

University of Tartu
Institute of Philosophy and Semiotics

THE CHARIENTIC: A NEGLECTED NORMATIVE CATEGORY

Master's Thesis in Philosophy

Natasha Jade Bailie

Supervisor: Francesco Orsi

Number of characters: 87,215

Tartu, 2023

Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis is the result of original research conducted by myself (Natasha Jade Bailie) under the supervision of Francesco Orsi, and that apart from the works cited herein, no other material has been copied and nor has this thesis in whole or in part been submitted in this university or another for a degree.

Natasha Jade Bailie

22/05/2023

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Natasha Bailie', written in a cursive style.

Acknowledgements

I would firstly like to thank my family and my friends in Tartu and at home in Ireland for their support and encouragement.

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to all of the staff at the Department of Philosophy for their inspiring and unwavering support for my philosophical development. Their continuous support and confidence in my philosophical ability is incredibly value to me.

In particular, I would like to thank my supervisor Francesco Orsi for his patience and his support. His expertise has helped me develop my ideas and express them in a more sophisticated manner, as well as navigate the complex field of contemporary metaethics.

In addition, I would like to thank Simon Reginald Barker and Jay Zameska for the time and effort they contributed to providing detailed and enlightening comments on my ideas during the writing process.

Finally, I am grateful to my partner and best friend Thomas Moore for his emotional support and companionship, specifically over the course of my studies. I treasure our discussions about philosophy, theology, politics, and more; those exciting discussions give me so much joy and inspire me to be the best version of myself.

THE CHARIENTIC: A NEGLECTED NORMATIVE CATEGORY

Table of Contents

1: Introduction	5
2: The concept of the charientic	7
2.1. Background	7
2.2 Introduction to Glassen’s paper	8
3: Charientic judgements	10
3.1. Charientic judgements are genuinely evaluative	11
3.2. Charientic judgements are distinct evaluative judgements	13
4: Charientic reasons and obligations	16
4.1. Normativity and the normative question.....	18
4.2. Answering the normative question	21
4.3. Grounding charientic reasons and obligations	28
5: Objections to Korsgaard and Kant	31
5.1. Implausible subjectivity of practical identity	31
5.2. Self-legislation	32
6: Conclusion	35
Abstract	37
References	38

1. Introduction

It is a standard problem of value theory, broadly construed, to identify, classify, and analyse evaluative judgements. While the focus often rests on evaluative judgements which we usually call “moral” or “aesthetic,” there are other distinct, interesting classes of evaluative judgements which enrich the study of value as a whole and elucidate the complexity of human behaviour, and of human responses to others’ (and one’s own) behaviour. In 1958, Peter Glassen argued that judgements regarding vulgarity, which he calls “charientic” judgements, are (i) properly evaluative judgements; and (ii) distinct from other types of universally recognised evaluative judgements, such as moral or aesthetic ones. The goals of this thesis are, first, to support the claims made by Glassen by analysing and strengthening the arguments he offered, and second, to argue for the existence of charientic obligations, or, at least, good charientic reasons. The term “charientic”, coined by Glassen himself, derives from the Greek “charis”, a term which is “very often used of persons in relation to qualities of mind, graceful, elegant, accomplished... men of taste, men of education...” (Liddell and Scott, 1869; in Glassen 1958, 140). The charientic judgement is then a judgement concerning the degree and/or form of vulgarity or grace with which one conducts oneself; “vulgar” is a typical term of negative charientic judgments, while “graceful” or “refined” are typical terms of positive charientic judgements. For example, Glassen claims that “It is vulgar to chew gum,” or “Engaging in altercations in public is vulgar”, in contrast to purely descriptive statements like “Chewing gum whitens the teeth” or “Altercations in public usually attract attention”, respectively, are genuinely evaluative judgements, which are distinct from other universally recognised classes of evaluative judgements (e.g., the moral) (Glassen 1958, 138). In his paper, Glassen gives an outline of the nature of these judgements, arguing that they are indeed genuinely evaluative in nature and distinct from other universally recognised classes of evaluative judgement, namely, moral, aesthetic, prudential, and economic judgements. He discusses the language commonly used in the construction of charientic judgements and, often using comparison with the moral as an aid, discusses the nature of charientic approval and disapproval, as well as charientic excellence and the attitudes and responses which accompany charientic judgements.

While Glassen’s notion of the charientic has been taken up in a smattering of papers in different areas of philosophy, such as political and legal philosophy (see, e.g., Graham and Hoffman (2015); Feinberg (1987), respectively), it appears that despite the

essential peculiarity of charientic judgements which Glassen draws out in his paper, little philosophical attention has been given to them and the broader notion of the charientic *as a proper normative category*; in particular, to my knowledge, no strictly value-theoretic work has been done on the subject beyond the foundations laid out by Glassen over sixty years ago. Glassen himself speaks of the danger that “theoretical charientics will be regarded as a frivolous subject” (Glassen 1958, 145). Indeed, given the pervasiveness of the moral and the aesthetic in the history of moral philosophy and seemingly¹ in everyday life, coupled with the predominant idea that moral virtue is the highest form of virtue, it is easy to see why studying the charientic in and of itself could be dismissed as intellectual frivolity. In my view, charientic judgements deserve more scholarly attention and it is the purpose of the thesis to pay this attention and contribute to the field of “theoretical charientics”, as Glassen called it. In particular, I shall first analyse and expand upon Glassen’s arguments, concluding that the charientic is indeed a proper normative category distinct from other universally recognised categories (the moral, the aesthetic, etc.) and second, I shall argue that there exist charientic obligations (or, at least, good charientic reasons). I intend to achieve the second aim by clarifying the concepts of obligations and reasons for action, and arguing for a Kantian theory of normativity which permits the existence of charientic obligations. I then address some objections to this account (some general, and some specific to the charientics).

