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Integrity and Struggle

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ABSTRACT: Integrity is sometimes conceived in terms of the wholeness of the individual, such that persons who experience temptations or other sorts of inner conflicts, afflictions, or divisions of self would seem to lack integrity to a greater or lesser degree. I contrast this understanding of integrity—which I label *psychological integrity*—with a different conception which I call *practical integrity*. On the latter conception, persons can manifest integrity in spite of the various factors mentioned above, so long as they remain true to their commitments in action and deliberation. Although psychological harmony is one feature reasonably associated with integrity, I suggest that practical integrity captures other features of character and action often (and reasonably) related to ascriptions of integrity. *Practical* integrity remains possible even for those who must confront, manage, and control factors that give rise to various kinds of inner conflict.

KEYWORDS: Commitment; Conflict; Courage; Integrity; Temptation

I. Integrity: What Sort of Wholeness?

In most if not all human life, there is some struggle. Sometimes we struggle against external circumstances. Sometimes we struggle against, or within, ourselves. Inner struggles take various forms. We might struggle to overcome various temptations, habits, or ‘dark thoughts,’ to reconcile competing and sometimes conflicting commitments or values, to understand who we are or have been and how these periods of our lives are related to the sort of person we aspire to be. We might struggle to understand just what it is we want or ought to be. Resolving these various problems and questions in a way that leads to greater inner harmony, and living in a manner that reflects this inner harmony—especially in how one confronts and manages external conflict and adversity—might be taken as the core of what it means to cultivate, and ultimately to have, integrity. The person of integrity is a ‘whole’ self, someone who, as Gabrielle Taylor

puts it, ‘keeps his inmost self intact’ (1981: 143; see also Blustein 1991: 130-138). Thus, such a person contrasts with the person John Cottingham describes as ‘a divided self, pulled in two directions at once’ (2010: 6). This notion of wholeness, and still more the contrast with a divided self, emphasizes unity as an essential feature of a life of integrity, specifically *psychological* unity in which a person’s desires, beliefs, dispositions, and actions all cohere. Such unity and coherence come in degrees, and so while perhaps no one attains *full* (or ideal) integrity, people have integrity to a greater or lesser extent, some to a highly admirable degree.

One *might* take integrity to be like this, and no doubt many of the lives to which we attribute integrity are like this. But integrity also has a practical dimension, manifest by those who practice what they preach and stand by their commitments in difficult circumstances. We might simply regard these as the outward effects of integrity, and point out that these behaviors can be otherwise labeled as instances of honesty (or consistency) and steadfastness (or constancy). Importantly, such virtues are essential to the cultivation of psychological integrity, since the person seeking to overcome inner struggles must be honest with oneself and steadfast in the quest to integrate one’s various commitments (and to ferret out unwanted and unwelcome desires and impulses). Thus, honesty and steadfastness—and courage, which supports both of these virtues (e.g. Taylor 1985: 126, and Halfon 1989: 44)—cannot simply be the effects of integrity, but are rather those traits which make psychological integrity possible.

Suppose a person exemplifies the virtues of honesty, steadfastness, and courage, but remains in important ways conflicted and divided: a recovering addict who still has the urge to use, or a person whose commitments, values, or other aspects of his or her identity lead to conflicts that can never be completely resolved. Suppose such sources of inner conflict are ineliminable, persistent. Such a person lacks some amount of psychological integrity, though

depending on the case, perhaps not so much that we wouldn't say that she still has quite a bit, and is to be admired for that. The problem I have with this response is that it becomes unclear, on some ways of filling in the details of such cases, what this person *lacks*, which would allow us to say that there is something else she could do in order to have even greater integrity.

Perhaps that is the wrong way to think about the matter. That is, we might say that a person saddled with ineliminable inner conflict lacks full (psychological) integrity, but so do most people, after all. Such a person isn't (or needn't be) doing anything wrong—indeed, she may be doing the best she can. But to speak of integrity is to speak, as it were, of the state of one's soul, and a divided soul (or self) lacks integrity to the extent that it lacks complete unity. This is a conceptual point rather than, at least in all cases, a moral judgment.

Cottingham emphasizes that, 'integrity is perhaps the hardest virtue to achieve,' because of the 'conflictedness, which is our human lot as flawed creatures,' and which 'generates tension, uncertainty, vacillation, self-doubt' (2010: 13). Under some descriptions—no doubt the ones Cottingham has in mind as he then contrasts these states of mind with tranquility—these features are negative, as when tension takes the form of crippling stress or anxiety, or when uncertainty, vacillation, or self-doubt render one incapable of sound deliberation and decision-making, or incline one to retreat (in cowardice) from a situation, or to take the path of least resistance at the cost of self-compromise. But under different descriptions these products of conflictedness may not seem quite so terrible: one experiences a certain amount of tension or even vacillation, driven by the awareness of competing goods that warrant one's attention; one experiences some uncertainty or self-doubt motivated by the humble recognition of one's own fallibility and a desire to resist hasty judgment or overweening self-confidence. In these instances conflictedness evinces an aliveness to a world of diverse goods and possibilities and an awareness of one's own

limitations. But if that is true, then why should we accept the alliance of integrity with tranquility, as well as a kind of wholeness or unity that ideally crowds out inner conflict? Why should we not instead acknowledge that a person can be a harmonious whole in spite of the existence of ineliminable inner conflict? In such cases, harmony may be the result of living well amidst various inner tensions, rather than of their elimination.

