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**A Relational Account of Resolutions:
Resolution as Reacquaintance**

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B.S. Marketing, Palm Beach Atlantic University, 2017

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I. *Introduction: Puzzles of Self-Constraint*

How is it that an agent who is otherwise unable to do what she wishes can overcome her weak will merely by saying some words to herself? Consider Ellie who is an accomplished clarinetist. She enjoys playing clarinet, yet dislikes the finger drills necessary to preserve her skill. She knows that all things considered she should practice.¹ Yet, when she is tempted to skip practice, her all things considered judgement may shift. After all, skipping the drills for one session and doing something more enjoyable will not undermine her skill all at once; the harm done is rather minimal. However, imagine this happens frequently, and Ellie finds she is often avoiding practicing. Knowing the temptation will come again, she may resolve to practice her drills. But how can just saying some words to herself make any difference? If she already has the strength of will to practice, the resolution seems unnecessary; yet, if she does not, how does the resolution give her this new ability? It seems that resolutions and other tools of self-constraint should be either ineffective or unnecessary in the face of weakness of will.

Yet, we know that sometimes they can be effective *and* necessary.² This leaves us with at least three puzzles. 1. How does self-constraint work, and where does this extra strength come from? 2. Can self-constraint be rational or is it merely obstinacy? 3. How can self-constraint avoid bad faith and respect our ongoing agency, i.e., can we avoid

¹ The definition of weakness of will is debated. I use the term as Davidson (2001) does to mean going against our all things considered judgements. Holton (2009) argues that weakness of will is a failure to persist in resolution. Weakness of will is then only possible once we have resolved.

² Some prominent examples of self-constraint include getting out of bed to go jogging (Holton, 2004 and 2009), avoiding the Sirens (Gauthier, 1997), running a marathon (Marusic, 2015), and various attempts to avoid overeating or over indulging in drink, Andreou (2014) and Liberman (2016) for example.

abdicated our agency to the “dead hand of the past.”³ I aim to sketch a plausible account of self-constraint that describes how resolution can be effective, rational, and agentially respectful all at once.

Most explanations of self-constraint are rather hostile. They deal with alienation, struggling against ourselves, and bad faith. However, Jorah Dannenberg takes a different approach. He works to expand the conceptual space of both self and two-party promising to show how they rely on identification with the values we hold at the moment of promising; this requires ongoing self-constraint.⁴ I find Dannenberg’s account hopeful, as it extends past gloomy talk of compulsion, unbreakable obligations, and the fear of irrationality. His expansion of self-promising focuses on the more positive elements that I will argue are necessary to explain self-constraint, such as: self-identification, value, love, and earnestness. Even so, I will argue his account is open to at least two major worries, and I will draw out the weak points of such positive agent-centered accounts of self-constraint.

Next, I work to sketch an account that fleshes out Dannenberg’s concept of the ‘memory of the will’ as resolution. I explain self-constraint as an active relational daily devotion to what we value. Through establishing a virtuous cycle in our daily actions, we can implement Dannenberg’s memory of will actively and plausibly. In short, I *act* because I identify with the value I act towards, and I am reminded of *why* I identify with this value by being *reacquainted* with it through the action. Thereby, I constrain myself

³Bratman (2012) 74. I use ‘bad faith’ as Sartre (2021) and Marusic (2015) use it. For now, let it suffice to describe bad faith as inappropriately viewing yourself as a determined object instead of an agent with free will. By acting determined by past decisions, we can be ruled by choices we no longer identify with. See Section III for a longer discussion.

⁴ Dannenberg (2015)

to care about my values in an agentially focused and rational way, by loving what I value and acting in light of this through smaller instrumental steps, helping assuage anguish without falling into bad faith.

However, I go beyond recent agent-centered accounts such as Dannenberg and Berislav Marusic. Drawing on Harry Frankfurt and a broadly religious tradition, I argue for not only necessary faith in yourself but a rational faith in your values.⁵ By acknowledging that we are limited in our volitional control over what we find valuable, we avoid an overly optimistic account of human freedom. By recognizing the limit of our own will, faith in something outside of ourselves can be rational without becoming bad faith in self. The world is rarely up to us alone such that good faith in self is all that is required to succeed. Instead, we need faith that our values will remain attractive ‘live options’ for us.⁶ I argue we can do this in an active manner that avoids bad faith; the best way to do this is through a kind of ongoing relationship that is expressed in physical and mental acts—an active living through our values. If successful, my account should solve the three puzzles of self-constraint listed above while also avoiding my concerns about Dannenberg’s memory of the will account. I conclude by answering potential objections about implausible voluntarism and a dilemma facing the memory of the will.

Our biggest projects in life, what we care about, what we identify with, and what we cherish, require not only a static state of valuing but a life of action through which we

⁵ Dannenberg (2015) Marusic (2015). Note that these values are not necessarily objectively normative, such as a moral realist believing honesty is normative. Values can be subjective and valuable simply because an agent cares about them. This is similar to discussion found in both Morton & Paul (2019) and Paul (2021). We can value plans that are not universally normative, such as joining the supreme court or getting a PhD.

⁶ I mean ‘live options’ in the way James (1960) uses it, not to be confused with the ‘live possibilities’ used by Holton (2008). I will discuss more in Section V.

are reacquainted with our values and given the chance to reaffirm them regularly. To achieve our cherished goals we need not only decision and action but also devotion and faith. Strange as it sounds, for limited beings like ourselves, an account of self-constraint is an account of freedom to pursue what we desire. To quote Frankfurt: “How are we to understand the paradox that a person may be enhanced and liberated through being seized, made captive, and overcome?”⁷

II. *Tools of Self-Constraint: Resolutions, Self-Promises, and Scope*

The literature on resolutions is sizeable, and how resolutions ought to be conceptualized is debated avidly. The most influential account of resolutions comes from Richard Holton. He argues that a resolution is a first-order intention paired with a second-order intention to *not* reconsider the former. A resolution is made specifically to protect the first-order intention from expected future inclinations to the contrary.⁸ Contra Holton, Alida Liberman argues that resolutions are a first-order intention paired with a second-order *desire* not to reconsider the intention.⁹ Another influential account is Marusic’s Sartrean response which takes an agentially privileged practical approach. He sees a resolution as an intention or decision to resist temptation.¹⁰ There are other approaches, but we need not go further for my purposes.¹¹

⁷ Frankfurt (1988) 89.

⁸ Holton (2009) 11. See also Holton (2004).

⁹ Liberman (2016). I find this closer to the mark and also see the necessity of a pro-conative stance.

¹⁰ Marusic (2015) 32.