Moreover, I believe that the broader analysis of the charientic *as a proper normative category*, which I shall initiate through this thesis, deserves scholarly attention for three reasons: (i) its peculiarity makes it an interesting subject of philosophical investigation in itself; (ii) the study of any normative category can prove beneficial for finding solutions to general problems in value theory, and (iii) the category is closely related to social philosophy and political and legal theory, thus, it may contribute to developments in those fields of research and eventually influence real-life practice.

The rest of the thesis is structured as follows: In Chapter 2, I explain the context in which Glassen’s paper is situated and I discuss some charientic concepts. In Chapter 3, I develop the arguments given in Glassen’s paper, namely, that the charientic judgement is properly evaluative and distinct from other widely recognised evaluative judgements such

¹ It shall be seen throughout the course of the thesis that the charientic, as well as the moral and the aesthetic, has a rather substantial role in everyday life and the reason the charientic seems frivolous at first glance is that the way in which we perceive and recognise the charientic in everyday life is often very subtle.

as the moral and the aesthetic. Then, I address possible objections to this argument. In Chapter 4, I introduce the central problem of the thesis, namely, determining whether there are charientic obligations. I conclude that such obligations exist. I do this by applying Christine Korsgaard's theory of normativity, detailed in her 1996 book *The Sources of Normativity*, to the charientic. Chapter 5 discusses possible objections to my argument and provides responses to them. Finally, Chapter 6 concludes with a summary of the work done in this thesis, some remarks on possible developments of it, and suggestions of further work to be done in the field of theoretical charientics.

2. The concept of the charientic

In this chapter, I introduce the topic of Glassen's paper. I shall first give an overview of the context in which the paper is situated. Then, I shall discuss what Glassen means by "charientic" and provide a working definition of vulgarity, since Glassen does not do this and I believe this to be helpful for the subsequent analysis. Finally, I explain what Glassen wants to say about charientic judgements, before evaluating the steps he takes to support his claims in the next chapter.

2.1. Background

I first provide a brief picture of the background of this paper, including an overview of Peter Glassen's life and work, which shall give us an insight into the overall aim of the paper and later help us understand what work remains to be done in the area of "theoretical charientics".

Peter Glassen (1920-1986) was a Canadian philosopher who studied at Harvard University and maintained a position at the University of Manitoba for a substantial period of his life. He worked primarily on analytic moral philosophy, but his interests in metaphysics and epistemology motivated him to publish papers on these topics too, and he left behind a uniquely varied collection of philosophical works.

As previously mentioned, Glassen's paper on the charientic has been cited in a number of philosophical works, mainly legal and political. I shall now give a brief summary of precisely how Glassen's work was used in the works which make the most significant use of it. To my knowledge, Glassen's paper has been cited in approximately 13 works, the most recent being Charles Nussbaum's 2016 book on pornographic fiction and the most cited being Halliwell's 1991 paper on Greek culture, according to Google

Scholar (Google Scholar, 2023). It seems that Glassen's concept of the charientic has proved useful in areas of political and legal theory and philosophy, and even cultural theory. Many of these citations refer to the concept in a passing remark, rather than apply it as a concept which is fundamental to contributing to the attainment of the respective authors' goals (see, e.g., (Nussbaum, 2016), (Halliwell, 1991), (Packer, 1996)). However, the charientic has a fairly significant role in Feinberg's 1984 book *Offense to Others*. Feinberg is concerned with offenses related to obscenity, such as pornography. Feinberg agrees with the claim that the charientic is a distinct class of normativity, in particular, distinct from morality. The notion of the charientic therefore plays into Feinberg's aim to "de-moralise" certain evaluative categories, thereby putting them outside of the reach of the law. According to him, obscenity is the most extreme form of vulgarity: "judgments of obscenity... are charientic judgments of the most extreme kind. Obscenity is the outer limit of vulgarity" (Feinberg 1987, 108). His recognition and introduction of the charientic to his work on obscenity is therefore gives Feinberg a vocabulary for what he wishes to express and to give a richer account of what obscenity is. However, Feinberg's thought that vulgarity and obscenity are related has been criticised by Kieran; Kieran, also recognising the legitimacy of the charientic, in fact argues that obscenity and vulgarity do not exist on the same spectrum – which would be the charientic spectrum – he argues that obscenity is a distinctly moral matter (Kieran 2002, 34). Despite the fact that the charientic has received some attention in certain areas of philosophy, and indeed played a substantial role in Feinberg's book, no purely conceptual work has been done on the charientic, and it is my goal to contribute to such work in this thesis, as well as convince the reader of why this is a worthwhile project. It is clear from analysing these papers that the aforementioned scholars accept the distinctness of charientic judgements from others. This is good for us, but for the sake of philosophical rigour, I believe it is still important to review the foundations laid by Glassen and add some details to strengthen these foundations.

