



WELFARE, ACHIEVEMENT, AND SELF-SACRIFICE

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Welfare, Achievement, and Self-Sacrifice

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MANY PHILOSOPHERS HOLD that the achievement of one's goals can contribute to one's welfare apart from whatever independent contributions that the objects of those goals, or the processes by which they are achieved, make.¹ Call this the *Achievement View*, and call those who accept it *achievementists*. Below, I argue that achievementists should accept both (a) that one factor that affects how much the achievement of a goal contributes to one's welfare is the amount that one has invested in that goal, and (b) that the amount that one has invested in a goal is a function of how much one has personally sacrificed for its sake, not a function of how much effort one has put into achieving it. So I will, contrary to at least one achievementist (viz., Keller 2004, 36), be arguing against the view that the greater the amount of productive effort that goes into achieving a goal, the more its achievement contributes to one's welfare. Furthermore, I argue that the reason that the achievement of those goals for which one has personally sacrificed matters more to one's welfare is that, in general, the redemption of one's self-sacrifices in itself contributes to one's welfare. Lastly, I argue that the view that the redemption of one's self-sacrifices in itself contributes to one's welfare is plausible, independent of whether or not we find the Achievement View plausible.

The paper has the following structure: In section 1, I explicate the Achievement View and its many forms. In section 2, I argue that the more one has invested in a goal, the more its achievement contributes to one's welfare. In section 3, I argue against taking investment in a goal to be a function of how much effort the agent has put into achieving it. Instead, we should, as I argue in section 4, take investment in a goal to be a function of how much the agent has personally sacrificed for its sake. In section 5, I argue that, in general, the redemption of one's self-sacrifices in itself contributes to one's welfare. I then end with some concluding remarks in section 6.

1. The Achievement View

The Achievement View has many forms, but before examining them, here, again, is my official statement of the view:

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¹ See, for instance, Scanlon (1998) and Keller (2004). By "independent contributions," I mean the contributions both that the object of the goal would make, independent of whether or not it is realized as an achievement, and that the process would make, independent of whether or not it successfully culminates in an achievement. I will have more to say about this shortly.

The Achievement View: The achievement of one's goals can contribute to one's welfare apart from whatever independent contributions that the objects of those goals, or the processes by which they are achieved, make.²

Even non-achievementists would accept that it is in one's self-interest to achieve a goal insofar as either the object of that goal or the process by which it is achieved is something that would, for independent reasons, contribute to one's welfare. For instance, it may be that, in the process of trying to achieve a goal, one must exercise and develop certain human excellences or higher capacities. Given a perfectionist theory of welfare, this process will itself contribute to one's welfare, apart from whether or not one actually succeeds in achieving one's goal. To take another example, suppose that one's goal is to acquire riches. Such riches would likely contribute instrumentally to one's welfare, regardless of whether they are realized as an achievement or as a windfall. So, when one achieves a goal, the independent contribution that the object of that goal makes to one's welfare is the contribution that it would have made even had it instead been realized as a windfall. Furthermore, the independent contribution that the process by which the goal was achieved makes to one's welfare is the contribution that that process would have made even had it not resulted in any achievement. The achievementist, then, holds that in addition to the independent contributions made by the object of the goal and the process by which it was achieved, the *achievement* of the goal can contribute to one's welfare.

Although some achievementists (e.g., Keller 2004, 27) hold that the achievement of one's goals *in itself* contributes to one's welfare, achievementists, as I have defined them, are not committed to this strong claim; they can take it or leave it. So, for instance, someone who holds that the achievement of one's goals contributes to one's welfare only when it redeems some earlier self-sacrifice counts as an achievementist even though she would deny that the achievement of one's goals *in itself* (i.e., on its own) contributes to one's welfare, for, on her view, an achievement cannot on its own — apart from being conjoined with some self-sacrifice that it redeems — contribute to one's welfare.³ What sets achievementists apart, then, is that they think that

² The Achievement View does not imply that achievement is the only thing that can contribute to a person's welfare. Indeed, most achievementists hold that other things in addition to achievement (e.g., pleasure) contribute to a person's welfare. See, for instance, Scanlon (1998, 123-124) and Keller (2004, 34).

³ Although it is the achievement of the object of the goal, say, riches, that redeems the earlier self-sacrifices, and it is the redemption of those earlier self-sacrifices that contributes to one's welfare, the contribution that the redemption of those earlier self-sacrifices makes is, I take it, distinct from the independent contribution that the object of the goal, i.e., the riches, makes to one's welfare, for, on the view just described, the contribution that the redemption of those earlier self-sacrifices makes depends on the riches being realized as an achievement

the achievement of a goal can contribute to one's welfare apart from whatever independent contributions that the object of the goal or the process by which it is achieved make, not that they think that the achievement of a goal can contribute to one's welfare apart from whatever relationship it bears to things outside of itself, such as the self-sacrifices that one made for the sake of its fruition. To keep this distinction clear, I will call the view that the achievement of one's goals *in itself* contributes to one's welfare the *Hardcore Achievement View* and those who accept it *hardcore achievementists*. All hardcore achievementists (e.g., Keller 2004) are achievementists, but not all achievementists are hardcore achievementists.

Above, I noted that the object of a person's goal can be realized and that this may count as a windfall, not as an achievement. So, what does it mean to have a goal and what constitutes its achievement? First, to have a goal as opposed to, say, a mere desire, one must intend to bring it about through one's own efforts. I may want to be rich, but unless I intend to make some effort to bring this about, then this is just a mere desire, not a goal. This necessary condition for having a goal explains why I cannot take some state of affairs as my goal unless I believe that there is something I can do to effect it (Keller 2004, 32). So, although I may want to possess an immortal soul, possessing an immortal soul is not something that I can take as my goal.

Second, achieving a goal involves having that goal realized due in part, at least, to one's own efforts. There is a difference, then, between achieving one's goal and having the object of one's goal realized as a windfall. To achieve one's goal, one's efforts must be productive — that is, efficacious in bringing about their intended effect.⁴ Suppose, for instance, that my goal is to acquire riches and that I start up my own company in the hopes of becoming rich. Unfortunately, however, the company is a complete failure, going bankrupt before ever turning a profit. Nevertheless, the object of my goal is realized, as a rich uncle dies unexpectedly and leaves me millions in inheritance. In this case, I did get what I was striving to achieve (namely, riches), but this was not something I *achieved*. Rather, it was a windfall.⁵

I should also explain that the Achievement View comes in both restricted and unrestricted versions. Thomas Scanlon (1998) accepts the restricted version, where it is the achievement of only one's rational goals that contributes to one's welfare. Simon Keller (2004), by contrast, accepts the unrestricted version, where the achievement of a goal contributes to one's welfare regardless of whether or not the goal is rational or worth achieving.

rather than as a windfall, whereas the independent contribution that the riches make does not.

⁴ Perhaps, though, other unintended effects can also count as achievements when they are themselves foreseeable effects of the achievement of the intended goal, as where one's goal is to cure cancer and, as a result of succeeding in doing this, one achieves fame. I thank Dave Shoemaker for this point.

⁵ I take this to follow from the meaning of the word "achievement." In any case, though, this is what achievementists take achievement to consist in — see, for instance, Keller (2004, 33).

In what follows, I will gloss over this distinction, for nothing that I will say hangs on which version we adopt. If the reader favors the restricted version, he or she may insert “rational” or some other suitable qualifier before “goal(s)” wherever appropriate.

Achievementists disagree not only as to whether it is the achievement of all goals or only certain goals that contributes to one’s welfare, but also as to what determines the extent to which a particular achievement contributes to one’s welfare. Achievementists appeal to various sorts of principles in this regard. Below I list just a few of them — the ones that will be most salient for our purposes:

The Desire Principle: The more one wants a goal to be realized, the more its achievement contributes to one’s welfare.⁶

The Efforts Principle: The greater the amount of productive effort that goes into achieving a goal, the more its achievement contributes to one’s welfare.⁷

The Sacrifice Principle: The greater the amount of self-sacrifice that goes into achieving a goal, the more its achievement contributes to one’s welfare.

The Difficulty Principle: The more difficult (by absolute or relative standards) it is to achieve a goal, the more its achievement contributes to one’s welfare.⁸

The Comprehensiveness Principle: The more “complex” or comprehensive a goal, the more its achievement contributes to one’s welfare.⁹

⁶ I have purposely glossed over temporal issues. Is it how much the agent wants the goal to be realized when the intention to achieve the goal is first formed, or when the goal is finally achieved, or at times in between that is relevant? What if the agent has already gone to great lengths and sacrificed much for the sake of achieving some goal and is now very close to achieving it, but no longer cares whether or not it is achieved?

