Paradoxical Obligations: An Inquiry into the Paradox of Self-Release and Duties to the Self

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An Inquiry into the Paradox of Self-Release and Duties to the Self

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Introduction

Paris, 1832. It is a dark night with a full moon. Along the Parisian streets walks Inspector Javert, a man who finds himself trapped in a wicked dilemma. Javert, employed by the Parisian police, has sworn a duty to the institution of law. His entire career, his entire life even, has stood the name of justice, and by extent the safety of Paris. He has sworn an oath on this matter, and he regards keeping the order as the most important task he is entrusted with. Javert believes he has a duty to the law. For this is what it means to take up the mantle of the police force, supposedly. Yet, he is a religious man as well, living by the faith of the bible and values the virtues of salvation and mercy. His faith teaches him to be kind, just, and most importantly, to offer the downtrodden second chances. The church to Inspector Javert means as much as the law does, and thus far they have agreed with one another. Yet now, Inspector Javert finds himself in a situation where neither his faith nor the law can help him (Hugo, Les Misérables 1862).

Twenty years ago, Javert was deployed to guard a group of prisoners who were working in the Parisian docks. They were treated as little more than slaves, but Javert's did not question this. The prisoners' punishment was an extension of the law, and the law must be followed. Until one day, a prisoner who was tried for the crime of stealing a single loaf of bread to feed his starving niece, was finally released after twenty years. His name: Jean Valjean. Now, Valjean is sent out on parole, and is expected to show up at the police's door regularly to show he is living a decent life free of wickedness. Realising that no one would give him a second chance as a criminal he refuses to return to the police however and flees.

Javert blames himself for not expecting Valjean's move and vows to return him - a dangerous criminal in his eyes - back to the prison. Valjean however, would not be found until six years later when Inspector Javert finds him by chance in a most peculiar situation: he is saving a man from being crushed by a cart that through an accident has fallen upon him. This cannot be seen *but* as a virtuous act. In other words, Valjean has turned his life around. He has become a successful businessowner and was even elected as mayor. He is loved by many people and has adopted an orphaned girl whom he raises as his own daughter. He has committed no crimes since he has escaped, and is supposedly no danger to anyone around him. His life has become one of virtue.

What is Javert to do here? On one hand the police demands that Valjean be brought in to atone for his crime of twenty years ago, yet on the other, does his faith not believe in second chances? Six years Javert has dedicated to retrieving Valjean, yet now he has found him, he realises that Valjean is a good

man, and not at all the dangerous criminal he has been searching for all this time. He does not know what to do, caught between his faith and the law. Javert does not resolve his dilemma, and instead, ultimately, throws himself in the Seine to drown.

This thesis will not make such a drastic demand of conflicting duties, however Javert's case is most assuredly an interesting one. For Javert appears to be trapped between two conflicting duties: a duty to justice and a duty to his faith. Unable to resolve either, he sees no way to continue living. Inspector Javert is one of the main characters in the novel Les Misérables written by Victor Hugo, and plays a somewhat awkward role, where he starts as the main antagonist of the story, yet slowly evolves to be more sympathetic through his moral struggles. Most of Javert's character arc focusses on how his faith in his duties slowly fall apart, which climaxes when he has the chance to finally capture Valjean. But, as he recognises how Valjean lives virtuously, ultimately decides to let him go. And it is in this moment, that Javert is at odds with himself. It is in this complexity that we not only find Javert compelling today, but oddly relatable. For who has not at some point made a decision that went against their own perceived duty due to circumstances?

There are many questions that this case raises. Would Javert have been able to resolve this supposed clash of duties himself? Did these duties even exist in the first place? Why does Javert constitute his entire being upon these duties? Are these duties to him or someone else? Even more, when becoming a policeman Javert promised to uphold the law, similar as to when he became part of his church and swore he would follow its teachings. Did these promises become duties? Or, were they always duties and never promises? Could he owe a duty to these complex intangible institutions? And are they something that we could owe ourselves? Clearly, this is a complex matter and demands further research and development.

I will take the standpoint that promises and duties differ from one another, as the grounds they are based on differ. This distinction however is not easily made, and I will return to this question in chapter 3. Javert promises to uphold the law and his faith, but were these merely promises or duties? Does a duty arise from a promise? Is this always the case? And can we have duties without making promises? These are some of the questions I will be discussing, yet there is a central question we must address first: *can* we have a duty to ourselves? It seems that Javert clearly thought so, staking his entire being on remaining true to his duties. However, does the question hold normatively? A promise and a duty are usually made *to* someone other than oneself - so what happens when we make one to ourselves? Does it hold the same moral weight? The same moral obligation? Could we consider this even to be

coherent? If Javert had found this thesis on his way to the Seine and been able to read it, could it have saved him?

In this thesis I will try to seek not necessarily a solution, but at least a clarification to this problem within moral philosophy that Singer (1959) has named the Paradox of Self-Release. The core problem in this paradox is that if one has a duty to oneself, they would also have a *right* against oneself, which Singer describes as 'nonsense' (Singer 1959, 202). For if one can release oneself from their own obligation whenever, then surely the duty, and obligation, itself cannot exist in the first place. Thus, we have stumbled upon a contradiction. In this thesis I will inquire whether, despite Singer's Paradox, we could still argue for the existence and coherency of duties to the self by offering an alternative and more extended structure of morality. In order to argue for the coherency of duties to the self I will use Paul Schofield's theories on Perspectives and Practical Identity. I will not argue for the coherency of promises to the self in this thesis.

I will argue that if we would add the existence of a second, personal, sphere to how we regard morality, we may be able to argue that at least one part of duties to the self can be seen as coherent and producing moral obligation. This shall be the prudential sphere. I will make no such claim for promises to the self however. I will argue for this coherency through splitting the realm of morality into two spheres: one considers promises and duties made to others, and the other focusses only upon promises and duties to the self. The former I shall name the Joint Moral Sphere, and the latter the Prudential Sphere. Afterwards, I will demonstrate a method to, within these spheres, distinguish promises from duties where I argue that promises are based upon self-interest, and duties upon self-respect. I will also make a distinction between internal and external duties to the self, where internal duties derive from *within* a person and external duties are taken up willingly from the *external* world. I will focus mainly on what I term the Prudential sphere to question whether duties to the self are truly incoherent as is claimed. In this theory I mainly follow Hills' work on duties and promises to the self (2003), and follow her definition of promises and duties which suggests that duties can be coherent, yet promises cannot because they are simply 'strong volitions' (Hills 2003, 134).

This thesis is divided in four chapters: First, I will discuss what the Paradox of Self-Release is and why it is a problem for duties and promises to the self. Next, I will try and argue for the presence of a second moral sphere aside from the joint moral sphere: the prudential sphere. Afterwards, I will attempt to create a framework which could help us separate duties from promises so that we might argue for the coherence of one without needing to argue for the coherence of the other. And finally,

I will add the distinction of internal and external duties based upon Schofield's theories alongside the concept of practical identity (2015) (2021), in order to argue for the coherency of (some) duties to the self.

An important comment to make at this point is that I do not aim to 'solve' either the Paradox of Self-Release in its entirety, or attempt to reformulate the sphere of morality. Moral philosophy is an incredibly complex, and more importantly grey, abstract area of philosophy. As we will see, my formulation is not one without its problems. However, I hope to show another way we may look at duties to the self and argue for its coherency in an attempt to better understand this area of philosophy. And hopefully by the end, gain a better understanding of why Inspector Javert believed his only way out of his dilemma was to drown himself in the Seine. And maybe, just maybe, we may prevent his tragedy in the future.

1. On the paradox of self-release

Singer's Paradox

For us to delve deep into morality we must lay some groundwork. To start, we must define what the paradox of self-release exactly is (Singer 1959) (Darwall 2006). The first mention we may find of this paradox may be traced back to Hobbes himself:

> *The Soveraign of a Common-wealth, be it an Assembly, or one Man, is not subject to the Civill Lawes. For having power to make, and repeale Lawes, he may when he pleaseth, free himselfe from that subjection, by repealing those Lawes that trouble him, and making of new; and consequently he was free before. For he is free, that can be free when he will: Nor is it possible for any person to be bound to himselfe; because he that can bind, can release; and therefore he that is bound to himselfe onely, is not bound,* (Hobbes 2009 [1651]).

In other words, a sovereign need not be bound by his own laws, even if he himself creates them. Singer has named this problem the 'Paradox of Self-Release' (1959). Singer discusses this topic in relation to duties to the self. Since the idea of duties to the self involves a serious contradiction: "Thus what we call 'duties to oneself' are either not genuine moral duties at all, or, if they are, they are not duties to oneself," (Singer 1959, 202). Let us return momentarily to our example mentioned in the introduction before. There is a distinction between a promise made to oneself and to another. If A borrows ten euros from B, then A is expected to pay B back. To decide not to do so seems unfair and beyond rude of A to B. In this scenario, only B is allowed to waive away the promise. Only B may tell A that there is no need to pay them back, not the other way around. This formulation of the situation is coherent. There is a promise, a 'promisee' and a rightful obligation. The promise exists between A and B for one to pay the other back, and A is now burdened with the duty to pay back. Let us give another example that shows the incoherency that Singer introduces: it is New Year's day, and, as A watches the fireworks, they decide that this year they will stop consuming any type of junk food and start eating healthier. A promises to themselves to change their lifestyle. Now it is July, and A is tired of having to watch their eating pattern so much, so, they decide it has been enough, and allow themselves to eat whatever they wish again. They have relieved themselves of the duty that came out of the promise.

This raises the question, Singer argues, that if A promised themselves something, and were able to break that promise, that the promise may never have existed in the first place. For if you both make a promise, and can waive it away whenever you feel like it, then does it exist in the first place? Singer

would say no, they indeed never existed in the first place. I in contrast, would argue, not for the existence of promises to the self, but *for* the existence of duties to the self.

Before we get there, it is first important to state that promises made to others do appear to be coherent: for it seems that we *can* owe people whom we have made an agreement or a contract with. "If I have promised you to do something, then I have a duty to you to do what I have promised, and you are the person to whom I am under obligation," (Singer 1959, 202). Thus, by promising someone else something, it appears that one has a right over the other. If A borrows ten euros from B, then B has a right against A to get those ten euros back at another time. This is where the thorn appears: for a promise to oneself seems virtually impossible, for how could you have a *right* against yourself?

There is some terminology to clear up here. First, it is important to note what Singer means by 'obligation'. To Singer, an obligation derives from either a duty or a promise made to another. At a later point in this thesis I will argue that there is a possibility of obligation similarly arising from a duty to the *self*, yet Singer does not support this view. Singer and I agree however that an obligation always arises out of a duty or a promise, for an obligation demands someone having a right against the self. It is impossible to resolve oneself of an obligation when one has received it from another, else it would not exist. So, in a promise made between two people, one person is under obligation by another, and one person - through the existence of this obligation - has a right against the other person to enforce this obligation. Only one person in this equation then can waive the promise away: the promisee. There is however another way to get rid of a promise: by breaking it. If one breaks a promise does the obligation fall away though? The cost could be one's reputation and a friendship with another. There is however, no way for those who promise to themselves, to release themselves of the obligation. For if they were able to do this, then the obligation surely would not have existed in the first place. This, in Singer's terminology, would make the promise incoherent since it becomes paradoxical. For if one could release themselves of an obligation (and so duty) anytime at will, then the duty did not exist in the first place (Singer 1959, 203).