2.2. Introduction to Glassen's paper

Glassen's paper contributes to a central aim of the "general theory of value", namely, the study of "sorts of evaluative judgements" (Glassen 1958, 138). Two sorts of evaluative judgements which are universally recognised and given a definitive name are the aesthetic and the moral. Other sorts which are sometimes mentioned are "prudential" and "economic" judgements; conceptual work on these and even recognition of their being genuinely evaluative is uncommon in comparison to the moral and aesthetic cases,

possibly due to a certain elusive quality which they possess. The central aim of Glassen's paper is to classify another sort of evaluative judgement, which seems to have this peculiarity, in his paper and give them a name – these are what he calls “charientic” judgements. Achieving this aim involves successfully completing two tasks: (i) convincing the reader that charientic judgements are indeed evaluative; (ii) convincing the reader that these judgments are distinct from the other four aforementioned sorts of evaluative judgements (thus determining their status as another “sort” or class of evaluative judgement which can then be subjected to conceptual analysis). The first main aim of this thesis is to evaluate and improve the two above-mentioned claims which Glassen makes, as well as give a more comprehensive description of the charientic, thus providing a stronger foundation for the value-theoretic field of “charientics”.

First and foremost, let us consider the concept of vulgarity in the context of the paper. Glassen introduces a charientic judgement by considering a "judgement using the term 'vulgar'" (Glassen 1958, 138). The term "vulgar" thus forms the starting point for the study of charientics and in some way generates the most common charientic judgements, such as "Spitting in the street in vulgar". These judgements are the ones which Glassen focuses on, and as such seems to emphasise the importance of the concept of vulgarity for discussion of the charientic. Glassen gives examples of what he thinks the majority believe to be examples of vulgarity (or not) throughout the paper. Considering some basic instances of vulgarity, it is clear enough that a person's vulgarity is often done out of ignorance. Of course, we can conceive of a person being deliberately vulgar to disturb another person's comfort, but more often we might think of, say, a child's often vulgar behaviour due to their ignorance of the customs of civilised society. It seems that vulgarity, whether arising from ignorance or not, can be described as failure to comply to one or a set of social/cultural custom(s), which typically results in creating discomfort in whoever bears witness to this behaviour. This seems to capture what is “wrong” with the examples of vulgarity given by Glassen (chewing gum, spitting in the street, engaging in public altercations).

Of course, a normative category has its positive and negative concepts and terms. We have already referred to vulgarity, the common negative concept on the charientic spectrum. In the positive direction, then, there is a tendency or inclination towards elegance or grace. So, on one extreme end of the charientic spectrum (the negative end), we have vulgarity, boorishness, coarseness. On the other (positive) end, we have elegance,

refinement, and grace. This is reflected in Glassen's choice of nomenclature for the charientic, namely, the Greek word "charis" which, as previously mentioned, is word often used "in relation to qualities of mind" of those individuals who are "graceful, elegant, accomplished... men of taste, men of education..." (Liddell and Scott, 1869; in Glassen, 140).

The choice of this word seems to suggest that there is a duality of content associated with the term "charientic;" on the one hand, there is the "outward" domain of etiquette, good manners, appropriateness in social situations, and so on – these matters pertain specifically to other persons (the general public, our immediate company, friends and family, etc.). On the other hand, there is an element of care towards one's oneself (distinct from the care shown through the virtue of prudence), pertaining to one's comportment and refinement, grace, and good taste, as well as one's capacity for self-restraint – this appears to be an "inward" domain of the charientic; a private or intrapersonal aspect. Even though it cannot be known for certain whether mine and Glassen's conceptions of the charientic match entirely, this inference based on the etymology of "charientic" seems to support my conception of vulgarity.

Now that we have been exposed to the concepts of the charientic, we can begin to evaluate the claim made by Glassen that charientic judgements are distinct evaluative judgements, which is the subject of the next chapter. In the first subchapter, we develop the argument that charientic judgements are genuinely evaluative; and in the second subchapter, we develop his argument that charientic judgements are indeed distinct from other universally recognised sorts of evaluative judgements (e.g., moral). Completing this task and strengthening Glassen's arguments will then allow us to speak of the charientic as a proper normative category, that is, as possessing a kind of normativity which deserves to have its name and place within the general theory of value (like morality and aesthetics have).