¹¹ E.g., Bales/Handfield (2021) attack the bootstrapping objection that resolutions don’t add extra reasons. Cohen/Handfield (2010) argue that resolution is a disposition required for agency similar to a virtue.

By contrast, self-promises are often maligned as internally incoherent or as conceptually collapsing into resolutions.¹² It is a standard objection that self-promises cannot bear the hallmark of standard promising—the creation of binding obligations or duties. This is cited as a Hobbesian problem: a tyrant cannot be subject to her own laws because she can change them at her own whim. Likewise, an agent’s self-constraint only has as much authority over her as she allows it.¹³ There have been several recent attempts to vindicate self-promises.¹⁴ I am persuaded that they push back successfully on the Hobbesian “impossibility” accusation of self-promises,¹⁵ yet, I am less convinced they show *how* self-promises are effective.¹⁶

However, I will set aside the debate of whether self-promises are possible and whether they are a distinct concept from resolutions.¹⁷ If self-promises *do* turn out to be coherent and distinct, we’ll still need to explain how they too can overcome the general puzzles of self-constraint. If we are able to provide an account for the genus of self-constraint, it will only help the case of each potential species. Hence, I will consider the broader genus of what I’m calling ‘tools of self-constraint.’ I define ‘tool of self-constraint’ following Dannenberg’s definition of self-promising: a tool that allows an

¹² For a standard rejection of self-promises see Hills (2003) 134.

¹³ Hobbes (1991), 184. Habib (2009) 537, Rosati (2011) 8, Paul (2014) 350, Schaab (2021), and Cohen (1996).

¹⁴ See especially: Habib (2009), Rosati (2011), Dannenberg (2015), Liberman (2019), and Schaab (2021). Habib, Rosati, and Schaab attempt to vindicate obligations to self. Dannenberg and Liberman take alternative approaches.

¹⁵ See especially Habib (2009) and Rosati (2011) for in depth argument against impossibility.

¹⁶ Rosati (2011) argues that the problem has slid to the level of being able to discern between self-release and breach. However, she does not suggest how we can self-promise so that we don’t release ourselves.

¹⁷ Rosati (2011) argues self-promises are distinct due to their moral valance, whereas resolutions are normative due to rationality. Hills (2003) argues that we can have duties to self, but even if we do, self-promises are still better understood as resolutions, both being firm decisions to act. I am unconvinced of such a strong distinction and aim to work where they would share common ground even if they do turn out to be distinct.

agent to bind herself to an action (or inaction) in the expectation of future temptation “though not in any way that will result in your coming to be bound to anyone other than yourself.”¹⁸ I use ‘self-promises,’ ‘promises to the self,’ and ‘resolutions’ interchangeably throughout to mean a tool of self-constraint.

III. Dannenberg and Memory of the Will: Self-Constraint as Passive Activity

Dannenberg defends self-promises, but he agrees with the skeptics who think that self-promises cannot bind by creating moral obligations as they do in two-person promises.¹⁹ Instead, Danneberg argues that self-promising involves a memory of the will. He uses this Nietzschean phrase to mean “the sort of continuity or stability that a person undertakes to actively create and maintain within her system of values when she makes herself a promise.”²⁰ It is a kind of systemic strength of will that is aimed at ourselves.²¹ How this is done is the weakest part of Dannenberg’s account, for it requires something counterintuitive: a kind of underlying, subconscious yet conscious, passive yet active, effort of the will. This kind of self-promise is limited to “the deliberate undertaking to bind yourself to do as you promise, though not in any way that will result in your coming to be bound *to* anyone (or anything) other than yourself.”²²

Dannenberg regards self-promising as shaping and preserving our values, especially in long-term projects, making self-promising not merely about agential authority interest but about self-constitution.²³ Self-promising is about working on

¹⁸ Dannenberg (2015) 160.

¹⁹ Dannenberg (2015) 163 ft 6. Thus, he disagrees with the strategy taken by Habib, Rosati, and Schaab.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 164. We can take this to mean when she forms a resolution or resolves within herself as well.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 169.

²² *Ibid.*, 160. He thinks that the line between strict self-promises and plans or intentions is blurry. Yet it is necessary that a self-promise is “clearly meant to surpass” a mere plan or intention.

²³ See Rosati (2011) for an authority interest argument. The idea is also discussed in Paul (2014).

ourselves as a life-long project, “establishing, maintaining, and protecting the place in our lives of the things that we want to matter to us.”²⁴ Dannenberg argues that the aim of self-promising is important and basic; it is how we shape and maintain our values actively as a person. To break a promise to yourself is not breaking a moral obligation, it acts against a value you have cultivated deliberately as your own. He uses ‘value’ to mean something that matters to a person, something they think is important, or something central among their cares and concerns which is good in and of itself.²⁵ Thus, we are not open to moral censure due to breaking an obligation as if it were a two-person promise.²⁶ Instead, we are open to agential censure because we create a kind of internal incoherence—we undermine our own self-formation.²⁷

For example, say that Ellie does not enjoy merely playing her clarinet; instead, she values musicianship such that it is central among her cares. Musicianship is important to her in and of itself. If she resolves to continue valuing her musicianship, then she works against herself when she is both resolved to keep valuing musicianship and fails to take the necessary instrumental steps towards remaining identified with this value. Her actions lead to a kind of dissonance, a working against herself. But if we care so centrally about our values, why do we need to resolve to keep them? What can make us stop valuing them?

²⁴ Dannenberg (2015) 162.

²⁵ Ibid., 165 ft 9 and 10.

²⁶ There is certainly a kinship between authority interest, building our agency, and self-formation. However, Dannenberg’s account of self-formation of values requires there be no ‘in order to.’ Whereas, authority interest will be a tool needed *in order to* better control our self-formation and decision making.

²⁷ This of course may be open to rational and moral censure as well as agential censure.

According to Dannenberg, we resolve to protect these values we've authored from "external" forces, forces that shape us without us choosing them.²⁸ These can be dramatic, such as a loss of religion or realizing you no longer find the pursuit of a medical career attractive. Or it can be more mundane, like when our musical tastes change over time or a bad mood impacts what we value in the moment. It is uncertain how much our values are determined by external forces and to what extent we can keep our self-chosen values stable through will alone. Dannenberg thinks there is no sharp line between values we've authored and those that arise from external forces. He also thinks the limits of our deliberate control must be accepted, for it would be unhealthy and inhuman to try to avoid *all* change through this reflexive control of self-promising. Consider David Gauthier's case of pre-teen Mark who is deathly afraid of betraying his much-cherished value of finding girls yucky. Mark enrolls in an all-male military school to avoid the foreseen value change of finding girls attractive.²⁹ This attempted control is unhealthy. We need forces of change outside our control for growth, maturation, and development.³⁰

To resolve the tension between trying to author *every* value in our lives and allowing change from external forces, Dannenberg's answer seems to split the difference. It is unnatural and implausible to resolve not to change at all, yet it also is important to adopt, maintain, and cultivate certain values of particular importance.³¹ This is Dannenberg's strategy for self-constraint: "we deliberately choose to value, and continue

²⁸ Ibid., 167.

