

BUILDING A PHILOSOPHICAL DEFENSE OF THERAPEUTIC RECREATION: THE CASE OF *DISTRIBUTIVE JUSTICE*

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The need for a critical review of therapeutic recreation's philosophical basis has become steadily more apparent in the last several years as the field faces a series of challenges both within and without. Halberg and Howe-Murphy (1985, pp. 7-8, 14) suggest that therapeutic recreation is at a crucial juncture, the response to which requires attention not only to professional issues but to larger social values and concerns. This response demands introspection on philosophical issues in the field. Reynolds and O'Morrow (1985) make this point emphatically: "No single issue could be more important or require more urgent attention from the profession of therapeutic recreation than the development of a well-defined occupational philosophy" (p. 35). Yet despite the importance attached to the consideration of philosophical issues, Halberg and Howe-Murphy (1985, p. 9) conclude there has been no convergence of philosophical perspectives despite the increasingly structured nature of therapeutic recreation.

The audience for philosophical discussion of therapeutic recreation has to this point been searching largely for confirmation of professional status. This has led to a predominantly internal focus of this discussion, that is, an almost exclusive concern with the professional character of therapeutic recreation and its practitioners. Discussion limited in this fashion ignores myriad other factors and issues requiring attention if we are to build a philosophical defense of therapeutic recreation that will speak to audiences beyond our professional borders, who might not be as already persuaded of therapeutic recreation's worth as we are. This will permit more fluent statements of the goals pursued in therapeutic recreation practice and more active participation in the debate over the allocation of scarce resources in both professional and societal contexts. The intent of the present essay is to provide, using a discussion of distributive justice that is admittedly occasionally more complex than has been usual in our philosophical literature, an extended example of philosophical analysis. At the same time, it makes a substantive contribution to the defense of therapeutic recreation by demonstrating the availability of a potentially rich and powerful argument for therapeutic recreation in a society based on equality and fairness. To do this requires first several comments on the nature of philosophical discussion as it presently exists.

Philosophical Discussion and Therapeutic Recreation's Internal Force

Philosophical discussions of therapeutic recreation are too often isolated from relevant sources in the main currents of philosophical inquiry or from philosophically informed discussions of social issues affecting the field. Far too frequently our literature fails to go beyond a few well worn sources, or even to go to original sources at all. One debilitating effect of this is an occasional naïveté regarding the nature and purpose of philosophical argument, with the result that our analysis is less focused and productive than needed. Taking but one example, and that from an otherwise cogent presentation, Reynolds and O'Morrow (1985),

in opening their discussion of defining therapeutic recreation as a profession, use “ideology” as a synonym for “philosophy,” an unfortunate choice in light of the incompatibility of ideological thinking (characterized by rigidity and closure) with philosophical reflection (characterized by flexibility and openness). This uncertainty regarding the nature of philosophy returns again when they argue that “Values are formulations of preferred behavior held by individuals or groups. They imply a usual preference for certain means, ends, and conditions of life, often being accompanied by strong feelings” (pp. 110-111). If, however, we are to take seriously the notion of values, and hence ethics as the study of values, we cannot accept “preferred behavior” or “usual preference” as the expression of ethical action. These phrases imply that what is regarded as right or good is simply a matter of taste, perhaps even of convenience, and that this changes from one to another state of affairs. But right and good are at the heart of moral theory: to make them relative to a variable state of affairs renders them ethically empty by imposing situational ethics. Moral thinking is about human actions, how they are to be guided, and thus how they are to be assessed. To say something is morally good or right is to express a moral obligation to pursue it. Further, the notion of “often being accompanied by strong feeling” is antithetical to the nature of philosophical inquiry, which proceeds not by any appeal to feeling but by reasoned argument regarding the content of right conduct. There is no room for appeal to emotion: strength of feeling or conviction is morally irrelevant, affecting only the intensity with which one is willing to argue. To hold otherwise would open the possibility that a more intensely held immoral conviction would outweigh a less intensely held moral conviction.

Confusion over the nature of philosophical inquiry cannot be ignored if it is to satisfy the need expressed for it. There is a certain looseness about the word “philosophy” in the recreation field generally, reflected even in appeals by those who favor expanded philosophical inquiry. It is hardly necessary that every therapeutic recreation educator and practitioner become a philosopher. What is instead at issue is the need to sharpen our philosophical arguments to the point they make positive contributions to articulating the nature and purpose of the field and to advancing its claims within the various arenas where therapeutic recreation must compete for attention and resources.