3. Charientic judgements as a distinct sort of evaluative judgement

In this chapter, I want to develop the work done by Glassen in his paper. In particular, I shall argue for the thesis that the charientic is a proper normative category which is distinct from other such categories which are universally recognised, in particular: the moral, aesthetic, prudential, and economic. While Glassen's paper already lays the foundations for the study of the charientic as a field in its own right, there is more which needs to be said

on the matter. A more thorough value-theoretic assessment of the charientic must be done to give a comprehensive and convincing argument that the charientic is indeed a proper normative category and, as a result, give theoretical charientics the status of a subject in its own right which is substantial and important/relevant enough to carry the proper name assigned to it by Glassen.

First, I clarify what I mean by a proper normative category. The term “normative category” is not so widely used in philosophical literature and can be ambiguous. So, I now give a working definition of this concept and explain why this concept is important. We take a normative category to mean, roughly speaking, a complete and internally networked collection of concepts and corresponding natural language terms which refer to values or norms of a particular kind. In other words, a discourse about a particular kind of values and norms. For example, the moral is universally recognised as a normative category: we have a set of meaningful and reciprocally interrelated evaluative terms such as “wrong,” “right,” “moral,” and “immoral,” and normative (action-guiding) terms such as “obligation”, “must”, and “ought” (in the special, moral sense of the word; see (Foot 1972, 307)) which allow us to make statements of an evaluative nature (i.e., evaluative judgements) and thus display moral (dis)approval and engage in moral (dis)agreement. Because this set is sufficient to allow for such thought and discourse, I call the set of the concepts and its corresponding natural language terms “complete” and thus, by the definition given above, “the moral”, or morality, is an example of a proper normative category. When it comes to the charientic, there is some vagueness which must be cleared up, as will be seen once we begin.

3.1. Charientic judgements are genuinely evaluative

Glassen’s first aim was to determine whether charientic judgements are genuinely evaluative. Glassen argues rather briefly that “judgements using the term ‘vulgar’” are indeed evaluative and I think his argument is sufficient. He appeals to commonly identified features of an evaluative judgement in the argument. Take any judgement using the term “vulgar”, like “It is vulgar to chew gum”. Glassen identifies four features belonging to this sort of judgement which he claims are common to all evaluative judgements.

First, that they have a “certain aura” or “smell” which distinguishes them from descriptive statements (Glassen 1958, 138). Second, they do not appear to be subject to empirical investigation to determine their truth or falsity. Thirdly, the terms used in this

judgement which gives it that “certain aura”, namely the term “vulgar”, can be and often is interpreted differently across cultures or even from person to person, just as the moral term “good” or the aesthetic term “beautiful” can be; as such, one person’s judgement of vulgarity can reasonably be met with responses like “Who are you to judge?”, or “You are simply expressing the attitude of your culture” (Glasen 1958, 138). Finally, they have an “expressive-evocative function”, which, Glasen recalls, has “come to be widely regarded as one of the salient features of” evaluative judgements (Glasen 1958, 139). The “expressive” part of the expressive-evocative function refers to the fact that evaluative judgements do not merely describe an attitude (e.g., “I don’t like *x*” or “Boo, *x*!”) but they also are the medium through which that attitude is expressed. This is true for the case of charientic judgements, since the claim “*x* is vulgar” seems to express disapproval or some other negative attitude towards *x*, thanks to that “aura” or “smell” which the term “vulgar” appears to have. The “evocative” part of the function refers to the fact that the expression of an attitude through an evaluative judgement evokes attitudes in others; it evokes attitudes which either agree with the judgement or attitudes which are about that attitude.

Glasen discusses the nature of these attitudes and explains that they are distinct from moral attitudes. Moral approval is typically displayed as a kind of respect, whereas charientic approval takes the form of a kind of admiration, according to Glasen. In addition, moral disapproval comes across as indignation or a kind of resentfulness, whereas charientic disapproval is a kind of contempt – a kind of “looking-down-one’s-nose reaction” (Glasen 1958, 142). The way in which we behave towards those who are the object of our judgement is different, too: if we express moral disapproval of an individual, we typically desire them to be reprimanded for their offense; in contrast, if we express charientic disapproval, we typically want to exclude that individual from our social circles and ridicule them. Though we may also ostracise from our social circles those who we show moral disapproval of, we are not expressing an essentially moral point of view when we do this as a result of charientic disapproval – the latter is done out of a sense of annoyance or frustration of having to put up with having our preferred milieu disturbed (Glasen 1958, 142). In addition to the differences in behaviour corresponding to charientic and moral disapproval, there are also significant differences in the attitudes towards oneself when one makes a charientic *faux pas* or a moral transgression: the moral transgression typically evokes feelings of guilt or shame, whereas the charientic *faux pas* typically evokes a feeling of embarrassment (Glasen 1958, 143).

