

# Integrity and Self-Protection

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According to the standard conception of integrity in Western culture, to have integrity is to adhere to one's own commitments, particularly in the face of some challenge. So one lacks integrity to the degree to which one acts in ways that conflict with what one values. It would seem to follow that martyrs—that is, those who sacrifice their lives in defending what they value—are paradigms of integrity. And we do tend to think of martyrs in that way; people such as Martin Luther King and Ken Saro Wiwa<sup>1</sup> are admirable, in part at least, because they had so much integrity. They opposed oppressive regimes, knowing full well the dangers to themselves. They were motivated not by instincts for self-preservation, but by a strong sense of justice. Self-preservation, or self-protection, seems to be negatively correlated with integrity on the standard conception of that virtue. To be self-protective is to lose some of our integrity. In this paper, I pursue the somewhat unlikely claim that a certain amount of self-protection is consistent with integrity and is even required by it in many circumstances.

The amount of self-protection I have in mind is that which allows the agent to maintain the ability to offer forth her best judgment to others. That is minimal self-protection—I call it “protecting one's agency”—and it is synonymous with self-preservation. By contrast, a person is maximally self-protective when she shields herself from any challenge to her views. We describe people as “self-protective” not only when they aim to preserve their own lives or sanity, but also when they shy away from controversy. The latter I call “protecting one's interests” and argue that it is incompatible with integrity.

A large gap exists between protecting one's agency and merely protecting one's interests. People who fill that gap protect themselves not to avoid straining themselves in debate, or to preserve their lives or sanity, but to prevent themselves from losing what they value (e.g., loved ones, the respect of employers, material objects even). They sometimes “choose their words very carefully” or fail to utter them completely so as not to upset people who matter to them. I call such behavior “protecting one's values” (one acts to preserve things of value, not of mere interest). It is medial<sup>2</sup> self-protection, and it can be necessary for integrity.

Investigating how compatible integrity and self-protection are in general should yield insights into the nature of integrity, which is the subject of much debate in moral philosophy.<sup>3</sup> My intention here is not only to decide the compatibility question, but also to engage in “a fresh line of inquiry”<sup>4</sup> into the nature of integrity. I start with the standard intuitive conception of that virtue and build on it using intuitions about the integrity of people who are self-

protective. To return to martyrs, my intuitions about them include the following: Insofar as some martyrs are not true to themselves or needlessly sacrifice their lives for something they value, they lack integrity. I conclude that a failure to protect one's agency can compromise one's integrity.

### **Being Self-Protective**

Analyzing the relation between self-protection and integrity requires a basic understanding not only of integrity, but also of self-protection. How are the extremes of self-protection—"protecting one's agency" and "protecting one's interests"—similar such that they are both instances of self-protection? Further, how do we account for different degrees of self-protection? Let me begin with the extremes and determine what they have in common for the purpose of establishing a broad definition.

A person protects her agency literally when her ability to act is under threat and she aims to protect that ability. The threat may be to her life or to her sanity. For example, a member of a persecuted minority might take steps to avoid confrontation with dominant members of her society, particularly the most threatening among them, because the risk to her life is too great. In situations in which she is forced to deal with people who are socially dominant, she might try in subtle ways to discover how they view her minority status. How much do they align themselves with the majority? Once she finds that out, she will know whether she can live among them and maintain her sanity or her life. Note here that self-protection does not have to be passive; one can take *steps* to ensure one's own protection, rather than wade around in the avoidance of others.

At the other extreme is protecting one's *interests* by sidestepping the need to justify oneself to others or by refusing to do so. For example, a person might actively surround himself with people who share the same views as he (and who do not value debate for its own sake) or cut off conversations with people who cross his path and try to make him accountable for himself. Soon after such conversations begin, he might say, "I just don't want to talk about it" or "I am through with this discussion." If the resistance stems not from a threat to his emotional well-being, but from something much less forgivable, such as weakness of will or arrogance, then he is merely protecting his interests.

So why are protecting one's agency and protecting one's interests both instances of self-protection? People who exhibit such behavior are protective of very different things. Yet they share one major thing in common: a concern for consequences to themselves of engaging openly and honestly with others or of failing to resist a perceived threat. Hence, self-protectiveness is an attitude—one with behavioral dimensions—that involves concern for consequences to the self.

Let me elaborate. The relevant consequences against which people protect themselves must be negative from their standpoint, and the relevant concern must be to prevent or minimize those consequences. People who are protective of their interests find challenges to their views to be intrusive and therefore negative from their perspective (although from an external perspective, those challenges may be positive for them). They avoid the intrusion by refus-

ing to meet the challenges or by surrounding themselves with like-minded folks. Similarly, people who are protective of their agency limit negative consequences to themselves that would follow from resisting threats to their lives or to their sanity.

Of course, people are always self-protective in relation to some threat in the world (no one is self-protective in a vacuum), and the threat need not come from a person but could be from an animal or a thing. People are self-protective when they guard against attacks by cougars or against the threat of an earthquake. Also, the threat may be perceived but not real. Hence, one can evaluate self-protective attitudes in terms of how well they represent the world, that is, in terms of whether they are well-grounded or not.

A person might assume that a threat targets her agency when in fact it targets only her interests, in which case her view of the form that her self-protection takes would be false. She might be deceived by others or deceive herself into thinking that avoiding controversy is essential to her well-being, especially if she lives a sexist society in which women are meant to be fragile and can actually flourish more if they aspire to that ideal. In reality she handles controversy quite well, which is something that a feminist friend could perhaps point out. If that were true about her, her self-protection could not be minimal, despite what she and others think.