This is neither to suggest that we lower our standards of integrity nor an attempt to draw a line specifying the degree of psychological wholeness necessary for integrity. It is rather to suggest a picture of integrity as a kind of *practical* wholeness or harmony evinced by the way in which one confronts the various conflicts and tensions that arise.¹ Certainly, without significant psychological cohesion, and in particular sound capacities for deliberation and self-guidance (or autonomy), such integrity might not be achievable. Thus, this *practical integrity*, no less than the psychological integrity praised by Cottingham (and Taylor), calls for the virtues mentioned above: courage, honesty, and steadfastness. However, what I will call practical integrity differs from Cottingham's (and Taylor's) picture of integrity—which I will refer to as *psychological integrity* because of its emphasis on ideal psychological unity²—because it takes possessing some degree of psychological cohesion as only one (necessary) part of integrity. Inner cohesion (even tranquility), as it were, is not enough, and the reason can be briefly illustrated by considering the person who has reached a state of inner quiet by making himself impervious to the world and the demand he might have otherwise heard it making of him.³ We could only say that such a person exhibits practical integrity if this inner calm and seeming unity is the result of sound deliberation and honestly reflects this person's various commitments and values. A false tranquility purchased at the price of repression, self-deception, and the wanton disposal of worthwhile goods (or the hardening of one's heart), would not, I think, be life of either practical

or psychological integrity. Thus, these two pictures of integrity are not wholly opposed to each other. Practical integrity, however, describes certain kinds of lives that involve the sorts of inner conflicts mentioned above, where the advocate of psychological integrity might instead be inclined to stress the lack of unity or wholeness. The difference can be expressed thus: psychological integrity emphasizes the elimination of conflict and inner struggle; whereas, practical integrity emphasizes what it means to struggle *well*, creating harmony out of tension and conflict, without seeing the inability to eliminate all conflict as, in every case, a flaw which signifies a lack of wholeness of character. This is not to celebrate imperfection or weakness, but rather to emphasize that, for us, integrity is a matter of making something admirable, inspiring, and relatively cohesive of our, as Cottingham would have it, imperfect lot. Psychological integration, to whatever degree it is possible, is but one aspect of this process, and may itself be evidence of practical integrity, especially when it is achieved through the exercise of the virtues mentioned above.

II. Temptation & Deliberation

The strongest differences between the psychological and practical pictures of integrity are illustrated by cases of individuals who experience themselves as ‘divided selves’ (or more simply as divided or conflicted) but still manifest the several virtues associated with practical integrity. However, for similar reasons, these two pictures of integrity seem to diverge, at least in some cases, on whether a person of integrity is prone to temptation or how exactly we should expect a person of integrity to respond to that which is tempting.

On the psychological picture, integrity involves wholeheartedness. One’s second-order desires match one’s beliefs and commitments, and one’s first-order desires are (ideally) brought

into conformity with all of the other psychological components of oneself. Thus, a person of ideal psychological integrity would be fully consistent across these various psychological components. Her well-trained dispositional nature would incline her toward first-order desires that conform (or at least don't strongly conflict or interfere) with her higher-order desires and plans.

Given this kind of picture, Gabrielle Taylor suggests that the person of integrity, 'will not be tempted to act in certain ways, because to be tempted implies that certain features of a situation will present themselves to the agent as reasons for action to be weighed against reasons for acting otherwise' (1981: 157). Such a person, for example, would not be tempted to accept bribes offered on the condition that she sacrifice her most deeply held commitments. In support of this idea, Taylor appeals to John McDowell's suggestion that for a virtuous person certain considerations, which for others would be tempting reasons to act (immorally), are not reasons at all—these considerations (temptations) are 'silenced,' which means that they have no weight at all in the virtuous person's deliberations (see McDowell 1998). Similarly, the person of integrity sees a bribe as having nothing to recommend it as an object (or good) about which to deliberate and to weigh against her own commitments. Bribes have no power over such a person; the prospect of a great sum of money does not prey upon her mind, or eat away at her resolve.

Cottingham considers whether such an expectation—that the person of integrity will be impervious to temptation—is too demanding:

How does the person of integrity act when faced with such situations [of temptation]? One response is that he or she must simply exercise strength of will, grit the teeth, and adhere steadfastly to the good, putting temptation to one side. The person of integrity, in other words, is a person who can call on their powers

of self-control—the *fortitude moralis* or ‘moral fortitude’ which Immanuel Kant so admired. Well, such self-control is no doubt admirable, and those of us who have been weak enough to give in to our baser impulses may wish we had greater strength of will. But when you reflect on it, such a solution—grimly controlling our disreputable impulses—doesn’t seem to be particularly a manifestation of *integrity*. On the contrary, one might think it shows precisely that the agent in question is a divided, fragmented being—one who has to struggle to bring the desires into conformity with what reason dictates. He has certainly not *integrated* the darker side of his character into a harmonious whole. On the contrary, though he may surely deserve credit for sticking to the straight and narrow, he remains somehow a *divided self*, pulled in two directions at once. (2010: 6)

The vision of integrity articulated by Cottingham, and the distinction he makes between a unified self and a divided self, is certainly understandable. No doubt, the quest for psychological harmony is a worthy ideal, and people who find themselves afflicted by ignoble desires, irrational fears, or other inner conflicts which threaten to lead to self-compromising or self-destructive action would prefer to be rid of them. That might lead one to question what Cottingham means when he says that the person who needs to exercise fortitude and self-control in order to put aside temptation, ‘has certainly not *integrated* the darker side of his character into a harmonious whole,’ for it might seem that what is needed is not integration of the ‘darker side’ so much as its *elimination* (or its *taming*, so that it is no longer really a competing, darker, ‘side’ of the self). That would certainly seem to be what he means by ‘[bringing] the desires into conformity with what reason dictates.’ The person of (full) integrity, in effect, transcends the need for fortitude and self-control because she does not experience desires that are so strong

(tempting) as to derail her various plans and commitments. For the rest of us mere humans, this is some tall order, but of course, Cottingham acknowledges that the exercise of fortitude and self-control are themselves admirable. No doubt they are indispensable as we seek to cultivate greater inner harmony throughout the course of our lives. (Strictly speaking, however, self-control would not on this (strongly Aristotelian) picture count as a virtue. Rather, its necessity indicates the degree in which one lacks a fully temperate disposition, in which one's tendencies toward various desires and aversions cohere, as a matter of second nature, with one's beliefs, commitments, and so forth.)