The combination of the above observations about judgements containing the word “vulgar” constitutes the most efficient method of argumentation for Glassen’s first claim, given the background of his paper. Glassen acknowledges quite rightly that the criterion for a statement to be an evaluative judgement (as opposed to a descriptive statement) was far from settled at the time of writing, and this is still the case today. For example, there is still debate as to whether an evaluative judgement necessarily motivates one to act in accordance with that judgement (this is the motivational internalism-externalism debate; see, e.g., (Shafer-Landau 2000) for a taxonomy of the different forms of internalism and a defence of externalism). Since Glassen’s paper marks an introduction to the concept of the charientic and aims to lay the philosophical groundwork for study of the charientic, it would not be reasonable to provide in-depth arguments about this general metaethical problem. Thus, I would say that this argument needs no augmentation, though one small technical detail may be introduced here for completeness:

Glassen’s claims are about charientic judgements as a whole, while his arguments largely concern judgements which use the term “vulgar”. These two sets of judgements are different and this is made clear by Glassen. For example, Glassen considers the statement “He is a gentleman” to be a charientic judgement, because of the well-recognised special usage of the term “gentleman” to refer to “[the man’s] accent, his way of dressing, and his general deportment in society” (Glassen 1958, 141). Other words which Glassen identifies as pertaining to the charientic, as he defines it, include “refined”, “cultivated”, “cultured”, “educated” “civilised” on the positive end of the spectrum, and “boorish”, “crude”, “coarse”, “philistine”, “uncouth” on the negative end. I think it is clear enough that the sense in which these words are used (and not just the words themselves) indicates their evaluative nature in the same sense that “vulgar” is evaluative; thus, it seems that we can safely extend Glassen’s argument from judgements using the word “vulgar” to all of those suggested by Glassen and named charientic.

3.2. Charientic judgements are distinct evaluative judgements

Having argued that charientic judgements are indeed evaluative, Glassen wants to show that they are their own kind of evaluative judgement, that is, distinct from moral, aesthetic, prudential, and economic judgements. We shall now discuss and strengthen the arguments which Glassen makes to support this claim.

Let us begin by considering economic and prudential judgements. Glassen claims that judgements which use the word “vulgar” (and thus, by our previous comment, charientic judgements in general) “could not with any plausibility be said to be prudential or economic” (Glassen 1958, 139); that is all Glassen says regarding economic and prudential judgements. I think, however, that this issue deserves some additional attention, particularly regarding prudential judgements. Glassen does not say enough about economic judgements for us to elaborate on the claim that economic and charientic judgements are distinct, but it seems anyway that whatever kind of judgement could be called “economic” is fundamentally different to a charientic judgement.

Now, let us consider prudential judgements. It is not unreasonable to posit that charientic judgements may in fact be prudential, because the degree of vulgarity with which one acts can be viewed as a prudential matter. For example, being vulgar may be judged to be foolish or lacking in self-interest since such behaviour would potentially lead others to think that you do not respect yourself or those around you, and thus they may treat you poorly; as a result, your quality of life, especially in the public dimension, would be reduced and this would be against your own interests. However, the charientic is not reducible to the prudential since reasons for action from a prudential point of view and from a charientic point of view can be seen to conflict. Though this kind of claim depends on what we mean precisely by self-interest, I think it suffices to provide the following example which displays the irreducibility of the charientic to the prudential: consider a monarch who sacrifices their own self-interest for maintaining the degree of grace and elegance with which a monarch is expected to conduct themselves. The personal struggles and unhappiness which such self-restraint can have on people in such positions is known; a striking example is the life of Empress Elisabeth of Austria (see, e.g., (Hamann 2012, 51)).

Another class of evaluative judgements which the charientic may reduce to is the aesthetic. There does seem to be an aesthetic element tied to the notion of vulgarity and all other “charientic” terms. For example, consider the judgement “Spitting in the street is vulgar”: it seems to express a feeling of disdain towards the unpleasant appearance of spitting in the street; “He is a gentleman”, where “gentleman” is used in the charientic sense which Glassen discusses, would seem ill-placed if the gentleman in question was not to some degree aesthetically pleasing – well dressed, a pleasant-sounding voice, and so on. It seems plausible that the charientic has a necessary aesthetic element – that some property or feature of the object which the judgement refers to, though at times subtle, is

aesthetic. For example, the terms “elegance” and “grace” are often understood to be aesthetic terms, yet grace is deeply embedded in the etymology of the very word “charientic”. Glassen argues, however, that the charientic is not reducible to the aesthetic because charientic and aesthetic judgements concern different kinds of objects; the charientic concerns objects pertaining to personhood (a person or their action/behaviour); whereas the aesthetic concerns “proper” *things* (works of art, the form/structure of material objects, etc.) (Glassen 1958, 139). Moreover, while “elegant” or “graceful” often indicate aesthetic qualities, Glassen means to use them in a distinct way: Indeed, there is elegance and grace in a purely aesthetic sense, but the charientic pertains to a person’s character or actions, and the elegance of a person’s conduct is not the same kind of elegance which, say, a mathematical theory or an evening gown can have. Furthermore, my definition of vulgarity given earlier in this chapter indicates there is something about vulgarity and thus the concept of the charientic which marks it as not fundamentally aesthetic. Is there necessarily an aesthetic element attached to disrespect, to lack of value? I do not think so – this aspect of the charientic makes it seem more likely to be reducible to the moral, but I shall now argue that this is not the case either.