Additionally, take the term we 'owe' something to ourselves. Surely, we do not mean that something is promised *to* ourselves. Singer describes the term 'owe' as a combination of emphasizing that one has a right to something, and that one has a determination to take action towards that end. By saying 'I need some time off work' I am implying that I have a perfectly reasonable right to do so, and therefore I should be determined to do so as well. Yet, when we say that we 'owe it to ourselves to X', it appears to imply that we have a duty to X. Singer suggests that we have a right to X, and that there

could be no moral considerations against it. If I am overworked and suggest I owe it to myself to take some time off to recharge, no one could on a moral ground be against this. However, there must be a distinction made here. A right to do something (e.g. taking time off work) cannot be the same as a duty (Singer 1959, 203). So, how could we formulate this distinction?

Singer ultimately concludes that the whole act of duties to the self must be absurd. We can use the term 'duty' in a psychological sense however: deciding we have a duty to do something can alleviate us of the stress of wondering if we should do it, and if we openly promise something to ourselves, we appear to reinforce our determination to indeed follow up on this promise. Yet, they cannot hold any significant moral status.

In Singer's own terminology there are three premises that illustrate how incoherency works (Singer 1959, 203). This is also referred to as the 'Incoherence Argument' (Schaab 2021, 176-77):

1. If A has a duty to B, then B has a right against A.
2. If B has a right against A, he can give it up and release A from the obligation.
3. No one can release themselves from an obligation.

Objections and Questions

Singer may not personally believe in duties to the self, but that is not to say that his is the only possible view. Cholbi (2015) introduces a Kantian view on the matter, suggesting a matter of accountability. If we consider ourselves to have a moral duty for fulfilment, we may argue that 'a person is accountable to the individual owed the duty for its fulfilment,' (Cholbi 2015, 851). Cholbi suggests that Singer seems to believe that duties to the self do not have the same moral binding as most moral duties would have. He questions whether this holds up, for if we have a duty to A, yet we find this not to be fulfilling or perhaps realising it is making ourselves miserable, then why could we not, as the individual to whom the duty is owed, waive away this erroneous duty, and as a result be free of its obligation?

This leads us to a question of accountability. If A can waive away a duty bestowed on B, then why could not A who, as an individual is accountable just as B would have been to A, be accountable to oneself and waive this duty away? Not to mention, if hypothetically one were to make a promise to oneself - say to check in with their aunt every two weeks - and fail to do so, then one would experience feelings of resentment, frustration, and disappointment. Regardless, whether this promise is waivable at any point, the fact that feelings like this arise must mean that they are somewhat genuine and

produce moral value. Thus, to immediately suggest duties to oneself cannot exist due to this paradox seems hasty (Cholbi 2015, 853).

Muñoz introduces an array of arguments on this paradox as well; there are several ways he considers that we can 'break the link' between that of duties to the self and release. We could for example have a duty to ourselves to "care about and respect ourselves for our own sakes," (Muñoz 2020, 693). We could have duties to ideals, or self-regarding duties from a utilitarian perspective to live a happy life. Most interestingly, Muñoz argues, is the theory that there are *contingent* reasons why we cannot release ourselves from certain duties. This would mean that while some duties could be waved, others could not. By waiving a duty, the obligation in question disappears and a person is no longer bound.

Then there is the question of self-release. The only problem Singer suggests about duties to the self is that we can release ourselves at will from them, resulting in a lack of moral obligation. Similarly, Singer would consider this problem to apply to promises to the self as well. However, we would not consider this a contradiction at all. Say we would want to adopt a pet and promise ourselves to do this, but when we realise how complex the process of taking care of the animal would be, we decide against it. There hardly seems to be anything paradoxical about this (Muñoz 2020, 696). Fruh similarly mentions the example of a locked door to which we have a key. As long as the door is locked, we cannot pass through, regardless whether we have the key or not. We are 'trapped' in the room *until* we decide to 'release' ourselves (Fruh 2014, 65-66). So, while obligations in general are considered to be binding (for if they were not than we would not consider them to be obligations), we would not consider them to be *inescapable*. Or as Muñoz phrases it: "Agents are bound *until* they are free," (Muñoz 2020, 697).

If duties to the self truly do exist, then there are important aspects of life that rest entirely upon the individual herself (Kant, Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals 1997, 1-19). For an illustration, consider a duty of not committing suicide. We cannot relate this duty to a specific individual aside from ourselves. For it is us ourselves that have a duty not to commit suicide, meaning we do not have an inherent duty to make sure others do not commit suicide. In other words, this appears to be a duty one has to mankind or society. Singer refers to this as a 'general duty' (1959, 204). A General Duty would have a different kind of weight than the types of duties that Singer has been discussing so far. What is the relationship between General Duties and duties to the self? Are they similar? In chapter four I will discuss this further by referring to General Duties as 'internal duties', but for now it is important to see that there could be different sorts of duties.

This in broad strokes has been Singer's introduction to the Paradox of Self-Release. In essence the complication arises that if a duty follows from a promise, and we make the promise to ourselves, then it means we can waive away the duty whenever we wish. We would be both object and subject in our own promise, meaning we would have a right against ourselves which appears to be nonsensical. There are other questions that arise from this discussion as well. There is also the question on what the distinction between a promise and a duty is, and if both result in having a Right.

To summarise, there are plenty of perspectives we may consider that go against Singer's non-belief in duties to the self. And it is in this vein that I would like to offer a slight alternate structure to the Kantian method to how we consider morality, and the space of duties and promises to the self within it. Singer understands duties overall to be similar to what Kant refers to as duties of right, however he expands this by suggesting there are also duties of virtue such as beneficence or developing one's talents (Singer 1959, 202). Singer retains that only duties to others in this manner are coherent, I will try and argue that duties to the self could also be coherent, while also drawing a distinction between promises and duties to the self.

As a personal note I believe it would not be harmful moving forward for the sake of my argument to merge the terms 'duties to the self' and 'self-regarding duties'. For the self here would be the object as well as the subject, which means that if we do say that duties to the self exist, then they must always be self-regarding since it would benefit the self in this scenario. In the literature these two terms are set apart from one another as there are duties to the self and duties that we supposedly *owe* to ourselves are two distinct facets within morality, but in my proposal what matters is that only a single person is involved in these duties rather than two distinct entities, and thus I would place them in the same category for simplicity's sake. This will make my overall proposal simpler, however it is a limitation I put on my proposal, and may warrant future research. Of course, it is first imperative to determine if we could call duties to the self coherent, and if they exist. However, for now, by merging the terms duties 'to' the self, and duties 'regarding' oneself we will side line the discussion on who is the object and who is the subject in this argument which will help us overall in the argument.

In the following chapters I will attempt to bring some clarity on these questions, and illustrate how the moral sphere where duties and promises reside might be more extensive than what is overall accepted. By expanding and further working out how we consider the structure of morality, I will aim to show that the Paradox of Self-release can be more specified within morality which will give a better overview on what is morally coherent and what is not (yet).

2. Imagining a Prudential Sphere

A Second Moral Sphere

A young prince, fleeing his home momentarily and the pressures of his rank, goes out on a hunt. He finds himself drawn to a lake filled with pristine white swans and watches in bewilderment as, when the sun finally sets, they transform into beautiful maidens. One of them sets herself apart from the group and explains that she and the other swans have been cursed by a sorcerer to live as swans during the day, yet take on their true appearances momentarily at night. This scene may be recognised as Tchaikovsky's Swan Lake. What is interesting in this story is how the prince, named Siegfried, plans to rescue the swans.

At the lake Prince Siegfried meets Odette, our heroine. She is cursed by the sorcerer Rothbart, and the sole way to break her curse is by someone pledging their love to her sincerely. Siegfried, who coincidentally happens to be pressured by his mother to find a wife, sees his chance, and takes it. He is enamoured by Odette and tells her he will try to break her curse, and promises *himself* that he will make the pledge she needs to free herself during the ball a day later. However, Rothbart discovers the lovers' scheme and brings his own daughter Odile to the ball, disguised as Odette. During the ball Siegfried takes the stage and declares that he will truly and forever love Odette. Yet, he does not realise that the true Odette does not stand before him, and so he pledges himself to the wrong woman, dooming Odette in the process.

While tragic their ending is, what is intriguing here is not Siegfried's honest mistake, yet the way he pledges himself to Odette. There is a two-part way to consider the promise he makes. While he promises *to* Odette that he will love her, he also appears to promise to *himself* that he will attempt to save Odette by making the pledge that Odette requires to break free of her curse. As we have seen in the previous chapter, a promise to the self appears to be incoherent as the subject and the object are one and the same, yet, as we see here Siegfried pulls through and fulfils the promise he makes to himself: that of *trying* to free Odette.

Based upon Hills' understanding, morality exists out of a single sphere. I offer a different approach, considering morality to exist out of two distinct spheres. The first, I refer to as the Joint Moral Sphere. This sphere contains obligations (that is promises, duties, pledges, vows, oaths, etc.) made to other people, thus producing moral obligations. For if another has a right against yourself through a promise made, then we consider this promise to produce obligation. Yet, what does that mean for promises

to the self? While what Siegfried has done appears to be incoherent - he made a promise to only himself that he could release himself from at any moment - yet, he did uphold his promise and even fulfilled it successfully (aside from the deception). It appears that he has acted in a way that for a moment only affected himself. Surely then, there is something to say about a second moral sphere that only focusses on oneself. In Hills' words: "If all duties are duties to others, there is a sphere of morality that concerns actions which affect other people and a private sphere that concerns actions which affect only oneself," (2003, 138-39). As an example, let us suppose we have a duty to promote others their well-being. This would be a moral concern. Yet, if we consider that we should take care of others, then we likely should also take care of ourselves. This concern would be based purely on self-interest, and thus fall into a moral sphere that considers only oneself: the Prudential sphere (Hills 2003, 140). This is the second sphere.

Something to consider then is whether the prudential sphere has a reason to place itself within morality if it only focusses on self-interested acts. If the promises I make do not affect anyone else in the slightest, then only *I* am able to hold myself accountable to them. Thus, how could this produce moral obligation? This is one of the grey areas of morality that we touch upon as there are enough objections to be given on how a duty or a promise to the self should not bear the same weight within morality as a duty or a promise to others. I would like to make the argument that we are to develop these capacities of self-interested morality for the sake of our development as human beings. If we only hold ourselves to promises and duties made to others, and not to a single one of ourselves, what does this say about our own character? Would we consider ourselves to be trustworthy? Sincere? When we make a promise to ourselves and fulfil these, we attain a sense of accomplishment and develop our identity. This must mean that there is some normative change occurring within ourselves, even if we can hypothetically waive the promise or duty away whenever we wish. This train of thought moves away from Timmermann's interpretation of Kantian thought that is most prominent in the literature. Timmermann (2006) for example, interpreting Kantian thought, understands morality as existing out of a moral sphere, and a separate prudential sphere that is not affected by the moral sphere. Thus, something is either merely a way to reach a realisation to ends (prudential), or deserves to be followed as a moral end. In my own proposal here, I do not follow this line of reasoning, instead proposing to incorporate the prudential sphere into morality as well. My main argument for this reasoning is that the prudential sphere plays a role in the development of our own character and identity, therefore I would consider it to be a part of morality and incorporate it as so. This is distinct from Timmermann's interpretation.