Here we have so far been less successful than is needed, and to a significant degree the reason for this can be found in therapeutic recreation’s internal focus. Halberg and Howe-Murphy (1985) make reference to philosophy as a “major internal influence,” arguing that “How a profession chooses to look at questions, such as the nature of the person and the nature of change, is basic to its orientations, operational paradigms, and procedures” (pp. 11-12). The difficulty here is that emphasizing the “internal influence” of philosophical inquiry in therapeutic recreation limits a fuller understanding of the issues facing the field. There is, of course, a certain amount one learns by looking in a mirror, but without perspectives from outside the mirror’s gaze, eventually all one sees is a one dimensional caricature.

It may be, as Mobily (1985b) has pointed out, that “a true philosophical position on therapeutic recreation has not been developed to date because justification of therapeutic recreation has awaited empirical verification (p. 15). There is a crucial question hidden in this statement, namely, what is the relation

of “empirical verification” to justification? For many in recreation generally, empirical verification is the essence of justification: to collect data, analyze it, and report the findings is to support a particular conception of therapeutic recreation, one whose foundations are taken a priori to rest on an empirically verifiable link between therapy and outcome. The most immediate problem here is that a body of empirical research supporting the efficacy of therapeutic recreation has, in fact, been slow to emerge. There is a dearth even of evaluation research, precisely ‘the kind practitioners would be most anxious to have to persuade recalcitrant administrators and reluctant third party payment carriers of therapeutic recreation’s effectiveness.

Justification can, however, be approached from another direction. As Mobily (1985b) goes on to point out, “because a sound philosophy should not only guide practice but also give direction to research, we should develop a reasonable philosophical framework before proceeding with empirical research” (p. 15). I would take this somewhat further, to argue that only by expanded philosophical inquiry are we able to illuminate the fundamentally value based nature of therapeutic recreation. Justification thus becomes a process of analyzing the values guiding practice, articulating them so they can be discussed and understood, and then seeking empirical verification not of the values themselves, but of the techniques to realize them in practice. Rather than depending on empirical research to legitimize it, inquiry into values becomes the hallmark of therapeutic recreation, which would openly display its fundamentally value based nature. The question ceases to be “what works and why?” and becomes instead “what is it we are trying to promote?” Mobily (1985b) continues by maintaining that “Only by knowing what TR is, in the most fundamental and philosophical way, can a framework for future research, thought, and dialogue be provided” (p. 16). Mobily is, I think, most certainly correct, and the absence of such a philosophical understanding of what therapeutic recreation is, fundamentally, has been reflected in the inability of the field to define its focus in anything more than generalities.

Nowhere are these generalities more clearly evident than in the National Therapeutic Recreation Society (NTRS) Philosophical Position Statement: “All human beings, including those with disabilities, illnesses, or limiting conditions, have a right to, and a need for, leisure involvement as a necessary aspect of the human experience” (quoted in Peterson & Gunn, 1984, p. 323). In what way might empirical research reduce the generalities of this sentence? How is the concept of “right,” let alone of “human experience,” to be operationalized without reducing it to triviality or circularity? If, on the other hand, we turn to philosophical argument, it becomes possible to offer competing conceptualizations of rights, to determine how they connect with similarly delineated conceptualizations of the human experience, and from this to argue that securing those rights is profoundly related to attaining the desired human experience. Empirical research can at this point ascertain the degree to which such rights are in fact secured, and draw conclusions about the most effective means of further advancing them. Beyond this unarticulated conception of right and human experience, the Statement describes therapeutic recreation’s aim as facilitating an “appropriate leisure lifestyle.” Yet what is “appropriate” if not a value term? It is neither a scientific nor clinical term, verifiable by empirical research. It can be defined only by choice among alternatives, and this choice

represents a valuation of these alternatives on criteria drawn from the qualities regarded as desirable for a person to have or enjoy. The difficulty is, then, that nowhere in the Statement is the centrality of these value choices acknowledged nor is there any attempt to explicate the Statement's basic concepts in value terms. These are strange omissions indeed for a Statement intended to be philosophical (cf. Halberg & Howe-Murphy, 1985; Mobily, 1985b; Patterson, 1985).

Sylvester (1985b) sums up the course of philosophical discussion in the field by observing that "Occupied with establishing its professional identity, therapeutic recreation has, understandably, not explored its philosophical foundations" (p. 7; cf. 1985a, p. 9). Yet as Sylvester (1987) demonstrates elsewhere, there has always been a strong ethical content in discussions of leisure and recreation generally, so that the internal focus of therapeutic recreation has obscured the lack of a coherent philosophical understanding of the field. Put another way, the focus on developing and defending an identity as a recognized profession has led the field away from a searching encounter with its own fundamental content towards an absorption in creating the trappings of a profession. Existing statements of philosophical concern, exemplified in the NTRS Statement, focus not on the content of therapeutic recreation services, but on the therapeutic recreators themselves and their identities as professionals. The Statement is in essence a codification of canons of professional conduct, which is of course desirable but should not be mistaken for the philosophical analysis so urgently needed in the field.