⁷ Productive effort is effort that has been efficacious in bringing about one’s goal. Keller explicitly endorses the Efforts Principle. He says, “The greater the quantity of productive effort that an individual successfully devotes to the achievement of a particular goal, the more that achievement contributes to her welfare” (2004, 36).

⁸ It can be difficult for a particular individual to achieve a goal that by absolute standards is quite easy to achieve. For instance, something as simple as tying one’s shoelaces can constitute a significant achievement for someone who is severely disabled. Conversely, something that, by absolute standards, is quite difficult to achieve can be achieved quite easily by someone with extraordinary abilities.

Thomas Hurka would appear to accept this view, although Hurka’s discussions focus on the good rather than on what is good for a person. He says: “But what exactly is achievement? It clearly involves realizing a goal, but not every such realization counts as an achievement; for example, tying one’s shoelace does not unless one has some disability. And among achievements some are more valuable than others” (2006, 221). He says that what explains these differences between greater and lesser achievements is “surely in large part their difficulty” (2006, 221).

⁹ For a discussion of the comprehensiveness of a goal and how it affects the value of its achievement, see Raz (1986, 293) and Scanlon (1998, 122). For a discussion of the “com-

The Value Principle: The more valuable a goal's object, the more its achievement contributes to one's welfare.¹⁰

These principles are not jointly exhaustive, but, for our purposes, we need not list every possible principle that an achievementist might appeal to in accounting for the degree to which a particular achievement contributes to one's welfare. Neither are these principles mutually exclusive; an achievementist can, in theory, accept any combination of them. Nonetheless, the point of this paper is, in part, to argue that achievementists should at least accept some species of the following plausible principle:

The Investment Principle: The more that one has invested in a goal, the more its achievement contributes to one's welfare.

One way an achievementist might seek to accommodate the Investment Principle is to adopt the Efforts Principle and take an agent's investment in a goal to be a function of how much effort she has put into achieving it. Alternatively, an achievementist could take an agent's investment in a goal to be a function of how much she has personally sacrificed for its sake and adopt the Sacrifice Principle instead of, or in addition to, the Efforts Principle. I will argue that achievementists should accept the Sacrifice Principle but reject the Efforts Principle. But first I must clarify several points about the Achievement View itself.

In what follows, it will be important to keep the Achievement View distinct from one of its close cousins:

The Making-a-Mark View: That one's life makes or leaves some significant mark on this world in itself contributes to one's welfare — the more significant the mark made, the greater the contribution to one's welfare.¹¹

Although an achievementist could accept something close to the Making-a-Mark View by holding that only those achievements that make some mark on the world contribute to one's welfare, the Making-a-Mark View and the Achievement View are, in fact, quite distinct.¹² A person can make a significant mark on this world without thereby achieving anything, and a person can achieve something without leaving any significant mark on this world. To illustrate the former, consider Alexander Fleming's accidental discovery of

plexity" of a goal and how it affects the value of its achievement, see Hurka (1993, chap. 9; 2006, 224).

¹⁰ See, for instance, Hurka (2006, 233), although, as I mentioned in note 8 above, Hurka's discussions concern the value of achievement, and not necessarily its value for the agent.

¹¹ This view is inspired by what Ronald Dworkin calls the "model of impact" (2000, 251-253).

¹² James Griffin uses the word "accomplishment" for those achievements that make a mark and thereby give one's life "weight and point" (1996, 19-20).

the antibacterial properties of the mold *Penicillium notatum*. This discovery was not an achievement, but instead a windfall — the result of his not taking the proper precautions to avoid mold contamination of his bacterial cultures. Nevertheless, his discovery left a significant mark on this world. To illustrate the latter, learning Latin, summiting Mt. Everest, and reading the complete works of Karl Marx are all significant achievements, but none of them need leave any significant mark on this world. So although many of us want to leave some significant mark on this world, this is really something quite separate from achievement.

Lastly, the reason for my use of the word “can” in my official statement of the Achievement View is that an achievementist may hold that it is not the achievement of goals (or even the achievement of rational goals) *per se*, but only the achievement of, say, *difficult* goals, that contributes to one’s welfare. Such an achievementist would deny that the achievement of a goal always contributes to one’s welfare, for the achievement of a goal of zero difficulty would, on this view, contribute nothing to one’s welfare. The only versions of the Achievement View that hold that the achievement of a goal is always a benefit (at least, to some degree) are those versions that adopt the Desire Principle or the Efforts Principle. On the Desire Principle, the achievement of a goal will always contribute to one’s welfare, because taking some state of affairs as one’s goal is, in part, to desire to bring it about. And, on the Efforts Principle, the achievement of a goal will always contribute to one’s welfare, because a goal does not count as being achieved unless it has been realized due in part, at least, to one’s productive efforts.

2. In Defense of the Investment Principle

We can see the need for adopting some species of the Investment Principle, such as the Efforts Principle or the Sacrifice Principle, by considering the implausibility of those versions of the Achievement View that deny the Investment Principle. To illustrate, suppose that two people, Abe and Bert, want very badly to achieve a certain goal, the object of which is to be realized, if at all, in a little more than a year’s time. Whereas Abe justifiably believes that his only chance for success lies in pushing a certain button on his TV remote once this evening, Bert justifiably believes that his only chance for success lies in pushing a certain button on his TV remote constantly for at least one hour per day over the next year. And let us suppose that both Abe and Bert diligently act as they believe they must in order to succeed.

Now, even supposing that they both want their goals to be realized equally badly, it seems that Bert stands to gain more from success (or, if you prefer, stands to lose more from failure) than Abe does. That is, it seems that success will contribute more to Bert’s welfare than it will to Abe’s welfare. But what might account for this? Since they both have the exact same goal, neither the Value Principle nor the Making-a-Mark View can account for this difference. And since they both want the objects of their goals equally badly,

the Desire Principle cannot account for this difference. Perhaps, the Comprehensiveness Principle can account for this difference, since the achievement of Bert's goal requires him to achieve many more subordinate goals, such as that of pushing the button on this particular day for this particular hour. But imagine Carl, who is like Bert in every respect except that the button that Carl justifiably believes that he must push for one hour each day is one that requires twice as much pressure to push down. Thus Carl has to push twice as hard as Bert does (although still not very hard at all) and, consequently, endures twice as many minor aches and pains as Bert does. It seems, then, that Carl has more to gain from success than Bert does, and the Comprehensiveness Principle cannot account for this, for Carl's goals and Bert's goals have exactly the same hierarchical structure.

One may think that the Difficulty Principle accounts for this difference between Carl and Bert, for Carl's button is, in a sense, more difficult to press down in that it requires more physical pressure and thus more exertion. Nevertheless, pushing a button like Carl's, even for an hour each day over the next year, is not difficult at all in the relevant sense. In the relevant sense, a goal counts as being difficult to achieve only if its achievement would require great skill, talent, strength, stamina, or ingenuity. But there is certainly no skill, talent, or ingenuity needed to succeed in pushing such a button for an hour each day, nor is pushing such a button for an hour each day something that requires great strength or stamina — at least not for an able-bodied adult such as Carl. After all, it is something that a child could easily do; indeed, many children who play video games do it with ease for much more than an hour a day. In any case, let me just stipulate that, according to the Difficulty Principle, in order for an activity to count as difficult because of the amount of effort that it requires (as opposed to the amount of skill, talent, or ingenuity that it requires), the amount of effort must be sufficiently great so as to require great strength or stamina, thereby making success somewhat of a challenge. This will allow us to keep the Efforts Principle distinct from the Difficulty Principle, for otherwise the Efforts Principle would just become a mere species of the Difficulty Principle.¹³

It seems, then, that adopting the Investment Principle (or some species of it) is the only way to account for the fact that Carl has more at stake than the others do. Certainly, none of the other principles from the above list are able to account for this fact. Of course, the above list was never intended to be exhaustive, and so we cannot come to this conclusion simply by canvassing it. But it is difficult to think of any other possible principle, on or off this

¹³ I need not make this stipulation for my argument to succeed. If one prefers to say that any goal that requires some effort to achieve is thereby to some degree difficult to achieve and that the greater the amount of effort required, the more difficult it is to achieve, then the Difficulty Principle can account for the difference between Bert and Carl. But, in that case, the Difficulty Principle would, where it overlaps with the Efforts Principle, be a measure of investment. So my conclusion will stand: we need to adopt some species of the Investment Principle to account for our intuition that Carl has more at stake than the others do.

list, that could account for the fact that Carl has the most at stake. Besides, the Investment Principle is appealing not only because it allows us to account for the intuition that Carl has the most at stake, but also because the account it gives is itself intuitively plausible. If asked why we think that Carl has the most at stake, we would point to the fact that he has more invested in achieving his goal than either Abe or Bert does — that he did more, endured more, and sacrificed more for the sake of achieving his goal than they did.