In this chapter I will demonstrate how we should consider there to be an existence of a second moral sphere: the prudential sphere. By showing how the prudential sphere is a part of morality, we can later argue for the coherency of (some) duties to the self.

Promises to the Self and Moral Obligation

The largest claim we can make for the existence of a prudential sphere rests upon the idea of personal moral development. If we would hypothetically accept this idea of a prudential sphere, how would this interact with the incoherence argument that Singer discusses? Schaab specifically focusses on premise 3: 'No one can release themselves from an obligation'. Singer argues that this is a clear contradiction. But, does the presence of a supposed incoherence entirely negate the possibility of a prudential sphere? Schaab argues that even if I am under an obligation, I am under that obligation *until* I release myself (Schaab 2021, 177). Prince Siegfried has placed himself under an obligation to free Odette from her curse, and he stays true to this obligation throughout the story without releasing himself from it. It is not at all clear that simply having the possibility of self-release in fact dissipates Prince Siegfried from his obligation to save Odette. This demonstrates that there must be some personal sphere in which moral obligation resides, for the obligation exists until one is actually released from it.

As mentioned before I follow Hills' definition that promises cannot be coherent since they are merely volitions unlike duties (Hills 2003, 134). A strong volition is an intention to do something, but not one that creates moral obligation. Hills argues that a promise to the self can never create obligation, however at a later point I will argue that while it likely can create some manner of obligation, it is not *moral* obligation. Only a duty can create a moral obligation. Promises, according to Hills, do not lead to duties, and are therefore merely volitions. Thus, while breaking a duty is breaking an obligation, breaking a promise merely demonstrates a character flaw. This means that promises are less obligating than duties. Once again, I will not argue for the coherency of promises to the self in this thesis, however I do believe there is value in considering literature on promises to the self as it helps to demonstrate that a prudential sphere must exist and be considered a part of morality. In the next chapter we will move away from promises to focus entirely upon duties.

What distinguishes a promise from things such as intentions or volitions according to Habib is that promises should create obligation, and specifically *moral* obligation (Habib 2009, 538). I will later disagree with Habib's point of view on promises creating moral obligation, but for now it helps with the argument. There is a distinction for example by saying 'I promise to save Odette from her curse',

and, 'I intend to save Odette from her curse'. The first seems stronger than the latter - it is a promissory obligation: "To wit, a promissory obligation is an obligation to do what was promised in the act of promising," (Habib 2009, 539). And so, if Prince Siegfried would fail after merely *intending* to save Odette, we would blame him less significantly than if he had promised to do so. Clearly there is a normative distinction between promising, and having a mere volition. I would name this distinction commitment. A promise signifies a serious commitment being made (and thus breaking it demonstrates a character flaw), whereas a volition does not seem to indicate that same level of commitment, and consequently breaking a volition is not as significant as a promise.

It is a common argument that promises (and duties) to the self could not create moral obligation since they can be broken without censure (Atiyah 1983, 54). One part of this idea is that no one would know if one breaks a 'secret' promise they have not made public, and so no one would realise that a breach of promise has occurred. This does not hold for two reasons: firstly, a promise to the self does not need to be always a secret, and secondly, even when we break promises we have made to ourselves we still consider them to be transgressions (Habib 2009, 545). Cholbi makes a similar interesting comment on this, suggesting that feelings of resentment may arise out of failing to fulfil one's promise or duty (Cholbi 2015, 853). This would mean that individuals regard themselves to be responsible to come through on their own promises, and failing those feels as a loss of authority over oneself or supposes one to be weak-willed. This attitude, Cholbi argues, is similar to how we hold others accountable who have failed or broken promises that were promised to us. As a result, in a similar state of mind, we should be able to claim that these moral demands can also be made on the basis of authority over oneself (Cholbi 2015, 853). Fruh agrees with this view, suggesting that breaking a promise lets oneself down: "...feelings of disappointment, regret and a sense of moral loss may accompany the breaking of a promise. In the case of broken single-party promises, these attitudes are made no less reasonable, and they may signal the sadness of failing to live up to our own commitments or the angst of betraying our own values," (Fruh 2014, 68). It seems then that obligation and authority are interlinked with one another. Fruh names this the 'normative power view' (Fruh 2014, 80). The idea is, just as Cholbi mentioned, that a promise (or a duty!) becomes binding when one deliberately takes on the obligation that follows from the promise. In this case, the authority to take on the promise, demonstrates that a normative change has taken place which binds the promise, and so creates moral obligation (Owens 2006). This theory is an intuitive one, but it is not one without problems. There is a question on how authority is transferred since usually it goes from the subject to the object, but in the case of a single-party promise it considers merely the same individual. Nevertheless, the normative power view demonstrates a way how we may consider promises to the

self to create moral obligation (Fruh 2014, 81). Clearly, this set of moral demands would have to exist in a prudential sphere that only concerns oneself that is distinct from what I call the Joint Moral Sphere.

The Incoherence Argument and Binding

Even if we consider there indeed to be a prudential sphere within morality, how do we escape the incoherence argument? For if we may release ourselves of promises and duties at a whim then surely we cannot consider them to be properly binding. Habib even suggests that self-release may be dependent upon circumstances. Consider wedding vows: if one makes devotional vows during their wedding, it is with the intention (hopefully) to uphold these vows within the marriage. If the couple chooses to later divorce, then we cannot consider one to be morally responsible for upholding these vows anymore as the circumstances have changed. "Promises are forward looking, and thus it is always possible that circumstances change between the time of the act of promising and the time for the performance of the promised act in such a way as to substantially alter the nature of the promise," (Habib 2009, 548). Let us say that Prince Siegfried promised himself to break Odette's curse, but what if Odette in her swan form, was shot by a hunter the next day? Or perhaps she has made amends with the sorcerer Rothbart and her curse has already been lifted? Or what if, some other strapping young prince shows up, captures Odette's heart, and fulfils all the conditions to release Odette from her curse before Siegfried has a chance to? The point Habib makes is that self-release from promises (and in extension some duties) *must* be possible since the circumstances that the promise has been made in can always change. Thus, the sheer possibility of self-release does not have to mean that a promise does not produce moral obligation. In these cases, 'breaking' a promise seems fully acceptable. For how could we ask Siegfried to save a woman who is not in need of saving anymore?

Fruh suggests that binding oneself to a promise is also a far more serious matter than it seems. One does not fleetingly make a promise and move on, it must be a conscious moral deliberation for it to 'count'. To make a proper promise it must involve some kind of reflective endorsement and deliberation, additionally there must be some element of time involved (Fruh 2014, 72). Thus, a promise to the self cannot be the exclaiming of a set of 'magical words', but must show some sort of normative change. This means that we cannot consider promises that are made under coercion or duress to be morally binding or morally obligating. Owens refers to these kind of promises as 'wicked promises' (Owens 2016, 10). Similarly, this marks the distinction as well for breaking a promise and releasing it in bad faith. For in the latter situation, one never endured that normative change that is required. What must also be a critical part of the binding of promises is the Kantian notion of sincerity.

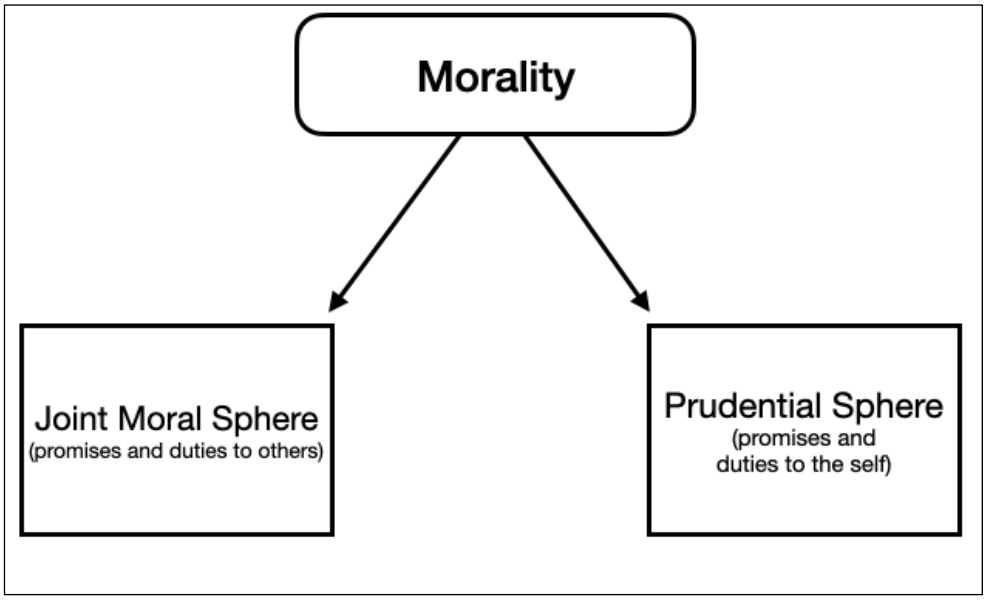
This reminds of what Fruh calls 'bad faith'. In essence, we cannot accept a promise or a duty to be either binding or morally obligating if it was made under insincere conditions. If Prince Siegfried had promised to save Odette because she asked him to, but felt more coerced into making the promise as he did not want to upset her, then we cannot consider this to be a sincere promise, nor do we then believe it to be binding.

Another question on the topic of binding is the possibility of having a *right* against oneself. When we make promises to others, the promisee has a right against the promiser to fulfil the promise. But could one have a right against *themselves* to fulfil obligations to the self (be they promise or duty)? Hill (2012) suggests there are three reasons how we could consider this to be possible. First, some promises we commit to are not made in our self-interest, but feel like something we 'ought' to do. This means that since we knew beforehand this promise was not in our self-interest, that we cannot release ourselves from this promise on the basis of this. One would be justified in fulfilling this promise. Second, promises that are made in our own self-interest do not harm others. If I find out that upholding my promise would harm another person and my circumstances have changed, I may release myself from my promise since this is a special circumstance. Third, what if a promise one makes is within one's self-interest, but one finds themselves facing expected, yet immediate differing temptations. For example, let us say that Prince Siegfried promises himself to save Odette and returns home to ponder how to do this. Yet, when he arrives home, his mother informs him that a neighbouring kingdom has invaded and they are now officially at war. One could not blame Siegfried for being occupied with keeping his own kingdom safe from this threat, and not acting upon his promise to try and save Odette. It would then be considered acceptable to revise the obligation when the temptation has passed (Hill Jr 2012, 149-150).

At the end of Swan Lake Prince Siegfried, realising he has broken the promise he has made to himself, flees the palace and rushes back to the lake where he finds Odette dying. We can hardly blame Siegfried for breaking his promise as he was deceived. All the actions he took were very much in line with his promise, and demonstrated how sincere he was. While he may have broken his promise by accident, it does not result in a belief that he has failed his own character. The two lovers reunite and throw themselves in the lake where they both drown, yet, remain together forever in death.