²⁹ Gauthier (1997) 17.

³⁰ Dannenberg (2015) 167.

³¹ Ibid., 168. He often emphasizes the number of these authored values will be small: "a way of singling out certain values that it is especially important to us to guard and protect." 162

valuing something, undertaking to stand fast to that value against the ever-fluctuating circumstances of life.”³² But, how do we maintain willing our cherished values? If Ellie values her musicianship, how can she keep this value alive and well in the face of external forces, from mere moods of the day to the suspicion that musicianship is no longer a value worth caring about?

I doubt holding values stable such that we *always* appreciate and care for them is possible. Dannenberg admits as much and accepts our fatigue and occasional lack of care as part of the human condition.³³ Consider a platitude of marriage advice: even if you always love your spouse, you aren’t going to always like them. This hints at the stability of a “deeper” valuing that can withstand the short-term buffeting of a shallower dislike. Dannenberg’s main concern here is how individual actions can erode away the deeper more stable value until it is gone, such that we can no longer value it even if we want to.³⁴ But if value is lost one failure at a time *and* we can fail to desire these individual acts, it is vital to stop these transitory moments from undermining the more stable devotion slowly. What does Dannenberg recommend?

He embraces something similar to the Sartrean answer from Marusic’s discussion on resolution and strength of will.³⁵ Instead of trying to predict our behavior by reviewing the evidence, we ought to view ourselves as active agents who can solve the problem practically. I must make the effort to hold the values I want, even if complete success

³² Ibid., 168. It seems engineered to address the anguish Sartre highlights here: “I await myself in the future, in which I arrange to meet myself in an hour, or month from now. Anguish is the misgiving that I will not attend that meeting, that I will no longer even want to attend it.” (2021) 75.

³³ Dannenberg (2015) 169.

³⁴ Ibid., 162.

³⁵ Marusic (2015). See Morton & Paul (2019) and Paul (2021) for recent use of this concept.

may be beyond me.³⁶ By deciding to do something under our control and through our agency, we can believe rationally that we will succeed, even in the face of evidence.³⁷ Thus, self-promises are important in combatting and overcoming a systematic weakness of will that is similar to bad faith. We can avoid this bad faith in the face of anguish by a kind of continual effort of will. As Dannenberg describes it: “a kind of self-aware, focused, and active effort of will, through which we try to make our valuing of something be as unyielding...as possible.”³⁸

However, at this point we ought to raise two concerns. Consider Ellie again; she’s resolved to continue to value musicianship. Practicing today is a way of avoiding her value from being undermined slowly. Yet, today she is fatigued, and she simply is not in the mood to practice. What should she do? After all, we resolve to act because we expect temptation. Should she practice even though it is not what she values today? Dannenberg tells us very little about what to do when we are actually faced with temptation, when we don’t value what we usually care about in the moment. We have run up against the limits on a kind of voluntaristic caring.³⁹ Not only that, we need more information on *how* the memory of the will practically helps us achieve systemic strength of will. It is little help to be told that the way to avoid weakness of will is to have strength of will.

The memory of the will is supposed to provide this descriptive account. Just like the ordinary memory, the memory of the will need not always be occurring consciously. It

³⁶ Dannenberg (2015) 170.

³⁷ Marusic (2015). See Section 6 for this view.

³⁸ Dannenberg (2015) 170.

³⁹ Marusic (2015) argues his approach avoids doxastic voluntarism, that we hold a point of view because it is advantageous. He argues an agential point of view is not a choice but a fact. However, I want to raise the objection of voluntarism at a different level, not of belief or point of view, but of motivation and care. 142.

might just be a latent resolution, in the way memories are latent typically. The memory of the will is not meant to just remind me of a past state of valuing in the hopes of rekindling my desire for that past state of affairs. Instead, it is meant to be a kind of indefinite, if sometimes latent, action that projects those values forward by forming myself towards my goal.⁴⁰ It is not the case that I have lost my values and am trying to get them back. Instead, I use my values to do the necessary semi-active psychic and affective upkeep to prevent them from deteriorating by living through them into the future.

However, at the center of this solution is a concern; the memory of the will needs to be the right balance of activity and passivity. If it is too passive, the latent action of resolve will be forgotten and ineffective; however, if it is too active then it is not latent as much as constant mental activity. If Ellie is resolved to keep musicianship as a value, she has some kind of latent action to keep musicianship important. However, if this resolution is too latent then she has effectively *forgotten* her resolution in the way we may forget some important fact we were trying to remember. However, if this memory of the will is too active, then it breaks the metaphor. It is not a latent memory but a kind of constantly occurring mental activity, a buzzing at the forefront of her mind. But this is a bigger issue than merely breaking a metaphor; this constantly occurring mental activity leads to a persistent knowledge of choice. This feeling is best described by what Sartre calls ‘anguish,’ an agonizing state that tempts us to bad faith in order to escape it.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

Sartre thinks anguish arises in the face of radical freedom, in our ability to always “be what we are not.”⁴¹ As free agents we can always change our minds, stop what we are doing, or decide this act is no longer something I desire. Unlike fear, anguish is an angst about ourselves—a fear that *we* may change our own goals. Anguish is concerning particularly in this case because it threatens to lead to bad faith. However, avoiding bad faith is one of our desiderata, and it is one of the foremost benefits of agent-centered accounts. Marusic sums up Sartre’s two kinds of bad faith: (1) to act as if you are only a determined object and reject your freedom; (2) to ignore your past and objectivity as if it has *no* impact on you whatsoever, as if you were unlimited in your ability.⁴²

These two forms of bad faith leave us trying to sail through the middle of our dilemma, for we can easily get trapped in a vicious cycle of anguish.⁴³ We resolve to do something and realize in anguish that we have the freedom to *not* do that thing. This tempts us to treat ourselves like an unfree object to escape anguish, but this is the first bad faith and must be resisted. So instead, we must live within a state of anguish. However, anguish reminds us we are forever free to give in or do otherwise. So, around we go. We can neither ignore anguish *nor* succumb to it. Similarly, if the latent action is too passive, we forget and it is ineffective, or we don’t reconsider and treat ourselves as determined, the other kind of bad faith. Yet, if it is too active, we will live in constant anguish, always tempted to give in or escape into the bad faith of determinism. As

⁴¹ This is a common formulation in *Being and Nothingness*, see pages 66-86 especially for a treatment of anguish. Sartre’s anguish has been popularized recently by Marusic (2015).