Glassen briefly argues that charientic judgements are distinct from moral judgements. He does this by observing that behaviour which is typically viewed as vulgar is not often thought of as morally wrong or immoral, such as chewing gum (Glassen 1958, 139). According to Glassen, a person’s vulgarity, no matter how pervasive, does not diminish their moral character; nor does a person’s elegance relieve them of their poor moral character. Of course, there are immoral actions which may be considered vulgar, and there may be moral actions which are perceived as elegant or graceful. However, this observation amounts only to recognising the multifaceted nature of reality with respect to value – life is such that we can consider many properties or qualities of an object. We would essentially need to show that there is a one-to-one correspondence between every possible charientic term and every possible moral term to show that the charientic is reducible to morality. This is not the case, and this can be shown by providing one counterexample to the claim: consider the easy example of chewing gum. While this action may often be deemed vulgar, which is a charientic term expressing disapproval, we would be hard-pressed to describe this action as immoral – there is no corresponding moral term expressing disapproval towards chewing gum. My proposed definition of vulgarity might make the charientic seem like an essentially moral issue. However, it is not, for not all

exhibitions of vulgarity will be so extreme as to be viewed within a moral dimension, even with this definition in mind, as can be seen by considering the gum example. Finally, as mentioned in the previous part of this chapter, the kinds of approval and disapproval which are expressed by moral and charientic judgements, and how we behave towards those who are the object of our moral and charientic judgements, are significantly different; this further suggests that moral and charientic judgements are indeed distinct.

4. Charientic reasons and obligations

Showing that the charientic constitutes a proper normative category – a discourse about a specific set of values or norms different from others – is not sufficient to show that these values or norms actually exist or are actually valid. For example, error theorists about morality (e.g., Mackie) do not deny that morality constitutes a proper normative category, but they hold that all moral judgments are false, because moral values or norms do not exist or are not valid, despite being accepted by the majority of people. So, a proper defence of the charientic must include a defence of the genuine existence and validity of charientic norms and values or, as I explain here, charientic obligations. In other words, one must avoid the pitfall of an error theory about the charientic. The notion of obligation outside the realm of morality can be unusual to consider due to the monopoly which morality seems to have over the concept of obligation. However, my study of Glassen's paper directed me to the possibility that there are charientic obligations. I now briefly introduce my motivation, my goals, and my strategy for achieving those goals in this chapter, and explain its structure, before we begin.

I believe the question of whether there are charientic obligations is worth investigating not only because it is an interesting question, but also because a positive answer will support me in my appeal to show that the study of theoretical charientics is a worthwhile project for those intrigued by the notion of charientic. While the notion of moral obligations (and consequentially, also aesthetic ones, prudential ones, and so on) has been criticised by prominent moral philosophers, particularly contemporary ones (see, e.g., (Foot 1972); (Mackie 1990)), I believe that human nature is such that we, in general, are pulled towards the notion of obligation or duty; our inability to live a meaningless life (or at least our discomfort towards that life) makes the notion of obligation attractive, despite our imperfections when it comes to fulfilling those obligations. In particular, this aversion to meaninglessness makes obligations attractive because obligations provide a way to

orient our lives in a way which we find hard to deny and they give us a sense of worth to ourselves and those around us. I agree with Korsgaard when she says that obligation is what makes us human (Korsgaard 1996, 5). The goal of this chapter, therefore, is primarily to argue for my claim that there exist charientic obligations which will then in turn justify the theoretical importance which I attach to charientics.

I intend to argue for my claim with the help of a Kantian theory of normativity, specifically Christine Korsgaard's version offered in her 1996 book *The Sources of Normativity*. In this book, Korsgaard claims that normativity is grounded in human nature; more specifically, the authority which arises from our capacity for self-reflection justifies the hold which normative claims have on us (Korsgaard 1996, 20). Under this view, an agent has good reasons for action based on successfully reflecting on and endorsing our choices and desires; the details of this will be elaborated on soon. In addition, obligations arise from a rejection of something which threatens our practical identity, which, roughly put, is a conception of ourselves through which we value ourselves and feel life is worth living. To support my main claim then, I shall explain how I think Korsgaard's Kantian theory of normativity can be applied to the charientic to give rise to charientic obligations, or at the very least, good charientic reasons. This involves arguing that the charientic is an area of value which is subject to the considerations of practical identity, that is, we can make decisions regarding charientic matters for the sake of our practical identity. This chapter is structured as follows: First, I discuss the concept of normativity, including an explanation of the concepts of normative reasons and obligations, which is essential to understanding the main claim of this thesis. Then, I discuss the aim of Korsgaard's book, namely, clarifying and answering the normative question; and I shall explain how answering this question is relevant for defending my claim. Then, I give an account of Korsgaard's answer to this question. Here, I include an explanation of Korsgaard's concept of practical identity and an account of the self which is required to defend her normative theory. Finally, I argue that Korsgaard's answer (that is, her Kantian theory of normativity) accounts for the existence of charientic obligations and address some possible objections to this part of my argument. It is worth mentioning that I give a brief description of Korsgaard's theory of normativity and provide my own developments of some parts of it, but despite its benefits an in-depth analysis of her theory would make the thesis unreasonably long. I hope that my somewhat limited additions will

at least sound plausible. I believe it is more important to focus on the “new” work being done here, which is: showing that Korsgaard’s theory of normativity explains the existence of charientic obligations.