All in all, it appears that there is a case to be made for the possibility of having a right against oneself, and that we could be bound by promises or duties to the self. This then in turn demands the existence of a prudential sphere. Furthermore, considering that promises and duties to the self can bind *and*

supposedly create moral obligation, they *must* have a space within morality. Thus, I suggest the following view of morality in the figure below. This view considers there to exist two distinct sections within morality: the joint moral sphere, and the prudential sphere. The joint moral sphere considers duties and promises made to *another*, whereas the prudential sphere only considers duties and promises to the *self*. The former then includes another entity aside from ourselves, while the latter focusses merely upon the self. This view is mostly based on Hill's considerations of moral spheres. Therefore, it is notably different than what Timmermann's Kantian perspective suggests. Timmermann (2006) would consider morality to exist out of a single moral sphere, with a distinct prudential sphere that exists outside of morality which focusses on self-interest. I reimagine the prudential sphere to include both duties to the self and promises to the self, to be a part of morality rather than existing outside of it. And, as I will explain in the next chapter, argue that sometimes self-interested promises can turn into duties to the self, and so produce moral obligation. My version of the prudential sphere then goes beyond mere self-interest, and therefore has a place within morality. My theory agrees somewhat with Schaab's point of view that the prudential sphere is a part of morality since promises and duties to the self create some form of obligation in my opinion and therefore accountability to oneself (Schaab 2021, 187). However, I do not follow Schaab's view that any obligation to ourselves function similarly as having an obligation to *another*.



3. Distinguishing Promises and Duties

An oath of vengeance: a duty or a promise?

A boy of nearly eleven, by the name of Inigo Montoya, lives and works together with his father who is a swordsmith. One day, a wealthy man named Count Rugen asks his father to make a specialised sword for him, one that can be comfortably wielded by his six-fingered right hand. The swordsmith obliges and labours an entire year to make the sword. One year hence, Rugen returns and demands to see the sword. The craftmanship is brilliant and the Count is impressed. Yet, despite this, to flex his authority, he refuses to pay, demanding to get it for free. The swordsmith, insulted that his craftsmanship is not recognised, refuses to sell him the sword and proclaims it now belongs to his son, Inigo. Rugen, in a flight of fury, kills the swordsmith. The young Inigo picks up his father's sword and challenges Rugen to a duel. Rugen takes him up on the challenge and, with years of experience, easily disarms Inigo. He recognises that the boy has talent however and lets him live, leaving him his father's sword as he leaves the scene. Inigo picks up the sword, and promises to avenge his father. He vows to become the greatest sword master in the land, so that when he finds the six-fingered man again he may challenge him to a duel and win.

This is a scene from the rather iconic movie 'The Princess Bride' (Reiner 1987). Overall considered a cult classic these days, what I find compelling is the vow of vengeance that Inigo makes to his father. It appears to have two parts: first, Inigo promises his father to avenge him, and second, he promises *himself* that he will become whatever it takes to be able to take this vengeance. The first promise appears to be somewhat complicated, for while it is made to another (and therefore coherent) the promisee has passed away and is no longer around to release the promiser. This is what literature calls a 'deathbed promise' and is usually considered not to create moral obligation due to its circumstances (Muñoz 2020, 693-94) (Habib 2009, 547). There is more room for discussion on this matter yet that is beyond the scope of this thesis. The second promise appears to reside within the prudential sphere we have discussed in the previous chapter. It is a promise that Inigo has made to himself. Yet the movie shows that decades later Inigo Montoya is still on his quest to avenge his father and has become the greatest swordsman around. He has kept the promise he made to himself, but even more he has *dedicated* himself to it to the point of staking his entire identity upon it. In Inigo's words: "When I was strong enough, I dedicated my life to the study of fencing. So, the next time we meet I will not fail." This notion must be stronger than a mere volition that Hills mentions. It has turned into a *duty*.

Hills defines a 'duty to the self' as an act that requires action and where the subject and object of the duty are the same person (Hills 2003, 132). Inigo has promised himself to become the greatest swordsman around to fulfil his quest for vengeance, thus he must first become a great swordsman before he can seek out his vengeance. The promise to become the greatest swordsman then is a reason for action. This promise however, to Hills, does not create obligation, for promises are merely strong volitions, and are thus waivable resulting in no moral obligation. I look differently at this example. Although I agree with Hills that promises do not create moral obligation in the sense that duties do. I would instead argue that in this example the promise that Inigo makes to himself has in fact turned *into* a duty, because the basis of the promise has changed from self-interest to self-respect. I will discuss how this functions further in this chapter. As a duty now however, Inigo's quest to become the greatest swordsman produces moral obligation in Hills' definition. In extent, this must mean that duties do create moral obligation and as a result are *unwaivable*.

Distinguishing promises from duties is difficult. They are considered to differ in creating moral obligation, however I believe that a duty *may* arise out of a promise as we see for Inigo Montoya. How could we distinguish these two, and ground duties to the self? This chapter will attempt to distinguish promises to the self from duties to the self and so split the prudential sphere into two segments.

Demands of obligation

As we have stated before, the concept of moral binding is vital for the coherency of promises and therefore duties. According to Fruh some sort of 'normative change' must occur when the promise is made or the duty taken up (Fruh 2014, 72). Both duties and promises are part of morality, yet there must be some manner with which we can keep them apart. Earlier I have stated that promises to the self as a concept that exists within the prudential sphere *might* be able to produce moral obligation. For when we break this promise we feel terrible about it. It appears then that there is some normative change occurring. Duties must be able to produce moral obligation as well for if they do not, then we could not call them duties at all. If both promises and duties possibly produce obligation, we must seek out a different ground on what distinguishes them. This returns us to the concept of binding.

Schofield suggests that a duty that one may release themselves from is a duty that does not bind, and if it does not bind, then it is no duty at all (Schofield 2021, 190). Schaab (2021) counterargues this, instead suggesting that we can counteract against a duty without breaking it. Such as eating a specific fruit when one has vowed not to do so, yet still sticking to their promise not to. In such a case it would discuss a matter of willpower. Schofield denies this claim, stating that breaking a duty or promise must

have some sort of normative distinction. Thus, when considering the conundrum of waivability in duties and promises to the self, it is not inviolability of a norm that is a central concern. It is rather the question "whether a waivable duty to the self could ever *bind*," (Schofield 2021, 194). This in turn only emphasizes that a duty must be binding, else it cannot create that normative distinction that is required.

In other words, a duty to the self must be able to bind oneself similarly to how a promise to the self would. Both should create obligation for the sake of coherency. Yet still, we regard a duty as something stronger than a promise. To break one's duty appears to be far more significant than to break a promise to oneself. It is here that we may find the grounds for a duty to ourselves. Where a promise to the self at first glance can be waivable, a duty to the self cannot be permitted to be so. Later I will discuss why this cannot hold. While breaking a promise to the self is wholly unfortunate, breaking a duty to the self seems to say something about one's character and identity. In the case of Inigo Montoya, if he suddenly decides to give up his quest to defeat his father's killer then he loses an integral part of himself that shapes his identity. Yet, if he merely gives up on his deathbed promise to his father to avenge him, we are not inclined to blame him as much. For surely his father wanted him to live a peaceful, happy life, rather than spending it to become a weapon for him? Why do we regard duties as normatively stronger and more significant than promises?

Grounds for duties to the self

Hill offers an interesting distinction on the topic of binding: Hill suggests that while a promise to the self can bind oneself, it cannot *morally* bind oneself (Hill Jr 2012, 151-52). For example, let us say that Inigo Montoya on his travels to become the greatest swordsman of the land rests at an inn and explains the other patrons his quest. He knows he will catch up with Count Rugen tomorrow if he keeps on travelling. Then, someone storms in, informing them that tomorrow a group of bandits is planning to raid the village. The village cannot hope to protect themselves of this threat. The villagers then attempt to convince Inigo to stay another evening so that he may aid them, this however would interfere with Inigo's own plans and may risk him losing his quarry. If Inigo were to say: "I cannot stay for I have promised my father to avenge him and I am close to finding his killer", then it appears that he has some morally grounded reason for leaving the village. Yet, if he would say, "I cannot, for I have promised *myself* to never get distracted from my quest", this hardly appears to be a moral claim at all. In the latter case it would be in Inigo's self-interest focus on his own quest for vengeance to get it done sooner, but it says nothing about his moral reasons. And in the latter case we would consider Inigo to have failed morally by leaving the villagers to their fate. Thus, where promises may produce

obligations, they cannot in general make *moral* obligations. This means, that in opposition, duties *must* be morally binding.

Hill counters that there are rare cases in which promises produce moral obligations as sometimes certain circumstances change that make the promise create moral obligation. I would argue that in these cases we can consider the promise to have transformed *into* a duty as the normative weight has changed. Thus, we remain in line with duties being morally obligated and promises not. Hill gives the following example:

> *To illustrate, consider the following. The once honoured sheriff, humiliated by one act of cowardice, has become the town drunk, despising himself and ridiculed by all. When he hears that the outlaws from whom he ran are now coming back to town, he "promises himself" most solemnly to dry out and face them with courage. He will not do it for others, he thinks, but for himself, as one last chance to be true to himself. He deliberately places his last shred of self-respect on the line, fully accepting that if he makes and then breaks this "promise" he will be rightly condemned by himself and others more than if he simply skips town at once.* (Hill Jr 2012, 153)

Hill suggests that the morally neutral promise in this scenario has turned into a moral obligation. I would beg to differ however, and suggest that the sheriff, by staking his identity and self-respect on the line, that his promise has normatively transformed into a duty. The foundation of what started as a self-interested promise has changed into self-respect, and thus the promise becomes a duty that creates moral obligation. The stakes are much higher than before as they now concern his identity, and if the sheriff fails now, he would not *respect* himself enough to hold the title of sheriff any longer. One could argue that the sheriff's promise exists out of two promises: one promise *to* the town to keep it safe, and one to *himself* to reclaim his own identity. The first promise does not fall within the prudential sphere, but the latter one does, and this promise, by focussing on the sheriff's view of his own self-respect, becomes a duty as the basis alters from self-interest to self-respect. The promise normatively changes to a duty, and starts producing moral obligation. Thus, promises to the self are based upon self-interest, whereas duties to the self are based upon self-respect (Hill Jr 2012, 154). Hence the more serious feeling one experiences when failing one's duty, as one loses a part of their self-respect and thus identity.

Another way to consider a distinction between promises and duties is that of weakness of will. In general, if we break or fail a promise we make to ourselves it is an instance of weakness of will. Take for example breaking that promise to call one's mother once a week. By not fulfilling this promise we fail ourselves as we have proved that we were not able to hold ourselves to self-promises. Breaking a promise appears to be different than waiving it away, as in the latter we would not feel resentment at failing our promise. Yet, failing a duty appears to be more significant than being merely a weakness of will. Weakness of will nevertheless appears to be a form of moral failure. Timmermann discusses how Kant considers weakness of will through a dual perspective. Where the 'dear self' follows its own inclinations, and so is seen as violating any duties we might have. In contrast the 'proper self' is considered to be the 'true' self, and is able to follow its rational capacities (Timmermann 2006, 518). This would consider giving into our will to be 'weak', 'irrational' and perhaps even akratic, whereas remaining strong-willed about any of the promises or duties we have is a form of rational self-control. Cholbi calls this having 'authority' over oneself. Where failing a duty comes with feeling of resentment so significant that it affects one's own identity (Cholbi 2015, 853). Being strong-willed appears to be not too different from self-respect, since both terms have a foundation in their strength of identity. In the case of duties we cannot afford to be weak-willed. For while breaking a promise is unfortunate, breaking a duty would be more significant to one's own identity.