Of course, the above argument will not convince everyone, for some may not share my intuition that Carl stands to gain more from success than the others do. But, perhaps, the best argument for accepting some version of the Investment Principle is yet to come. As we will see below, the Sacrifice Principle (a species of the Investment Principle) is entailed by what I call the *Not-for-Naught View*, a view that I explain in section 4 and argue for in section 5. My arguments for the Not-for-Naught View constitute independent grounds for accepting the Investment Principle.

In any case, some achievementists will not need convincing in the first place, for at least one achievementist, e.g., Keller, explicitly endorses a species of the Investment Principle, viz., the Efforts Principle. And other achievementists say things that suggest that they would endorse the Investment Principle. Scanlon, for instance, claims that the achievements that significantly contribute to one's welfare are those that have played some significant role in shaping one's life and activities (1998, 121). And it is plausible to suppose that how significant a role a particular goal plays in shaping one's life and activities is a measure of one's investment in that goal. To the extent that one reshapes one's life and activities for the sake of achieving that goal, one has invested in that goal's achievement.

Furthermore, as Scanlon claims, it is not enough to just have a goal; one must have done something to try to achieve it if its achievement is itself to contribute to one's welfare (1998, 121). If, instead, one were to hold that the realization of the object of one's goal contributes to one's welfare whether or not one has made any efforts or self-sacrifices for the sake of achieving it, then one would not be an achievementist, but a desire theorist who restricts the relevant desires to those that one has formed the intention to bring about. So what distinguishes achievementists from desire theorists is that achievementists hold that it is not the realization of goals *per se*, but only the realization of goals in which one has invested, that contributes to one's welfare. And arguably the more that one has invested in a goal, the more its achievement contributes to one's welfare. To illustrate, consider again the case of Abe. Unlike Bert and Carl, Abe has had to sacrifice almost no time or effort to achieve his goal; all he has had to do is push a button once. Given the fact that Abe has virtually nothing invested in achieving his goal, it seems that its achievement will itself do very little to nothing to enhance his welfare. Indeed, it would be odd if, by merely pushing a button, Abe could make the realization of the object of his goal a much more significant contribution to his welfare than it would have been had it been realized instead as merely a

windfall. The most plausible way to account for this fact is to appeal to the Investment Principle and the fact that Abe has very little invested in his goal. But I will not belabor the issue any further, for the most controversial issue for achievementists is not whether the Investment Principle is true, but whether putting more effort into a goal always constitutes a greater investment in that goal. In the next section, I argue that it does not.

3. Why We Should Reject the Efforts Principle

Achievementists should, I have argued, accept some species of the Investment Principle. In this section, I argue that it should not, however, be the Efforts Principle, for the Efforts Principle has a number of counterintuitive implications.

3.1 The Efforts Principle counterintuitively implies that, other things being equal, we should adopt goals that will require more productive effort to achieve. On the version of the Achievement View that accepts the Efforts Principle, the greater the productive effort involved in achieving a goal, the greater the contribution its achievement makes to one's welfare. This means that, other things being equal, I am better off adopting goals that will require more productive effort to achieve.¹⁴ Thus, if I am choosing which of two mutually exclusive goals, G_1 or G_2 , to adopt and G_1 will require more productive effort to achieve, then I should adopt G_1 as opposed to G_2 as my goal even if everything else is equal, including the likelihood of success, the degree of difficulty involved, the value of their respective objects, the amount of utility that will result from their achievement, the extent to which I will need to exercise and develop my higher capacities in the process of achieving them, etc. Since G_1 requires more productive effort to achieve, achieving it will *ipso facto* contribute more to my welfare, or so the Efforts Principle implies.

To illustrate, suppose that I am deciding whether to adopt as my goal that of having read either the complete works of Ernest Hemingway or the complete works of Leo Tolstoy (or substitute two authors whose complete works you take to be equally worth reading). Assuming that everything else is equal, I should choose the one that will require more productive effort to achieve, even if it will require more productive effort only because it will involve more trips to the library. Imagine that, contrary to fact, the complete works of each author consists in the exact same number of words and that the works of each are equally rewarding and intellectually engaging, but that Hemingway's complete works contain many more volumes, simply because they are shorter. And since I can only check out five books at a time, reading the complete works of Hemingway will require many more trips to the li-

¹⁴ Keller, a proponent of the Efforts Principle, explicitly acknowledges this fact. He says that the Achievement View implies "that your life will in the relevant respect go best if you set yourself goals that you will achieve and that will elicit the greatest possible amount of effort" (Keller 2004, 38).

brary. Given this fact alone, I am, according to the Efforts Principle, better off adopting having read the complete works of Hemingway as my goal. But this is highly counterintuitive. Why should I adopt one goal over another merely because it will require more trips to the library (and hence more productive effort) to achieve?

We might plausibly think that the more difficult it is to achieve a goal, the more its achievement contributes to one's welfare. But, in thinking this, we would be appealing to the Difficulty Principle, not the Efforts Principle, and we should not conflate the two. Although goals that require more effort to achieve are typically also more difficult to achieve, this is not always the case. The Efforts Principle and the Difficulty Principle can come apart, for some tasks require a lot of easy, mindless, and repetitive effort.¹⁵ The completion of such tasks will count for a lot on the Efforts Principle, but for little to nothing on the Difficulty Principle. Consider, for instance, the task of counting two jars of marbles using a push-button tally counter. This involves twice as much effort as counting only one of the jars using the same method (assume that the two jars are of the same size and equally full), but it is not twice as difficult. Indeed, counting two jars of marbles using this method (which does not even require one to keep track of the count) is no more difficult than counting one jar, for it does not require any greater skill, talent, strength, stamina, or ingenuity. (Assume that the jars are small enough that the two jars can be counted by this method in a matter of a few minutes, thus requiring no stamina at all.) So we see that the Efforts Principle and the Difficulty Principle do come apart. Counting two jars, as opposed to one jar, counts for twice as much on the Efforts Principle, but for no more on the Difficulty Principle. The same is true of taking more trips to the library.

We might also plausibly think that the more significant a mark that an achievement leaves on this world, the more it contributes to one's welfare. But again we should not conflate this view, namely, the Making-a-Mark View, with the Efforts Principle even if typically those achievements that leave a significant mark on this world require great effort to achieve. The two can come apart. For instance, walking on one's hands from Oxford to London is a remarkable deed, an achievement of sorts, but it need not make any significant mark on this world, especially if it goes completely unnoticed and unrecorded even by those who produce *The Guinness Book of World Records*.¹⁶ Since some may find the Making-a-Mark View plausible, let me just stipulate that I will leave the same mark on this world whichever author I choose to read and so the Making-a-Mark View gives me no reason to choose one author over the other.

¹⁵ They can also come apart in that something can be quite difficult by absolute standards and yet be effortless for someone with extraordinary abilities. On some accounts, Mozart was able to compose music effortlessly. This does not, however, make his brilliant symphonies any less of an achievement. I thank Thomas Hurka for this example.

¹⁶ I borrow this example from Griffin (1986, 65).

In the end, then, my suspicion is that what plausibility the Efforts Principle may initially seem to have derives entirely from the fact that the Efforts Principle oftentimes overlaps with the Difficulty Principle and the Making-a-Mark View, which are each much more plausible than the Efforts Principle. The Efforts Principle, by contrast, is clearly implausible, as we see when we consider the case of which author to read, a case in which the Efforts Principle does not overlap with either the Difficulty Principle or the Making-a-Mark View. The mere fact that one goal will require more effort (e.g., more trips to the library) to achieve is no reason to adopt it over a goal that is otherwise equal. And, as we will see presently, the Efforts Principle has other counterintuitive implications as well.

3.2 The Efforts Principle counterintuitively implies that, other things being equal, we should expend more productive effort to achieve our goals. The Efforts Principle counterintuitively implies that if I have two mutually exclusive ways of achieving the same goal, both of which are equally likely to succeed, then, other things being equal, I am better off choosing whichever means will be more effort-intensive. To illustrate, suppose that my goal is to solve a set of extremely simple arithmetic problems (a goal worth pursuing, let us assume), and that I can do so either by using paper, pencil, and the methods I learned in elementary school or by going out and purchasing a calculator and using it instead. The first method will certainly involve more effort, but it will not be more difficult, just more tedious. Let us assume that the former will involve more productive effort even factoring in the effort that went into making the money needed to purchase the calculator. And let us assume that, in other welfare-related respects (e.g., my hedonic utility), I will be just as well off whether I use paper and pencil or the calculator to solve the problems. Assume, then, that although I will not enjoy the extra time spent doing the problems using paper and pencil, I will, with the money that I save from not purchasing a calculator, be able to purchase something from which I get a compensating amount of hedonic utility. Yet, despite these utility effects as well as everything else being equal, the Efforts Principle implies that my life goes better for me if I do these problems without the aid of a calculator, for the more productive effort I put into achieving this goal, the more its achievement contributes to my welfare. But this is quite counterintuitive. It is hard to see how the mere fact that doing the problems without the aid of a calculator will involve more productive effort constitutes a self-interested reason for me to do so.