Self-protection is also a degreed notion. The degrees reflect the extent to which one is concerned with consequences to one's self. Consequences vary depending on what sort of thing would be lost (i.e., agency, something of value, or something of mere interest). We say that someone is *really* self-protective when the person aims to protect not only his physical and emotional health, but many other things besides, things whose satisfaction are not crucial to his well-being. Thus, on a continuum of self-protection, the protector of interests veers toward one extreme, that of maximal self-protection, and the protector of agency toward the other, that of minimal self-protection. This way of defining the continuum may seem odd, for surely people protective of their agency are struggling against a greater threat and hence need to be and probably are *more* self-protective than those who are protective only of their interests. An alternative would be to define the continuum in terms of the seriousness of the threat to the self, where the greater the threat, the greater the self-protective behavior. But such a description does not fit with the way we use the term "self-protective," that is, with our tendency to say that people are more self-protective the more consumed they are with trivial consequences to the self. The person who backs down from any challenge, no matter how severe, is really self-protective, while the person who meets almost every challenge is not very self-protective at all.

Not everyone will fit neatly into this continuum, however, which is just a basic illustration of degrees of self-protection. For example, someone might do a lot to protect her interests, which suggests, in light of the continuum, that she is maximally self-protective, but at the same time she does little to protect her agency, which indicates that she is *not* maximally self-protective. One could interpret Thomas Hill's Deferential Wife as fitting this description.<sup>5</sup> She promotes her interests in her husband's well-being while sacrificing her self-respect, a core element of her would-be agency.<sup>6</sup> Such cases demand a

more sophisticated picture of how self-protection admits of degrees, one in which the degrees can change depending on which form of self-protection is at issue. (So a person could be maximally, medially, or minimally protective of her interests and maximally, medially, or minimally protective of her agency, and the degrees for each can differ.) For simplicity's sake, I shall stick with the basic picture and assume that what I say about different forms of self-protection (protecting one's agency, one's interests, etc.) and integrity applies to those forms regardless of the degree to which they manifest themselves.

In between protecting one's interests and one's agency on the basic continuum is concern with protecting more than just life and less than mere comfort. The main goal is to preserve what one values, such as relationships or job prospects. For example, the person who abruptly ends a conversation with another by saying "I'm through with this discussion" might be trying to protect a relationship with that person or with someone close to that person.<sup>7</sup> Rather than merely being *interested* in the relationship, he *values* it. Further, he does so in a way that is relevant to how self-protective he is only if the relationship is tied to his identity, say, as a parent or good friend. (We may value some things, e.g., world peace, without their shaping our identities, but in that case, preserving them is not obviously a matter of *self-protection*.) The further the relationship is from the core of his identity, the easier it would be for him to end the relationship, and the more his behavior would approach maximal self-protection. The closer the relationship is to the core, the closer his behavior would be to minimal self-protection. It would also veer toward that extreme if the views under challenge were so central to his identity that even entertaining the possibility that they are misguided would cause a destabilizing shift in his perception of the world. In that case, his self-protection would very nearly be, and may even be, protection of his agency.

To summarize, self-protectiveness is an attitude that admits of degrees defined inversely by the degree to which one strives to prevent serious consequences to the self. The consequences are posed by some threat or perceived threat in the world. And their seriousness depends on what they actually affect: one's agency, one's values, or one's interests. Let us now turn to the integrity of people who are self-protective.

### **Integrity and Maximal Self-Protection**

Consider first those who are maximally self-protective. Would they have integrity based on the standard conception of that virtue? Again, the conception is that people with integrity hold fast to their views against challenges to them. The problem with people who are protective of their interests is that they decline to meet most challenges. Our intuitions about them point to resistance as a key element of integrity, as well as to the value for integrity of engaging openly with people who have opposing views, or so I shall contend.

People who are maximally self-protective refuse to take on challenges because doing so would be strenuous, not because it would cause them to

sacrifice something they value. They do not feel a strong need to resist, yet hold off in order to be prudent; they are just too lazy or too concerned with their own comfort to defend themselves. People who avoid difficult situations for such reasons cannot have integrity, because integrity itself is difficult.<sup>8</sup> Struggle against whatever would threaten one's values is so central to it that if no threat exists, one's integrity is not even at issue.<sup>9</sup> We do not even comment on people's integrity without reference to situations in which they could have failed to honor their commitments but chose not to do so.

Thinking of maximally self-protective people reveals that it is not enough for integrity that one is willing to stand by what one believes in. As a maximally self-protective person, one could surround oneself with like-minded people, who might listen attentively to what one has to say, but who would pose no strong objections. One is not *resisting* anything in that case. One is not taking up a challenge. As a maximally self-protective person, one could also be committed exclusively to such principles as "Seek thine own pleasure" or "Seek the approval of others" and follow them consistently. But surely such a person lacks integrity. She is not even a candidate for it because "there is no possibility of conflict—between pleasure [or approval] and principle—in which integrity could be lost."<sup>10</sup> The egoistical hedonist, for example, will always back down on challenges, even to defend her hedonism, if backing down gives her more pleasure than resisting.

The conflict one engages in to preserve one's integrity need not be verbal. One does not have to be a debater to avoid the degree of self-protection that inhibits integrity. One could simply embody the necessary resistance by quietly refusing to do as others do and being a reminder to them of how badly they may be living. For instance, an environmentalist could be a model to his pesticide-obsessed neighbors of what it means to be a good environmental citizen. And he could have integrity as a result, even without ever debating environmental issues with his neighbors. Of course, he would have to find it difficult to be someone in the neighborhood who refuses to harm the environment. He would have to feel some pressure to adopt the environmentally unfriendly ways of his neighbors. Otherwise, he would experience no challenge; he would not have to struggle to adhere to what he thinks is right.