Self-Respect as the Basis

As we have seen in the example of the sheriff, the nature of a promise can turn into that of a duty. For the promise was focussed upon self-interest (to face the outlaws with courage) but somehow turns into a demand of self-respect (seeking to reclaim his title, respect, and with it, identity). Similarly, we can consider Inigo's desire to become the greatest swordsman in the land as a promise since it is based on self-interest. Surely it would be easier to exact his revenge by mastering the sword, but nothing beyond this demands that he should follow this path. If he finds another way to exact his revenge without touching a blade at all, say by poisoning Count Rugen, then we would not consider Inigo to have trespassed in a moral capacity. It would certainly be a symbolic flourish to kill his father's killer with the same sword he was killed with, but it is hardly necessary. Inigo's promise to exact revenge however says more about his character. His entire motivation and purpose is based on exacting revenge, and if he would choose to lay down his arms and become a simple farmer, than we do believe he has failed somehow. His promise for revenge is based upon self-respect, and so normatively changes into a duty. This immediately explains why we intuitively consider duties to be 'stronger' and more seriously morally binding compared to promises. Failing a promise compared to failing a duty holds a significantly different weight.

Timmermann, following a Kantian perspective, agrees that self-respect might just be the basis for the consideration of a duty to the self. The example he gives is that of 'crawling servility' which stands in direct opposition to self-respect: "Servile behaviour is generally considered to be morally distasteful. We do not, however, think it is wrong because the person treated in a servile manner is wronged, or in any way adversely affected; and the judgement that somebody ought not to degrade themself in this manner clearly goes beyond condemning the competent pursuit of self-interest. It may even be in the agent's long-term self-interest to be servile. We still think that there is something fundamentally wrong about it. Kant says that a servile person 'dishonours his own person' and 'surrenders his humanity'," (Timmermann 2006, 527). Self-respect then is something integral and foundational to the human psyche that it can be wronged significantly enough to demand a loss in respect.

Downie considers a similar method of promises as Hill, which also utilizes the notion of self-respect, which I believe may be similarly extrapolated to consider duties to the self. He starts by setting up a few premises that he believes may sum up the notion of promises. First, there is a weak moral obligation to carry out firm intentions. Second, the sub-set of intentions that we refer to as promises exist when we shift from intending to pledging. And thirdly, we cannot consider promising to be a necessarily social practice since it is possible to make promises to the self without another promisee present (Downie 1985, 267). The second and third points have been discussed so far and I believe are generally intuitive. The first premise leads to some questions, which Downie answers by taking the Kantian method of considering sincerity to be a vital and integral part to making promises. "The answer is that the explicit adoption of a particular end, as in the statement of an intention, makes determinate a more general moral obligation, that of practical consistency, this consistency being understood to be a characteristic that only the actions of a thinking being can exhibit; which is to say, only his thoughtful, planned actions, only the execution of policies," (Downie 1985, 267). In extension to this, if such a promise is broken or unfulfilled, it can only lead to feelings of 'shame' and 'unworthiness'.

So why then, Downie considers, do promises lead to strong senses of moral obligation at times? Downie offers an example of making a vow without a promisee: "The self has been *identified* with the projects, and carrying them out has become not only a moral obligation of practical consistency but a stronger moral obligation of honour and self-fidelity," (Downie 1985, 269). This leads into the same direction as Hill's example with the sheriff. When the self is being 'identified' with the promise, or in other words, one's identity is contingent on fulfilling the promise in question, then a moral obligation

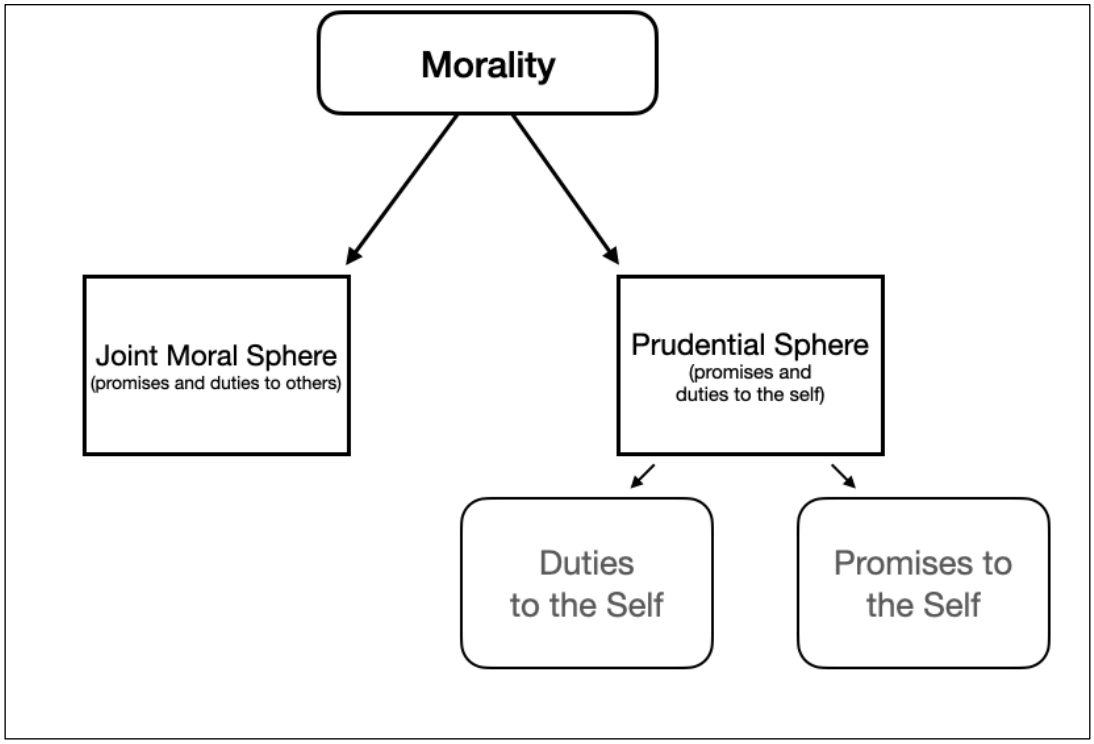
follows. I would once more argue that what Downie is describing here is not a promise, but a duty. By having a promise focussing on identity and in extent 'honour' and 'self-fidelity', we are in fact talking about a duty based on self-respect. And it is for this reason that this duty produces moral obligation, which a promise that is based on 'firm intentions' as Downie says, does not - or at least not to such a significant effect. There is of course room for discussion here whether the obligation a promise creates does not lead to any moral obligation through self-interest, however this is beyond the scope of this thesis and would divert our attention to promises rather than duties.

Downie ends his discussion with three interesting conclusions; first, by making a promise to either the self or to others, the promise is pledged to one's future. This means that one's own future identity is at stake. A person their integrity will diminish if they break or fail this promise (Downie uses the word 'promise' yet I would argue what he refers to is a duty). And it is then this idea of self-respect that produces the moral obligation in question rather than the promisee having a right against the promiser. Second, if one's promise (or duty) involves another person in whatever way, that gives more reasons to follow through on the promise, but it does not necessarily create a moral obligation. And thirdly, Downie concludes that the 'institution' of promising - that is following any ritual to 'formulate' the promise - is not essential to create a promissory obligation. One's self-identity is far more crucial. Downie gives the example of promising oneself to never lie and always speak truth (in my reasoning this would become a duty to the self). This duty would then be more connected to oneself rather than the institute of promising (Downie 1985, 270).

Both Downie and Hill seem to share the sentiment that there exists a distinction between promises made based on self-interest and self-respect. Where the latter produces moral obligation, and the former does not. I therefore argue that self-respect could be the basis to distinguish duties to the self from promises to the self. We have also seen that a promise may transform into a duty if the basis of this promise shifts from self-interest to self-respect, as in the sheriff case and the Inigo Montoya case. It is worth noting that from a Kantian perspective this could not work since Inigo in essence surrenders himself to a passion of revenge which is always morally impermissible. Thus, Hill would surely not agree with my theory and here is where my proposal of morality again distinguishes itself from a Kantian perspective. Inigo promises himself to avenge his father, yet in the process he appears to put his own identity on the line. He does not merely wish to exact revenge, but to do this with the very sword his father was killed with, thus it is imperative he becomes the greatest swordman in the land. If he becomes the greatest swordsman, yet still fails when he duels Count Rugen, then we would consider him to have failed some integral part of himself. For it appears that his promise for revenge

has turned from self-interest to one based upon self-respect, and thus has become a duty. If Inigo fails to exact revenge, he fails himself. Inigo's tale luckily has a happy ending as during the climax of the film he, by seemingly sheer luck, encounters Count Rugen. He demands a duel which Rugen readily agrees to. Yet, it is quickly clear that Rugen is no match for Inigo, and Inigo cuts him down while reminding him that it was Rugen's own actions that have brought this fate down upon him. At the end of the film Inigo is shown to be content and finally, at peace. With his duty fulfilled all that is left to him now is to find a new purpose in life and his sword. We can only hope he found himself one.

Now we may finally take another look at how our view of morality has changed, demonstrated in the figure below. By basing our definition of promises and duties on self-interest and self-respect we are now able to create a distinction between the two, and as a result split the prudential sphere in two. Once again, this figure draws away from Timmermann's prudential sphere which would not consider duties, but only consider things in our own self-interest. I oppose this view by placing my version of the prudential sphere that does not merely focus upon self-interest, within morality as I believe that duties to the self create moral obligation and hence have a place within morality. Since I have not argued for promises to the self to be producing moral obligation there might be a question whether it has a space within morality, but this is beyond the scope of this thesis. So far, I have merely argued for the coherency of duties to the self and not promises to the self. Till this point we have considered that a prudential sphere must exist, and that there must be a way to distinguish duties to the self from promises to the self. I have discussed that we could consider duties to the self to be binding through demands of one's identity. Still, Singer's question on waivability remains. Can duties to the self be coherent (even if they produce moral obligation) if they can still be waived by the promiser? How could we consider these duties to the self to be coherent if the promiser and promisee are one and the same? If a duty remains waivable, then it cannot hope to be binding, even if breaking it would lead to feelings of blame and resentment. I will dive into these questions next chapter in an attempt to reconsider the paradox of self-release.


Morality
Joint Moral Sphere
(promises and duties to others)
Prudential Sphere
(promises and
duties to the self)
Duties
to the Self
Promises to
the Self

4. Duties to the Self and Extending the Paradox of Self-Release

Let us return to our starting case of Inspector Javert. Not yet to his unfortunate encounter with the Seine but further back, to the Parisian police force and his faith. Javert finds himself stuck between two promises: to the police, and to his faith. Yet, are these allegiances truly promises? Perhaps they started out this way. Partaking in a job of high-stature and becoming part of the community by joining a church, we could argue that Javert was acting in his own self-interest. But following Javert through the story, we see that becoming faithful to the law and his religion becomes an integral part of his character. So integral that he considers both allegiances before making any decisions. Thus, these promises have turned into duties to himself, and have fundamentally become a part of his character. For what is left of Javert if we were to strip him of these allegiances? This gets to the point where Javert lets Jean Valjean, the fugitive he seeks, go threefold. The third and final time, he realises that he cannot bring himself to recapture Valjean. To imprison a man who has done much good in his life, and is far from the criminal Javert wished he would be, Javert cannot bear to punish him and finally leaves Valjean be.