In a response to Taylor (1981), Raimond Gaita takes issue with her views about integrity and temptation. He suggests that it is quite possible to be tempted without granting that which tempts any weight in deliberation. Thus, he imagines:

...a man just back from three months climbing in the Himalayas He arrives home to find a friend's wife, after whom he has previously lusted, in his bed. She is as beautiful as you like to make her. He is tempted. Has he thereby 'weighed' any reasons for acting. [sic] Not if he sees the action to which he is tempted as adulterous. As far as *deliberation* goes he has nothing to deliberate about, for there is nothing in the situation which is even a bad reason for committing adultery. He does not, for example, get a better reason if she throws off the bed covers revealing herself exquisitely naked, not even if he had been a year in the Himalayas. As far as the *deliberative* context is concerned, what tempts him can have nothing to say for itself. In that sense, his understanding of what it would be for him to commit adultery 'silences rather than outweighs' (McDowell) other

considerations. But that only amounts to saying that only moral considerations can enter moral deliberation. (1981: 172)

Importantly, Gaita does not question the idea that the virtuous person (or the person of integrity) does not deliberate over the tempting course of action. However, the suggestion that even without any deliberation one might be tempted indicates that Taylor and Gaita could mean different things by temptation.

We can distinguish between being tempted in a deliberative sense, where being tempted means that one takes the tempting good (or course of action) into consideration as a live option. On the other hand, when Gaita says that his mountaineer is tempted, he might mean that he *feels* tempted—that is, experiences the relevant sexual urges, the phenomenological ‘pull’ of temptation.⁴ Given this interpretation, I suggest that one could feel tempted (or feel a temptation), and recognize this feeling *as* a temptation, prior to any deliberation. Gaita’s point is that such a recognition—say, in a person with a strong commitment to spousal fidelity—would (or at least could) thereby rule out thinking that such a feeling represents some good which warrants deliberation. The recognition of the tempting feeling *as* a temptation would thereby silence that feeling in the relevant sense. The feeling might persist (though it might also gradually abate), but it would be silenced in the sense of not being considered as a reason (even a bad reason, as Gaita puts it) for action. This lack (or refusal) of consideration would be sufficient for practical integrity—this person remains consistent and constant in all that he directly controls of the situation.

It is, of course, possible that Taylor meant that a person of integrity would not even *feel* tempted, or at least not *strongly* tempted in the phenomenological sense just sketched. However, in her later (1985) work on integrity, Taylor holds that the relevant class of desires which the

person of integrity will not be tempted to compromise are those desires with which she endorses (at a second-order or reflective level). She allows that while first-order desires might sometimes conflict with these higher-level desires and commitments, the person of integrity will have significant control over them, and not simply act on the desire which is ‘phenomenologically the strongest’ (113). This seems consistent with (my reading of) Gaita’s suggestion that one could be (or feel) tempted without allowing those temptations to enter into deliberation, and we could amend this reading to her earlier (1981) remarks to clarify the particular sense in which the person of integrity is not tempted.

Taylor’s later account, on which the person of integrity isn’t, as it were, blown about by her desires, but rather has control over them and so remains constant to her commitments, thus resembles what I mean by practical integrity. As mentioned, this depends upon some degree of psychological integrity, for a person who cannot control her desires or how she acts in response to them will likely lose whatever integrity she had to lose. On this picture, however, so long as the person is able to maintain that control, she preserves her integrity. This seems to contrast with Cottingham’s position, in that it is imaginable that someone in the sort of situation described by Gaita could experience quite strong sexual urges, nearly overwhelming, so that even though this person recognizes that these impulses are just that—impulses—and not reasons, he must exercise considerable self-restraint so as to avoid forgetting himself (or his commitments) and becoming, as it were, mesmerized by the situation. Such a person could be contrasted with another who, in a similar situation, reacts with disdain or outrage, and leaves the room untouched by even a feeling of temptation. If we follow what Cottingham says about temptation above, it would seem that we should say that this person shows greater integrity, that his desires (or lack thereof) show greater cohesiveness with his commitment to fidelity than

Gaita's man who, though he sees he has no reason to commit adultery, is still tempted (in the phenomenological sense—that is, aroused).

An important difference in these two imagined cases is that the person who is tempted has experienced something which, though it did not affect his deliberations, might cause a feeling of shame. That is, we can imagine him thinking that he ought not have felt aroused, and feeling ashamed that he was. (He might feel this way although he realizes that in some respect the arousal was not completely within his control. Whether they should or not, feelings of shame aren't particularly interested in whether ought implies can). We might, however, say that given the unexpected nature of the situation, this person did all that he could, and from the perspective of practical integrity, what he did (and did not do, or deliberate about doing) is enough.

III. Persistent Temptation

While the case of temptation above clarifies importantly different senses of temptation, the divergence between practical integrity and psychological integrity can be more clearly illustrated in cases where temptation (of the phenomenological kind) is a persistent, recurring feature of one's life. This is because integrity is most properly ascribed with reference to a significant span of life, if not a whole life, rather than a life examined at any particular moment (as above). This is not deny that some particular action might lead us to say that the person who did it compromised his integrity. However, such a judgment is made against the background of what the person, up to this point, had stood for. Furthermore, such instances of self-compromise may lead others to wonder whether this person had any integrity to lose in the first place (see Taylor 1985: 110). In that case, too, judgments of integrity are based not simply upon the nature of a person's actions, but more specifically in terms of their place, and their coherence, against the

background of that person's commitments (which are cultivated over time) and may, in some cases, be taken to demonstrate that one's stated commitments lacked genuine depth, or that one lacked all along the necessary capacities to remain true to one's commitments should they be subjected to any significant pressure.