One might ask whether any sort of challenge requires a response as far as our integrity goes. Is one self-protective to an inappropriate degree if one neglects to meet *every* challenge? Some philosophers would say "no": The challenge has to be to a core commitment, one that is central to our identity.<sup>11</sup> Here, a maximally self-protective person lacks integrity only insofar as he shields himself from challenges to his identity. (One might ask whether such a person even has an identity, that is, something that individuates him from others. Could maximal self-protection not undermine identity, assuming that identities are formed by setting oneself apart from others, which is exactly what people who are maximally self-protective seek to avoid? However, one could be maximally self-protective only in some contexts, not all, in which case one could have an identity, although it might not be known in all contexts. Only when "maximally self-protective" is an "all things considered assessment" of a person might he lack an identity altogether.<sup>12</sup>)

So is it true that people who are maximally self-protective some of the time lose integrity only when they decline to meet challenges to their identities? If it were true, someone with integrity could ignore opposition to views he holds that he thinks are correct but that do not define him. And that just seems to be false. Consider an example Cheshire Calhoun uses to illustrate a different point about integrity:<sup>13</sup> “When President Clinton capitulated to the joint chiefs of staff and members of Congress . . . over the military ban on gays and lesbians, he was criticized, particularly by the gay and lesbian community, for lacking integrity.” Did it matter whether his initial opposition to the ban formed part of his identity? Surely not.<sup>14</sup>

Integrity therefore demands that we respond to challenges to our own views, verbally or otherwise, and the challenge need not be to something that confers identity upon us. Nonetheless, Lynne McFall may be right that “the challenge must be to something *important*.”<sup>15</sup> The wine connoisseur who resists the temptation to guzzle Mountain Dew when offered a choice between it and fine wine does not manifest integrity because “[w]ine is not that important.”<sup>16</sup> It would follow that people with integrity cannot be so self-protective that they fail to respond to challenges to their views on matters of importance.

People who are self-protective to that degree may not lack integrity, but they do not have it either. Someone might always shy away from controversy not because of anything morally condemnable (e.g., indifference, weakness of will, arrogance), but because she is so emotionally sensitive or has such low self-worth that every challenge poses a significant threat to her. Particularly if her sensitivity stems from oppression or abuse, it would be too harsh to say that she lacked integrity. Alternatively, one could claim that she lacks the *capacity* for it, which is different from saying that she has no integrity at all.

Implicit throughout this discussion of integrity and resistance is a view about the kind of resistance that people with integrity offer up: It involves openness to opposing views or responsiveness to the arguments of others. It is not dogmatic resistance. What the emotionally sensitive person above is leery of specifically is the shift in perspective that can occasion being responsive to the opinions of others, which may be psychologically destabilizing. People with integrity have to be willing to risk such turmoil. They have to be open to changes in their perspective that are difficult to make. And they have to be willing to make those changes, purposefully even, if the arguments of others warrant it.<sup>17</sup> Their resistance must be of a sort that is open-minded and rational, in other words, rather than pigheaded and irrational.

This issue about appropriate forms of resistance concerns how people with integrity hold on to their views. They are committed enough to them that they are unwilling to back down for frivolous reasons, but they are also open to “changes of moral course,”<sup>18</sup> that is, if important reasons exist for such changes. Someone with integrity does not cling to beliefs as the person does who ends all conversations abruptly with those who disagree with him. People who are maximally self-protective exhibit a kind of dogmatism that is incompatible with integrity.

Note that responsiveness to others’ reasons for objecting to one’s views is distinct from unprompted, deep reflection. People with integrity do not

need to be real reflective types, who continually ask, Why? Why? Why? What grounds do I have for believing what I do? That would exclude most people from being candidates for integrity<sup>19</sup> and might exclude the reflective types to boot, who could question their values too much to have the firmness of commitment that characterizes people with integrity.<sup>20</sup> Nonetheless, integrity does prohibit people from refusing to hear opposition to their views for fear of losing the order that exists in their mental lives or the justification they have for living as they do. They have to be reflective when the need arises: that is, when people challenge them openly, when they feel challenged by new knowledge they have gained that may require them to reorder their commitments, or when their circumstances are so complex that it is unclear what it would mean for them to honor their commitments. Surely, they also have to reflect only to the degree necessitated by the challenge or by their circumstances.

What grounds these views about how people with integrity adhere to their beliefs? I think the answer lies in the etymological connection between integrity and integration. Integrity is a personal virtue insofar as it promotes psychological integration and discourages the sort of alienation or distress that can accompany having beliefs that one fears to be false, or from acting in ways that are incompatible with one's beliefs. The worry about people who avoid rather than respond to controversy is that they must sense that problems exist in their belief systems, but they try to ignore those problems. Their purpose may be to maintain some mental order, but the fact that they *aim* (however consciously) to avoid controversy suggests that they already experience some disorder. Hence, they are not as integrated as they could be. They will need to respond to the challenge they face in order to achieve higher levels of integration.

A good analogy here is to writing a philosophy paper and sensing a flaw in it that one cannot quite put one's finger on, but being too fed up or too committed to the paper as it stands to make changes. However, until one investigates the problem, one cannot get rid of the nagging feeling that *something* is wrong in the paper. Only by dealing with the worry can one experience the ease that goes along with actually finishing a paper (which is not to suggest that people with integrity should achieve in their minds the level of order that exists in some philosophy papers!). People who engage in self-protective behavior to avoid having to question their beliefs cannot feel the serenity of knowing that their beliefs have survived some scrutiny at least. The doubts they have that prompted their self-protective behavior will simply persist and interfere with the integration of their selves.