Javert has decided, in virtue of being a faithful and righteous man, that he cannot rightfully imprison Valjean lest he wishes to risk his own integrity and beliefs. In other words, what started from a self-interested promise, has turned into a duty to the self of self-respect. If Javert were to capture Valjean he would be going against all his beliefs on the mercy of his faith and the righteousness of the law. In other words, his duties conflict with one another. We have reached a point where we agree that duties alongside promises are part of the prudential sphere, but are they coherent? We have considered so far that duties to the self and promises to the self must exist for the sake of forming our authentic characters, yet if duties to the self have different more serious grounds than promises to the self, they must take up a special place within morality. This final chapter will discuss Paul Schofield's theories on coherency, unwaivability and my own considerations on how there may be more than a singular type of duty. Schofield's theory is especially helpful in arguing for the coherency of duties to the self which is why I will be focussing on his concepts of Practical Identity and Perspectives in this chapter.

Coherency

So far, we have considered duties to the self to take up space within morality as they play a role in character development and identity formation as mentioned in chapter two. Promises to the self and duties to the self reflect upon oneself as a person and therefore it is only natural that they are located within morality. Schofield (2015) gives three additional interesting arguments for why duties to the

self specifically play a significant role within morality. First, it appears that morality exists in some type of lexical priority. Two distinct duties may have no connection with one another (Schofield 2015, 508). Say, that Javert decides to pay a loan back he has taken previously today, then this will have nothing to do with following his duty to serve justice. Secondly, we consider it to be important that one acts out of a *recognition* of duty, not merely in accordance with it. If Javert is to find and recapture Valjean he does so because of his duty to the law, not because it would personally make him very happy to do so. The 'wrong kind of motivating reason' should not be followed when fulfilling one's duty. Thirdly, this one has been mentioned plenty of times before, but should someone fail one of their duties than we consider it appropriate to experience feelings of blame and self-resentment. To summarize, in acknowledging duties to the self "...will impact our views about how an agent ought to reason about what to do, our views about which kinds of reasons she ought to act for, and our views about which emotions it is proper for her to experience," (Schofield 2015, 510).

Internal and External Duties to the Self

Schofield, now content in that duties to the self are part of the prudential sphere, then considers Singer's paradox. The main problem, and most integral one, Schofield concerns himself with is the question of binding, "To be under a requirement that one can waive is, we might say, to be under no requirement at all," (Schofield 2015, 515). A common solution to this problem specifically considering duties is formed by Hills. She suggests that there may be 'unwaivable duties' (Hills 2003, 135-136). Based upon human rights we would have certain duties to ourselves (and to others as well) that can never be waived away in virtue of our humanity. If, for example, we would decide that one has a duty to promote well-being, then no one would be permitted to harm themselves or hold themselves back when it could work in their benefit from a moral standpoint. Hills' idea is that by arguing for these unwaivable duties, we could sidestep Singer's paradox altogether. For by arguing that these 'internal' duties are unwaivable it would make at least a part of duties to the self naturally coherent. In the literature I have seen multiple mentions of 'unwaivable' duties, I group these terms together and refer to these as 'internal' duties moving forward, as they derive from *inside* ourselves. Schofield refuses to rest his own claims of the existence of duties to the self upon internal duties for two reasons. First, whether unwaivable internal duties exist in the first place have been long contested and undermines the essence of Singer's paradox by sidestepping the problem rather than attempting to solve it. Moreover, assuming we then also have unwaivable internal duties to others, how would this work? If A has an unwaivable duty to B, then surely B is allowed to waive the duty away even if it is internal? B's opinion must matter in this case. Secondly, even if we were to say that internal duties to the self exist they would be incredibly limiting in scope. How do we decide which duties qualify and which do

not? A duty to not harm others may be acceptable but to attempt to set up a single list with specific internal duties is incredibly complex (Schofield 2015, 516). To avoid confusion, it is important to note that what I refer to as 'internal' and 'external' duties is an entirely different concept from what Timmermann discusses by the same name and should not be conflated with one another (Timmermann 2006, 512).

Schofield continues with a different take than Hills on how to argue for the coherency of duties to the self, however before we discuss this, I believe there is some merit in considering the concept of internal duties further, and its counterpart 'external' duties, first. As our definition stands internal duties to the self would be duties that we are born with, as an extension of our humanity. We would encounter the problem that Schofield mentioned of having to define a list of what these duties specifically are, but some examples which hold potential are a duty for self-preservation, a duty to not harm oneself and a duty to promote one's own wellbeing.

Internal Duties

Further internal intrinsic duties that could be considered are moral self-improvement, a duty to self-respect, a duty to happiness and a duty to self-actualisation. These are all types of intrinsic duties that Kant discusses as well. Individually, all of these appear to be perfectly coherent. We could have duties to ourselves to take care of ourselves, to live well, and to live up to our potential. Since they are based upon our own humanity, they are supposedly binding, and as a result create moral obligation. Not following up on these moral obligations gives way to feelings of self-resentment. Say I have the potential to become a great talented classical pianist. Yet, what if I, for reasons such as laziness and disinterest, never bother to practice? Surely this would be a poor decision on my end, for I had the potential to become a great pianist but wasted it away. These kinds of internal duties are closely connected to fundamental human rights, something that Hills considers as well (2003, 135). If internal duties do in fact exist and we are able to formulate a list of them, they must be considered coherent and unwaivable. Yet, there are two considerations to make.

First, what if these internal duties clash? Say we return to my possible bright future of becoming a renowned pianist. In this scenario we assume that I have a duty for self-actualisation and a duty of happiness. Since I have the potential to become a renowned pianist in classical music, in line with my duty to myself, I should practice consistently in an attempt to become the best and most skilled player I can possibly be. Only through training I can I fulfil my duty of self-actualisation. Yet, what if I do not enjoy playing classical music at all? Let us say I wish to become a jazz pianist instead, as playing jazz

pieces makes me infinitely happier. I still study and practice the piano, yet I choose to train in a different field that would not give me the great renown as with playing classical pieces, since doing so would make me greatly unhappy. It seems then, that two of my internal duties clash with one another and as a result neither can coexist with one another. Do these duties exist in lexical priority? And if so, how would we select that order? It is clear that this creates quite the conundrum when formulating a list of internal duties. So, while they may indeed be coherent, it is difficult, if not impossible, to formulate a universal list.

Secondly, is it right to consider unwaivability as a criterion of a duty to the self? I have previously considered it to be a possible criterion, but there are some notable difficulties. In this scenario, I am experiencing two duties to myself that clash with one another. Kanygina (2021) offers an interesting counterpoint and considers this exact problem. She suggests that duties to the self cannot be based upon mere unwaivability as it would never allow us to opt out of duties to the self that possibly clash, or do not have our best interests at heart. What matters to duties to the self then should be *autonomy*: "If the consideration of autonomy curbs the successful use of our power of release/consent, then we can further specify the constraint as follows: release/consent requires an autonomy-conferring attitude of reflective endorsement," (Kanygina 2021, 571). Or in other words, our normative power of releasing ourselves from a duty to the self has a 'principled basis'. This does not mean we can opt out of duties to ourselves anytime, but neither does it mean we are unable to opt out of them whenever they clash. Kanygina makes a distinction between failing to comply with a duty to oneself, and releasing oneself from it purposefully. To illustrate, Kanygina proposes the example of Bob and Saloni. Suppose that we have a prima facie duty to the self to not inflict harm upon ourselves. Bob is a medical student who wishes to be taken more seriously by his peers. To attain this respect, he injects himself with an experimental drug that could have severe side effects to his health. He knows and understands the risk of this procedure, and so we may consider him to have acted non-autonomously. Saloni is the leading scientist in said experimental drug and, to further her own scientific research and with the belief she is close to a breakthrough, similarly injects herself with the drug. Saloni then releases herself of her internal duty consciously and autonomously, yet Bob fails to comply with his duty (Kanygina 2021, 571-72).

Thus, if we want to argue for the coherence of internal duties to the self, we cannot escape the possibility that internal duties can clash with one another. Even internal duties cannot always be unwaivable, it seems that there must be a possibility to either release oneself of an internal duty or be able to opt out of it. This conclusion opposes what previous mentions have addressed. However, if

internal duties to the self are to be considered to be coherent, this is an objection that must be carefully considered.

External duties

Where internal duties derive from *inside* ourselves, external duties must then be retrieved *outside* ourselves. This is not an entirely original notion on my part, Owens introduces a very similar concept which he refers to as 'voluntary and involuntary obligations' (Owens 2016, 1). Where I refer to voluntary as 'external' and involuntary as 'internal'. I believe that we could define external duties as duties we have acquired throughout our life. Javert's duty to follow the justice of the law appears to be an external duty. He was not born with this duty nor is it integral to his humanity. He willingly picked it up when he joined the police and made it a fundamental part of his worldview and his character. Similarly, Inigo Montoya's quest for vengeance appears to be an external duty as well, one which he has willingly picked up when his father was killed and has founded his life's purpose upon now. A question then becomes how either of these normatively differ from a *promise* to the self? The core difference appears to be that both Javert's and Inigo's external duties have been based on self-respect rather than self-interest, which mean that their identity is on the line if they fail to abide by their duties. Neither Javert nor Inigo follow their respective duties because it would improve their life in any way, thus it is not based upon self-interest but something stronger such as self-respect. Therefore, I argue that their duties create moral obligation for them.

However, hypothetically, if Inigo decided that the best way to honour his father was to lay down his arms to become a farmer, and if Javert would quit the Parisian police, then we could not consider either character to be responsible to keep up these duties. We would not expect Javert to continue to chase after 'criminals' or Inigo to keep tracking Count Rugen if they lay down their self-imposed duties. In other words, it seems that in both scenarios the external duties are waivable only at the moment when they are waved. This reminds of comments made earlier by Muñoz and Fruh in chapter one. Muñoz gives the example of promising oneself to get a pet, but changing one's mind when they realise they are unsuited for it. We would not blame the person in question for this decision. Fruh compares this structure as being in a locked room with the key to unlock it. So long as one does not use the key they are trapped (there exists obligation), yet when they use the key they are free (the obligation is dissolved). In this case I would argue that an external duty to the self creates significantly more moral obligation than a promise to the self would, but we cannot deny that promises and external duties appear to be similar to one another. Their basis of self-interest and self-respect differs, however both remain waivable. To Singer this would mean that neither of them could be coherent. An additional

concern to discuss is that it is not always clear when a duty to the self has an internal basis or an external one, which does not help with placing them in different spheres. In some situations, these duties appear to be subjective. Take for example a parent taking care of their children. The choice to have children and the resulting duty is an external one. Yet, the duty to take care of one's own children both physically and emotionally is hardly an external duty. While it is a logical result of the external duty that comes with choosing to have children, it appears we cannot opt out of this duty of one's children their welfare whenever we wish. When internal and external duties seem to arise due to developing circumstances it becomes difficult to reliably distinguish the two from one another.

Schofield's Solution

Diachronic Duties

It is time to circle back to Schofield's solution. As we have seen, arguing for the coherency of either internal or external duties to the self is incredibly complex as we ultimately always return to the problem of waivability. If I merely have a duty to myself, I could waive it away at any instance since the object and the subject of this duty are one and the same. One method of 'solving' this consideration is regarding a single person as having two temporal parts. One in the present, and one in the future. In this manner, we relate to our future selves for the duty, meaning that the person we 'owe' our duty to is distinct from us through a temporal nature. They are thus two distinct metaphysical entities. We refer to this as a diachronic duty, for the duty exists out of two separate points in time. To illustrate, say someone is a smoker and realises this could create serious health concerns for themselves in the future. Thus, the current self owes it to the future self to stop smoking. Schofield concludes that this sidesteps the actual problem Singer discusses, as well as ask a lot of questions within metaphysics that might be impossible to answer. For how can a person exist out of two distinct entities throughout time metaphysically? Schofield acknowledges that this solution would demand a revolution within metaphysical thought and is thus not a feasible solution (Schofield 2015, 517).