Although I have claimed that it is counterintuitive to think that it would be better to take one means as opposed to another to achieving a goal merely because one would involve more effort than the other, I do not deny that there can be a point to taking the more challenging means to achieving a goal. Taking the more challenging means to achieving a goal can have a number of beneficial effects: (1) it can make the process of achieving it more enjoyable, for we often enjoy a challenge; (2) it can make the goal more diffi-

cult to achieve and, if the Difficulty Principle is true, this can itself make its achievement more beneficial; and (3) it can make the process of achieving it involve the greater exercise and development of one's higher capacities, which in turn can be beneficial. It is because of such benefits that games have rules that are designed to make the relevant goal more difficult to achieve.¹⁷ And it is also for such benefits that some people purposely take the more challenging means to achieving their goals. For instance, some take on the challenge of summiting Mt. Everest without the aid of supplemental oxygen. And others choose to build cabins without the use of power tools. These people are not irrational in adopting the less efficient means to achieving their goals, but it is not the Efforts Principle, but the positive effects of taking the more challenging means, that explains the rationality of their actions. It is true, of course, that the more challenging means is oftentimes the more effort-intensive means. But, as we have seen, this is not always the case. Sometimes one means will be more effort-intensive but no more difficult or challenging. For instance, solving a set of simple arithmetic problems without the aid of a calculator is more effort-intensive, but no more challenging. And, in such cases, there seems, contrary to the Efforts Principle, to be no point at all to adopting the more effort-intensive means if everything else (including the effects on one's hedonic utility) is equal.

To sum up, the Efforts Principle implausibly implies both (1) that, other things being equal, we should adopt goals that require more productive effort to achieve and (2) that, other things being equal, we should expend more productive effort to achieve our goals.¹⁸ Given these counterintuitive implications, we should look elsewhere for some more plausible species of the Investment Principle, a task to which I now turn.

4. Why the Sacrifice Principle is Superior to the Efforts Principle

So far, we have seen that achievementists should accept some species of the Investment Principle, but that it should not be the Efforts Principle. Below, I argue that achievementists should accept the Sacrifice Principle instead of the Efforts Principle. The Sacrifice Principle captures everything that is plausible about the Efforts Principle without having any of its counterintuitive implications.

¹⁷ For instance, in golf, the goal is to get the ball from the tee to the inside of the hole, but the rules forbid taking the most efficient means to achieving this goal: picking up the ball off the tee, carrying it down the fairway, and dropping it in the hole. See Hurka (2006) for an excellent discussion of games and the good of achieving what is difficult. The golf example is his.

¹⁸ Another counterintuitive implication applies only to the unrestricted version of the Achievement View that accepts the Efforts Principle, viz., Keller's view. This view implausibly implies that not only am I better off, other things being equal, taking the more effort-intensive means to achieving the goals that I already have, but I am also better off adopting more achievable goals whether they are worthwhile goals or not. Keller explicitly acknowledges this implication of his view — see Keller (2004, 38).

Admittedly, something about the Efforts Principle seems plausible even after we extricate it from other, often overlapping, principles and views such as the Difficulty Principle and the Making-a-Mark View. Even if there is no point *per se* to adopting goals that will require more effort to achieve, and no point *per se* to taking the more effort-intensive means to achieving our goals, the Efforts Principle is often right in holding that we stand to gain more by succeeding (or, alternatively, stand to lose more by failing) to achieve those goals in which we have invested much effort. The thought seems to be that if one puts a lot of effort into trying to achieve some goal and fails, then all those efforts will have been in vain. And it seems worse to have toiled in vain than to have toiled for some point or purpose. But such thoughts, I will argue, are better captured by the Sacrifice Principle than by the Efforts Principle. Actually, they are, as we will see, best captured by the following broader view, which entails the Sacrifice Principle:

The Not-for-Naught View: The redemption of one's self-sacrifices in itself contributes to one's welfare — the closer that one's self-sacrifices come to being fully redeemed, the greater the contribution their redemption makes to one's welfare.¹⁹

The Not-for-Naught View entails the Sacrifice Principle, for, on the Naught-for-Naught View, the redemption of one's self-sacrifices contributes to one's welfare and (as we will see below) in proportion to how much one has personally sacrificed. This plus the fact that achieving a goal for the sake of which one has personally sacrificed redeems those self-sacrifices proves that the Sacrifice Principle is true: that the greater the amount of self-sacrifice that goes into achieving a goal, the more its achievement contributes to one's welfare. The Not-for-Naught View entails the Sacrifice Principle but is broader than the Sacrifice Principle in that it allows that one's self-sacrifices can be redeemed by events that do not constitute an achievement. I will have more to say about why we should accept these broader implications below,

¹⁹ In his paper "Well-Being and Time," J. David Velleman comes very close to endorsing this view. He says: "The point of learning from a misfortune, surely, is to prevent the misfortune from being a total loss. Learning from the misfortune confers value on it, by making it the means to one's edification" (1993, 337 — see also 334-5). But Velleman notes that he is not committed to the truth of "most" of the value judgments that he makes in the paper. As he says, he offers each of them only as "an intuitively plausible illustration of the possibility that periods containing equal sums of momentary welfare can have different overall welfare values" (1993, 331-2). Perhaps, though, both Jeff McMahan and Michael Weber do endorse the Not-for-Naught View. Drawing inspiration from Velleman's work, they each make the same sorts of claims that Velleman makes but without such qualification — see McMahan (2002, 177) and Weber (2004, 80-84).

The Not-for-Naught View does not imply that the redemption of one's self-sacrifices is the only thing that can contribute to one's welfare. Certainly, pleasure is also something that can contribute to one's welfare. Moreover, the Not-for-Naught View is compatible with both the Achievement View and the Hardcore Achievement View, and so a proponent of the Not-for-Naught View can hold that achievement is something that in itself contributes to one's welfare whether or not one has sacrificed for the sake of that achievement.

but first I want explicate the Not-for-Naught View and explain how both it and the Sacrifice Principle avoid the sorts of counterintuitive implications that plague the Efforts Principle.

4.1 Explicating the Not-for-Naught View. Let me start by explaining that a self-sacrifice involves an agent knowingly and deliberately choosing a course of action that produces a prudentially sub-optimal outcome for herself (i.e., sub-optimal in terms of her welfare) for the sake of increasing the chances that some desired end will be realized (Heathwood, manuscript).²⁰ We determine the extent of a self-sacrifice by comparing the agent's actual welfare with what it would have been had she instead acted so as to produce the prudentially optimal outcome for herself.²¹ Given the deliberate nature of a self-sacrifice, the Not-for-Naught View does not imply that a person benefits every time some hardship she endures turns out to be instrumental in bringing about one of her desired ends. Take, for instance, the case where a dog bites a lonely man and this event somehow leads to his getting what he most wants: a loving partner. Imagine, for instance, that while waiting in the emergency room he meets someone with whom he falls in love. Finding a lover certainly counts as a benefit, but the instrumentality of the dog bite does not. In this case, there is no self-sacrifice that is in need of redemption, for he did not willingly suffer the dog bite for the sake of bringing about any end.²²

On the Not-for-Naught View, whether or not a person's self-sacrifices count as being redeemed depends on her actual ends, the ends that, if attained, would make her self-sacrifices worthwhile, at least, by her own lights. To illustrate, consider the following case. Dr. Smith, a scientist, has spent

²⁰ More precisely, an act x is a self-sacrificing act if and only if there exists an available alternative y such that the agent would be better off were she to perform y , and yet she performs x , knowing that this means that she will be worse off, because she wants to bring about some end that she believes has a greater chance of being realized if she performs x than if she performs y .

²¹ It may seem odd that I define self-sacrifice in terms of what is prudentially sub-optimal when, on the Not-for-Naught View, what counts as prudentially sub-optimal depends, in part, on whether one's self-sacrifices are redeemed or not. But the oddity here is only apparent. Suppose I do x and that as a result my welfare level is 40, where this welfare level takes into account the fact that my doing x renders certain earlier self-sacrifices redeemed and others unredeemed. Further suppose that I could have done y instead and that, had I done so, my welfare level would have been 50, where this welfare level takes into account the fact that my doing y would render certain earlier self-sacrifices redeemed and others unredeemed. Lastly, assume that there is no alternative act available to me where my welfare level would be greater than 50 and that, therefore, my doing y would have been prudentially optimal. My self-sacrifice was, then, 10 units of welfare. We just compare my welfare in the actual world with what my welfare would have been had I performed the prudentially optimal act.