The result has been therapeutic recreation's failure to establish a broader context within which the field takes its place and the corollary failure to develop a forceful statement of the values which its services are intended to foster. The need for this is stated by Reynolds and O'Morrow (1985), who argue that the field "requires community or society approval to maximize the quality of services provided. Without this approval, the services that can be provided are restricted" (p. 7). Therapeutic recreation's internal focus has prevented consolidation of its self-understanding to anywhere near the degree that it is adequately competitive for scarce public resources. There is, to be sure, general obeisance to concepts like human dignity and rights, but the field's neglect of expanding on these generalized sentiments makes it difficult to justify the field's contribution to realizing such values. How, then, do we hope to persuade our relevant audiences in whatever settings that what we do as therapeutic recreators addresses the needs of our clients and society?

Attending only to its self-image, therapeutic recreation has failed to address this wider community: its internal, at times almost self-serving, focus has led not to a fuller comprehension of the profession, but to a secondary status currently beset by a variety of challenges. By isolating the field in the manner this has been done, from the general field of recreation as well as from the main currents of social thought, we begin to surrender any claim to philosophic support developed elsewhere, which in the case of recreation generally includes, for example, well articulated claims to freedom, possibility, creativity, and experience of self. Coupled with concepts such as fairness and equality, these claims might yield a full and eloquent defense of therapeutic recreation. It is doubtless an intimidating prospect to consider what must be done to reduce our isolation and

escape our currently secondary status; it would be more comfortable to remain turned inward, arguing about familiar issues. But this is to relinquish our professional fate to forces we have made little effort to control, and is not a stance that would be adopted by a confident and maturing profession.

Introducing Distributive Justice

There have been some strong beginnings in philosophical discussion of therapeutic recreation (e.g., Mobily, 1985b, 1985c; Sylvester, 1985b), analyzing in particular the person's experience of therapeutic recreation and demonstrating its connection with other elements in the person's life space. This existential analytic illuminates the client's reaction to therapy and thus the enabling factor in therapy. We can 'look forward to further development of this line of inquiry, which is likely to be fruitful. It is important to note, however, that most philosophical discussion of therapeutic recreation has been individualist in focus. Although this might well reflect the general nature of therapy, it ignores the collective nature of social values. Without attention to this, as suggested by Reynolds and O'Morrow (1985, p. 7), it is unlikely the field will develop the reservoir of support necessary to meaningful competition for scarce resources. The practical aspect of this is to expand the advocacy role of our professionals and organizations, but without a sound foundation in the social values, such advocacy will come across as self-serving and shallow. To give weight to our arguments and advocacy requires an understanding of the moral values on which this society claims to rest. The remainder of this essay is devoted to a sketch of one approach to this challenge, via the connecting concepts of distributive justice, rights, and liberty.

These three concepts are closely linked and form in one way or another the legitimation for most of what is done through and by our institutions. They were conceived originally and remain generally understood in individualist terms (Bellah, et al., 1985). Traditionally, this society has emphasized the procedural aspects of social values, treating breaches of or conflicts among them as matters to be set right by the legal system. This is familiar in our literature as the idea of negative liberty, which has been defined as "the absence of duress, coercion, and interference" (Sylvester, 1985b; cf. Bregha, 1985; Harper, 1986). There is, however, another aspect to these values, rising out of the social thinking on which the welfare state was based (Hemingway, 1979). Among its most accessible statements is Green's (1893, v. 3) essay on the freedom of the contract, in which he writes that "The mere removal of compulsion, the mere enabling of a man to do as he likes, is in itself no contribution to true freedom . . . the ideal of true freedom is the maximum of power for all members of human society alike to make the best of themselves" (pp. 371-372). Full liberty, then, is not simply removal of barriers, but giving persons the powers to carry them beyond these barriers: to remove a barrier, without also providing the means of moving beyond the point at which one finds oneself, is empty. Positive liberty, rather than simply proclaiming the legal ability, of the person to act as the person chooses, reaches out to the person to provide the tools (later to be defined as rights) with which, and only with which, absence of legal restriction takes on positive meaning. Liberty without this positive element is in fact not full liberty at all, only a confirmation of the status quo.