⁴² Marusic (2015). See his Section 6.1.

⁴³ Sartre thinks that this is the most common state of anguish. It is ephemeral, swapping back and forth constantly. “Bad faith has an evanescence; it oscillates constantly between good faith and cynicism.” (2021) 91.

Marusic puts it, we must be left in anguish and unsettled, “for it is an unsettling fact that we are both subjects and objects; free yet predictable, even by ourselves.”⁴⁴

If Dannenberg, Sartre, and Marusic are right, we need a state that both acknowledges our free possibility for changing our mind, and yet chooses confidently to continue in the face of it, taking a practical instead of a theoretical standpoint—even if it is unsettling. This is the best answer to the issue of Dannenberg’s memory of the will: be strong and live through it in anguish.⁴⁵ Living in anguish is necessary in order to make sense of an agentially centered account, and just as Dannenberg sees self-promising as systemic strength of will, a Sartrean approach sees resolve as strength of will to act in anguish—to face constant temptation, without succumbing. So, it is a very important puzzle piece to give a descriptive account of how to attain this strength of will in the face of anguish. While edifying, we need more to solve weakness of will than to be told to act with strength of will. When Ellie is tempted not to practice and cannot even will herself to care about her value of musicianship, she needs more advice than to be told to try harder. She cannot simply feel the force of her value at will.

Regardless of these concerns, I still find Dannenberg’s account hopeful in answering the three puzzles of self-constraint given above. The active stance clears away concerns of bad faith. The desire to preserve a value by acting continually through that value is very different from having bound yourself to an old value you no longer care

⁴⁴ Marusic (2015) 174.

⁴⁵ I see a parallel problem in Holton’s account of “rehearsals” for reconsidering resolutions without activating a rational judgement shift. Sarah Paul doubts that there is such a delicate cognitive state that allows an agent, in the face of temptation, to consider the reasons for her current action while not reconsidering her resolution. If the resolved agent considers the reasons too strongly, she will fall into the temptation that the resolution was meant to prevent. If she does not reconsider her resolution, then she is subject the first kind of bad faith. Paul (2009).

about. This latent and continuing act also avoids concerns raised by accounts that say we are compelled by the normative force of some alienated obligation. Instead of relying on the normative force of obligation to a past self, something akin to blackmail, Dannenberg's account relies on active present identification. In these obligation accounts, our promises from the past can become quickly alienated from our present selves. But Dannenberg's account works to prevent us from becoming alienated from our values. We are bound by our promise because we feel the normative force of it currently, and while we are still bound, *we work to retain it, not recover it.*⁴⁶

If this is true, we can solve puzzles for both resolutions and self-promises. We can explain how self-constraint works by employing a memory of the will as a latent ongoing action. It is rational because it stops alienation before it starts such that we act on our current preferences. It also avoids arguments of bad faith because it is not the dead hand of the past but the active working of the present. We project our cherished values into the future through an active practical stance. However, Dannenberg's account has at least two major weaknesses.⁴⁷

1. The account does not flesh out how 'memory of the will' works practically such that it explains how to remain strong willed within the necessary anguish.
2. It does not provide plausible limits to doxastic caring and is currently overly strong and optimistic in our ability to care at will.

⁴⁶For those keeping score, this is the space that Habib and Rosati free up by rejecting the Hobbesian impossibility objection. However, you must somehow persist in feeling the normative force of the binding—the exact thing Dannenberg is suggesting we do. I hope to further the conversation by providing an account of how to do so.

⁴⁷ There is at least a third major concern. If Dannenberg's account only works for values we *already* cherish, then this leaves out the people who need strength of will the most. Those who are split in will about their values or are trying to gain a value they've already lost or never had. I think that my account can work with current theories of habituation to fill in this gap; however, due to space, I set it aside this paper.

Inspired by this account, I will sketch my own account of resolution that still answers the three puzzles stated while avoiding these objections. I suggest that in order to remain committed to our cherished values and constrain ourselves, we ought to look to the concepts of love, earnestness, and surrender as a means of daily devotion in order to resolve effectively in a rational and agentially authentic manner. I will then expound upon these two weaknesses and explain how my relational account can answer both.

IV. A Relational Account: Conditions

Current discussions of resolutions center around practical goals: getting yourself to jog, avoiding overeating, and sailing home safely to Ithaca. Yet, the topic of commitment in the face of temptation to fall away from what we value most has a rich religious history. For the religious, it is of the utmost importance to answer the question: how do we avoid drifting from our values in the face of temptation?⁴⁸ Not only is self-constraint stressed but it is important that it is done in *the right way*, i.e., in an authentic manner of love and union. The goal is not mere prohibition of bad actions or doing good actions begrudgingly. The goal is keeping a deeper self-identification with God, remaining, and growing deeper in relationship. So, it is unsurprising to find many fruitful religious ideas akin to Dannenberg's 'keeping' of values.⁴⁹

I frame my relational account with familiar requirements from the self-constraint literature. In order to create a proper resolution, you must take stock of your preferences, your goals, and your second-order desires and volitions.⁵⁰ A resolution ought to come

⁴⁸The answer to this question involves highly controversial debates across traditions around Pelagianism, free will, and predestination which I will certainly not discuss here.

⁴⁹ I owe inspiration here to Protestant philosopher Soren Kierkegaard's essay "Love Conquers All."

⁵⁰ See for example: Bovens (1992) discussing preferences, Holton (2009) first order intentions, and Liberman (2016) first order desires. Dannenberg (2015) assumes you must know truly what you desire.

from an all things considered judgement in a cool-headed moment that reflects our higher order desires. If we wanted to express this requirement in a less analytic way we might say: “You must know thyself.” We must understand our own desires, preferences, and identifications, alongside an accurate conception of the danger of failure we are undertaking.⁵¹ These prerequisites are standard and should be uncontroversial. Of course, resolutions can be self-deceived or made improperly. It means only that we’re interested in the resolutions that fit these conditions.

However, I do add a potentially controversial condition. It is common to require an understanding of the danger of failure and of how much of our action is up to us alone, yet it can be very difficult to assess these accurately before we begin. For this reason, I posit an extra condition that we ought to enter resolution not only with faith in ourselves but also in our values.⁵² A proper resolution requires not only an understanding of the limits of *our* ability but understanding of our value and faith that it will remain desirable into the future—that it will continue to attract us and be worth caring about.⁵³ So, we not only have to properly know ourselves and the world but also our value. Consider Ellie who has been a skilled musician for years and understands what musicianship entails, its benefits and demands, how it impacts her personally, etc. She is in a better place to judge the value of musicianship than a non-musician. I will argue that this requirement of faith

⁵¹This condition is similar to Marusic’s discussions on bad faith and Morton & Paul’s requirement that we take into account not only the danger of losing resolve but also of the external concerns in life. See Marusic (2015) Section 6.1 and Paul/Morton (2019) 188. Repeated in Paul (2021) 5.