²² My intention, here, is neither to deny nor to espouse the broader view according to which it is worse generally to endure a hardship that is for naught than to endure a hardship that has some point, regardless of whether or not that hardship is self-imposed, thereby constituting a self-sacrifice. Rather, my intention is only to point out that the Not-for-Naught View is narrower than this view.

most of her adult life working on a cure for Alzheimer's. For the sake of finding a cure, she has made tremendous self-sacrifices, not just in terms of the long hours she has spent working at the lab, but also in terms of her family life. At times, she regrets her decision to neglect her family, but at other times she thinks that all will be vindicated if only she succeeds in curing people of Alzheimer's. Dr. Smith has also had to forgo the professional recognition and advancement that would normally come to someone as talented and dedicated as herself, for she has had to conduct much of her research in secret since it involves the illegal use of fetal stem cells. The story almost has a happy ending, as Dr. Smith eventually discovers a cure. Unfortunately, though, she suffers a massive coronary on the way to publish her results, and the first person to find her collapsed on the floor with the only records of her research laid out beside her is a radical pro-lifer who calls 911 but then collects and destroys her records. Dr. Smith dies a few days later in the hospital after a second coronary and all knowledge of the cure dies with her. In the end, then, Dr. Smith fails to cure anyone. And this, according to the Not-for-Naught View (and the Achievement View as well) is a terrible misfortune *for her*, because her goal, we will assume, was not just to discover a cure, but to cure people of Alzheimer's. Assume that had Dr. Smith known she was merely going to discover a cure but not cure anyone, she would not have been willing to make any of the self-sacrifices. Thus we must conclude that her self-sacrifices were unredeemed despite the fact that she achieved a great intellectual feat, i.e., the discovery of a cure. So we see that a person's self-sacrifices can have a point and yet be unredeemed when that point is not one of the agent's *actual* ends.

Conversely, a seemingly pointless self-sacrifice can turn out to be redeemed when assessed in terms of the agent's actual ends. Imagine, for instance, that a number of World War II Allied POWs work very hard, risking life and limb, to construct a bridge over the River Kwai, but the bridge is destroyed upon its completion by Allied forces. We should not jump to the conclusion that all their efforts and self-sacrifices have been in vain, for, as they see things, the point was probably not to make the transport of Japanese troops and supplies across the River Kwai possible. More likely, the point for them was to feel more like human beings and less like caged animals. If so, the destruction of the bridge does not render their efforts and self-sacrifices pointless at all. (Of course, in the 1957 film *The Bridge on the River Kwai*, the motives of the Alec Guinness character are quite a bit more complicated.)²³

Although we are to assess whether or not a person's self-sacrifices have been redeemed in terms of her actual ends, these ends need not be the ones that she set out to achieve in making those self-sacrifices. To illustrate, suppose that a man named Dave works a second job for a number of years to save for his daughter's college education and, in the process, sacrifices some of his happiness. Tragically, though, his daughter dies just before she is about

²³ Thanks to Steve Luper for this example.

to enter college, and so Dave ends up using the money instead to provide a more comfortable retirement for him and his wife. Although Dave's self-sacrifices do not result in the end that he had set out to achieve, we should not conclude that his self-sacrifices have been in vain, for his self-sacrifices did result in a more comfortable retirement for him and his wife, which is, we will assume, one of his ends and one for the sake of which he would have been willing to have made those self-sacrifices. So a person's self-sacrifices can be redeemed even if not in the way originally anticipated.²⁴

We also need to consider what determines the extent to which the redemption of one's self-sacrifices contributes to one's welfare. There are a number of factors here. First, as already mentioned, the greater the extent to which one has self-sacrificed, the more there is in need of redemption, and thus the more the redemption of those self-sacrifices will contribute to one's welfare. And we assess the extent of one's self-sacrifices by comparing how well off the person actually is with how well off she would have been had she not made the self-sacrifices in question and instead acted so as to produce the prudentially optimal outcome for herself. Second, the greater the extent to which those self-sacrifices were, by the agent's own lights, worth making, the closer those self-sacrifices come to being fully redeemed and, thus, the greater the contribution to her welfare. We assess the extent to which those self-sacrifices were, from the agent's own lights, worth making by asking to what extent the agent would have thought her self-sacrifices worth making had she known from the start what the outcome was going to be and how instrumental her self-sacrifices would be in bringing about that outcome.²⁵ Third, if we accept a restricted version of the Not-for-Naught View, we need to also ask to what extent the agent's self-sacrifices were objectively worth making — that is, we must ask to what extent the ends realized were ends worth sacrificing for.

It is important to note that, on the Not-for-Naught View, there is an upper limit to the extent to which the redemption of a self-sacrifice can con-

²⁴ Actually, the view that I have been describing is only one possible version of the Not-for-Naught View, the version that I take to be the most plausible. Some other versions would be more restrictive, holding that the realization of an end can redeem a self-sacrifice only if that self-sacrifice was made with the intention of bringing about that end (specifically) and/or holding that the end realized must make the self-sacrifice objectively worth making, not just worth making by the agent's own lights. Even if I am wrong about which version is the most plausible, this will not affect the conclusions that I argue for here and below: (1) that the Not-for-Naught View entails the Sacrifice Principle, (2) that both the Not-for-Naught View and the Sacrifice Principle avoid the sorts of counterintuitive implications that plague the Efforts Principle, and (3) the Not-for-Naught View is plausible independent of whether or not we find the Achievement View plausible.

²⁵ Alternatively, we could make this assessment by asking the agent, after the fact, to what extent she thinks that her self-sacrifices were worth making now that she knows what their effects have been. We should also consider whether we should be asking these questions of her actual self or some idealized version of herself (e.g., one that is fully informed and whose desires are maximally unified and coherent). For now, I wish to sidestep these issues as none of my arguments hangs on how they are resolved.

tribute to a person's welfare. The good in redeeming a self-sacrifice never more than compensates for the self-sacrifice itself. When self-sacrifices lead to the attainment of some desired end, they are redeemed and are thereby made less bad or even not bad at all, but they are never thereby remade into something of positive value.²⁶ Thus, on the Not-for-Naught View, there is no point to making self-sacrifices merely for the sake of redeeming them. As far as the Not-for-Naught View is concerned, a person benefits from desired ends that result from her self-sacrifices up to the point where she would have still been willing to make the sacrifices had she known from the start what the outcome was going to be. At this point, her self-sacrifices are, and by her own lights, fully redeemed. At this point, these self-sacrifices detract much less, if at all, from the welfare value of her life. But, if, on top of this, other desired ends come about as a result of her self-sacrifices, this would not, as far as the Not-for-Naught View is concerned, contribute to the welfare value of her life beyond whatever welfare value the desired ends themselves contribute.

Of course, to say that, on the Not-for-Naught View, there is an upper limit to the extent to which the *redemption of a self-sacrifice* can contribute to a person's welfare is not to presume that there must also be an upper limit to the extent to which the *achievement a goal* can contribute to a person's welfare.²⁷ The Not-for-Naught View is compatible with the Achievement View (it is even compatible with the Hardcore Achievement View), and an achievementist may hold that there is no upper limit to how much an achievement can contribute to a person's welfare. For instance, if the achievementist holds that there is no limit to how difficult a goal can be to achieve and/or no limit to how valuable the object of a goal can be, then the achievementist can, in adopting the Difficulty Principle and/or the Value Principle, hold that there is no limit to the extent to which an achievement can contribute to a person's welfare. Moreover, the achievementist can hold that the achievement of a goal constitutes a benefit even when that achievement does not redeem any self-sacrifices. Suppose, for instance, that Mozart was able to compose his great symphonies without making any self-sacrifices. In that case, these achievements would not redeem any self-sacrifices, and thus the Not-for-Naught View would not imply that these achievements contribute to his wel-

²⁶ As I understand it, redemption is not a phenomenon whereby some good simply offsets some bad. Rather, the redeeming event alters (or, at least, determines) the meaning, and thus the value, of a given self-sacrifice, changing its significance in the narrative of one's life and thus changing what contribution it makes to the welfare value of one's life as a whole — see Velleman (1993, esp. 337). Thus, on the Not-for-Naught View, the disvalue of a self-sacrifice is not offset but altered (or determined) by the redeeming event in the way that some hedonists hold that the value of the state of someone's being pleased/pained that *p* is altered (or determined) by, for instance, whether or not *p* turns out to be (or is) true — see, for instance, Fred Feldman's *Truth-Adjusted Intrinsic Attitudinal Hedonism* (2004, 112-114). For more on whether a redeeming event alters or determines the welfare value of a given self-sacrifice, see section 5.2 below.