Thus, maximal self-protection is incompatible with integrity, for it involves a failure to take seriously views that conflict with one's own and to revise one's views accordingly, if necessary, with the goal of creating an integrated psychology. People with integrity are firmly committed to their beliefs only if the beliefs warrant commitment. When they are worthy in that regard, they will resist opposition to them, rather than cave in for the sake of pleasure or prestige. Clearly, such resistance is absent among people who are maximally self-protective.

## Integrity and Medial Self-Protection

Medial self-protection characterizes people who are self-protective not out of arrogance or weakness of will, but out of concern for things of value to them. They also cannot cherish these things so much that they would die or nearly die without them, or else their protection would be minimal, not medial. Medial self-protection represents a range of behavior that responds to situations in which two or more things of personal value conflict. One has to back down on pressure to abandon one or more of them for the sake of preserving another. Let me explain why I think such behavior can be necessary for integrity, which would make it compatible with it, and then say why it can be incompatible with it.

Integrity can demand medial self-protection for at least two reasons that overlap. One is that one ranks a particular value higher than the others with which it conflicts, and so one should protect that value even if one is forced to behave in ways that appear uncharacteristic of people with integrity (e.g., one backs down, capitulates, sucks up, and the like). Appearances aside and all things considered, one can be required to behave in these ways for the sake of one's integrity. Take the following example: I am challenged to a political debate with a loved one on an issue about which we disagree profoundly. If I pursue the debate, I am likely to offend him, not simply with my beliefs, but with the urgency with which I know I will defend them. But I do not want to hurt my loved one. In fact, I am more loath to do so than I am to turn down an opportunity to debate an issue that I think is very important politically. The real challenge for me is to resist debating. By "backing down," I preserve my integrity, which is tied more closely to maintaining my relationship with my loved one than with supporting my political views.

Another reason why integrity may require medial self-protection is that our selves are relational, in the sense of being socially constituted, and so failing to make compromises for the sake of relations that help to constitute our selves could lead to their disintegration.<sup>21</sup> Returning to our example, say that the loved one is a close relative who has had a significant impact on my life, much more than I realize. I do not consciously stand for not offending him; in fact, sometimes I even take pleasure in offending him! (Some loved one, you might say.) But if I am not careful, I will insult him to a point at which he no longer wants me in his life. And the implications of that would be more devastating than I now imagine and would lead me seriously to regret my behavior. If that were all true, engaging in some medial self-protection would be wise on my part. To gain such wisdom, furthermore, I would have to reflect seriously on my relationality, or on what Owen Flanagan calls my "intersubjectivity."<sup>22</sup> The person of integrity "cannot treat herself as if she were an isolated being," ignoring the impact that others have on her and also that she has on them.<sup>23</sup> The reason why, according to Gabrielle Taylor, is that such a person would lack a "sane view" of the world, one that would allow her to achieve whatever is important to her.<sup>24</sup> My point is similar: If one fails to appreciate how some people help to maintain one's sense of self, one may experience and suffer their loss in a way that prevents one from pursuing one's goals in an integrated way.

However, some relations are not positive in that regard; they prevent us from ever being integrated psychologically or even from having a self. People can shape us in ways that are so profound that they define us almost exhaustively; neither we nor anyone else could truly identify us as persons in our own right. They can also influence us such that we do not feel right in our own skins; rarely are we sure of who we are and what we believe in. Either way, to engage in medial self-protection that preserves those relations would be incompatible with having integrity.

The intuition with this last point is that some authenticity is required for integrity.<sup>25</sup> One must act on one's own views to have integrity, and one must have such views in the first place. Why the connection between authenticity and integrity? Surely psychological integration has something to do with it. Acting on views other than one's own causes alienation within the self. However, what if others do exhaustively define the self, in which case, it would lack views of its own (i.e., lack authenticity), but it would not feel alienated from its actions or thoughts, which are really the actions or thoughts of others? Assuming such a case were realistic, it would be problematic as far as integrity goes because there would be no self to integrate. We could not say of such a person that *she* has integrity. She is not one in number.

In cases in which one's relations get in the way of one adhering to authentic values, it will be necessary to distance oneself from them for the sake of one's agency in extreme cases or simply for the sake of one's values. In other words, preserving one's integrity may require self-protection that loosens ties with others, rather than tightens them. Such self-protection would be medial in the following sort of case. A woman has family members who have traditional views about a woman's place in society, but she herself wants to dedicate much of her life to opposing sexism. As long as her desired goal is not to disabuse *her relatives* of their false beliefs, she could cut ties with them if their influence over her interferes with her feminism (e.g., by making her feel less capable than she actually is to change the way people think about women).

However, what if she resembles the person in our example above of someone who needs to maintain certain relations to keep her self together? If she cuts the ties, she may feel just as bad or *worse* in her own skin than she did before. But (to offer what seems like pop psychology) sometimes feeling worse is necessary for feeling better. Sometimes, we need to deal with some instability to achieve greater stability. Also, recall that the *sort* of mental stability or integration we need for integrity involves rational thought rather than doing what comes easiest. Achieving *that* sort of integration can require that we endure the discomfort that may come with responding well to reasons for choosing one path over another (e.g., for being a good feminist versus being a good niece or a good granddaughter).