We may make similar comments about the concept of justice. When based on a negative doctrine, justice, like negative liberty, remains a matter of procedure that inquires, for example, into the substance of a person's rights only to the point of determining whether these have been violated procedurally. Justice conceived on this model does not turn to the broader and more substantive question of whether such rights as are said to be held by the person in question can in fact be effectively exercised. Unless this question is addressed, justice is bereft of content and merely affirms the person's existing position. But this position, like those of all members in society, reflects the existing distribution within society of abilities, disabilities, opportunities, disadvantages, and limitations. It seems highly unlikely this distribution will be equal. It is, rather, far more likely that there will be innumerable differences among persons. These rise from manifold circumstances reflecting the vicissitudes of human life and activity. It is of deciding importance for the argument to be developed here that many of these circumstances from which inequalities rise are morally nonculpable so far as the person is regarded, that is, the person bears no moral responsibility for his or her existence. Familiar examples of this are race and gender. Less familiar, perhaps, to the general public but of dominant concern to the therapeutic recreation profession are examples such as congenital diseases, mental retardation, accidental injuries, and various disabling conditions. None of these reflects moral blame on the disabled person. And yet we know that when such persons come to act in society, to claim a full share in its benefits and obligations, such circumstances might stand in the way of successful action. These persons stand at a nonculpable disadvantage relative to those whose circumstances are more fortunate. So long as this disadvantage does not arise from legally adjudicable grounds (the existence of which cannot be assumed and which in any case cannot be argued for solely on procedural grounds of negative liberty or justice), there is no means to redress this inequality through a conception of justice limited to procedural safeguards.

Over against this stands a fuller conception of positive justice, more commonly termed distributive justice. As with positive liberty, distributive justice goes beyond procedural questions to inquire regarding the content of human activity, seeking to ensure that persons are not excluded from an equitable share in society's benefits and obligations. Distributive justice rests on three axioms. First, there are goods (defined as material or psychological constructs, e.g., income, property, education, physical security, well being, *health*, *access* to medical care, etc.) that are understood by society to define the good life. A person having these goods is taken to be better off than a person who has fewer or none. Second, there is a recognized and reasonably definable minimum level of these goods below which no person is regarded as living the good life. This makes it possible to assess the quality of life in society by determining both the actual and the desired distribution of goods. Third, access to these goods (which, it is important to note, entails access to the means of acquiring them) is not closed to persons by (a) factors that do not fall equally on all members of society or by (b) actors that are morally nonculpable, that is, for which the person bears no moral responsibility.

This means, for example, that a person who is born mentally retarded or who suffers physically disabling injury or illness cannot be excluded from access, and from the means to acquire access, to socially valued goods (among which

recreation is included) solely on grounds of mental retardation or physical disability (for comments on this issue, see Sylvester's essay in this volume). The person concerned has claims on society not only for procedural reasons (e.g., protection from discrimination) but also for substantive reasons, that is, the quality of the person's life. This becomes a question of the moral content of society. Rescher (1966) describes "the task of distributive justice" as providing the means "to assess the relative merits of a distribution, the 'assessment' in question being made from the moral point of view. Its objective is to establish a *prince le* by which the 'assessment' of alternative possible distributions is carried out". 7) Based on this, we can say that a person is conceived in a much more detailed image by distributive justice than by procedural justice. The latter takes the person as found, with no thought to what that person might become, and whose rights are not a concern unless they are abridged, with no thought to the person's ability to exercise these rights actively. Under procedural justice, unless a person's rights are violated, the person's actual condition never rises as a moral question, so that procedural justice has very little to say about the content and quality of a person's life. To rely, then, on the processes of procedural justice to address quality of life issues is misguided. A person who is in some fashion disadvantaged might never suffer treatment requiring procedural remedies and yet never have opportunity to achieve that minimum share of goods society defines as the good life. Simply removing procedural barriers, necessary as this is, is insufficient to facilitate sharing in the good life unless means are also introduced for bringing all persons to equal ability to enjoy this minimum share of goods and for pursuing them beyond the minimum level. This is the task of a theory of distributive justice, which is conceptually richer than procedural justice because it goes beyond procedure to concern itself with the *contents* of competing distributions and the *principles* by which these are to be made.

Criteria for Distributive Principles

Based on the preceding discussion, there are three steps in evaluating any actual or proposed distribution. We must; first, explore the principle on which the distribution is based, including the questions of who is to be included or excluded from it and on what grounds. We must, second, go on to identify the goods to be distributed according to the principle and at what levels. We must, third, assess the agreement of the resulting distribution with the distributive principle underlying it. None of these questions will be answered easily and each will require continuing attention. In a sense, the entire issue of distributive justice is ongoing, involving unending reappraisals. Here we can only begin our inquiry, but we can at least do so in a way from which subsequent discussion might profitably proceed. For the present, then, I wish to direct attention to the first step mentioned above, viz., the exploration of a distributive principle and its coverage. This is the critical issue, for if we can find a satisfactory distributive principle, it will guide us not only in making a distribution but also in determining what goods must be distributed according to it. We must keep in mind that distributive justice will have a fuller conception of the person and the quality of life to be achieved than does the more limited concept of procedural justice. This means questions will be raised that we do not ordinarily associate, in our procedurally oriented society, with questions of justice.