Schofield takes a different route that does not assume that a person can exist out of two distinct temporal entities, but is in fact *one* extended, enduring entity through time. Schofield uses the terms 'perspectives' to achieve this, suggesting that while the entity remains the same, their view on things differs (Schofield 2015, 517). 'Perspectives' are defined as "...a point of view from which one perceives, or feels emotions, or has sensations, or judges a proposition to be true, or wills some particular action, and so on," (Schofield 2015, 517). The benefit of considering these kind of perspectives is that we recognise that there are distinct perspectives where interests and conflicts can derive from, and, it

helps us understand why from certain perspectives certain demands are made (Schofield 2015, 518). Schofield borrows this concept from Darwall (2006). Essentially the core idea is that an individual can take up two perspectives at any time. Take our smoker case. There is but one distinct entity in this scenario, but she can look at her situation from her present perspective, and a future perspective where she may be suffering from health concerns due to her smoking. The current perspective is then P1, where the future perspective would be P2. The demand and obligation derives from P2. In this sense the object and subject of the duty are the same temporal entity, *but* still distinct from one another which then 'solves' Singer's paradox. For P2 demands something from P1, which creates both the duty and the moral obligation. Timmermann introduces another similarly interesting concept called 'universal temporality' which states that the agent in question must follow their maxim, which in this case is the generated duty by P2, as it is always valid. Thus, duties to the self must have a temporal nature in the sense that they persist through time and an agent cannot waive them arbitrarily (Timmermann 2006, 519).

But could we not waive away this duty? P1 and P2 are produced from the same person which would mean that Singer's challenge is still relevant. Schofield counterargues this by suggesting that a duty may only be waived from its appropriate perspective. If the duty were to be waived, it would have to be waived from P2 as this perspective produces the moral obligation. Since P2 exists in the future this is impossible, and thus makes the duty unwaivable. Through this method Schofield believes he can sidestep the issues that internal unwaivable duties to the self would create, and simultaneously argue for the existence of duties to the self (Schofield 2015, 516-522).

This theory itself is not without problems as Kanygina once more clearly illustrates. Kanygina raises an interesting point: there is an issue with the non-identity problem. The non-identity problem considers the moral obligations we have to future generations of people that, as of now, do not exist yet (Kumar 2003, 99-100). The question is then, to whom are our acts in the present owed to? In other words, let us say that Javert at P1 is out on a quest to find and recapture Valjean to satisfy his own personal need for justice. There is a possibility of a future perspective existing at P2 where Javert realises his search was futile and disillusions himself with the law, thus causing a breakdown. P2 is not a future perspective that Javert at P1 would endorse, however, if he still takes actions in line to eventually reach P2 down the line, he has not in fact wronged the Javert at P2, for he did not exist at that time. And while the Javert at P2 could say that he is worse off than he could have been during P2 due to the actions of the Javert at P1, he cannot say he has been *wronged* by him. For how could we argue that

the Javert has wronged himself from the perspective of an older Javert at P2, when this perspective did not even exist when the decision was made? (Kanygina 2021, 567-68)

Overall, I think we can agree that Schofield's introduction of perspectives may prove a valuable tool in understanding how diachronic duties to the self may be understood from a temporal perspective. It also solves the problem of having to reformulate metaphysical notions on how entities exist. However, Kanygina raises an interesting concern that cannot be ignored and should be more closely considered to properly argue for diachronic duties.

Synchronic Duties

We have considered diachronic duties to the self so far, duties that due to demands of the future, affect the present. But what about synchronic duties to the self? These would be duties to the self that only exist within the present as they are *synchronised*. Schofield has argued for these duties as well by building forth on his theory of perspectives, with the addition of *practical identities* (Schofield 2019).

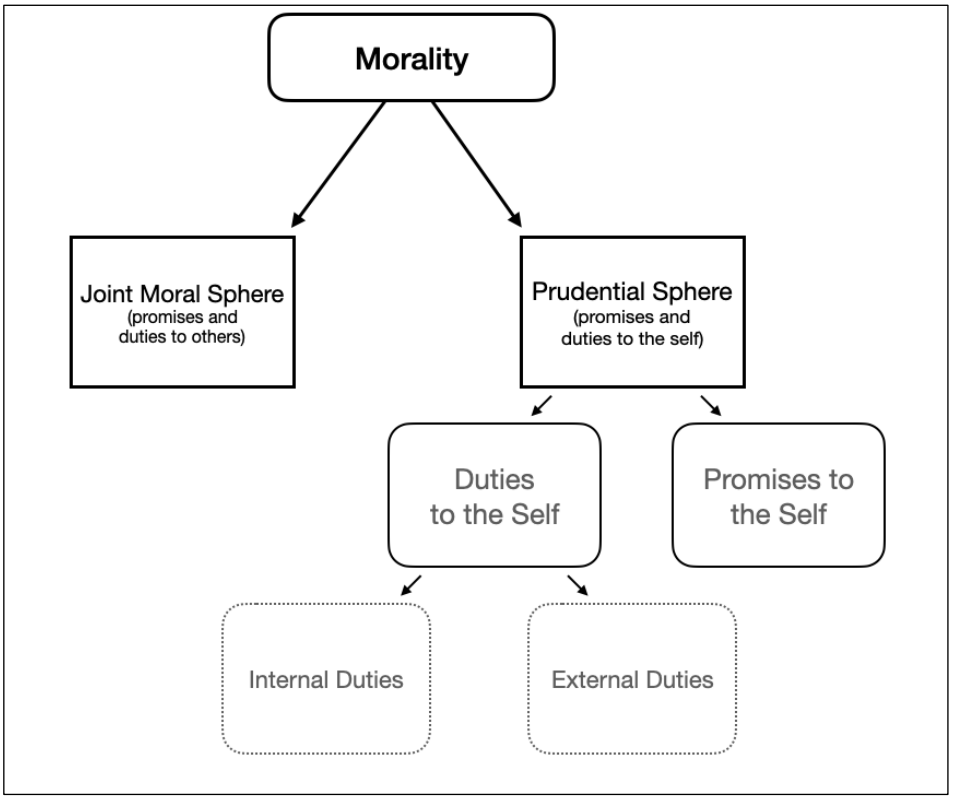
What is a practical identity? Schofield defines it as follows: "To begin, a practical identity is, very roughly, a characterization of who or what an individual is that entails she has particular reasons for acting. The most obvious examples are those associated with socially constructed roles," (Schofield 2019, 224). These are roles such as being a 'philosopher', a 'parent', a 'spouse', etc. These identities assume that they are a sum of parts. A philosopher, supposedly, has reason to write and read philosophical works. A parent has reason to care for their children and to take on a guiding role, etc. There are actions and reasons for these actions taken from the *perspective* of this identity. Which means that when considering a situation, a person always does it from a certain perspective that is based upon their practical identity. What is needed for a coherent duty are two distinct entities within the theory. Schofield argues that people consider situations from multiple viewpoints, since they always have multiple roles. If one is both a philosopher and a parent they will have two distinct perspectives, and Schofield argues that these two perspectives are enough to fulfil the demand for two separate entities. As a philosopher it might be important to spend days in a library to read as much possible, however the role of a parent demands one's presence at home. Thus, the two identities can conflict with one another. Schofield refers to this as 'competing demands' (Schofield 2019, 224-26).

This theory however does not solve the issue of waivability. If we have two conflicting perspectives, usually one takes precedence and waves the other away, thus releasing themselves from that duty in that point in time. What is needed is to demonstrate that practical identities are able to produce obligation that cannot be waived by the person in question. This reminds us of the way I have defined duties to the self so far from promises to the self. Duties are based on self-respect, which means in extension that if they are failed or broken in whatever manner, then one loses a bit of self-respect to themselves. Feelings of blame and self-resentment arise as we have seen before. This in turn, is the moment where we may return to Javert's wicked dilemma. For it appears that Javert's problem is two of his identities clashing with one another. His identity as an upholder of the law, and a man of the faith. How can he reconcile these two identities?

Schofield introduces Korsgaard's Kantian account for further development of this theory (Korsgaard 1996, 125-129). As a possible solution Korsgaard suggests shedding one practical identity since any individual has several practical identities. However, this cannot work for it would mean one would lose a part of their identity. "Demands placed upon persons by their practical identity qua human beings are *inescapable*," (Schofield 2019, 227). Korsgaard's solution to this dilemma is incredibly Kantian in nature: she argues that at the core, in virtue of being human, we all have a core identity. An identity as human beings that cannot be shed or erased in any capacity. Certain things are demanded of us based upon this identity (for example promoting our rational capacities). Frankfurt (1999, 130-137) does not agree with this idea, suggesting that practical identities are contingent, but not that everyone has a base identity in virtue of their humanity. To Frankfurt loving attachments craft identities and demand of the individual what she can and cannot do. Take for example a painter who is a painter as long as she paints. Thus, being a painter creates a categorical demand and obligation upon her: she must keep on painting to remain a painter. Undoubtedly this identity will sometimes conflict with others, but if she chooses to stop painting, it will undoubtedly be bad for her. Frankfurt suggests that demands arise from things a person loves (e.g. painting), this demand would then be the basis of a synchronic duty to the self. However, these demands only become moral obligations, and unwaivable, when they are legitimate. What demands based on things a person loves are then legitimate? That is a question that appears to be very similar to the question on how to define internal duties. In other words, this too is hardly a fool-proof method just yet. Additionally, how do we define when someone is a painter? How much must she paint? What if she has not painted in years but still desires to? To define an identity would be no small feat. Nevertheless, what we can learn is that a practical identity may very well form from things a person loves, and on that basis we can formulate demands. And, Korsgaard's idea that we all have an identity based upon our humanity would explain

how we owe things to ourselves which reminds of internal duties (Schofield 2019, 228-230). Schofield himself does not align himself with either theory, but does suggest that either could form a basis for further justifying the coherency of synchronic duties.

With all the considerations made within this chapter I propose that we can further extend the structure of morality I have offered below. This chapter has discussed the possibility of 'duties to the self' as a sphere to be split up into internal and external duties. Furthermore, I have discussed Schofield's theories on how we may argue for these duties their coherency either diachronically or synchronically alongside some counterarguments.



Return to Javert

What do we at last do about Inspector Javert? He appears to be trapped between two demanding practical identities. One, the solemn and stoic policeman, who follows the law and believes in what it calls justice. And the other, the pious, devout man who believes in mercy and second chances. One demands Valjean's capture and return to prison, while the other, recognising the good Valjean has done with his freedom, demands that Javert should leave him be. Both are to be considered by my

own definition to be extrinsic duties, as they have been willingly taken up by Javert himself, however they appear to be dangerously close to being internal duties as well. For while Javert has taken them up willingly, they have now become such a deeply intrinsic part of his identity that without that duty, he is not himself anymore. He has based his worth and so his self-respect upon upholding these duties.