4.1. Normativity and the normative question

To begin, let us give a summary of what normativity, reason for action and obligation means. Normativity is the conceptual backbone of ethics. It is the pull which we feel when we made claims about morality, beauty, and so on. Korsgaard writes:

Normativity pervades our lives. We not merely have beliefs: we claim that we and others ought to hold certain beliefs. We not merely have desires: we claim that we and others ought to act on some of them, but not on others. We assume that what somebody believes or does may be judged reasonable or unreasonable, right or wrong, good or bad, that it is answerable to standards or norms. So far, so commonplace; but we have only to go a little further to find ourselves on the high seas of moral philosophy. (Korsgaard 1996, xi)

Reasons for action are strongly linked to the concept of normativity, particularly the class of reasons called normative reasons for action. Philosophers typically distinguish three different kinds of reasons for action: normative, motivating, and explanatory. A normative reason to do an action *A* is a consideration which counts in favour of doing *A*. A common moral normative reason for doing an action *A*, say, telling the truth, would be that telling the truth is the *honest thing to do*; we can contrast this with an example of a prudential reason to tell the truth, namely that it is *in my best interest* to tell the truth because, for example, I might be punished if I don’t and my lie is discovered. As suggested by these examples, a normative reason will often be categorised according to a particular normative category; it will relate to a particular set of values/norms, such as moral norms, prudential norms, legal norms, and so on (Alvarez).

The other commonly distinguished kinds of reasons for action are called motivating or explanatory. A motivating reason is one which relates entirely to the subject in the sense that it captures the considerations in light of which the agent did what he did, and an explanatory reason is one which explains the action of an agent as seen from a third-person perspective (Alvarez). For example, in *Romeo and Juliet*, Romeo ends his life after finding out that Juliet to be dead. Though, of course, it turns out that Juliet was not dead after all. Romeo’s reason (from his perspective) to end his life was that Juliet was dead; this provides an example of a motivating reason. In contrast, an example of an explanatory reason is that Romeo did not want to live without Juliet; this explains his decision to drink the poison and end his life. It is clear from this example that the function of these different kinds of reasons in accounts of agency and motivation are different from normative

reasons. Normative reasons are the kind of reasons which we consider in anticipation of acting and can reflect on and analyse; they are viewed from the perspective of the hypothetical agent and therefore are of most philosophical importance. They are the reasons with which I concern myself in this thesis.

Now, we move on to obligations. While most people have a rough idea of what an obligation is, there is often confusion regarding its precise meaning. Korsgaard points out that an obligation is often been thought of as a required action, though in fact the word obligation refers not so much to the action which is required but to the “*requiredness*” of the action. Therefore, I adhere to the following definition of obligation: An obligation is a normative reason which has a particularly strong “normative pull” so that it requires—“obliges”—us to do something (Korsgaard 1989, 311). Where there is a decision to be made about whether to do action *A* or action *B* and we have equally good reasons to do either, but have an obligation to do action *A*, then we are required to do action *A*. For example, someone who makes a promise is thought to be obligated to keep that promise.

In the remainder of this part of the chapter, we address what Korsgaard calls the “normative question”, which asks what the source of normativity is: does the justification of the claims which normativity makes on us come from God, some fact about human nature, or something else? This question is what Korsgaard explains and answers in her book, and her answer is crucial to my argument for the main claim of this thesis, namely, that there exist charientic obligations. I first explain in more detail what the normative question asks and then discuss why this question, particularly its answer, is crucial to my argument. At this point, I would like to mention that for the sake of brevity I focus my explanation of Korsgaard’s work to suit the purpose of showing how it can be applied to my argument; I do not intend to discuss or analyse her work comprehensively.

I now discuss the normative question. Let us first consider the grasp which morality has on us. What is it about morality which renders us indefensible against its claims on us, despite our attempts to abandon it or our furtive desire to act only on our private interests? Why are we willing to die for what we believe to be right; or more precisely, why would we rather die than live a life in which we cannot act according to what we believe is right? The claims which morality makes on us are not only describing what we should do, but they themselves seem to command our actions. We naturally tie the notions of obligation and duty to morality. We can try to explain these obligations based on what actions or way

of life is good or right, but then we must answer the question of why it is good or right, and, in particular, why does the good or the right seem to pull us towards it? Korsgaard explains that this is because ethical standards are *normative* – they do not merely describe a way to regulate our actions since they also “command, oblige, recommend, or guide” (Korsgaard, 1996, 8).