⁵² Kierkegaard (1958) 181 and 195. This faith may be called hope according to some definitions. E.g., Augustine and Aquinas both believe hope is a desire for something good, uncertain yet possible, and future. I call it faith to emphasize the person-proposition relation, that we must have faith in something outside of ourselves. I discuss more contemporary ideas of faith in Section VI, but hold no special commitment in the faith vs. hope distinction.

⁵³ I am thinking of it in the way Frankfurt (1988) describes volitional necessity as being both self-imposed and imposed upon them involuntarily. More on this later.

is not a fault but an important feature; it is necessary that our value constrain us in some way in order to achieve our goal. I will expound upon “faith in our values” in Section VI; for now, let it remain vague as we sketch the rest of the account.

To sum up, a relational account suggests that proper resolutions must be all-things-considered judgements made rationally and coolly, given the state of ourselves and the world, with recognition of our freedom as well as the danger that comes with it. It also requires an elusive kind of faith in the thing being pursued, as a force that is somehow external to us, yet influenced by our action towards it. The next section sketches out the *how* of my account and is my response to the first objection I raised against Dannenberg in Section III.

V. *A Relation Account: Daily earnestness as the abiding place of love*

The relational account aims to solve the tightrope walk of activity and passivity posed in Section III by transcribing a larger goal into smaller instrumental actions. Participating in these smaller instrumental actions aimed towards the larger goal protects the earnestness of the resolution. Earnestness may be considered something like the animating force of the formal husk of a resolution. If a resolution is the understanding and decision, then the earnestness is the identification with, care for, and will to continue with that decision.⁵⁴ Earnestness will be central to how agent-focused accounts can explain resolutions as rational and agentially respectful. A resolution without earnestness is neither authentic nor rational, for you would be aiming towards something you do not care about, chafing under the dead hand of the past. Kierkegaard describes this persisting

⁵⁴ Earnestness might just be the resolve of a formal resolution. While such a potential distinction is overlooked in the literature and may be interesting, I leave it aside for now and work with the concept of earnestness.

in resolution while wishing it were gone as “unfaithfulness,” which results in a “disordering of your soul.”⁵⁵ This disordering is familiar.⁵⁶ If we lose earnestness while still holding our resolution, any wholehearted identification becomes split such that unhappiness will follow whether they continue to will the resolution or not.⁵⁷

To see what I mean, consider earnestness in the example of a marriage; an unearnest resolution to yourself is like a husband who becomes alienated from his spouse yet does not get a divorce, remaining married in a weak formal way. He need not physically abandon his spouse to be relationally distant. He may go through the motions without fulfilling the stronger sense of marriage as being in loving union with another person.⁵⁸ We can do this with our values through resolution *without* earnestness. E.g., if Ellie says she values musicianship, yet has come to actually loathe playing and avoids it constantly, then she is inauthentic and hypocritical if she continues to tell herself she loves and values musicianship.⁵⁹ To avoid this contradiction, she ought to change the values she proclaims *or* work to reclaim them in earnest.⁶⁰

This stronger and weaker sense of fulfilling a resolution conforms with the religious sentiment of being committed “in the right way.” It also aligns with Dannenberg’s conceptual expanding of fulfilling a promise. He argues that a promise can (sometimes) be less about the transaction of fulfilling the obligation that a promise

⁵⁵ Ibid 185 and 189. Resolutions can of course come on a sliding scale of earnestness. It need not be binary.

⁵⁶ Consider Augustine’s (1993) disordered loves or Frankfurt’s (1971) ineffective higher order desires.

⁵⁷ See Augustine (1993) 23. Note the ability to hold a resolution and *breach* it, instead of *ipso facto* releasing yourself, is controversial and currently at the heart of self-promises debates discussed above.

⁵⁸ See Stump (2010) Chapter 6 for thorough discussion on union, presence, and alienation.

⁵⁹ If she still wants to want to value music then she has an ineffective second-order desire. Frankfurt would describe Ellie as unfree to pursue her value. She is only free if her first and second order desires align.

⁶⁰How to reclaim them is important, however, I bracketed this objection in note 47 and cannot address it here.

between two people creates and more about *how* it is done. Sometimes, it is not merely that I want this specific task handled, it is that I want you to handle it, as the person you are currently.⁶¹ E.g., when you married me, it is not that you wanted me to merely *not* divorce you; you wanted to be in a spousal relationship with me in the stronger sense. In this case, an estranged spouse who is still legally married is fulfilling his obligation in the wrong way. Likewise, we can hold our resolutions in the wrong way. For a resolution to be rational and agentially sensitive, it must be kept in the right way—in earnest.

So how does earnestness solve any puzzle that the latent continuous act of the memory of the will cannot? It seems earnestness is just another way of saying that if you care about your resolve then you'll care about it. It goes something like this: earnestness, played out through daily duty of smaller insignificant tasks, is the rebirth of love and its abiding place.⁶² Resolution, earnestness, and love form a virtuous circle, carrying abstract mental states like desire and long-term intentions into our present through specific daily action: love refreshes earnestness that can tire from duty, earnestness protects the love that can be undermined by inaction and anguish.⁶³ Describing resolutions as providing protection or extra strength for our desires or intentions is not new to the literature.⁶⁴ The

⁶¹ Consider if you named me the guardian of your child in case of your demise. You've named me because of who I am. If I make this promise, I can break it even if I foster your child. I break it by becoming someone you wouldn't want fostering your child. In this case, it is less about the transactional nature and more about the character of the person. See Dannenberg (2015) 172-181 for more thorough discussion.

⁶² Kierkegaard (1958) 194.

⁶³ I will use love to mean much the same as identification, desire for, etc. I vary them merely for style's sake.

⁶⁴ Holton (2009) argues that resolutions are second-order intentions that "entrench" our first-order intentions. Liberman (2016) thinks that resolutions are second-order desires that protect you from rationally reconsidering a first-order intention. Dannenberg (2015) discusses more scattershot how self-promises 'protect,' 'guard,' 'preserve,' and 'keep.' Sartre says that we think of resolutions as a "barrier" between us and temptation. (2021) 71

virtuous circle sketched above is meant to provide this same kind of protection or strength, one that makes you bound only to yourself.

