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Kamm, F. M. *Morality, Mortality. Vol. 1: Death and Whom to Save from It.* New York: Oxford University Press, 1993. Pp. 334. \$45.00 (cloth).

Everyone loves to obsess about death, and philosophers (from Socrates on) are certainly no exception. This book contains ruminations (of perhaps a faintly obsessive character) on some of the most important metaphysical and moral dimensions of death. Kamm's book—the first volume of two—is challenging, fascinating, and frequently brilliant. It is written in a manner that makes it rather difficult to read. But for the reader who is willing to tackle the challenge, it is an imaginative, deeply engaging philosophical adventure.

Reversing the order of the title, Kamm begins with mortality and moves on to morality. That is, she begins with a treatment of the metaphysical issues concerning death. Why exactly is death bad for the individual who is dead (if it is indeed bad)? (Epicurus's question.) And why is death (posthumous nonexistence) worse than prenatal nonexistence? (Lucretius's question.) Given that death is indeed bad and in some sense worse than prenatal nonexistence, what sorts of attitudes should we take toward death?

Kamm begins by laying out Thomas Nagel's classic approach to answering Epicurus's question: death is bad for the individual who dies in virtue of depriving him of the goods of life (the Deprivation Account). Although criticizing certain features of Nagel's argumentation, Kamm accepts the main lines of the Deprivation Account. But if one is a deprivation theorist, Lucretius's question becomes pressing, since posthumous and prenatal nonexistence can appear to involve symmetric deprivations of the goods of life. Here Kamm considers a suggestion by Parfit that we seem to care less—in some sense—about past experiences than future experiences: Parfit “claims [that] if I wake up one morning and do not remember what day it is, I would prefer that it be the day after I underwent *very* painful surgery rather than the day before I am to undergo only moderately painful surgery (assuming there are no aftereffects of the very painful surgery) (Surgery Case). One extension of this view is that I may care less about the goods of life I have already had than about goods I am still to have” (pp. 27–28). If we care considerably less about past good experiences than about future good experiences, then perhaps we have the makings of an answer to Lucretius's question: after all, death deprives us of something we care relatively more about.

Although Kamm believes this Parfitian approach helps to answer Lucretius's question, she also maintains that it falls short of giving an adequate answer. This is because the Parfitian approach implies only that death seems worse than prenatal nonexistence to an individual who takes the perspective given by a particular point in time, not that it genuinely is worse. Kamm holds that a fully adequate answer to Lucretius's question must give a picture of death's badness that can be seen and appreciated from a perspective that is not bound to a particular point in time (a temporally more objective perspective). She appears to believe that only such an account of death's badness will help to show that death genuinely is worse than prenatal nonexistence (rather than simply seeming to be so).

Kamm proceeds to consider a variety of factors that can be appreciated from a temporally more objective perspective and might plausibly be thought to explain death's badness in a way that implies that death is worse than

prenatal nonexistence. She distinguishes between experiential and nonexperiential goods and criticizes the Parfitian approach for not giving adequate attention to certain nonexperiential goods (goods of "achievement"). Kamm develops her own proposal to explain the badness of death; this proposal combines the Nagel and Parfit points with considerations which can be appreciated from a more objective temporal perspective and which imply that death is worse than prenatal nonexistence. Whence the title of the first part of the book: "Death: From Bad to Worse." I know of nothing quite like this first part of the book: it is certainly the most comprehensive, sustained, and enlightening discussion of the metaphysical issues concerning death of which I am aware.

If death is indeed bad, then how should we behave when various lives are at stake—when (e.g.) we can save some lives but not all? The second part of the book deals with theoretical considerations about saving lives, and the third part treats the issues in a more concrete fashion, dealing with problems concerning the acquisition and distribution of organs for transplantation. Many of the theoretical insights developed in the first two parts of the book are exploited to good effect in the more applied final part, although this last part can also stand on its own.