I doubt that beyond the vague "be rational," simple rules exist to guide people in situations in which medial self-protection may or may not be warranted for the sake of one's integrity. Should I back down from a challenge to my values by someone who is important in my life? The answer may depend not only on how important that person is and how important the relevant commitments are, but also on how ugly the confrontation could get,

whether I have the mental energy to withstand it, how good I feel my reasons are for having the relevant commitments in the first place, who else might witness the confrontation and who they are to me, and the like.

Contemplating the integrity of people who are medially self-protective may not give us rules to live by if we want to have integrity, but it does highlight certain conditions for integrity: namely, that we must have a self to integrate and that we must be cognizant of its relational dimensions without assuming that certain relations are inevitable components of it.

### Integrity and Minimal Self-Protection

We have finally reached the degree of self-protection that is relevant to martyrs, that is, those who refuse to protect their agency. While they may protect their values through their martyrdom, they do not protect themselves in relation to those values (i.e., their behavior is not *self*-protective). Even though martyrs are paradigms for integrity, I claim that their lack of minimal self-protection is incompatible with integrity when they needlessly put their agency at risk, where risk is needless if the behavior does not create resistance in favor of one's values or if one could have formed the resistance without the risk. Thus, minimal self-protection can be necessary for integrity. Where risking one's agency is *needful*, however, because no other way exists to further one's values, integrity may require it. In other words, martyrdom can be necessary for integrity.

In spite of our standard intuitive conception of integrity and what it implies about martyrs, surely most of us would acknowledge that being a martyr is problematic, as far as integrity goes, if the self-sacrificing behavior is entirely ineffectual—that is, if it does not produce the intended resistance. For example, if a student protesting animal research on campus were to risk his life by suspending himself from the side of a wind-struck forty-story building and staying there for days on end,<sup>26</sup> he would lose integrity if he stayed after discovering that he had garnered *no* support for animal rights and in fact had lost such support because everyone thought he was crazy. If he became an urban legend in a way that positively influenced people's views about animal rights in the future, perhaps we would reassess his behavior. But as it stands, his integrity wanes from the lack of respect from others for his behavior. The reason why brings us back, interestingly, to dogmatism. By persisting in a failed attempt at resistance, the student becomes dogmatic, just as the person who refuses even to attempt resistance is dogmatic (i.e., the maximally self-protective person).

We would further question the student's integrity if he could have created strong resistance against the research without suspending himself from the side of a building. In other words, even if the stunt proved fruitful as a path of resistance, but an equally fruitful path was available that did not involve his risking his life (but instead, e.g., organizing public talks and rallies), we would be more apt to praise him for his integrity if he chose the second path. By contrast, if he chose the first, we would be more inclined to call him crazy (although we might not think he was completely crazy if his stunt *was* successful in furthering the cause of animal welfare).

Assuming this analysis of the second scenario is correct, we need to expand our understanding of integrity to accommodate it. Why would integrity *require* that we choose the path of resistance that affords us at least minimal self-protection, that is, if such a path exists? If we understand integrity as a purely personal virtue, which we have so far, we will be hard pressed to give an answer. Integrity is purely personal if it involves being “in the right relation to oneself,”<sup>27</sup> which we interpreted above as having one’s thoughts integrated with one another and with one’s actions. I suggested that resisting opposition to one’s values, rather than avoiding it, is a sign of integrity, for it shows that one’s commitment is solid or at least that one is willing to modify one’s commitment to achieve greater integration. This view does not obviously imply that one should try to resist such that one is minimally self-protective.

Greater psychological integration *could* come from choosing the path of resistance that is most self-protective, but only if one holds one’s values in such a way that it is important that one continue to exist to further them. One’s values might define what one should do in a promotional sense (e.g., one should promote animal rights, rather than simply respect them), and one knows that one is better at that task than most people. Hence sticking around to perform it, rather than sacrificing one’s agency while performing it, would be more integrative psychologically. But one’s values may dictate that one honor or respect certain things (e.g., animal rights) rather than promote them. Alternatively, it may not be important for the promotion of one’s values that one continue to exist.<sup>28</sup> Either way, one’s integrity would *not* demand as much minimal self-protection as possible; instead, one might have to honor or promote one’s values at the expense of one’s agency.

One might argue that for everyone, greater integration comes with acknowledging deep psychological impulses toward self-preservation—that we could not *be* integrated if we endorsed values that required us to go against impulses that we could not possibly resist. Thus, integrity demands that we choose the path of resistance that is least dangerous, which is probably also the path of greatest psychological integration. Is that true? Do we need to be minimally self-protective to be psychologically integrated because of irresistible self-protective impulses? Many of us surely do. But some of us do not, and among them are the martyrs whose integrity we praise so much. A person like Aung San Suu Kyi<sup>29</sup> must lack normal impulses toward self-preservation to have risked her life the way she has.

If being in the right relation to oneself does not require that one be minimally self-protective, then being in the right relation to others must require it, that is, if the requirement exists at all. In other words, if people with integrity are as minimally self-protective as possible, the reason must be that integrity is a social virtue and its social dimensions demand such behavior. Calhoun provides a justification for this sort of view of integrity. Let me give some defense of her theory and then use it to support the claims I have made about martyrs.