This surpasses the previous attempts at describing this kind of protection because it explains how earnestness is protected, how it is strengthened to persevere. Earnestness in smaller instrumental acts aimed towards the larger action of “resolving to value” provides a plan for action and a vent to anguish of inaction. While no agent-centered account can completely remove the anguish of freedom, it can be assuaged by providing an outlet for rational and earnest action. Anguish arises from a constant state of underdetermination of future actions. Yet, an action like resolving to value something is an abstract and indefinite act, one that requires many smaller actions over a period of time. In anguish, we must accept that we are free to continue in this series of actions or not; we are aware that we may not even care about the value before it is complete. Sartre gives the example of writing a book as a time-extended action with many sub-actions which you could quit at any stage. It is understandable that living in anguish could undermine your current state of resolve at the present stage. For, why should I write chapter one if I may never write the final chapter? Likewise, if I know I won’t care about musicianship later on, why should I resolve to keep it as a value now?⁶⁵ Marusic suggests we take a practical stance. You ought to view yourself as an agent who can solve this problem practically, i.e., by writing the book or resolving to care despite the evidence. This is to have good faith in yourself.

However, as discussed above, to remain in good faith, you cannot ignore anguish—you must live *through* it. One suggestion for how to assuage the wavering of

⁶⁵ Note that there is an important difference between the state of valuing something now, in and of itself, and the telic act of resolving to keep caring about a value. I discuss this distinction more below.

anguish is through action. If I am worried that I won't write chapter one today, the best thing to do is begin writing. This is for at least three reasons. First, uncertainty cannot exist in past action. If I have written chapter one, I need no longer worry if I will. Secondly, anguish is a reflective phenomenon, yet as Sartre suggests, action can make us unreflective.⁶⁶ When I am writing the book, I am engaged in a way that is authentic while mitigating reflective anguish. It is always possible to stop writing yet "throwing" myself into the activity makes me focus on my ability to *solve* my problem instead of worry about it.⁶⁷ Third, unlike mental activity, which can both "will and nill" at the same time, action excludes the opposite.⁶⁸ I cannot both write and not write in the same instant.⁶⁹ While I am writing, my original indecision is behind me as I am absorbed in the action, the more action that moves into the past, the more is secured as certain.

This comfort can be had through daily devotion of seemingly unimportant actions and provides a three-fold benefit. First, we assuage anguish through practical activity as just explained. Second, as often noted, through habituation we gain confidence in our ability to act as we wish.⁷⁰ Finally, through smaller actions we are reacquainted with our larger value. By practicing her clarinet, Ellie is reacquainted with how much she values her musicianship. Her value is "rebirthed" through reacquaintance with it through

⁶⁶ "I need to ask myself, do I still desire and choose to write this book? I need to reflect. When I am in the act of writing it, I am unreflective and there is no "question" of the ultimate end, it becomes the ground for active instrumental reasoning." Sartre (2021) 75

⁶⁷"There I am, engaged within it, and discovering it at the very moment at which I have already thrown myself into it. At this instant, of course, it remains my possibility, since at any moment I can turn aside from my work..." Ibid.

⁶⁸ For the idea that choice involves a simultaneous "I will" and "I will not" see Arendt (1978) discussing Augustine.

⁶⁹ Arendt (1978) sees this and calls it the "redemption of action."

⁷⁰This is usually discussed as agential authority. Resolution literature often talks of agency or authorial interest the main reason for not undermining ourselves in resolution.

action.⁷¹ Thus, her love and identification with her value is protected, her earnestness is refreshed for she is reminded why she loves musicianship, and her anguish is assuaged as described above.

I've used 'larger' here as Michael Thompson uses it in discussing his naïve action theory. A "metaphysically larger" action encapsulates many smaller actions within it.⁷² According to Thompson, action can be explained by reference to further action. For example, I write a sentence in order to write a page, in order to write a book. Most actions are extended temporally, include many sub-actions, and are not achieved by aiming *directly* at the larger act. If I am making an omelet and am at the egg breaking stage, it is still appropriate to say I am making an omelet as well as breaking an egg. In this case, "break the egg" is just one smaller act within the metaphysically larger act of making an omelet. I do not make an omelet by doing some one act called "omeleting;" I go about the multiple smaller acts in order. However, Thompson's naïve action theory is meant to explain telic actions that can be completed and have a definitive endpoint. This is disanalogous to the indefinite aim of keeping a value or becoming perfectly virtuous. However, I find Thompson's picture of nested telic actions to be a helpful analogy for indefinite actions. For example, I can't gain a "larger" generous disposition without performing smaller *generous* acts that are nested within my aim to achieve a generous disposition.⁷³

⁷¹ Note that this is for agents who currently identify with their value and are trying to avoid undermining.

⁷² Thompson (2012). Sartre notes this structure in a mysterious way. "The sentence is the very meaning of the letters I form, and its summons is not called into question...I cannot form the words without transcending them toward it." (2021) 75

⁷³ Note that if I am trying to remain generous in the face of expected temptation, such that my generosity is telic and not done for its own sake, these actions will not be perfectly generous. They will be imperfectly generous.

If I value generosity and want to continue to identify with it then I ought to perform smaller instrumental actions towards my end. Consider an example of instrumental action; when you take yourself to have a reason to fly to New York, you will also take yourself to have an equally strong reason to take the means necessary for attaining that end.⁷⁴ In like manner, if I have a reason to be generous, e.g., that I am resolved to value it, then I have reason for taking these smaller generous actions. Dettached from my larger resolution, I may avoid these actions, but the love of my larger value makes them instrumentally important. I act them out earnestly, and this action reacquaints me to generosity. Thus, I can have earnestness towards actions that I may not desire normally, and, by performing the action, not only is my anguish assuaged but the reacquaintance refreshes my earnestness. Resolution to continue to value generosity sets up acts that are usually done for themselves into a chain of telic actions, actions that are done with another aim in mind.⁷⁵ “Remaining identified with generosity” is the larger action into which my smaller generous actions can be slotted, an end that they are aimed towards.

It may be objected that my requirement is too strenuous, that this makes far too many actions instrumental. But it is wrongheaded to think you must take every opportunity to act towards a value in order to protect it. Instead, it reveals an intuitiveness of this account that scales properly with the strength of resolutions and explains why not all resolutions are equally strong. Ellie need not take every opportunity to act in service of her musicianship. Yet, the more she is reacquainted with it the more it is protected.

⁷⁴ Liberman (2016) takes instrumental reasoning as a commonplace and uncontroversial norm, and I do the same. I use her example here. See 3.2 for fuller argument and discussion of Rational-Means Reason Transmission.

⁷⁵ Note that an action be done *both* for its own sake and as a means to another end.