Nagel's reflections on death are the springboard for the first part of the book, and John Taurek's important essay "Should the Numbers Count?" (*Philosophy and Public Affairs* 6 [Summer 1977]: 293–316) is the springboard for the second part of the book. Taurek argues that generally it is not a worse thing if more people die rather than fewer, and thus it is permissible in certain conflict situations not to save the greater number (simply in order to prevent more deaths). More carefully, Taurek's view is that it is not a reason to save some people rather than others (when we cannot save everyone) that we could thereby save a greater number of lives.

But Kamm presents an argument against Taurek's skeptical view and on behalf of the commonsense position that it is indeed a worse thing if more people die rather than fewer. But of course this does not imply that we ought to save the greater number (unless a certain sort of consequentialism is true). As Kamm points out, it may be that considerations of justice and fairness stand in the way of saving the greater number of lives and entail that both groups (containing the greater and the lesser numbers) should be given equal chances.

Kamm goes on to argue that such considerations (stemming not from the good, but the right) need not stand in the way of preventing the worse state of affairs (i.e., the state of affairs in which more die). In the process, there is a detailed examination of contexts in which various lives are at stake. Kamm considers (among other issues) the question of what makes a policy unfair and the significance of the distinction between direct and indirect need for aid. She also considers various procedures besides straightforwardly saving the greater number which give some weight to the number of people involved. There is a very subtle and probing discussion of the appropriateness of the various procedures in different contexts. Kamm points out that these procedures all claim to treat individuals as equals (as in Taurek), and yet (contra Taurek) they do not involve giving groups chances or shares independent of their numbers. Further, they do not seem to be based on the view that it is worse if more suffer than if fewer do.

The final portion of the second part of the book consists in a detailed and fascinating discussion of cases like the following: you can either save one person's life or save another person's life and a third person's (say) finger. It appears that a consequentialist would aggregate the loss of the life and the finger and counsel saving the life and the finger rather than merely the life. But it does not seem obvious that this is correct. Indeed, Kamm argues that the consequentialist approach is not correct in these contexts precisely because there are "irrelevant utilities." In the course of her discussion of a variety of such contexts, Kamm distinguishes a number of approaches that meld "subjective" and "objective" considerations. She defends certain of these combinations as laying bare the essence of commonsense morality.

As she develops the different ways of combining subjective and objective elements, Kamm gives a trenchant and incisive analysis of significant features of commonsense morality. As she points out, commonsense morality has "concern for the fact that from the subjective point of view of each person who stands to lose his life, it matters who wins, and because it matters more to someone if he is the one to suffer a big loss than if he suffers a small one, this should make certain utilities become irrelevant" (p. 186). Kamm's reconstruction of commonsense morality thus gives some weight to the concern of each person to be the one to survive in a way that prevents straightforward consequentialist aggregation, and yet it does not endorse the radically subjective view of Taurek.

Kamm begins the more "applied" third section of the book with a detailed discussion of the Report of the U.S. Task Force on Organ Transplantation (which pertains to the acquisition and distribution of scarce organs). Her critical discussions of this report and other approaches are subtle and extremely penetrating. Further, she presents a systematic positive view of her own about how we should acquire and distribute scarce organs. This somewhat intricate view involves combining the weights attached to considerations of need, urgency, and outcome. Part of what is useful about Kamm's approach is her careful and enlightening discussions of the nature of the concepts of need, urgency, and outcome (and their relationships).

Kamm's treatments of the three major sets of issues—the metaphysics of death, general theoretical issues pertaining to saving lives, and the more applied issues concerning organ transplantation—are all extremely impressive, comprehensive, and insightful. In all three cases they seem to me to be the best overall discussions available. This of course does not mean that I do not have worries and reservations. I shall present a few of these in what follows, focusing primarily on part of the discussion of the metaphysics of death.