Calhoun’s reason for saying that integrity is social is contained in the title of her paper, “Standing for Something.” She maintains that integrity not only involves standing *by* what we endorse, but also standing *for* something, which

is a social act. No one stands for anything only for themselves; they do it “for, and before all deliberators who share the goal of determining what is worth doing.”<sup>30</sup> A person with integrity puts forth her best judgment and in doing so meets the social responsibility that goes along with being “a member of an evaluating community.”<sup>31</sup>

To see clearly why standing for something is a social act, consider the following example. Along with other members of her constituency, a politician advocates for animal rights, but then the tide of public opinion changes so that most people no longer support those rights, and the politician withdraws her support. Some of us conclude that she was only ever interested in votes, not justice. If that were our opinion, we would also wonder whether she ever stood *for* much of anything in the first place. She could not have stood for animal rights anyway, if she was only ever concerned with her own reelection (although she could have stood for “politicians who want votes should do whatever their constituents want”). It follows that people stand for things for others, not only for themselves; and since “standing for something” is central to our conception of integrity, integrity must be a social virtue.

But why should others care that someone stands for what she believes in? In what way is an agent in the right relation to *others* when she stands for something? Calhoun asks us to imagine this picture:

I am one person among many persons, and we are all in the same boat. None of us can answer the question—‘What is worth doing?’—except from within our own deliberative points of view. This ‘What is worth doing?’ question can take many specific forms. What evils, if any, ought one morally to refuse doing no matter the consequences? What, for philosophers, is worth writing about? . . . That [such questions] are answerable only from within each person’s deliberative viewpoint means that all of our answers will have a peculiar character. As one among many deliberators, each can offer only her own judgment. Although each aims to do more than this—to render a judgment endorsable by all—nothing guarantees success. . . . But given that the only way of answering the ‘What is worth doing?’ question is to plunge ahead using one’s own deliberative viewpoint, one’s best judgment becomes important.<sup>32</sup>

Implicit here is the assumption that the justification of moral and other norms is social, where to assume otherwise would be to imagine a God’s eye point of view<sup>33</sup> on “what is worth doing.”<sup>34</sup> Once we give up on the latter, as we almost certainly should, all we have left are our singular perspectives. Thus, we should all value those perspectives such that we are willing to defend them to others. While Calhoun may need to acknowledge that there are norms for moral interaction, specifically norms of rationality, that are not decided on socially and that people with integrity must respect if the value of integrity is social, I think that she is right overall about how we should approach the “What is worth doing?” question. Obviously none of us has a singular perspective that is God-like.

One might want to nuance Calhoun’s claims and say that debating what is worth doing is not necessary in some contexts for integrity, and hence,

integrity could not involve standing for something in those contexts. For example, standing for vegetarianism in the local grocery store by forcing one's fellow shoppers to deliberate on the evils of eating meat is surely not a prerequisite for having integrity if one is a vegetarian, is it? Well it might be, depending on the way that one values being a vegetarian. If one values it less than the privacy of consumers in grocery stores, then one should not force them to debate their purchases while they are shopping for meat. If one values vegetarianism *more* than consumer privacy, one should pursue such debates for the sake of one's integrity. Note that if one is a vegetarian (or a Marxist or whatever), one is not required to stand for that way of life in *every* context, for not all contexts will provide a challenge to one's value structure according to which vegetarianism may be less important than other values.

One might also object to Calhoun's theory because it implies that it should matter to other members of one's community what one's own best judgment is and whether one offers forth that judgment; but particularly if one lives in a community in which the majority of members have oppressive values (e.g., sexist or racist values), one might legitimately refuse to value their best judgment. That is a powerful objection, and I can say only something brief in response to it here. People with oppressive views are often resistant to, or incapable of, engaging in the sort of rational deliberation that integrity requires, as I claimed above and as my suggested amendment to Calhoun's view about norms of rationality suggests. If asked *why* they think certain groups are inferior to others, or how they would respond to obvious objections to their views, people who are sexist or racist invariably come up short.<sup>35</sup> Consequently, their judgment need not matter to us in deciding what is worth doing, that is, not if they can do nothing to persuade us of it.

Thus, integrity involves being in the right relation to others because we stand for something for the sake of other members of an evaluating community to whom our best judgment should matter in determining what is worth doing. The only restrictions on the "we" are that "we" must be capable of giving reasons in support of our views and of responding rationally to the objections of others. Each of "us" should stand for our best judgment; that at least is the moral ideal. Although it may seem somewhat outmoded for the largely chaotic societies in which many of us now live, to give up on that ideal is to give up on morality itself (that is, as long as we agree that there is no God's eye point of view).

So how is this theory relevant to martyrs and their integrity? It implies that their lack of minimal self-protection may be seriously problematic. The idea that each agent should acknowledge the singularity of her own best judgment and the value it has for a moral community suggests that she should do what she can to protect her agency so that she can continue to offer forth that judgment to others. Calhoun writes, "[P]eople without integrity trade action on their own views too cheaply for gain, status, reward, [or] approval."<sup>36</sup> I am adding that people without integrity can trade their own lives or sanity too cheaply for progress in furthering their moral or other commitments, progress that is either insignificant relative to the loss of their contribution to the community or that could have been achieved another way.<sup>37</sup>

Trading one's agency for progress of that sort may not be cheap, however. We do not think that all martyrs lose integrity through their sacrifice, and we *should* not if Calhoun's theory is correct. If self-sacrifice is the only way to steer social debate legitimately toward one's own view of what is right, one should pursue it as a path of resistance, for the sake of one's integrity, at least. Arguably, the only way Ken Saro Wiwa could have forced the Nigerian government and Shell Oil to realize that Ogoni people were undeserving of the oppression they faced was for Wiwa to risk his life repeatedly by engaging in planned protests. Many of us who knew his story valued his integrity precisely because of the influence he had on how people perceived the power structure of Nigeria and on public debate about reform in Nigeria. However, if he had lost that influence prematurely by needlessly sacrificing his life, I doubt we would have praised him so much.