Additionally, I believe there may be both a synchronic and a diachronic duty to the self at play here. The diachronic account would consider P1 Javert in this moment, where he considers what to do with Valjean, and P2 could have two versions. Either P2-A is a future where Javert has mercifully released Valjean and fulfilled the demands of his faith, however has betrayed his profession in the law and so loses a part of his integrity. Or, P2-B where he recaptures Valjean and brings him to justice fulfilling his demands as a server of the law, but understanding he has ignored a demand of his faith. The synchronic account of this situation would base itself on Javert's two practical identities. One demands mercy, the other justice. Acting in line with one of them, would automatically negate the other and Javert would lose his legitimacy and a fragment of his identity alongside it. Either identity appears to be producing moral obligation, and he cannot waive one away in favour of the other without losing all he is.

In other words, there is no future where Javert can uphold either practical identity without betraying himself, and so, he sees no way to continue, and plunges himself in the Seine. The tragedy of Javert is then entirely of his own making and ultimately, proves his own undoing.

Conclusion

The core problem that has been looked at within this thesis is what Singer names the 'Paradox of Self-Release' which raises the concern that promises and duties to the self are incoherent. For when the object and the subject of a promise or a duty to the self is one and the same, then the individual in question is able to waive away their duty or promise whenever they wish, thus resulting in the conclusion that there must have been no moral obligation at all to begin with. I have argued against this thesis, and have attempted to consider an alternative and extended structure of morality that would help to make duties to the self more coherent. Whether promises to the self are coherent is another question entirely that I would not argue for as of now.

I have begun by arguing that the prudential sphere should be considered to be a part of morality even if it only affects ourselves. It is vital that it is part of morality since it is required for the moral cultivation of our own identities. I lean into the Kantian notion of commitment and sincerity for this. We have also seen that for a promise to the self or a duty to the self to be coherent, it is not entirely necessary that they are unwaivable. We see this in the second chapter when considering the case of Prince Siegfried, who due to external circumstances might see the surroundings of his own promise change and demand release of his promise. He might have promised to himself to attempt to save Odette, but he has a right to release himself from this promise if someone else were to save her before he gets the chance. There is then a grounded reason why we should consider both promises and duties to be waivable, for circumstances are always subjects to change, and so promises and duties must be too.

If duties and promises remain waivable then surely they are not binding in any manner? As we have seen throughout this thesis, reoccurring mention of feelings of self-resentment and blame arise out of broken or failed duties or promises to the self (Cholbi 2015) (Fruh 2014) (Downie 1985) (Schofield 2015). Thus, there must be some normative change occurring that results in these feelings, which means in turn that there must have been some existing obligation that we must have felt to experience these feelings. This feeling of resentment can only have been triggered by our conscience, which is informing us that we have not acted in line with our identity. This seems to imply that even in spite of being waivable, duties and promises are able to produce some manner of obligation. The type of obligation distinguishes promises and duties from one another then. I have argued that promises are based upon self-interest and duties upon self-respect. A duty is after all not something we always take up willingly, but is something we feel we 'ought' to do. Breaking a duty to the self also appears to be more significant and serious than breaking a promise to the self. Self-respect says something about

our own character and identity, which a promise does not. Take for example the Inigo Montoya case I have discussed in the third chapter. He makes a promise to take revenge, and decides in order to do so he must become the greatest swordsman in the land. Thus, from this promise a duty has arisen to become the greatest swordsman in the land to exact his revenge. And if Inigo fails to become this, then it appears that he has failed his own character in some manner. What we see here is that duties have a different basis than promises, but also that duties may arise from promises when their basis changes. In other words, a duty is more obligating than a promise is. Therefore, I have argued that while both create some level of obligation, a duty specifically creates *moral* obligation. And so, as a result, if one fails a duty to themselves, they fail morally as well. Therefore, failing a duty feels more significant than failing a promise.

Duties to the self must be morally obligating otherwise we would not consider them to be a duty in the first place. And in order to create a moral obligation the duty must bind the promiser in some manner. Thus, a duty need not necessarily be unwaivable to be considered to be coherent at all. All it must be is binding, and as a result produce moral obligation. This is simultaneously the crux we find in Schofield's theories in chapter four. Schofield is an adamant arguer for unwaivability as a criterion, however when delved in further it seems a difficult sentiment to hold. In this chapter I have argued for the understanding that we may have internal duties to the self which we are simply have in virtue of our humanity, and external duties that we willingly take up throughout our lives. There are difficulties with the concept of internal duties however. They are limited in scope, and their lexical priority is unclear, thus these duties may clash without a way to resolve them. External duties are easier to argue for, as they most often arise from promises we have willingly made, that change from a basis of self-interest to one of self-respect. The promise transforms into a duty, and so failing them is a reflection upon one's character. Still, it appears that internal and external duties exist within a grey area where one may arise out of the other, or that they are difficult to distinguish in general.

Schofield argues for the coherency of both diachronic duties and synchronic duties through the concepts of Perspectives and Practical Identities. Perspectives allow a single temporal identity to consider a situation throughout time, meaning one could hypothetically 'owe' one's future self something which in the present creates a duty to the self. Practical Identity considers the idea that we all play 'roles' in society upon which many stakes are based. Our role becomes our identity, and thus failing our identity results in a loss of self-respect. A problem arises if these practical identities clash with one another as Schofield does not consider how this issue may be resolved.

While Schofield's theories offer a new and interesting way of considering duties to the self that consistently remain unwaivable, we see through Kanygia's arguments that Schofield's theories encounter difficulties with the non-identity problem and that unwaivability does not account for autonomy. Autonomy may be an interesting criterion to consider for duties to the self, something which Kant has also discussed before. However, as of now this is beyond the scope of this thesis. It remains that so far the best criterion I have found for duties to the self are that they must be binding, and through that binding must create moral obligation. Thus, we might go so far as to reconsider if Singer's proposed paradox should truly be considered to be such a 'problem' for duties and promises to the self in the first place. In this thesis I have focussed primarily upon duties to the self, however it is not unimaginable that duties, could be considered to be a 'subset' of promises. We could also consider pledges, oaths, vows, and resolutions to have some place among these. In other words, there is plenty more to be considered and researched within the sphere of morality that concerns different types of duties and promises.

To end, we must return to the beginning. That would be the Parisian streets in 1832. Let us say that when walking to the Seine Javert finds this thesis on the ground and decides to read it. When he has overcome the terror and confusion that must come when reading about one's current predicament where the outcome appears to be decisively clear, he may seek a solution to his dilemma. Could we offer him one and perhaps spare him his tragic fate?

Let us review the case of Inspector Javert for the final time with all we have discovered so far: Javert's story begins when he both joins the Parisian police force and joins the church. In both cases he makes a promise *to* these institutions to uphold their morals and values. These promises are based upon self-interest. Joining a church in this era was an important part of belonging to a community, and everyone has a self-interest in taking a job that pays well and, during this time period, results in status. The church and the police in this case have a right *against* Javert to uphold his part of the promise, which is to live according to their standards. What happens through time however, is that Javert starts reflecting these values he lives in accordance with, not upon these institutions anymore but rather, himself. Javert decides that to be a faithful man, he must believe and incentivise mercy. And as a policeman he must deliver justice according to the law. Now what is happening here is that Javert's promise seems to be shifting from the institutions to himself. While he still has promised these institutions something, he seems to develop certain demands of himself that he owes to none *but* himself. Thus, it appears that the basis of Javert's promise is developing from self-interest to self-respect. Javert is staking his identity upon being merciful and just, and so his promises to these

institutions slowly transform into duties *to himself*. Respect for himself is what binds him to these duties, and so creates moral obligation. It is without doubt that were Javert to act unmercifully or unjust now, that he is inherently failing himself in a way that is stronger than merely weakness of will. By consciously failing himself, he loses a part of himself. In terms of Schofield and as mentioned before at the end of the previous chapter, to Javert this can be seen as either a diachronic or a synchronic duty to the self. I believe that it can best be seen as a synchronic duty to the self since in this scenario Javert is not depending upon a future version of himself to fulfil his duty, but what is at stake here is his *practical identity*. Javert's practical identities as a 'policeman' and a 'faithful person' demand different things of him.

These demands of his character are external duties rather than internal duties. For Javert was not born with them, and willingly took them on. Hypothetically, this means he can willingly lay them down as well, but, at the cost of his own self-respect. If he would abandon these duties or fail them, he would clearly experience feelings of remorse and resentment. This is then the conflict that arises when Javert encounters Valjean. He is sent to retrieve Valjean and send him back to prison. This is a demand of justice. This duty to himself finds itself in trouble when in three separate instances Javert finds Valjean doing morally good things. His duty to justice would believe Valjean to be a dangerous criminal, yet he is no such thing. His duty to his faith would demand that he should offer mercy to Valjean and let him go, yet he would then be betraying his practical identity of being a policeman and following the law. Two of his practical identities stand in direct opposition to one another, and Javert finds himself trapped in the middle.

Two options are left to Javert, and neither are very appealing. First, Javert can choose to follow Korsgaard's theory and shed one of his practical identities. He would always retain his core identity as a human being in Korsgaard's view, yet he would have to give up one of his practical identities. By shedding one he is free to follow the other, yet at a significant loss to himself. Regardless, he would still have one practical identity intact and be able to follow that fully and wholly. Not to mention that he would always retain the core practical identity he holds in virtue of his own humanity, and thus according to Korsgaard he would always be able to live 'true' to himself in this manner regardless of which identity he sheds. The second option follows Frankfurt's reasoning and is a bit softer. Frankfurt would suggest that by choosing one practical identity over another for a moment, would not fail the practical identity in the balance. Thus, by not acting like a policeman for a moment does not mean one stops being a policeman. While Frankfurt's reasoning is less harsh than Korsgaard's, I do not believe Javert could accept this option. For all of Javert's choices and actions have been based upon

his belief in justice. So, either he gives up that belief, even if only for a moment and questions if the law is as just as he has always believed. Or, he indubitably follows it and does not grant mercy to Valjean, and once more, forevermore questions if the law was indeed just to imprison a man like Valjean again after all the good he has done. In either instance, his belief in the law falters, and one of his practical identities with it. Thus, we can only conclude, that Javert must pick one practical identity over the other to move forward and stay, at least somewhat, true to himself. Yet, in either Frankfurt's or Korsgaard's account, he would have to sacrifice a fundamental part of his own identity that will always make him lose a part of his own self-respect.

This thesis has by no account 'solved' Singer's paradox. The paradox remains a complicated matter within morality and there is plenty left to be said on it. Take for example some questions that naturally arise out of this thesis: Is there a possibility of breaking a promise to myself about what I take to be my identity? Is it possible that sometimes people do not know what their duty exactly is, and so commit themselves to what they *think* their duty is, but is in fact not? Can having self-respect ever be in our own self-interest? And what if people follow a duty not out of a sense of self-respect but the belief that some people will admire them for it? These are vexing questions and prove that there is must more research and considerations to be done upon this topic, but I do believe that this thesis has helped in giving clarity to what the Paradox's core problem is, and how it sits in the realm of morality. Further, I have hopefully made a somewhat convincing argument on why we should give more credibility to the belief that duties to the self exist and can be considered to be coherent. While I have not managed to solve the paradox, I do believe we have come to the root of Inspector's Javert conundrum. And while he commits to a tragic fate at the end of his story, I dare hope that if he had found this thesis during his last walk along the Seine, that he may have chosen a different path in the end, and greet the dawn while still remaining somewhat true to himself.

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