We must admit at the start that not only will inequalities exist in any society, but also that it will be impossible to eliminate them all. In our obviously imperfect world, we can do no more than hope to establish a distributive principle to aid us in identifying the nature, sources, and effects of inequalities, and calling our attention to their prevention or redress. Distributive justice, at least on the conception advanced here, does not attempt to undo what has been done but to mitigate the future occurrence and effects of inequalities. This is not accomplished by reducing one person's legitimate share in a good in order to increase another person's. The intention is instead to ensure that no person's share in a good excludes others from similar enjoyment. Distributive justice seeks to raise all persons' shares at least to a minimum recognized level and, beyond this, to ensure the opportunities of all to pursue further shares based on interest and ability. The human condition will always be such that ineliminable residual inequalities will remain. Our task is to work toward ensuring this does not occur because of defects in the basic distributive structures of society.

On this basis, I would argue that no distributive principle is just if it fails to include the needs of one or another group of persons who, by virtue of morally nonculpable conditions, are unable to participate in or to enjoy the benefits of a distribution carried out along that principle. We know there are all too many people who fall into this category, those who for one reason or another are excluded from a full share in society's benefits and obligations. It is here that the concept of distributive justice intersects with therapeutic recreation: practitioners deal with many such excluded persons in a wide variety of settings, persons who suffer physical, mental, and emotional disabilities, the effects of violence, substance abuse, poverty, and discrimination. If, as suggested earlier, part of shifting the profession's focus away from its preoccupation with self-image requires an enlarged external focus on those whom we serve and their share in the goods of society, then it seems clear we must be willing to develop our understanding of the principles and practices by which these goods are distributed. Such an expanded understanding will lead to a more forceful advocacy on behalf of and along with our clients.

In response to the stipulation that no distributive principle is just if it fails to address the needs of such excluded persons, I suggest there is a three part test of any proposed principle. It must, first, though not necessarily obviously, include arrangements for a distribution in which all share equally. It should be noted that throughout social history into the present there have been any number of inegalitarian principles for distribution (e.g. by race, gender, class, intelligence, religion, national origin, and so on). We should not take as settled the proposition that all are entitled to equal moral treatment; in a later section I will touch briefly on the moral theory underlying this claim. Second, a distributive principle must specify means of bringing to full enjoyment of the proposed distribution those persons who are at an initial disadvantage. Any distribution has a starting place and the more we wish to bring a principle into the world of practice, the closer this starting place must agree with the conditions of that world. This will reflect existing inequalities and disadvantages. Failure to include some means to redress these will simply perpetuate the affected persons' disadvantages in the new distribution. Third, any distributive principle must contain a means for enhancing the enjoyment of the distribution by those who for morally nonculpable reasons will remain at a disadvantage. Some disadvantages

are more severe and enduring than others; distributive principles must recognize this and provide means to prevent permanent exclusion. Without attention to these stipulations, a distributive principle will relegate disadvantaged persons to a permanently unequal condition and a secondary status in society.

A Distributive Principle: Capacity Development

A distributive principle requires a standard against which it is to be assessed. This standard may be conceived as the moral goal of the distribution, so that the more closely an actual distribution adheres to the distributive principle, the more closely it approaches the moral good on which that principle rests. A standard must initially treat all persons as moral equals, that is, it should make no assumptions about the existence or worth of abilities and disabilities. Only in this way can the inequalities and biases of any existing distribution be overcome. If we permit such assumptions, the distributive principle simply reinforces what is given. By excluding such assumptions, we achieve a purer image of a distributively just society, one that will provide more incisive understanding of the sources and effects of inequalities in our own society.

Some comments are necessary here regarding the complexity of the realm of moral and political theory we are entering. I direct the argument along this path not for perverse love of complexity in itself but because, as suggested in the opening pages of this essay, we have in therapeutic recreation too frequently relied on narrowly drawn and poorly focused philosophical argument. From my perspective, this has led to unsatisfactory results and has in any case not yet provided the strongly persuasive case for therapeutic recreation that is so urgently needed. Thus there is some sense in testing different paths, perhaps by seeking out more challenging philosophical sources and broadening our angles of vision. Advocacy, both for our clients and for our field, when conceived along existing lines, remains too limited. I do not for a moment suggest that our daily practice or teaching should ascend the heights of philosophy, but rather that pursuing such broadened vision might create a much richer context for practice, teaching, and advocacy. Though this is not the place to argue the point, I suspect such a richer context is likely to put us more directly in contact with the experiences and aspirations of those we serve than has been the case heretofore. If for no other reason than this, we ought to persevere in exploring the expanding philosophical context of the field.