Keeping in mind that integrity involves personal demands and not only social ones, martyrs do need to act in an authentic and integrated way, and not *just* contribute to social debate. Thus, Ken Wiwa Jr., who was not as committed to the Ogoni cause as his father when the former wrote *In The Shadow of a Saint*, would not have manifested integrity necessarily if he had risked his life for the Ogoni, even though the risk would probably have benefited the Ogoni in their struggle with the Nigerian government.

Martyrs also need to ensure that they will have an impact on social debate, which surely will depend in part on their social position. The reason why Ken Wiwa Jr. would probably have made a significant impact if he had protested as loudly as his father is that he *is* Ken Wiwa Jr.; he had a legacy that made the demands on his integrity different than for the average Ogoni. It lowered the bar at which he would have traded his life cheaply for the sake of the Ogoni movement. Social position is relevant to how needless self-sacrifice can be and also to how risky one's actions can be. One might receive a lot of social support because of one's position—for example, the Ogoni loved Ken Saro Wiwa and his family—and as a result have greater personal security than others, making actions that would be very risky for them less risky for oneself.<sup>38</sup> No one wants to see a beloved member of a community die, if only because it could make other members of the community vengeful.

In circumstances in which martyrdom would satisfy the social and personal conditions for integrity, integrity must require martyrdom. Such an act could be the most integrated and authentic thing one could do *and* it could further social debate in the direction one wants it to go more than any other act, in which case integrity must demand it, unless we are completely off track in understanding integrity. However, note that integrity is not the only moral value; other moral values could trump its demands depending on the circumstances. For example, life may be so sacred that the conditions described above are rarely sufficient to justify its sacrifice. I have taken no position on that matter or on similar matters. My claim is simply that integrity can lead one toward martyrdom. In other words, it may not require minimal self-protection.

Determining how compatible minimal self-protection is with integrity has allowed us to appreciate the social dimension of integrity and how it overlaps with the personal dimension. People with integrity adhere to what they

think is right such that they contribute to our understanding of what is worth doing, and they do so in an integrative and authentic way. Adding the social element explains our intuitions about minimal self-protection: It is important for integrity no matter what sort of values one holds. Adding it also makes further sense of intuitions we have about maximal/medial self-protection and integrity. People who are maximally self-protective—the avoiders of controversy—fail to fulfill their role as codeliberators in an evaluative community and consequently lack integrity. People who are medially self-protective also may neglect that role, or they may not, that is, if they protect what they value for and before others who are codeliberators and who they think should be able to value the same sorts of things that they do (e.g., certain types of relationships). In that case, they manifest integrity.

### Conclusion

We began with the intuition that martyrs—people who fail to protect their agency—are paradigms of integrity. We must conclude that martyrs are only “one reigning figure of integrity.”<sup>39</sup> For circumstances in which martyrdom would be crazy, the reigning ideal must be that of someone who protects her agency. She can do so for the sake either of the personal, integrative component of integrity or of the social, deliberative component. Since we are drawn to this self-protective figure as much as we are to the martyr, depending on circumstances, our conclusion is not unreasonable. It is also warranted in light of the understanding of integrity that arose from our discussion. People with integrity resist pressure to go against their values, but not in a way that is dogmatic or rash given the need they have to value their deliberative role in an evaluative community. People faced with the possibility of furthering their values through self-sacrifice that would be rash or crazy would avoid the sacrifice if they had integrity.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup>Wiwa was hung in 1995 by the Nigerian government for his political action in favor of his people, the Ogoni, who were being exploited by the government and by Shell Oil. See his son Ken Wiwa’s *In the Shadow of a Saint* (Toronto: Random House, 2000).

<sup>2</sup>The “minimal, medial, maximal” language comes from Diana Meyers, who discusses minimal, medial, and maximal autonomy in *Self, Society, and Personal Choice* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989).

<sup>3</sup>The debate centers on such issues as whether integrity demands consistency and a lack of ambivalence, whether substantive limits exist on the sorts of values that people with integrity can endorse, and whether integrity is a social virtue as well as a personal one. See, for example, Margaret Urban Walker’s “Picking Up Pieces: Lives, Stories, and Integrity,” in *Feminists Rethink the Self*, ed. Diana Meyers (Boulder, Colo.: Westview, 1997); Cheshire Calhoun’s “Standing for Something,” *Journal of Philosophy* 92 (1995): 235–60; and Lynne McFall’s “Integrity,” *Ethics* 98 (1987): 5–20.

<sup>4</sup>This phrase I took from comments by an anonymous reviewer, who was very helpful.

<sup>5</sup>See Hill, “Servility and Self-Respect,” *Monist* 57 (1973): 87–104.

<sup>6</sup>I owe this example and the point about people being protective of their interests but not their agency to Samantha Brennan.

<sup>7</sup>Thanks to Jackie Davies for pointing this out to me.