²⁷ I thank Thomas Hurka and Dale Dorsey for demonstrating the need to make this explicit.

fare. Neither, though, would the Not-for-Naught View imply that these achievements do not contribute to his welfare. The proponent of the Not-for-Naught View is free to adopt the Achievement View (and even the Hardcore Achievement View) and hold that achievements contribute to a person's welfare beyond whatever contribution they make in redeeming her self-sacrifices.

4.2 How both the Sacrifice Principle and the Not-for-Naught View avoid the sorts of counterintuitive implications that plague the Efforts Principle. Recall that the Efforts Principle implies both (1) that, other things being equal, we should adopt goals that require more productive effort to achieve and (2) that, other things being equal, we should expend more productive effort to achieve our goals. Neither the Sacrifice Principle nor the Not-for-Naught View imply either (1) or (2), for the amount that an agent has personally sacrificed for the sake of some goal does not go hand in hand with the amount of effort that she has put into achieving that goal. More on this follows in subsection 4.3 below. Furthermore, both the Sacrifice Principle and the Not-for-Naught View avoid other similar sorts of counterintuitive implications, such as analogues of (1) and (2), where, in each case, "more productive effort" is replaced with "more self-sacrifice."

With regard to (1)'s analogue, the Not-for-Naught View does not imply that there is any point to adopting goals that will require more self-sacrifice to achieve, for, as far as the Not-for-Naught View is concerned, there is no point to making self-sacrifices just so that they can be redeemed. On the Not-for-Naught View, a redeemed self-sacrifice is never better than the absence of that self-sacrifice. The point of redeeming one's self-sacrifices is only to ensure that they will not mar one's life quite as badly as they would if they were left unredeemed. Thus, in the example concerning which author to read, the fact that reading Hemingway's complete works would require more trips to the library is no reason to adopt the former as opposed to the latter as one's goal. Even if (contrary to the original example where everything else was held equal) making such extra trips to the library were self-sacrificing, there is, on the Not-for-Naught View, no point to making such self-sacrifices just to redeem them.

Even when combined with the Sacrifice Principle, the Achievement View need not imply (1)'s analogue either. Although an achievementist who accepts the Sacrifice Principle *could* hold that whatever portion of an achievement's welfare value that is attributable to the extent of one's self-sacrifices is so great as to more than compensate for the disvalue of those self-sacrifices (in which case the view would imply (1)'s analogue), there is no reason why the achievementist *should* adopt such an implausible view. The achievementist should instead, following the Not-for-Naught View's lead, hold that whatever portion of an achievement's welfare value that is attributable to the extent of one's self-sacrifices is never so great as to more than compensate for the disvalue of those self-sacrifices.

With regard to (2)'s analogue, the Not-for-Naught View implies that what is important is to redeem the self-sacrifices that one has already made, not to make as many self-sacrifices as possible along the way to achieving one's goals. So there is no point to taking one means to achieving a goal over another just because the one will require more self-sacrifice than the other. Indeed, there is a reason *not* to do so: other things being equal, additional self-sacrificing only makes one worse off. And, in the case of solving the arithmetic problems, where the self-sacrifices are the same whichever means one chooses, the Not-for-Naught View does not imply that there is any reason to adopt the more effort-intensive means.

As with (1)'s analogue, the achievementist who accepts the Sacrifice Principle can avoid (2)'s analogue by holding that whatever portion of an achievement's value that is attributable to the extent of one's self-sacrifices is never so great as to more than compensate for the disvalue of those self-sacrifices.

4.3 The Sacrifice Principle is superior to the Efforts Principle in its account of what constitutes investment in a goal. The amount of effort that someone has put into achieving a goal is not a good measure of how much an agent has invested in that goal. As I will argue below, an agent can be quite heavily invested in a goal in which she has put little effort, and an agent can be little invested in a goal in which she has put much effort. So how much effort one has put into achieving some goal does not go hand in hand with how much one has sacrificed for the sake of achieving that goal, and where these come apart, the latter is, I will argue, a more intuitively plausible measure of one's investment in that goal. Thus the achievementist should accept the Sacrifice Principle, not the Efforts Principle, in accommodating the Investment Principle.

One can sacrifice for the sake of achieving a goal without putting any effort into achieving it, for sometimes pursuing a goal involves incurring certain opportunity costs before even putting any effort into achieving it, and willingly incurring such costs for the sake of achieving some goal counts as a self-sacrifice. Suppose, for instance, that quite unexpectedly and at the last possible moment NASA selects Ed, a high school teacher, to fly on the next space shuttle mission, assuming, of course, that he can successfully complete the required training. Ed is thrilled about the opportunity to participate in the space program, a dream that he had never thought possible. But if Ed is going to fly on the next space shuttle flight, he must report immediately to the Johnson Space Center in Houston to begin his training or they will have to go with an alternate. However, his wife is about to give birth to their first child. So if Ed chooses to report for training, he will miss the birth of his child. And if he does not report for training, he will miss the chance to fly on the space shuttle. As it happens, Ed chooses to report for training and, just as he arrives at the Johnson Space Center, he is informed that his wife gave birth to a healthy baby boy while he was in transit. Intuitively, it seems that Ed has already invested a fair amount in succeeding in his goal, even though

he has not even started his training and so has not yet put any effort into achieving his goal. After all, he had very much wanted both to witness the birth of his first child and to help his wife during the natural delivery, and he had even spent many hours in birthing classes preparing for it. If we want to account for the intuition that Ed already has a lot invested in successfully completing his goal of flying on the space shuttle, we will need to allow that the extent of one's investment in a goal can exceed the extent of one's efforts to achieve it.

Of course, even if one's investment can be greater than one's efforts, there is still the issue of whether expending effort always counts as a form of investing. I think not, at least, not in the sense that tracks the extent to which an achievement contributes to one's welfare, for sometimes two people will have expended the same amount of effort, but it is intuitive to think that the one whose efforts constitute the greater self-sacrifice has more to gain from success than the other. To illustrate, consider two Olympic athletes: Fred and Greg. Let's suppose that Fred and Greg both put the same amount of effort into achieving their goals of winning Olympic medals. Both spend the same amount of time away from home training at the Olympic Training Center in Lake Placid, New York. Both exert themselves just as much in their workouts. But suppose that whereas Fred is a loner who is perfectly content being away from home, Greg is a husband and a father who hates being away from his family. And suppose that whereas Fred enjoys training more than anything, Greg dislikes the training and trains only in the hopes of winning a medal.²⁸ So Greg has to sacrifice more to achieve his goals. In particular, he laments both that he has to train so hard and also that he has to spend so much time apart from his family. Greg is willing to make these self-sacrifices only because he has a real shot at winning a medal if he does. By contrast, Fred makes no self-sacrifices; indeed, he is doing exactly what he most enjoys doing. Even if he had not been a contender for an Olympic medal, he would have still signed on to train with the medal contenders, because there is nothing that he would rather be doing.

In this case, it seems that Greg stands to gain more from succeeding (or lose more from failing) in his goal of winning an Olympic medal than Fred does, despite the fact that both have put the exact same amount of effort into achieving their goals and despite the fact that their respective efforts, if successful, will count as equally productive.²⁹ After all, if Greg fails, all his

²⁸ I am assuming that Fred's training counts as effort even though he enjoys it and would not prefer to be doing anything else. If, instead, exertion counts as effort only if it is somehow unpleasant or otherwise self-sacrificing, then the Efforts Principle is just a species of the Sacrifice Principle, where a self-sacrifice constitutes an investment only when it involves exertion. This would be quite arbitrary, though. Why would only those self-sacrifices that involve exertion matter?

²⁹ This is not to say, nor would the Not-for-Naught View imply, that Fred's life is made no better by the successful achievement of his goal. The claim, here, is that Greg gains more in achieving his goal, not that Fred gains nothing in achieving his.

self-sacrifices will have been in vain. He will rightfully lament that he should have stayed home. But, if Fred fails, he will not lament his efforts, for he has had to sacrifice nothing in making them. Even if he had no chance of succeeding, he would have been no better off doing anything other than what he in fact did.

To sum up, it seems that, intuitively speaking, Ed has a lot invested in his goal before he has even put any effort into achieving it and that Fred has very little invested in his goal despite having spent years training for it. In cases such as Ed's, self-sacrifice may involve no expenditure of effort. And, in cases such as Fred's, huge efforts may involve no self-sacrifice. Because one's investment in a goal seems to be a function of one's self-sacrifices and not one's efforts, and because the Sacrifice Principle need not have the sorts of counterintuitive implications that plague the Efforts Principle, achievementists should adopt the Sacrifice Principle in place of the Efforts Principle as the best way of accounting for the Investment Principle.