Consider, for example, the case of a recovering alcoholic seeking to maintain sobriety.⁵ Suppose this person remains sober, through some combination of medication and counseling (or participation in a support group like Alcoholics Anonymous) even though he or she never fully eliminates the desire for drink.

As above, I would distinguish between desires that are taken up as reasons for practical deliberation and desires which are recognized as such but not treated as reasons for pursuing their object. We can call the latter mere urges or cravings. Thus, it is one thing to say that the sober alcoholic still desires drink in the sense that, although sober, she still finds herself deliberating about drinking (or about skipping her Antabuse medication so that she can enjoy a drink⁶), and something different to say that the sober alcoholic still experiences cravings for alcohol but does not deliberate about acting on those cravings. (We could imagine that such a person has adopted some kind of strategy for diffusing such cravings so that they do not become too strong or lingering; she changes her activity, goes for a jog, to an AA meeting, or so forth.)

The person who still desires alcohol in the sense that she has to talk herself out of drinking would seem, for that, to have less practical integrity than the person who does not have to do so, though the latter might have comparably strong urges. The prior person is torn in a much deeper sense than the latter, as she engages in an internal debate about whether or not to drink. For the latter, there are no grounds for inner debate, but there may be a reason to undertake some kind of action in order to diffuse the craving, so that she can re-focus on

whatever else she needs or wants to do. As Cottingham might say, the person who deliberates about drinking remains a 'divided self' in that when faced with the prospect of having a drink, she still finds herself of 'two minds,' even if the self (as it were) which wants not to drink always wins the inner argument.

However, the latter person, too, is in some sense divided, not in terms of how she deliberates, but rather in the sense that she still has cravings that she might well wish would go away. Thus, from the perspective of psychological integrity, there remain urges within this person which conflict with the person she may well desire to be. If the cravings are strong and fairly regular, dealing with them may well interrupt other activities she highly values, and thus, managing her addiction might make it difficult for her to devote herself as fully to other projects or commitments. Indeed, some prior commitments might be psychologically impossible for her to uphold if she is to manage her cravings for alcohol. For example, it is not hard to imagine that a person who had been committed to becoming a world-class bartender would be forced by her drinking problems to give up the trade if she wants to have any chance of staying sober.

The person who is genuinely committed to sobriety may well have to accept such limitations as her lot. Certainly, we all have to accept that some of our commitments limit what other commitments we can also have, and a refusal to do so may indicate either a lack of realism or self-deception, each of these a threat to integrity. Importantly, from the perspective of practical integrity, the presence of mere urges or cravings for drink do not limit *how much* (practical) integrity the sober alcoholic can have but rather *what specific form* a life of integrity can take for her. That is, the commitment to sobriety imposes limits on what other commitments and actions that person can reasonably undertake (as well as mandating that she do other things that enable her to stay true to her commitment to sobriety).

A crucial point to keep in mind here is that such cravings may never go away completely, and not for lack of effort on the part of the sober alcoholic. They may, in that respect, be a permanent feature of this person's life. The cravings may be quite strong (phenomenologically), and we might ask whether the phenomenal strength of the cravings should affect whether, or to what degree, we think of this person as having integrity. I would suggest, however, that the strength of the cravings does not necessarily matter. What matters is how those cravings are encountered and perhaps whether the person continues to put herself in avoidable situations where she will have to contend with them.⁷ The strength or persistence of such cravings will dictate what one must undertake in order to control them, and thus determine the practical shape one's struggles to remain sober must take. The stronger the cravings, the more effort (and courage and creativity, etc.) it will no doubt take to preserve this aspect of one's integrity. This is not to deny the observation that could be made from the perspective of psychological integrity, that the need for such inner effort (or struggle) reveals the extent to which one remains a 'divided self.' However, the perspective of practical integrity emphasizes instead the constancy of commitment—in both deliberation and action—as well as the amount of self-understanding and self-awareness that can be attained, in spite of such inner division. Thus, courage (or fortitude) is not merely an auxiliary capacity upon which one must draw when one's integrity is lacking (as Cottingham implies in the quote above in Section II); rather it is one of many capacities that enable a person to persevere in the face of adversity, and in that respect maintain one's (practical) integrity—or more simply, to keep one's life together. Since inner adversity can take forms other than the kind of temptation that induces deliberation (over that which tempts), one can manifest a high degree of practical integrity in the face of those other forms of inner

adversity, no less than that shown in contending with adversity flowing from the world outside the self.

IV. Affliction

Inner struggles against addiction, depression, and other psychological afflictions can be consuming, and may be seen as a challenge to integrity in that one who must contend with them may wonder, during various dark periods, whether it is even possible for them to live a full, or whole, life. As suggested above, contending with such afflictions may restrict the other commitments one can realistically hope to undertake. To the extent that certain other commitments, and achieving those aims, are seen as essential aspects of living a whole life, persons with afflictions that dominate their lives—even if they otherwise manage them remarkably well—may feel less than whole. For example, one might come to resent the fact that one had to give up other pursuits in order to master, as much as possible, one's afflictions. Or one might despair that one's lot in life is pretty pathetic.

While such inclinations are no doubt understandable, such resentment and despair might be taken as signs of a lack of integrity, because they raise questions about one's constancy of commitment. Indeed, despair may be regarded a kind of temptation—roughly, the temptation to take a nihilistic view of one's life or one's commitments. Such despair would thus undermine the perception that one's commitment, say, to sobriety, really matters, and thus would seem to make one less capable of facing any significant adversity on this front (say, a particularly strong craving for alcohol).