- <sup>8</sup>See Amelie Oksenberg Rorty, "Integrity: Political, not Psychological," in *Integrity in the Public and Private Domains*, ed. Alan Montefiore and David Vines (New York: Routledge, 1999), 109.
- <sup>9</sup>Calhoun, "Standing for Something," 251.
- <sup>10</sup>McFall, "Integrity," 9.
- <sup>11</sup>See *ibid.*, and Gabrielle Taylor, "Integrity," in her *Pride, Shame, and Guilt: Emotions of Self-Assessment* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985). Bernard Williams is probably the originator of such a view. He calls our core commitments "ground projects." See his "Integrity" and "Persons, Character, and Morality," in *Moral Luck: Philosophical Papers 1973–1980* (New York: Cambridge, 1981).
- <sup>12</sup>Calhoun discusses the idea of an "all things considered assessment" of a person's character, which she attributes to Jeffrey Blustein (*Care and Commitment: Taking the Personal Point of View* [New York: Oxford University Press, 1991]). See Calhoun, "Standing for Something," 245 n. 15.
- <sup>13</sup>Calhoun, "Standing for Something," 254. She uses the example to illustrate her point that people with integrity take seriously the need to stand for their *best* judgment for the sake of other members of their community, not simply for their own sakes. I discuss this theory of Calhoun's later in the article.
- <sup>14</sup>See *ibid.*, 245.
- <sup>15</sup>McFall, "Integrity," 10 (emphasis in original).
- <sup>16</sup>*Ibid.*
- <sup>17</sup>See Walker, "Picking Up Pieces."
- <sup>18</sup>The phrase comes from Walker, "Picking Up Pieces," 73.
- <sup>19</sup>Owen Flanagan makes a similar point about the amount of reflection required for having an identity as a person in "Identity and Strong and Weak Evaluation," in *Identity, Character, and Morality: Essays in Moral Psychology*, ed. Owen Flanagan and Amelie Oksenberg Rorty (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1990).
- <sup>20</sup>I gained this insight from reading Peter Winch's "Moral Integrity," which was his inaugural lecture in the Chair of Philosophy, delivered at King's College, London, May 9, 1968 (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1968).
- <sup>21</sup>On the relational self, see Susan Brison, "Outliving Oneself: Trauma, Memory, and Personal Identity," in *Feminists Rethink the Self*, ed. Diana Meyers (Boulder, Colo.: Westview, 1997). Also, see Flanagan, "Identity and Strong and Weak Evaluation."
- <sup>22</sup>He claims that our intersubjectivity is an undeniable part of our moral psychology because of what cognitive scientists have discovered about the mind.
- <sup>23</sup>See Gabrielle Taylor's "Shame, Integrity, and Self-Respect," in *Dignity, Character, and Self-Respect*, ed. Robin Dillon (New York: Routledge, 1995), 167.
- <sup>24</sup>*Ibid.*
- <sup>25</sup>Beyond saying that it concerns what is one's own (one's own acts, beliefs and the like), it is difficult to define authenticity. I will not attempt to do so but will mention that I am persuaded by Diana Meyers' theory of authenticity in "Intersectional Identity and the Authentic Self," in *Relational Autonomy: Feminist Perspectives on Autonomy, Agency, and the Social Self*, ed. Catriona Mackenzie and Natalie Stoljar (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000). Meyers associates authenticity with integration and *dis*associates integration from wholeheartedness (consistency and a lack of ambivalence), which is the dominant view of integration in the literature on integrity. For Meyers, authenticity and integration are characterized not by wholeheartedness, but by the exercise of autonomy skills, which brings about such feelings as confidence and security, repose and gratification.
- <sup>26</sup>Someone did this on the main campus of the University of Minnesota while I was there as a postdoctoral researcher (1999–2000). So the stunt is real, but the rest of my example is fictional, especially the part about how successful he was in getting people on campus to oppose the research. I did not stay long enough to find that out.
- <sup>27</sup>See Calhoun, "Standing for Something," 253.
- <sup>28</sup>On honoring versus promoting values, see Philip Pettit, "The Consequentialist Perspective," in Marcia W. Baron, Philip Pettit, and Michael Slote, *Three Methods of Ethics* (Malden, Mass.: Blackwell, 1997).

- <sup>29</sup> Aung San Suu Kyi is the main voice of democratic opposition against the brutal military regime in Burma (renamed “Myanmar” by that regime). She has risked her life by, for example, confronting armed soldiers during public rallies for democracy and going on a hunger strike.
- <sup>30</sup> Calhoun, “Standing for Something,” 257.
- <sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 254.
- <sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 257.
- <sup>33</sup> The term “God’s eye point of view” comes from Donna Haraway. See “Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective,” in her *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (New York: Routledge, 1991).
- <sup>34</sup> Calhoun advocates such a view of moral justification more explicitly in “Moral Failure,” in *Feminist Ethics and Politics*, ed. Claudia Card (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1999).
- <sup>35</sup> See Adrian Piper’s “Higher-Order Discrimination,” in *Identity, Character, and Morality: Essays in Moral Psychology*, ed. Owen Flanagan and Amelie Oksenberg Rorty (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1990); and Anthony Appiah’s “Racisms,” in *Anatomy of Racism*, ed. David Theo Goldberg (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1990).
- <sup>36</sup> Calhoun, “Standing for Something,” 250.
- <sup>37</sup> This idea overlaps with a theory by Susan Babbitt that some dignity or self-appreciation is necessary for integrity, although Babbitt does not interpret integrity as a social virtue. See “Personal Integrity, Politics, and Moral Imagination,” in *Impossible Dreams: Rationality, Integrity, and Moral Imagination* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview, 1996). Babbitt argues that hostile forces, such as forces of oppression, can degrade the self to the point that there is no self left that can have commitments of its own or to the point that the commitments it does have are incompatible with integrity. She has in mind commitments that presuppose that the self is worthless (e.g., the commitment to being a drug addict). The account of integrity as a social virtue explains uniquely why a person with integrity cannot have such commitments; they are incompatible with the social responsibility we all have to value and offer forth our best judgment.
- <sup>38</sup> See Larry May’s “Professional Integrity,” in his *The Socially Responsive Self: Social Theory and Professional Ethics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 121.
- <sup>39</sup> Rorty, “Integrity,” 109.