To return to the question of a standard by which to assess distributive principles, I suggest as one such standard the degree to which any distribution promotes the fullest possible development of the capacities of each person to whom it is applied. These capacities involve the entire range of human activity: they are physical, emotional, intellectual, aesthetic, spiritual, economic, and so on. When we talk about a particular distribution, the question needing foremost attention is the effect the distribution will have on these capacities. Will it stunt them? Expand? Enhance? The answers will guide us in appraising the moral status of any proposed distribution.

Any distribution will of necessity take place in a societal setting. We must therefore have a conception of this society that is related to the purpose of our distribution but not remote from the actual conditions in society. As a starting

point, I take the idea of a society as a “cooperative venture for mutual advantage” (Rawls, 1971, p. 85; cf. Aristotle, 1962, 1134a26-29). The mutuality here exists between the person’s moral duty to cooperate in this venture, usually by obeying laws and customs (a duty shared with each member of society), and society’s moral obligation to provide the conditions in which the person’s capacities will be developed. As a person abides by society’s standards permitting pursuit of a share to the goods of society, that obedience is returned by drawing on the resources of society (e.g., education, communication) to carry on or redirect this pursuit. It is here that the concept of rights enters, following the positive model described earlier in regard to liberty and justice. Rights can be conceived as the expressions of a person’s capacities to make contributions to the search for mutual advantage (Green, 1893, v. 2, sec. 25). The emphasis on cooperation and mutuality points out the need for the respect and development of all persons’ capacities alike (Sec. 26) while each person follows out individual aims and ambitions. Capacities, their development, and their exercise (which on a positive view cannot be separated from their development) are the basis on which we are able to claim rights, which thus rest on assumptions about the moral equality of all individuals’ initial capacities and hence are independent of any purely material conditions (e.g., property wealth) (cf. Green, 1893, v. 2, sec. 136). The institutional and procedural aspects of society begin as efforts to define, secure, and protect rights, but go on in their fuller development to be means of advancing the positive content and expression of those capacities on which rights stand. At the same time, the heterogeneity of human capacities and values becomes more openly expressed as the positive work of fostering their expression continues. Whatever tendency there might be towards conformity is reduced by the variety of human values (Rawls, 1971, p. 509) and by the reciprocity of recognition and protection of rights among persons (Green, 1893, v. 2, sec. 26).

The intermediate conclusion to this line of thought comes in two parts. First, to articulate the value components on which therapeutic recreation rests, we must have some conception of the goals at which our therapeutic activity aims (Hemingway, 1986). Without this, it very quickly becomes difficult to defend the *raison d’être* of the field. The preceding discussion offers a conceptualization of the person as, in essence, a bundle of capacities, expressible as rights, assumed initially to be commonly shared by all persons, to the fullest development and expression of which the person is entitled as part of a distributively just society. What is distributed here are the conditions and opportunities of development from what one is into what one has it in one’s self to become, without the interference of morally irrelevant factors. This leads to the second point, that unwarranted deprivation in any person of the development and expression of these capacities is immoral. It is immoral, first, because it restricts the range of development and expression of the person, thus stunting the moral growth of the person. It is immoral, second, because society is thereby deprived of the unique contributions that might have been made by the person had the opportunity and conditions for fuller development been preserved. Thus it is that the development and expression of each person’s capacities and the defense of each person’s rights has not only individual but social value.

A case against such deprivation lies in Kantian moral theory. Among the central elements of this theory is that person is a moral agent, capable of authoring moral acts, so that persons must be treated as ends in themselves

(Kant, 1785/1959): “man, and, in general, every rational being exists as an end in himself and not merely as a means to be arbitrarily used by this or that will. In all his actions . . . he must always be regarded at the same time as an end” (p. 46). This principle establishes the “inviolability” of each person (Rawls, 1971, p. 3), that is, a person is never to become either a means to reach another person’s ends or merely an object of another’s attention, for either of these leads to a moral devaluation of the person so regarded. This has implications for the manner in which therapeutic recreation regards those who use its services. Each of us is aware of the internal struggle to avoid treating clients as objects or lesser partners, to avoid depersonalizing them. At times this is in response to the seriousness of their disabilities, at other times it is a means to cope with the stresses of demanding workloads. If, as will be argued in the next section, self-esteem is perhaps the primary good to be distributed in society, we cannot, regardless of the pressures on us, allow ourselves to forget the moral autonomy of the client, for that is one of the chief sources of self-esteem. One difficulty in avoiding objectivation of clients lies in the fact that so much of our philosophical discussion is focused internally, on us as professionals rather than on those using our services. This assessment may be extended to a sizeable amount of our empirical research as well, focusing as it does on professional preparation and stature. Halberg and Howe-Murphy (1985), in their contribution to this collection, raise this question at some length. Here let me simply urge that we consider the possibility that in our daily practice and teaching we might be guilty of violating fundamental claims about the moral status of the persons we serve.