Given this, I suggest that the real threat to integrity posed by these kinds of inner afflictions is not merely that they are themselves constitutive of a lack of integrity (in the

psychological sense) but rather that the pressure and limits such afflictions put upon one's life can present itself as a strongly tempting reason to despair. Thus, we might say that the person of practical integrity is not tempted to despair, and continues instead to recognize the value of his or her life and commitments. Importantly, in cases of affliction, the person of integrity recognizes that whether she likes it or not, her affliction demands her attention, and that the prospect of having any kind of better, or more whole, life depends upon her contending with her actual, potentially debilitating, circumstances. Such an attitude is articulated, in the notably different circumstances in Auschwitz, by Viktor Frankl in *Man's Search for Meaning*:

Woe to him who saw no more sense in his life, no aim, no purpose, and therefore no point in carrying on. He was soon lost. The typical reply with which such a man rejected all encouraging arguments was, 'I have nothing to expect from life any more.' What sort of answer can one give to that?

What was really needed was a fundamental change in our attitude toward life. We had to learn ourselves and, furthermore, we had to teach the despairing men, that it did not really matter what we expected from life, but rather what life expected from us. We needed to stop asking about the meaning of life, and instead to think of ourselves as those who were being questioned by life—daily and hourly. Our answer must consist, not in talk and meditation, but in right action and in right conduct. Life ultimately means taking the responsibility to find the right answer to its problems and to fulfill the tasks which it constantly sets for each individual. (1985 [1959]: 98)

The challenges faced by Frankl and those others in the concentration camps were vastly shaped by their external circumstances, but his basic point applies equally well to those cases where our own inner circumstances may seem to be an occasion for despair.

Importantly, inner afflictions that take the form of psychological disorders and addictions may have as their bases features that are not fully or directly subject to rational control. (That is, one cannot simply decide to stop craving alcohol or feeling depressed.) To emphasize psychological integrity thereby implies that such people cannot have as much integrity as those who are not so afflicted, and so do not experience those potentially divisive urges. Of course, if we take for granted the psychological conception of integrity, this point may seem trivial, analytic. And it is not a *moral* judgment of those people who, as a matter of their own inner constitution, lack greater psychological harmony.

However, if we think integrity matters in that having it implies a greater capacity for contending with adversity—that the person of integrity is one who is not blown about by his desires and urges or by the conventional forces of social or political life—then in that respect, persons faced with various afflictions face a *challenge* to integrity, and not merely a proof of its absence, with which those of us who are comparatively unafflicted simply do not have to contend. Our confidence in the value of our lives or commitments are simply not threatened by the factors which tempt the psychologically afflicted to give into despair. Those who do not despair, those who remain constant in their commitments and their struggles to contend with that which afflicts them, thus manifest a kind of integrity that many of us may not know at all whether we have.

In this spirit, Gaita sketches a case of this kind of affliction—no doubt thinking of his father, whose mental illness he describes in *Romulus, My Father* (Gaita 1998)—and the integrity which remains a possibility. Imagine:

...someone to be suffering from a mental illness, an effect of which is to throw him into deep confusion about the significance of events in his past...He struggles to regain his past by seeing it under some pattern of sense, to see people and events in his past justly and compassionately; ‘struggles’ because he has lost his confidence in that without which he cannot regain his sanity—his judgement, and because his fantasies and delusions periodically lay waste to whatever he had patiently and painfully achieved in understanding. Each time that happens he has to begin again. This he does. (Gaita 1981: 161)

Gaita judges this to be an example of someone who has integrity ‘in full, humbling, and inspiring measure.’ The decisive feature, he suggests, ‘is not merely that he tries to restore order to his life, but that he does it in an uncompromising spirit of truthfulness.’ Unfortunately, Gaita does not elaborate directly upon what he means by ‘an uncompromising spirit of truthfulness.’ He presents the case as a challenge to a conception of integrity (present in Taylor 1981) which requires that a person of integrity is properly connected and responsive to his past.⁸ As mentioned above, integrity is ascribed to a person (or life) against some temporal background, and the reasonableness and constancy of one’s commitments cannot be fully measured except against this broader, diachronic background. This is not to imply that a person of integrity cannot change over time (see Davion 1991 and Cox et al 2003); rather, such changes should be responsive to one’s past, show an understanding of who one has been over time and a reasonable sense of responsibility for this. Changes in one’s values and commitments must reflect (roughly)

growth and increased understanding, rather than repression or what existentialists like Sartre would describe as fleeing from oneself

If the man Gaita describes exemplifies integrity, the case presents a difficulty for the view that integrity requires that one's present life (or self) be integrated with one's past, for although he does not appear to be fleeing from himself, his past has lost its coherence or meaning for him. (Gaita implies that this is not because his past *is* a set of incoherencies or that this man has lived an incoherent life and is only now discovering this, but that this man is beset by some kind of psychiatric ailment which makes it horribly difficult for him to recognize the sense that his past made.) Thus, it would seem that without that sense of coherence or meaning, the man is unable to integrate his present self and commitments with his past. He has lost a grip on his own life history, and without that, he cannot have any (or much) (diachronic) psychological integrity. Gaita seems to suggest that this man has integrity despite this loss of inner coherence, and that this integrity comes out in how the man 'begins again' whenever 'his fantasies and delusions...lay waste to whatever he had patiently and painfully achieved in understanding.' This suggests—as I read the case—that Gaita sees this man as recognizing that there is something that he *has* lost, and so while thrown into 'deep confusion about the significance of events in his past,' this man does not give into the *despair* of thinking that there was no significance there after all, or of thinking that there is no point now in trying to recover what sense of his past he can win back.

This description makes this man seem as admirable as his situation is awful. Gaita's judgment that he shows great integrity may, for that, simply be taken to reveal a verbal dispute with those who emphasize psychological integration as central to integrity. Thus, one might say that Gaita wishes to use *integrity* to refer to steadfastness (and truthfulness) in the face of great

adversity; others like Cottingham (and early Taylor) want instead to reserve *integrity* for overall psychological wholeness and unity. No one, however, need deny that Gaita's man shows great courage.