In his discussion of death's badness, Thomas Nagel is concerned to establish that some things can be bad for an individual without their ever being experienced in any way by the agent. In order to make this thesis plausible, Nagel employs various examples, including one in which an individual is scurrilously attacked and lampooned behind his back by individuals who present themselves to him as friends. Nagel claims that this harms and is bad for the individual, even though the individual never experiences anything unpleasant as a result. Kamm criticizes Nagel's use of this example on the ground that it incorrectly suggests that the primary goods lost by the individual who dies (and in virtue of the loss of which death is bad) are nonexperiential

goods such as one's reputation's not being spoiled. But Kamm properly points out that it is primarily the goods of "experience and action" that ground our interest in further life (and the deprivation of which makes death bad for the individual who dies). While Kamm is sometimes more circumspect in her discussion of Nagel's use of the example of betrayal behind one's back, she does say that Nagel has "misargued" for the Deprivation Account (p. 63). She suggests that Nagel's mistake consists in employing the example of betrayal behind one's back to support the Deprivation Account of death's badness. (Previously, she has made a somewhat weaker claim, saying, "Nagel's focusing on the thesis that someone can be harmed without experiencing anything bad, especially by employing certain particular examples to support it [e.g., the example of betrayal behind one's back], makes it hard to see which deprivations in particular make death so bad" [p. 16].)

But surely there are two steps to Nagel's argument (a point which Kamm is apparently willing to acknowledge). First, Nagel wishes to establish the general thesis that one can be harmed by something without experiencing it. To this the example of the betrayal behind one's back is indisputably relevant. Of course, Nagel would then wish to take the next step and claim that death is one of these sorts of bads. Here there is a disanalogy between the betrayal example and death: death deprives the individual of (among other things) the goods of experience and action, whereas betrayal does not. But this disanalogy does not seem problematic, since the betrayal example is invoked at the first step and not the second. Granted, if one employs the betrayal example at the second step as well as the first, this could certainly blur one's analysis; but I do not think that Nagel was doing this, nor that any proponent of the Deprivation Account must do this (or would be inclined to make this mistake in virtue of adducing the example at the first step).

Thus, I do not think Nagel has "misargued" for his position in the way suggested by Kamm. I should mention that there has been considerable discussion in the literature about a different issue concerning the relationship between Nagel's betrayal example and death. After an individual has died, he is unable to have the goods of experience and action (on the construal of death as an experiential blank). And yet presumably the individual in Nagel's example is in some sense able to have unpleasant experiences as a result of the betrayal (even if he does not actually have such experiences). Thus, some have suggested that Nagel's example falls short of establishing that death can be bad for the individual who dies; in order to establish this, they contend that we need an example of something being bad for an individual where it is impossible that the individual have unpleasant experiences as a result. Whereas I do not believe that this criticism of Nagel's betrayal example is ultimately convincing, it is perhaps worthy of some consideration.

The Deprivation Account purports to tell us why death is bad for the individual who dies. This answers Epicurus's question. But there is another question (or perhaps set of questions) raised by Lucretius about the relationship between death—construed here as posthumous nonexistence—and prenatal nonexistence. It seems that prenatal and posthumous nonexistence are different in important ways and that any account of the badness of death that implies that they are the same (in these ways) would be problematic.

Parfit points out that it is a deep-seated feature of us that we care considerably more about future experiential goods than past experiential goods. This asymmetry in our attitudes is more than something we simply happen to have; it is not unreasonable and perhaps not even irrational, on some appropriate understanding of rationality. If Parfit is correct, then there would be an asymmetry between death and prenatal nonexistence: death would deprive us of something we (not unreasonably) care considerably more about.

Kamm points out that the asymmetry in our attitudes only emerges from the perspective of an individual located at a particular point in time. But we are also capable of taking up a temporally more objective viewpoint, from which the asymmetry disappears. Why, Kamm asks, must the temporally located viewpoint have hegemony here? Also, even from a temporally located viewpoint, the asymmetry seems to apply only to goods of experience and action and not to an important class of goods: those of achievement. Why should the goods of experience and action have hegemony over the goods of achievement? In part because Kamm does not see any obvious answers to these questions, she thinks it useful to develop a set of considerations by reference to which death can be seen to be worse than prenatal nonexistence from a temporally more objective perspective (and not in virtue of the Parfitian asymmetry in our attitudes).