5. Why the Not-for-Naught View is Plausible in its Own Right

As we will see presently, the Not-for-Naught View can account for some intuitions that the Achievement View cannot account for. This gives us reason to accept the Not-for-Naught View independent of whether or not we accept the Achievement View.

5.1 The Shape-of-a-Life Phenomenon. Unlike the Achievement View, the Not-for-Naught View can explain why a life that gets progressively better is often preferable to one that gets progressively worse, even where both lives contain equal sums of momentary well-being.³⁰ (Momentary well-being is the welfare value that some momentary segment of one's life would have if that segment existed alone, apart from any relationship it has with other segments of one's life.) To illustrate, consider David Velleman's description of two possible lives:

One life begins in the depths but takes an upward trend: a childhood of deprivation, a troubled youth, struggles and setbacks in early adulthood, followed finally by success and satisfaction in middle age and a peaceful retirement. Another life

³⁰ Note that I have used the word "often" as opposed to "always," for it seems to me that there are cases where there is no reason to prefer a life that gets progressively better to a life that gets progressively worse. For instance, imagine two people in intermittent comas, who every so often wake from their comas to experience a brief moment of physical pleasure. Suppose that, in one life, these brief episodes of pleasure are relatively frequent at first but gradually taper off. In the other life, however, the converse is true: the brief episodes of pleasure are infrequent at first but gradually increase in frequency. In one life, things get progressively worse, and, in the other, things get progressively better, but there seems to be no reason to prefer the one life to the other. So a life that gets progressively better is not always preferable to a life that gets progressively worse. It follows, then, that a mere difference in the trajectory of a life (improving versus declining) is not enough to make one life preferable to another.

begins at the heights but slides downhill: a blissful childhood and youth, precocious triumphs and rewards in early adulthood, followed by a midlife strewn with disasters that lead to misery in old age. Surely, we can imagine two such lives containing equal sums of momentary well-being. Your retirement is as blessed in one life as your childhood is in the other; your nonage is as blighted in one life as your dotage is in the other. (1993, 331)³¹

Intuitively, it seems that the first life, where things get progressively better, is preferable to the second, where things get progressively worse, and it seems this way even if we are to imagine that both lives contain the same achievements, occurring only at different stages in each life. The first is a better life, not just in the sense that it makes for a better life story, but also in the sense that it is the better life to lead, self-interestedly speaking. That such lives are preferable is known as the “Shape-of-a-Life Phenomenon.”³² But what explains this phenomenon? Some philosophers (e.g., Slote 1983) think that lives with an upward trajectory are, other things being equal, preferable to lives with a downward trajectory, because the benefits and the harms that are incurred late in life have a proportionately greater effect on the value of one’s life than the benefits and the harms that are incurred early in life. On this view, it is the mere timing of a harm or a benefit that affects its impact on one’s life. However, Velleman convincingly argues that this is not the case. On Velleman’s view, the reason a benefit that comes late in life can have a more profound effect on the value of one’s life is that benefits experienced late in life can redeem misfortunes incurred early in life. So a life that gets progressively better is, in some cases, to be preferred to a life that gets progressively worse, because only in the case of the former and not in the case of the latter can one’s earlier misfortunes be redeemed. In the life that gets progressively better, the earlier trials and tribulations can lead to the later successes and thereby redeem themselves. But in a life where the successes precede the misfortunes, the misfortunes could not have served as the foundation for those successes and so will have been suffered for naught.

³¹ And we can imagine that both lives contain the same amount of achievement.

³² I borrow this label from Feldman (2004, chap. 6). Feldman’s own view is that neither the shape nor the narrative structure of a life matters in itself. Rather, what matters, on his view, is whether the subject notices that her life has a certain shape or narrative structure and is pleased that it has this shape or structure. If she does not notice or is not pleased when she does, then neither the shape nor the structure of her life makes any difference to the welfare value of her life. Moreover, a person whose life has, for instance, a downward trajectory will be just as well off (other things being equal) as a person whose life has an upward trajectory if the former is just as pleased that her life has a downward trajectory as the latter is pleased that her life has an upward trajectory. Lastly, it seems to me that Feldman’s view fails to account for the phenomenon in question. The phenomenon to be explained, as I see it, is how two lives with *equal* sums of momentary well-being can have different welfare values simply in virtue of the fact that those lives are shaped or structured differently. But, on Feldman’s view, it is only when one is pleased that one’s life has a certain shape (thereby experiencing some additional momentary well-being) that one’s life is made better.

So, on Velleman's view, it is not the timing of the benefits and the misfortunes but the causal relations between them that explains why a life that gets progressively better is often preferable to one that gets progressively worse. To see this, compare the following two lives, which are loosely based on yet another one of Velleman's examples (1993, 337):

Hal's Life: Hal foolishly rushes into an ill-advised marriage with his high school sweetheart, and although they quickly hit upon hard times, Hal struggles to make the marriage work, making many self-sacrifices along the way. Despite his best efforts, though, the marriage ultimately fails, ending in divorce after ten miserable years. But all is not lost, for he learns from his mistakes. He remarries and again he works hard to make the marriage work, but this time his efforts succeed and in large part due to what he has learned from the trials and tribulations of his first marriage. He and his second wife spend ten happy years together until he unexpectedly dies on their tenth wedding anniversary.

Ian's Life: Ian also foolishly rushes into an ill-advised marriage with his high school sweetheart, and although they quickly hit upon hard times, Ian struggles to make the marriage work, making many self-sacrifices along the way. Despite his best efforts, though, the marriage ultimately fails, ending in divorce after ten miserable years. Regrettably, he learns nothing of use from the experience. He remarries and again he works hard to make the marriage work, but this time his efforts succeed, although not as a result of anything that he learned from his first marriage. He and his second wife spend ten happy years together until he unexpectedly dies on their tenth wedding anniversary.

Both lives contain ten years of matrimonial misery followed by ten years of matrimonial happiness. And both lives contain one successful marriage and one unsuccessful marriage. Both make the same self-sacrifices and work equally hard to make each of their two marriages work, and both achieve success in only one of the two instances. Assume, then, that both lives contain equal sums of momentary well-being and that both lives contain equal amounts of achievement.³³ Lastly, assume that whereas Ian rightly regards his first ten years of marital strife as a dead loss, Hal rightly regards his first ten years of marital strife as the foundation for the success of his second marriage. As Velleman aptly puts it, "The bad times are just as bad in both lives, but in one they are cast off and in the other they are redeemed" (1993, 337).

In this example, the timing, the sequence, and the trajectory of the events and experiences are identical, for in both cases the years of strife and the years of happiness occur in the same order and at the same stage of one's life, and both lives have the same positive trajectory — improving rather than declining. Moreover, the achievements and the sums of momentary well-being are the same in both lives. The two lives differ only in terms of

³³ Assume that whatever it is that might determine the extent to which an achievement contributes to one's welfare is the same in both lives. So, for instance, assume that, in each case, the same amount of effort and self-sacrifice went into each marriage and that, in each case, their efforts were equally productive or non-productive, and assume that both Hal's and Ian's goals were equally difficult and played equally comprehensive roles in their lives.

whether there is some causal relation between the years of strife during the first marriage and the subsequent years of happiness during the second marriage. In one case, the years of strife were instrumental in bringing about the later years of happiness. In the other, the years of strife were a complete wash, bearing no relation to the subsequent years of happiness. So it is not the timing, order, or trajectory of the events, experiences, and achievements within a life that affects its welfare value, but rather the relationship between them — specifically, whether the later successes redeem the earlier misfortunes. This is exactly as the Not-for-Naught View has it. The Achievement View, by contrast, cannot account for the Shape-of-a-Life Phenomenon, for in these cases the achievements are the same; it is only the shape and the narrative structure of each of the lives that differs.³⁴ Even if the achievementist accepts the Sacrifice Principle, she cannot account for the fact that Hal's life is preferable to Ian's life, for we are to assume that Hal and Ian made the exact same self-sacrifices for each of their marriages, and that both Hal and Ian were equally unsuccessful in making their first marriage work and equally successful in making their second marriage work. So the achievement of a successful second marriage contributes just as much to Ian's welfare as the achievement of a successful second marriage contributes to Hal's welfare. Only the Not-for-Naught View, then, can account for why Hal's life went better for Hal than Ian's life went for Ian, for only in Hal's case did the successful second marriage redeem many of the self-sacrifices made in the *first* marriage. So we see that quite apart from whether or not we find the Achievement View plausible, we should accept the Not-for-Naught View so as to account for the Shape-of-a-Life Phenomenon.