Given this, we might simply claim that there are (at least) two senses of integrity—the sense which emphasizes psychological integration and unity and the other which emphasizes those capabilities (or virtues) and achievements I've associated with practical integrity.

However, I suspect it would be a bit too easy to regard this as merely a verbal disagreement. These are, at any rate, two different conceptions of what it means for a person to have achieved harmony in his or her inner life (and in the relation between oneself and the world beyond). My aim here has been to suggest that the psychological integrity praised as such by Cottingham, for example, appears to assume (or imply) an overly narrow and simplistic sense of what might be counted as a harmony, one which takes conflictedness as such to count against one's integrity rather than being that out of which a harmony could be created. From the perspective of practical integrity, it is that creative process, which may involve forms of struggle and control, which is the crucial mark of integrity, rather than that this process leads (as it may not) to some point of complete (or near-complete) state of inner tranquility.

V. Divided Lives/Selves

In the cases of temptation, addiction, and mental affliction discussed above, it might reasonably be thought that even if that is the lot of the people who must contend with those sources of adversity, and even if one can have practical integrity in spite of these challenges, there is some ideal sense in which not being tempted, addicted, or afflicted would be preferable. At the same time, I can imagine someone saying that without having to face those challenges, he or she

wouldn't be the person she has become. This needn't involve a celebration of adversity for its own sake, but is simply an acknowledgement of the ways in which it is difficult to imagine having become who we are without having faced (or continuing to face) what we actually did (or still do).

This point applies also to cases where people experience strong conflict between different aspects of their identity, or even think of themselves as having multiple identities with competing commitments that may involve great conflict at times, and yet see each of these sources of conflict as important parts of who they are. Gaita discusses a hypothetical 'child of two cultures' who finds these dual sources of his identity 'sometimes in creative, sometimes in debilitating conflict, such that the results are interwoven in all that is significant in his character and personality.... This conflict is the root of his strengths and weaknesses' (161).⁹ As with the case of the man afflicted by mental illness, Gaita describes this child of two cultures as facing his situation in an uncompromising spirit of truthfulness. In this case, I take that to mean that this person sees the value of both cultures, the roles they have played in shaping him, and the undesirability of eliminating or forsaking either of these sources of his own self, despite the conflict, and hence accepting the struggles involved in reconciling as best he can these two aspects of himself at any given time.

Maria Lugones (1990) describes her own experiences as a Latina in the United States and as a lesbian—two identities which she sees as in serious conflict. Both identities come with a history of discrimination, and so affirming either identity entails some struggle against external forces. However, her lesbianism is also in conflict with the heterosexist norms of 'la cultura Nuevomejicana.' Thus, seeking to affirm both identities, and to integrate them into a single identity as a Neuvomejicana lesbian seems fraught with great difficulties. Lugones remarks, 'I do

not know whether these two possibilities can ever be integrated so that I can become at least, in these respects, a unitary being. I don't even know whether that would be desirable' (138-139). Nevertheless, both Victoria Davion and Cheshire Calhoun see Lugones' searching description of her own situation as suggesting that integrity need not require the elimination of such conflict. Calhoun remarks that, 'integrity may sometimes in fact require resisting the impulse to resolve inconsistencies' (1995: 238; on this point, see also Marino (2011)). Davion notes 'the extent to which [Lugones] understands her situation' and her 'commitment to monitor who she is and who she is becoming,' and sees this as pointing to an integrity that is possible even for a person who has what she calls a multiplicitous identity (1991: 189-191).

Clearly, internal conflict will be a part of such multiplicitous identities (or selves), but the ways in which such selves are 'divided' seems importantly different from the sort of division which Cottingham and Taylor emphasize in their discussions of temptation. It may be important that in the cases just mentioned the sometimes conflicting identities are neither in *full* conflict nor is it clear that progress is impossible in seeking to better integrate these identities, *pace* Lugones' uncertainty about whether such integration would be desirable. The important feature in both cases is that both identities constitute who that person is (and what he or she values or believes ought to be valued) in positive ways, so that it is not an option for either of them simply to *discard* one of these aspects of the self. Eliminating potential conflict by attempting to ignore or diminish one of these aspects of the self might itself be regarded by such persons as a temptation. (The temptation is not that of seeking ways to unify oneself, but rather seeking it by doing violence to a part of oneself which has sufficient positive value.) The practical integrity of being true to oneself and one's commitments thus may require not the elimination of such conflict, but rather the management of it through making difficult decisions about which aspect

of the self, on any particular situation, warrants expression or defense from the inessential demands of the other aspect of the self. Of course, it is possible that conflicting demands of each identity will present themselves as essential to maintaining it, and so it may seem that a person with a multiplicitous identity cannot fully guard against tragic internal conflicts. That is, self-compromise may seem inevitable (or its avoidance merely lucky).

The apparent inevitability of inner conflict in multiplicitous persons gives the decisions such persons might be faced with the character of a moral dilemma (about which commitments flowing from these sometimes conflicting identities to honor in any given case). The dilemmatic nature of such choices allows us to re-cast the implicit question above—'Can a multiplicitous person maintain integrity despite the fact that she may not in every situation, or in every choice, be able to honor fully both (or all) of the aspects of her multiplicitous identity?'—in the following terms: 'Can a person faced with a dilemmatic choice, which thereby involves favoring one value (or set of values) over another, despite the fact that the person identifies with (acknowledges, respects, etc.) the significance of both values (or sets), *choose* in a way that maintains her integrity?'