Based on the preceding, then, any distributively just society will secure for each person the greatest possible opportunity, consistent with like opportunity for all, to develop and to express the person’s capacities, and any restriction of this opportunity is a priori suspect as immoral. This argument begins with the equal moral standing of all persons, as Rawls (1971, p. 97) has done in defining equal citizenship as equal liberty and equal opportunity. Though it rests with each person to make of this initial equality what the person can, there is no *a priori* justification for treating any person as less than a fully competent moral being. The most immediate result is that a just society will not restrict access to what is necessary for the person to explore and to express this moral autonomy. So long as the person remains morally nonculpable, we are bound to treat the person *qua* person as a moral end. We are further bound to provide the conditions enabling the person to express this. If, then, the enjoyment of the goods distributed in society is a moral right, it cannot be abridged except for morally warranted reasons.

At the same time, in accordance with the earlier argument regarding the applicability of distributive principles, there must be a means to bring those who are temporarily or permanently disadvantaged in the pursuit of full enjoyment to the point at which the disadvantage is removed or reduced to its lowest degree. This stipulation is supported by what is perhaps the most well known element in Kantian moral theory, the categorical imperative, which directs action away from the merely self-regarding towards the more general and, because more general, the more nearly moral: “Act only according to that maxim by which you can at the same time will that it should become a universal law” (Kant, 1785/1959, p. 39). The implication for our purposes here is straightforward: a just distribution of goods will make no distinctions on moral grounds among persons’

entitlements, but will in fact follow a distributive principle treating all persons as equally moral beings and hence equally morally entitled to equal distributive shares. Such a principle, in adhering to the spirit of the categorical imperative, would entail that each person be willing to have the principle applied to that person's own share in the distribution of goods, so that persons with or without disadvantages would receive equal treatment. The categorical imperative and the principle of persons as moral ends in themselves are both universal in their application, making statements about how all persons are to be treated. Since any person might at any time become, through morally nonculpable events, a member of the temporarily or permanently disadvantaged groups, persons will recognize the mutual advantage of including members of these groups equally in the distribution of goods.

It should be clear that therapeutic recreation is directly affected by this argument. After all, what is therapeutic recreation if not an enabling field? This is true whether it is seen as a treatment modality or as the opening for play and recreation, whether in a clinical or community setting. In point of fact, those who come to therapeutic recreation practitioners for assistance are in some fashion disadvantaged or they would not be there. It might be that the person's condition is such that only in a specialized setting can that person recreate. Or it might be that the person is undergoing some form of therapy which recreation can enhance. However the issue is stated, therapeutic recreation performs a significant function that is legitimated by this argument for distributive justice: therapeutic recreation serves those who are in one fashion or another unable to take full enjoyment in the distribution of society's benefits and obligations. This function is performed by removing or reducing the disadvantage so full enjoyment can and does become possible. Because any one of us might at any time suffer illness or disability (these being among the vicissitudes of life referred to earlier in this essay), we all share an interest in ensuring the availability of therapeutic recreation services, along with those of the entire range of enabling professions, as part of our "cooperative venture for mutual advantage."

Capacity Development as a Distributive Principle: The Moral Groundwork

We may turn now to a brief examination of the moral basis for treating persons as bundles of capacities to be developed. This lies in a teleological conception of persons, a feature common to the arguments of Kant, Green, and Rawls. The idea of teleology has a long history in philosophy. Aristotle provided perhaps its fullest treatment, which Sabine (1961, p. 121) summarizes: "Nature is at bottom a system of capacities or forces of growth directed by their inherent nature toward characteristic ends." The human being, as a part of nature, has certain capacities (e.g., thought, creativity) that are found only in human beings and thus characterize the human being. Development of such capacities expresses, above all, characteristic human qualities. Kant (1784/1970, p. 42) appeals to the concept of teleology in arguing that "All the natural capacities of a creature are destined sooner or later to be developed completely and in conformity with their end." If as Kant (1784/1970, p. 54) argues elsewhere, enlightenment and moral progress are indeed part of the natural capacities of human beings, then it rests also in the nature of human beings that these natural capacities must be fully developed. Any morally unwarranted obstruction of this

development violates the: Kantian moral principles outlined in the preceding pages and thus stands morally condemned.

