justifications that sustain them. For example, a policy that is fair according to one criterion of fairness may receive more support than policy that is fair according to another criterion of fairness. Some might never act against their self-interest in supporting one or another of these policies, while others may do so in support of one and not the other; and so on.

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