I am inclined to think that the answer to this second question, and thus also to the first question, is affirmative for two reasons. First, in a moral dilemma, the inescapability of compromise is understandable and forgivable—the inevitability of compromise (sacrifice, etc.) is written into the very nature of a dilemma.¹⁰ When the cause of such a dilemma is not attributable to the agent, then the agent is not blameworthy for being in the dilemma, and so presumably cannot be blamed for choosing one way or another. Some may question whether multiplicitous individuals are immune from blame; that is, one might argue that if such a person had not committed herself to the conflicting values of conflicting identities, then the sort of dilemmatic

choice sketched above would not arise. This response strikes me as implausible, especially in cases like that of Lugones and Gaita's 'child of two cultures' because there are respects in which cultural identities transcend choice (to say nothing of sexual orientation). This is not to say that such identities and their values, as shaped by the wider culture (or subculture), are immutable (and presumably someone like Lugones would sensibly aspire to change what it means within la cultura Neuvomejicana to be such a person so that it is compatible with also being a lesbian). This is, however, to say that not every feature of a person's identity is a matter of choice; many features are inherited, and the project of making oneself into a certain kind of person (or self) involves understanding, discovering, responding to, elaborating upon, acknowledging, embracing, and sometimes rejecting various features of our inherited identities. The person who inherits conflicting identities—that is, finds oneself with conflicting identities that are revealed to oneself prior to choice—cannot be blamed for what is inherited. The person who, upon discovering such points of inner conflict, recognizes some value in each of these identities but also rejects the choice of simply abandoning or repudiating one of those identities is not obviously making a mistake—no more of a mistake than a person who values career and family but pursues both is making a mistake: conflicts arise, but the situation is not one of *total* conflict (unless the person has been foolish enough to make his or her separate commitments each so demanding that they are necessarily in a state of total and irresolvable conflict). Given all of this, I am inclined to say that when one must choose, and the conflicting demands are equal in weight (though no doubt ascertaining this is difficult—too difficult to deal with here), then one must simply choose. Genuinely dilemmatic choices do not impugn a person's (practical) integrity.

Second, recall that a key feature of practical integrity involves remaining true to one's commitments in action *and* deliberation. The multiplicitous person faced with a hard choice need

not be seen as abandoning or repudiating the aspect of her self which is not expressed by such a choice. It need only be that she has decided that some other aspect calls for specific attention (protection, expression, etc.) on this particular occasion. In the hardest of cases, neither option may reveal itself as the best one, and so one must simply choose. Attempting to determine the practical integrity of a person on the basis of a single difficult decision of this sort seems terribly confused. As I suggested above, while some choices (or thoughtless actions) are in direct conflict with integrity, many choices, considered by themselves, may not provide sufficient grounds for affirming or denying integrity. Instead, they contribute to a *pattern* of choice (and action) and thereby to the narrative of a person's life. These patterns, and the resulting narrative, would include the person's sense of her own identity, her commitments, her sense of their relative strength, the weight of various demands flowing from various aspects of the self, the choices she makes, her reasons for choice (i.e. her motivations), the actions she undertakes, as well as factors that may influence her deliberations and decisions (etc.) which are transparent to those around her, and of which she could be made aware. To include all of these factors is not to suggest that a person of integrity must be her own ideal observer—I leave it open how much weight the various factors have, and expect that weightings will not fall into any fixed ordinal ranking. The point is simply that being true to one's commitments involves not just non-akratic action but also self-understanding, a non-self-deceived sense of one's reasons, and thus some degree of self-monitoring. Cultivating or preserving, and even compromising, one's own integrity will thus often (perhaps usually) be a process, rather than a one-off achievement—or failure. This point seems to me fairly obvious when speaking of positive strides toward (or in the preservation of) integrity, since the very notion of cultivation entails process. One does not instantly become a person of integrity. On the other hand, failures—particularly those of great magnitude—may

seem to derail the whole process (or, again, lead us to think that one had no integrity to lose after all). Smaller failures, such as continued neglect of a commitment even though one continues to espouse it or believe that one is so committed, may indicate a more gradual decline, the kind of slow alienation from one's prior sense of self that may culminate in a person's waking up one day and wondering who in the world she has become.

So, to return to the question I have been trying to answer affirmatively—whether a multiplicitous person faced with conflict between aspects of the self can maintain her integrity—I would suggest that if this person *had* practical integrity in the first place (such that she had a kind of integrity to maintain) then, yes, her integrity is not compromised by a single difficult decision (if it is informed by the appropriate kind of deliberation, marked by self-understanding and self-monitoring, etc.). Of course, now we must ask whether we can allow that a multiplicitous person *had* any integrity to maintain. However, if what I said earlier in this section is correct, then there is no *prima facie* reason to assume that a such people necessarily lack (practical) integrity. If the sometimes conflicting aspects of one's identity—as a single person with a single life to lead—are both accepted as having sufficient value such that rejecting one or the other (or the commitments that go along with it) would itself constitute a self-compromise, then leaving the basic inconsistencies unresolved (as Calhoun puts it) might be what (practical) integrity requires in such cases. This does not imply that they must *remain* unresolved, or that one shouldn't seek to make what inner peace one can.¹¹

VI. Conclusion

It is worth noting that Cottingham recognizes that even his ideal person of integrity, 'is, to be sure, not an angelic zombie for whom there are no hard questions: she still has to work out

priorities, what is of most value, what is lower down the list' (8). No doubt, the working out of such priorities could be an arduous task, which takes great time and attention, and involves difficult choices. Cottingham continues:

But what she [the person of integrity] does have is a certain psychological *wholeness*—an understanding of the significance of all her various goals and desires, and the true place of each in her overall life-plan—how they fit in with her sense of who she really is. (8)

If Maria Lugones, for example, sees that being a Neuvomejicana Latina and a lesbian, though these identities conflict, are each equally a part of 'who she really is,' then *is she whole*, in the right sense for Cottingham's purposes? I am not sure—especially if someone like Lugones resists the notion that the values or commitments involved in embracing these aspects of herself are not easily ranked on some ideal list. Is refusing to have, or make, such a list simply a refusal to have integrity? In a case like hers, I doubt it.