It will be worthwhile to follow out briefly one application of these ideas to show how they may be used to derive goods relevant to therapeutic recreation that are distributed in society: Rawls (1971, p. 445) explicitly endorses the Kantian notion of capacity development, using it to develop the idea of self-esteem as “perhaps the most important good” distributed in society (p. 440). As discussed by Rawls, there are two aspects of this good, a person’s sense of self-value and a person’s confidence in personal abilities to carry out a life plan successfully. Any just society will be attentive to the development of a person’s capacities so that person may enjoy a sense of self-esteem. Part of this would require provision of opportunities to develop self-esteem for those persons initially or permanently at a disadvantage in pursuit of socially valued goods, success in which is a significant part of establishing a conviction of one’s own value and confidence in one’s abilities. Rawls connects this with a teleological concept he calls the Aristotelian principle, which holds that “other things being equal, human beings enjoy the exercise of their realized capacities (their innate or trained abilities, and that this enjoyment increases the more the capacity is realized, or the greater its complexity” (p. 414). The enabling of a person to express the person’s nature as a human being possessing capacities opens the way to achieve self-esteem as a socially valued good. As Rawls (pp. 432-433) points out, the Aristotelian principle supports capacity development in two critical ways, first by encouraging the successively greater development of a capacity and second by encouraging the development of successively higher order capacities. Both are paths to successively greater confirmation of a person’s self-esteem. Returning to the concept of a society as a “cooperative venture for mutual advantage” (p. 84) and informed by the Kantian principles discussed above, Rawls describes the social applications of the Aristotelian principle as reinforcing social cooperation: “the members of a well-ordered society have the common aim of cooperating together to realize their own and another’s nature in ways allowed by the principles of justice” (p. 527; cf. Green, 1893, v. 2, secs. 25-26). We can thus see how the distributive principle of capacity development--viz., that all persons, including those groups of persons initially or permanently at a disadvantage, are equally entitled to the conditions in which the fullest possible capacity development becomes possible--leads through a series of propositions derived from Kantian moral theory to statements about the social distribution of goods. These principles and Propositions assert the basic moral entitlement of all persons to equal moral consideration and demand the just distribution of goods necessary to it.

Conclusion

I have ended this essay with the discussion of self-esteem as a societally valued good because it is one of the central aims of therapeutic recreation to assist people in coming to value themselves and their abilities, though we tend to cloak this in clinical or social scientific terms: what else do the concepts of perceived competence or self-image mean if not self-esteem, the conviction that there is value in one’s abilities, in being who one is?

From this brief statement can self-esteem--which, it should not be forgotten, lies embedded in the elaboration of an argument for distributive justice--it is possible to see the potential fruits of extended philosophical discussion. The aim of the present essay has been to outline one path to these fruits that has direct application to the defense of therapeutic recreation without yet claiming to be either definitive or terminal. Indeed, in terms of philosophical discussion, neither of these should be expected nor sought: to do so denies the ongoing, dialectical character of philosophical argument. Yet, returning to the earlier discussion of justification, it is clear from this essay that the provision of therapeutic recreation services can be justified on moral grounds as a response to the entitlements of disadvantaged persons to have their capabilities recognized and to develop them to the fullest possible extent. It is also clear that some of what is said in this essay reflects generalized sentiments already held by therapeutic recreation professionals, but here, too, we must return to our earlier discussion and remember that we cannot base arguments in defense of therapeutic recreation on anything so nebulous as sentiments. Only if we are able to develop these into a coherent argument, grounded in a defensible conception of the person and developed consistently within itself and across cases, can we turn to our varied audiences with persuasive arguments. Although each audience is likely to require different emphases in these arguments, nonetheless therapeutic recreation, justified on moral philosophical grounds, becomes better able to speak powerfully on behalf of those who use its services. Nor, provided we are cautious, will such arguments be mistaken for attempts to justify in pseudophilosophical terms our own existence. This charge can be made against too much of what currently is accepted as philosophical discussion and analysis in therapeutic recreation. We must return those persons using our services to the center of our focus, addressing their legitimate claims for just treatment and joining with them in seeking satisfaction of *their* claims. We must, as professionals, be prepared to speak to the broader questions of the values in the society in which our clients live, and thus to bring our *human* as well as professional knowledge to bear. This is, in the end, perhaps the major contribution that philosophical discussion can render, the recognition that the problems we seek to solve are human problems, set in human society, governed by human goals and aspirations. People are not, ultimately, treated justly or given freedom by opening to them some form of treatment or therapy. They only become free and just as people, in human society, facing human problems. If we so narrow our professional focus as to ignore this, we will ignore at the same time the true depth and significance of the work we try to do.

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