I believe it is indeed prudent to seek to develop such considerations, and I find Kamm's suggestions enlightening. But I am not so persuaded as Kamm that this sort of project is necessary. She reports that in correspondence Parfit has suggested that "when we are considering Lucretius's question and are concerned with the badness of our own future nonexistence, we are thinking primarily about experiential goods" (p. 36). And this seems very natural. But Kamm wonders, "Why do we focus on experiential goods in considering Lucretius's question? Why not be concerned that more achievements are impossible in the future . . .? And if we are then focusing on achievements as well, why not past ones?" (pp. 36–37). It seems that our attitudes toward past and future goods of achievement are temporally symmetric.

I do not have a knockdown defense of the view that experiential goods are the goods that are relevant when we are considering the badness of our own future nonexistence. I suppose we might take a perspective from which we attended simply to the fact that our achievements will be cut off. But for this to suggest the inadequacy of the Parfitian approach, presumably we would have to be concerned with the mere fact that our achievements will be cut off apart from any future experiences of such achievements or the acts that issue in them. That is, one would have to care about the cutting off of the achievements *per se* and apart from experiences of them, and it is not evident that this is genuinely plausible. Does Kamm suppose that we can somehow envisage a future in which we act and achieve things but have no sense of acting and no experiences of achievement, and that we would still care about this sort of (imaginary) future being curtailed? If not, how might one establish that we do in fact care about achievement in our futures *per se* when thinking about Lucretius's question? Although I do not have a decisive argument here, I do find it natural and plausible that the temporally located perspective and the goods of experience and action have hegemony in considering Lucretius's question.

Kamm tends to put Lucretius's question as, "Why is death worse than prenatal nonexistence?" And she points out that the Parfitian approach does not imply that death *is* worse than prenatal nonexistence—only that it seems (from our particular locations in time) to be so. This way of framing the issues can make it appear that the Parfitian approach is defective. But I believe that this way of framing things is slightly unfair. For Lucretius's question might also be put as follows: "Why is there an important difference in our attitudes toward prenatal nonexistence and death?" After all, it is not exactly a part of our pretheoretical data that death is "really"—that is, capable of being seen from a temporally objective viewpoint to be—worse than prenatal nonexistence. (Indeed, the typical formulation of the preanalytical datum is in terms of an asymmetry in our attitudes: we tend to regard our future nonexistence with fear or at least we regard it as a bad thing, whereas we are relatively indifferent to our past nonexistence.) And if this is Lucretius's question, then Parfit's answer is not obviously defective.

I suppose that if we simply happened to have the asymmetry in attitudes identified by Parfit, then the Parfitian answer to Lucretius's question might be suspect. But Parfit's point is that the asymmetry in question is not merely contingent or adventitious; it seems to be a deep-seated feature of human beings. I believe it may even be a rational feature of us, on an appropriate conception of the rationality of our attitudes. If the asymmetry in attitudes is a deep-seated, not surprising, and perhaps even rational feature of us that is generated from the perspective from which we actually lead our lives (at least in our unreflective moments), what more need be said? I am thus less persuaded than Kamm that we need to develop an account of death's badness that can be seen from a temporally objective viewpoint to imply asymmetry between death and prenatal nonexistence.

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Held, Virginia. *Feminist Morality: Transforming Culture, Society, and Politics*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993. Pp. xii + 285. \$42.00 (cloth); \$17.95 (paper).

Feminist ethics is claiming historically characteristic life experiences of women as significant (and unjustifiably disregarded) data for moral theory. Caring relationships salient in women's lives are being explored as valuable theoretical paradigms: female friendship (Marilyn Friedman), lesbian bonding (Sarah Hoagland), and mother-child relationships (Nel Noddings, Sara Ruddick). In this tradition, Virginia Held's highly readable book finds the moral experience of "mothering persons" rich in insight and inspiration. Sensible, well balanced, informed, and informative, *Feminist Morality* is a good starting place for those not yet familiar with feminist ethics. Others should not miss its responses to criticisms and questions regarding earlier work in this field.

Virginia Held's vision is of a "morality that would result from reliance upon a feminist method of moral inquiry" (p. 38). It emphasizes process,