This is not at all to deny that other forms of fragmentation—repression, denial, self-deception, and so forth—would not constitute threats to one's practical integrity equal to those they pose for psychological integrity. Furthermore, the lack of psychological integrity which Cottingham might see in some of the cases I've discussed *does* pose challenges to the maintenance of practical integrity. They are, however, challenges that can be met, I have suggested, with (practical) integrity. (One can, on the other hand, fail to have integrity in these cases, and compromise oneself and one's commitments in all sorts of ways.)

Above, Cottingham speaks of one's seeing how all of one's goals and desires 'fit in with her sense of who she really is.' Does this leave room for *finding out* who one is, or that one could make such a discovery through a process (or during the course of a life) that either manifests

integrity or fails to do so? Our sense of who we (really) are changes over time. As discussed above, integrity does not oppose change itself, and beyond this, it would seem that the person of integrity must remain open to the possibility of change, in light of new circumstances, insights, or opportunities. But these changes will be guided by some sense of what is important, and so acceptable change—that is, change which is compatible with integrity—will have limits.

It might seem that Cottingham's remarks above imply that integrity requires a strong sense of where one is going in life, and by the end of his essay he moves from speaking of one's 'sense of who she really is' to the idea that integrity enables us to 'take a first step to becoming who we are *meant to be*' (13, emphasis added). This dramatic metaphysical (and teleological) shift is remarkable, though I shall not comment on it directly. Why should we not think it enough that the person of integrity knows what she stands for, what she values deeply and must not forsake (barring decisive reasons to revise her values at some later point), though she does not have a sense of where that will lead her or what she shall become—whether she was 'meant to be' that way or not? Some of our values do not culminate in a 'life-plan,' but rather in a set of guidelines for enacting whatever plans we devise along the (hopefully long) path of our lives. Such lives do not lack a sense of direction, though it may not be the direction of a 'five-year plan' (and the prior sense of direction may well suffice for Cottingham's purposes, although I am not sure about this).¹² Importantly, then, the person of (practical) integrity may not know where she is going, or where she will end up, but she does know that there are ways of getting wherever she might go that are not, for her, an option. In that respect, such a person will have a sense of who she is and what she stands for, even as who she will become and what shape her life will take remains in many ways a mystery which only the living of it can reveal.

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Notes

¹ My general approach is similar to Cox et al (2003), though I am focused here on the relation between integrity and inner conflict, and do not argue, as they do, for the claim that integrity is a “thick virtue term” (and not simply a formal virtue) (41).

² Importantly, Cottingham considers whether psychological integrity is sufficient for a good life, and contends that this depends upon whether such integrity requires some orientation to an objective good. If not, then he says integrity is not sufficient. However, he remarks, ‘We could put the point either by saying that mere integrity is not sufficient for the good life, or alternatively by reserving the label ‘true integrity’ for integrated conduct that is directed towards a good and a virtuous way of living. Either way, the upshot, from the point of view of morality, is effectively the same’ (13). Cottingham seems to favor the ‘true integrity’ approach; however, this is a side-point in his main analysis of integrity itself, which focuses upon psychological integration.

³ Given what I say about Cottingham in Note 2 above, it should be clear that he, too, would be troubled by such a case, and might say either that while such a life has integrity, it is not a good life from the moral point of view, or that it does not manifest ‘true integrity.’

⁴ J.P. Day (1993) claims that *tempt* should be treated as a success term; hence, ‘Strictly...we ought to say that Satan tried (unsuccessfully) to provoke Job to renounce God, and we ought to speak of ‘the Attempted (but failed) Temptation [of Jesus] in the Wilderness’ (176). Day’s discussion is interesting, but it is not clear that *tempt* and its cognates are *used* primarily as a success terms (although if the claim were that to tempt someone is at least to successfully get that person to deliberate about accepting the tempting good, then this might seem more plausible).

⁵ Putman (2001) discusses alcoholism in articulating his conception of psychological courage, and the applicability of the example to what I am calling practical integrity first occurred to me after encountering Putnam’s illuminating discussion.

⁶ Antabuse causes severe nausea when alcohol is consumed while taking it.

⁷ Avoidable in the sense that these situations are not mandated by other strong commitments. The harder case is one in which the person believes that, in order to honor some other commitment, she must put herself in situations in which she knows she will have to contend with such cravings. The discussion of divided selves below will suggest what we might say about conflicting commitments from the perspective of practical integrity.

⁸ Cottingham discusses this in terms of diachronic, as opposed to synchronic, unity or fragmentation (2010: 5).

⁹ Importantly, Gaita suggests that this person’s sense of ineliminable conflict need not be a false perception on his part: ‘His friends sorrow over his pain but cannot wish it otherwise, for it is so

constitutive of him, that to wish it otherwise would be to wish him to be someone else' (162).

For similar examples, see Calhoun (1995) and Davion (1991).

¹⁰ For extended discussions of the possibility of maintaining integrity in situations that seem to require compromise, see Benjamin (1990), esp. 61-84.

¹¹ An extreme case here is that of dissociative identity disorder (what is commonly called multiple personality disorder), and the attempt to 'integrate' the dissociated personalities back into a whole person. See, for example, Robert Oxnam's (2005) account of his own efforts to integrate. Such cases raise innumerable difficulties, since even if we see greater integrity in Oxnam by the end of his narrative, he is still comprised of three personalities, who now exist in a state of mutual awareness and collaboration. *To whom* would we attribute this greater integrity? All three personalities, working together?

¹² For a related discussion, about whether certain kinds of substantive commitments are necessary for a good life, see Calhoun (2009). (Calhoun argues that a certain form of commitment is not necessary.)

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