*5.2 Redeeming the past and the so-called "sunk-cost fallacy."*³⁵ Another reason to accept the Not-for-Naught View is so as to account for the rationality of people's tendency to honor sunk costs. People often treat the fact that, by performing a certain act, they could decrease the likelihood that some past sacrifice will have been in vain as a reason to perform that act. For instance, many people treat the fact that they have spent a lot of money on some nonrefundable, nontransferable ticket (be it for a concert, a plane trip, or a sporting event) as a reason to use it, and thus they will sometimes decide to use the ticket even when they rightly judge that they would better enjoy doing something else instead. It is also common for people to treat the fact that many lives and much money have already been lost in an attempt to win a war as a reason to invest more lives and more money in an attempt to secure victory and, thus, to ensure that what has already been lost will not have been lost in vain. And, quite generally, people treat the fact that they have already in-

³⁴ Both Velleman (1993) and Weber (2004, 80-84) have argued for essentially the same point.

³⁵ For an excellent discussion of the presumed irrationality of honoring sunk costs, see Kelly (2004).

vested heavily in some project (say, finishing a Ph.D.) as a reason to follow through with its completion.

The conventional wisdom, at least, among economists and psychologists, is that honoring sunk costs — that is, treating the fact that past sacrifices will have been in vain unless a project succeeds as itself a reason to invest further in that project's success — is fallacious, an instance of the so-called “sunk-cost fallacy.” As these academics see it, the past cannot be undone and so there is no way to recover such past costs. Thus, in deciding what to do, they claim that we should ignore such sunk costs and look only to the future. On their view, whether you should use your plane ticket, invest more resources in an attempt to win a war, or finish your Ph.D. depends only on the future prospects of your doing so, not on the extent of your past investment.

Of course, if the Not-for-Naught View is correct, then past sacrifices are not necessarily unrecoverable (i.e., sunk), and there is, then, no fallacy in looking to redeem them by acting so as to ensure that they will not have been in vain. It is, I believe, a merit of the Not-for-Naught View that it can account for our gut intuitions in this regard, especially when, as we will see presently, the thought that the value of our past sacrifices bears no relation to subsequent events is quite suspect.

Let us say that, in acting so as to ensure that certain past sacrifices will not have been in vain, one seeks to redeem those sacrifices (Kelly 2004, 73). The reason certain academics think that seeking to redeem past sacrifices is so obviously irrational is that they assume that the past is fixed and so unalterable by subsequent events. They believe that nothing that you do now can affect how bad the past was, and so you should ignore your past sacrifices, which, given the inalterability of the past, are beyond redemption. But there are two reasons to question this proposed account of the irrationality of honoring sunk costs. First, the assumption on which it is based, viz., that the past is unalterable by subsequent events, is questionable. Second, even if the past (or, at least, the relevant portion of it) is unalterable by subsequent events, it does not follow that such subsequent events cannot affect how well our lives go on the whole, for although subsequent events may not affect the value of our earlier sacrifices, they may affect what contribution they make to the value of our lives as wholes. Let us take each of these in turn.

Because of the impossibility of backward causation, we can be confident that nothing we do now can cause a change in the course of previous events. A later event can neither cause nor prevent an earlier event. But, arguably, relational aspects of the past are alterable by, or at least dependent upon, subsequent events.³⁶ For instance, what makes yesterday's prediction of rain

³⁶ If the entire course of the future is already settled, then nothing about the past can ever be changed by subsequent events. Nevertheless, it will be true to say that certain aspects of the past are determined by the course of subsequent events. For instance, what makes some prediction about certain future events true or false, even now, is the future occurrence or nonoccurrence of those events. So, if the future is already settled, we should deny that the

for today true is the event of its raining today. Likewise, the meaningfulness or pointlessness of some past event is also determined by the course of subsequent events, for meaningfulness is a relational property that holds between temporally distinct *relata* (McMahan 2002, 179-180). Now if welfare value is relational in the way that meaningfulness is, and if the meaningfulness of some past self-sacrifice can be altered (or determined) by subsequent events, then the welfare value of that past self-sacrifice can also be altered (or determined) by subsequent events (McMahan 2002, 180).³⁷ So, perhaps, the value of our past sacrifices can be affected (or determined) by subsequent events. And, if so, it makes perfect sense to honor sunk costs.

Suppose, though, that one persists in the conviction that the past (or at least the value of the past) is unalterable. Still, one should not leap to the conclusion that it is irrational to honor sunk costs, for even if the value of past sacrifices is unalterable, it may be that what contribution these sacrifices make to the value of our lives as wholes is affected by subsequent events. This is, in fact, Velleman's view. He claims that "the daily well-being of your former self is a feature of the past, beyond alteration.... [Thus] when subsequent developments alter the meaning of an event they can alter its contribution to the value of one's life, but they cannot retroactively change the impact that it had on one's well-being at the time" (1993, 339-340).³⁸ Velleman holds, then, that although a person's momentary well-being is purely determined by facts about that moment, facts about the causal relations between certain self-sacrifices and future redeeming events can affect how much those self-sacrifices detract from the welfare value of one's life as a whole. Here, Velleman is appealing to Moore's version of the principle of organic unities: the value of the whole of one's life is not equivalent to the sum of the value of its parts.³⁹ By appealing to this principle, Velleman is able to claim that

value of some past sacrifice changes once some future redeeming event occurs. We should instead say that since it was true all along that this future redeeming event was going to occur, the past sacrifice was never that bad to begin with. The occurrence of the future redeeming event only makes true what was true all along: that this sacrifice was always to have some point. So nothing about the past is altered; the sacrifice has the same value both before and after the redeeming event. Either way, though, subsequent events are responsible for the value that that sacrifice has.

³⁷ As Velleman notes: "Future events could affect one's present well-being if present well-being were a relation [say] between one's present desires and the states of affairs that fulfilled or failed to fulfill them. In that case, retroactively harming someone would no more require retrograde causation than retroactively 'making a liar' of him" (1993, 339).

³⁸ For a critique, see McMahan (2002, 179-181).

³⁹ As Hurka (1998, 300) formulates it, the generic version of the principle of organic unities is as follows: "The intrinsic [or final] value in a whole composed of two or more parts standing in certain relations need not equal the sum of the intrinsic [or final] values those parts would have if they existed alone, or apart from those relations." There are, as Hurka (1998, 299) notes, two "interpretations" of this principle: "A 'holistic' interpretation, which was Moore's own, says that the parts retain their values when they enter a whole but that there can be additional value in the whole as a whole that must be added to them. The 'conditionality' interpretation, which has been defended by Korsgaard (1983), says that parts can

events that redeem one's past self-sacrifices affect the welfare value of one's life as a whole without altering the welfare value of any of those past moments in one's life. Now, assuming that one should care about the welfare value of one's life as a whole and not just one's momentary well-being, it makes perfect sense, on Velleman's view, to honor sunk costs. So we see that whether or not we think that the value of certain past sacrifices can be altered by subsequent events, we can have reason to honor sunk costs, just as the Not-for-Naught View implies.

The Achievement View can to some extent account for the rationality of honoring sunk costs, but only to a limited degree. The Achievement View can account for the rationality of following through with the completion of projects in which one has invested heavily, for following through on such projects can result in a significant achievement. And, assuming that the Investment Principle is true, such achievements will contribute more to one's welfare precisely because one has already invested so much in achieving them. However, the Achievement View cannot account for cases where redeeming our past investments does not involve any sort of achievement. Consider, for instance, the case in which I have spent a large sum of money on some nonrefundable, nontransferable ticket. I will not achieve anything by using the ticket. Yet using the ticket will ensure that the money I have spent on it was not spent in vain. The Not-for-Naught View, and not the Achievement View, can account for the rationality of honoring such sunk costs.

6. Conclusion

I have argued that achievementists and non-achievementists alike should accept the Not-for-Naught View, for each needs the Not-for-Naught View to account both for the Shape-of-a-Life Phenomenon and for the rationality of honoring sunk costs. And I have argued that achievementists should reject the Efforts Principle and accept instead the Sacrifice Principle. They should reject the Efforts Principle because it has counterintuitive implications. And they should accept the Sacrifice Principle, not only because it offers the most plausible interpretation of a principle that I have argued that they should accept (*viz.*, the Investment Principle), but also because it is entailed by the independently plausible Not-for-Naught View.

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change their values when they enter wholes, so no additional value is needed." On this terminology, then, Velleman is taking the holistic interpretation, whereas McMahan (2002, 179-181) is taking the conditionality interpretation. I remain neutral as to which interpretation is best.

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