Likewise, if a person took every opportunity to be generous, she would be *very* generous. However, this doesn't mean that the generous person who is selfish occasionally does not value generosity at all. As limited beings, we cannot value all things equally; likewise, we cannot dedicate our lives to all values equally.⁷⁶

So, in this way the smaller actions receive instrumental significance from the larger action structure. Likewise, the smaller act I undertake in service of my resolution to value generosity has a reassuring effect on my earnestness. By valuing generosity actively, through a gift given or time sacrificed, I am reminded of why this *is* and *continues* to be important to me. In this way, my self-identification with and value of generosity is safeguarded. As suggested by both Dannenberg and Marusic, my current state is projected forward authentically. However, the relational account provides a system of identification, action, and reacquaintance which explains and surpasses the "just do it" advice given by other agent-centered accounts. Through our daily smaller acts, love supports earnestness, and through earnestness of resolution, love is protected and refreshes earnestness for more action. Earnestness is *kept* effective.⁷⁷ Thus we have what we want: earnestness providing protection for love, love upkeeping earnestness through strengthening reacquaintance with value, and the two in contact through anguish relieving action.

Let's put it all together. Ellie is a talented musician who values her musicianship, but fearing that her values may change over time she resolves to continue valuing it. In order to avoid an undermining of her value, Ellie practices and plays her clarinet

⁷⁶ Frankfurt notes this: "Perhaps it is possible only for an omnipotent being to love altogether freely and without conditions or restrictions of any kind." (1988) 94

⁷⁷ See Kierkegaard: "love is the refreshing essence, but resolution is the flask in which it is preserved." (1958) 194.

regularly. By practicing, she defeats anguish in three ways. While she is practicing, any reflective anguish is soothed by action. After she has practiced, any anguish over whether she will practice *today* is relieved by moving the action into the past. She also becomes more habituated and confident in her ability to act in the face of anguish, better preparing her to face similar anguish in the future. This smaller act of practicing also reacquaints her with musicianship and why it is valuable. Fresh time spent with her value gives her the chance to experience why she identifies with it, increasing her love for this value. The more she identifies with her value, the easier it will be to have faith that it will continue to reveal its importance to her. Thus, her action spurred by earnest resolve increases faith and love, which in turn refreshes her earnest resolve to help motivate her to act when tempted to avoid it. This brings us back to square one

But what if in the face of temptation or in a particular mood, she cannot muster any amount of desire or care to even *begin* this cycle? She recognizes that she usually values musicianship and is even resolved to continue to, but, right now, she couldn't care any less. There is a gap in the process, the same gap faced by Danneberg and Marusic. What are we to do about this gap? First, does this account also require an implausible voluntaristic care to bridge this gap? Second, what is the mysterious external and involuntary aspect I've described as requiring faith in our own values? If I am successful, this section will answer these objections and suffice to answer the second concern I raised against Dannenberg.

VI. *Objections: voluntaristic care and faith in value*

My answer to the two concerns above is intertwined. My account avoids an implausible amount of doxastic belief because it extends past faith in ourselves and

knowledge of difficulty in the world and requires faith in something outside our control—in our values. Frankfurt discusses the limits of how far faith in self can carry us towards our values. Not only do we come up against external factors but there must be some amount of involuntary “calling” from the thing we value which is outside our control. This requires faith in something outside our control, faith that the value will continue to appear attractive to us. For example, Ellie currently values musicianship but there is an element of involuntariness in this caring and identification. In resolving to continue caring about musicianship, she has some amount of faith that it will continue to appear valuable to her such that it causes her to desire it and care about it. We might say that she has faith that musicianship is a worthy value to pursue and will continue to show itself as worthwhile and attractive.

One concern with Dannenberg’s account is that it is impossible to simply *will* ourselves to care about something if we do not find it desirable in any way. It is more plausible that we can help stop the undermining of current values through will, but even here, anguish can be the exact fear of self-consistency that saps the will and makes voluntaristic care ineffective. Even if we can relieve our anguish, we are exposed to moods, temptations, and other factors that can catch us off guard, if only temporarily. The relational account addresses this weakness in two ways. The first is the practical active account given in the section above regarding smaller instrumental actions. But even here we experienced the same gap: what if we can’t even will yourself to identify with any of the smaller actions? We are in the same bind just a step removed, failing to will to care about a smaller action instead of willing *directly* that you cared about the larger value.⁷⁸

⁷⁸ I also find it plausible that short-term obstinancy may be better policy in such cases. Paul (2014) talks about how we don’t care about *perfect* self-governance. It also does not seem to be required for

However, the fact that this account is not impervious, that we can still fail in our resolution, is necessary. An accurate agent-centered account cannot and should not do away entirely with some requirement of strength of will, some about of “just do it.” At some level, it must be reliant on the agent’s will to begin the process, to step over the gap. However, the radical freedom that grounds the Sartrean answer, which both Dannenberg and Marusic ascribe to, is overly strong. It is implausible to think that between faith in oneself and radical freedom you can will yourself to care about anything instantly.

Morton & Paul discuss this issue of delusional optimism. They highlight the crucial caveat that this optimism is appropriate only when what we are attempting is “up to us,”⁷⁹ but almost none of the plans that require grit will be solely up to us such that “we will not fail to X as long as we try to X and continue trying.”⁸⁰ This is because that are many forces outside our control that can keep us from getting into PhD programs or becoming Supreme Court Justices. Dannenberg seems to think that preserving values *is* up fully to us. If that were the case, then all we would need is faith in ourselves and ourselves alone to succeed—the only obstacle being bad faith in the face of anguish. However, holding our values in place against the many external forces and natural changes of life involves much uncertainty and is closer to “gritty” goals. It seems that writing a book is entirely up to me such that if I continue try to write the book it will get

rationality as long as the local instances do not harm the overall agential authority. Similarly, we may not need perfect good-faith. Instances of bad-faith may be necessary and even preferred.

⁷⁹ Morton & Paul (2019) 188.

⁸⁰ Marusic (2015) 167.

done.⁸¹ However, in order to write the book rationally and earnestly, I need to see my project as valuable throughout. And this crucial caveat requires faith that my book project will continue to appear valuable and important to me. Thus, we need more than faith in ourselves. We need faith in our values, recognizing that part of our success is out of our hands. As the second objection wonders, how is this to be understood?

I cannot offer a long exposition on the contemporary discussion of faith in this paper, but let's stop quickly and define what I mean by 'faith.' I follow Daniel Howard-Synder and take propositional faith to involve at least three things: a positive evaluation, a positive conative stance (hope, desire, etc.) for it to be true, and a positive cognitive stance.⁸² This means that for Ellie to have faith that her value of musicianship will remain desirable she must believe it is a good thing to value, desire it, etc., and believe that it will continue to appear so. What it required for faith to be rational is open to much contemporary debate.⁸³ I focus here on the doxastic and control elements of faith in our values. Can we have faith in just anything?

Frankfurt talks of 'volitional necessity' as the kind of binding force towards our values that we are seeking to protect. This is the kind of necessity Martin Luther felt when he said "Here I stand; I can do no other." This is not logical or causal necessity, rather a necessity that sent Luther down a certain course of action by making all the other

⁸¹ You may successfully write a book in a way that is irrational or in bad faith, and that may be a good practical policy in some cases. However, here we need to consider writing it in a rational and agentially sensitive manner.

⁸² Howard-Synder (2013) 367 for conclusions. Note that this is more like an Augustinian view of hope rather than faith due to the added conative stance requirement. See Prolouge of Augustine (2021).

⁸³ See Rettler (2018) for a helpful summary of contemporary positions and problems. See Jackson (2021) for more on when and how faith can be rational. I assume faith can be rational here and do not argue for it.

alternatives “unthinkable.”⁸⁴ However, Frankfurt sees the problem of implausible voluntaristic belief and claims that it must, to some extent, be imposed upon us *involuntarily*; otherwise, we cannot account for why people do not simply care about things literally at will.⁸⁵ Within this involuntary imposition, volitional necessity is still “to a certain extent self-imposed.”⁸⁶ We can resolve to avoid being guided by forces or values other than those we want to continue to identify with.

A fruitful way to think of this involuntary attractiveness of values is through William James’ “live options.” A live option is one that “appeals as a real possibility to him to whom it is proposed.”⁸⁷ Yet the deadness or “liveness” of an option is not an intrinsic property of the option but a relational property to the thinker. Today, no one would find the proposition that health is due to the proper balance of blood, yellow bile, black bile, and phlegm as a live option.⁸⁸ Yet, up to the 18th century, common medical practices aimed at rebalancing the humors to restore health, making humourism a live and respectable option. Regardless of the real medical facts, the liveness of this option was a relational one. This involuntary aspect of liveness should also be understood as this kind of relational property. James lists external factors that affect our live possibilities,

⁸⁴ Frankfurt (1988) 86. Consider a more understandable example of volitional necessity: your child has been in a car accident and you feel you *must* rush to her side regardless of the circumstances. The alternative of not going is unthinkable. Note the similarity to Dannenberg: “Indeed, central to this promise’s significance is the fact that letting myself change so that I no longer wanted to care for this dog is, for me, unthinkable.” (2015)

⁸⁵ Frankfurt (1988) 88.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.* 87

⁸⁷ James (1960) 2.

⁸⁸ Also, James’ example to his crowd of 1900’s Ivy league students: “If I ask you to believe in the Mahdi, the notion makes no electric connection with your nature...As a hypothesis it is completely dead. To an Arab, however (even if he be not one of the Mahdi’s followers), the hypothesis is among the mind’s possibilities: it is alive.” 2

everything from upbringing to the current prestige of ideas. However, like Frankfurt, he never loses sight that we play a role in what appears alive or dead to ourselves.⁸⁹

To use Frankfurt's terminology, the part we *can* control is the second-order desire to identify with these values.⁹⁰ Frankfurt thinks we can suppress and dissociate ourselves from contradictory motives and desires.⁹¹ In effect, the part we can control is a negative power, a clearing of the path for what we want most by constraining our identifications towards the value we are seeking. Consider Ellie again; when she is fatigued and the thought that she hates clarinet practice arises, it is outside her control to *not* have this thought. However, it is within her self-control to dissociate from this thought. The thought may still pressure her to not practice, but through dissociation she can view it as an external pressure, something she identifies as an intrusive thought. Given another way, she can surrender this thought in favor of the value she gives to musicianship. Surrender of possibilities, i.e., the freedom to identify with this thought, is a key part of commitment and self-constraint.

However, this is only a part of the picture; if done without earnestness and faith in herself, that she will continue to be earnest in this value, she may fall into bad faith—surrendering her freedom for good and trying to see herself as “determined” to value musicianship forever, regardless of what she really values. Not only must Ellie surrender her other possibilities in favor of her value of making music, she chooses so *each time*

⁸⁹ Ibid. 8 “It is only in our already dead hypothesis that our willing nature is unable to bring to life again. But what has made them dead for us is for the most part a previous action of our willing nature of an antagonistic kind.”

⁹⁰ Frankfurt (1971)

⁹¹ See Augustine (1998) for similar thoughts on passion vs consent. 363-365 See also Luther's vivid proverb: “Dear brother, you cannot prevent the birds from flying in the air over your head, but you can prevent them from building a nest in your hair.” (1907) 305

with faith in herself that she will continue to value it. Since being earnest in this value is not up to her alone, she needs the third element of faith in the value itself to avoid voluntaristic caring. She not only needs to have faith in herself, she needs to have faith that musicianship will show her its value throughout in the future. She must have faith in herself, in her values, and act continually to constrain herself in order to avoid a slow alienation from her values.

No agent-centered account can be rid entirely of anguish or the need for action in the face of temptation, but no such account *should* do so. At some level, it must be up to us to act. It is still up to us to jump the gap and begin the process. However, the more we upkeep our values, the more we are in union with them, the more easily and earnestly we can begin. By acting towards something we care about and love the less we will need to strain to start.

VII. *Conclusion*

Tools of self-constraint are important. As limited beings, self-constraint is necessary to pursue our biggest projects in life. We cannot pursue everything with equal devotion. Agent-centered accounts provide an attractive answer to three major puzzles of self-constraint. However, they need to avoid delusional optimism while providing a plausible account of how we can avoid anguish. There is no shame in admitting that we cannot be the existential heroes that Sartre's radical freedom alone would require. We are limited and not as radically free as Sartre supposes, for there are rarely many human situations of great value that are "up to us" alone. In a changing, unknown, and complex world it is rare to know that success will arrive if only we keep trying.

In the face of this unknown, we need not only faith in ourselves and strength of will to act but faith in our values into the future.⁹² When it comes to caring about what we find most important indefinitely, we cannot create an impervious and indefinite value for them without falling into bad faith. What we can do is have faith in our values and, as Augustine writes, “rejoice in these true and certain goods, even though for now they are like lightning flashes on this dark road.”⁹³ Perhaps we cannot bring the lightning down from the sky, but we can place ourselves continually where it strikes the most, remaining eager to proceed when it illuminates our path. It still is in our power to “seek with as much energy as we can command, to gather our whole soul somehow to that which we attain by the mind, [and] to station ourselves and become firmly entrenched...”⁹⁴

⁹² We may also need things like grit, hope, etc.

⁹³ Augustine (1993) 60.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

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