We can extend this question across human value in general, not just morality – what is it about valuing something which makes us feel it is worthwhile or necessary to pursue it, and expect others to do the same? For example, when we say something is beautiful, we are not merely making a descriptive statement or even a statement about our own emotions/attitude towards that thing, but a normative claim – a claim which basically says to others: this thing is beautiful, and I think you should find it beautiful too (or at least ascribe some value to it yourself)? Korsgaard recognises this scope of normativity across many areas of value:

When I say that an action is right I am saying that you ought to do it; when I say that something is good I am recommending it as worthy of your choice. *The same is true of the other concepts for which we seek philosophical foundations. Concepts like knowledge, beauty, and meaning, as well as virtue and justice, all have a normative dimension, for they tell us what to think, what to like, what to say, what to do, and what to be.* (Korsgaard 1996, 8, my italics)

To understand the force behind normative claims – the force which gives them the authority to tell us what to think, to like, to say, to do, and to be – is what those who ask the normative question seek from its answer.

The question arises, in one way, with urgency in most people because of the predicaments we find ourselves in when we pay heed to such claims, most often, it seems, if those claims are moral. Often the consequences of our adherence to normative claims are drastic; for example, we willingly sacrifice our lives, or what makes them sweet, for what we believe is right (Korsgaard 1996, 9). These drastic consequences in particular lead us to ask: why? Why should I be moral? Why should I do what is expected of me?

Some philosophers have, instead of answering this question, explained it away, implying a denial the very normativity of these claims which seem to demand so much from us. For example, Phillipa Foot argues that the only reason we feel there is a special force behind (specifically) moral claims is due to centuries of specific moral teaching. Thus, Foot presents the question “Why should I?” in the face of any moral prescription or rule, just as legitimately as we might ask this question in the face of a particular club rule; or social custom which appears to be going out of fashion (Foot 1972, 311). Elizabeth

Anscombe explains away this special force as a residual effect of centuries of the influence and the stringency of Christian teachings in the West (Anscombe 1958, 5). Though these authors do not and did not intend to answer the normative question, I want to make it plain that I do not believe that the normativity of morality (or indeed other normative categories, such as the aesthetic or charientic) can be explained away as a contingent fact of our historical continuity, and for this reason I believe answering the normative question is important. In particular, the normative question is crucial to the understanding of my thesis and the argument of its main claim. I also mention Foot and Anscombe's claims because it leads us to consider the following, which helps partially to set up the problem for this thesis: if we can plausibly reject the existence of the special binding force behind morality as conceived in Western culture, what hope is there of arguing for the existence of charientic obligations? This thesis intends to display that such an argument does exist, and that there do exist charientic obligations.

Now that the meaning of the normative question has been discussed, I shall explain why it is relevant to my thesis. The question of the source of normativity is crucial to my argument, since if we can answer this question, that is, explain what justifies normative claims, we decide whether this justification applies to charientic reasons. Then, we can determine if charientic reasons be classed as obligations. I claim that Korsgaard's answer to the normative question does indeed apply to the charientic. In other words, her theory of normativity shows the existence of charientic norms, and thus explains the existence of charientic obligations.

4.2. Answering the normative question

In this part of the chapter, I discuss Korsgaard's answer to the normative question, which she calls "appeal to autonomy" and constitutes her own interpretation of Kantian ethics. Before going any further, the following point must be made about Korsgaard's work: in this book Korsgaard poses the normative question from the viewpoint of morality, since her overall goal is to determine what justifies the claims that morality makes on us (Korsgaard 1996, 9). However, I claim that the theory of normativity which she puts forth can be generalised to apply to any proper normative category, including the charientic. This I will expand on later in this chapter, but for now, let us keep in mind the following quotation from her book:

I will argue for two points: first, that autonomy is the source of obligation, and in particular of our ability to obligate ourselves; and second, that we have *moral* obligations, by which I mean obligations to humanity as such. However, it will be no part of my argument – quite the contrary – to suggest either that *all* obligations are moral, or that obligations can never conflict... (Korsgaard 1996, 91, original italics).

Notice that she distinguishes two claims for which she intends to argue and the use of the distinct concepts of obligation and *moral* obligation: she intends to show that autonomy is the source of *obligation*, firstly, and secondly that we have *moral obligations*. This appears to be a statement that her solution to the problem of normativity, though constructed to answer the normative question from a specifically moral point of view, does not suggest that all normative claims and obligations which actually arise are moral—there could also be charientic ones, and this is of course what I shall try to show later in this chapter.

I can now return to the task of this part of the chapter – answering the normative question, that is, providing a theory of normativity. Korsgaard discusses four sources of normativity which were identified by Western philosophers throughout the centuries, which she calls voluntarism, realism, reflective endorsement, and appeal to autonomy (Korsgaard, 18). While Korsgaard thinks the other views are insufficient as answers to the normative question, she thinks that each view is actually true. Each view and their criticisms contain essential pieces of information which direct us towards determining the true source of normativity, as Korsgaard explains later in her book and which I shall explain later. It should be noted that I assume a basic knowledge of Kantian ethics throughout (e.g., the meaning of the Kingdom of Ends and the distinction between categorical and hypothetical imperatives are assumed to be known). I now discuss the first three views.

Voluntarism is the view that the source of normativity comes from the existence of a legislating sovereign. Our obligations consist in those laws which are legislated by that sovereign. Hobbes and Pufendorf were adherents of this view. In particular, they maintained that what is right is just what you are obliged to do because the sovereign said so (Korsgaard 1996, 24). Korsgaard argues that voluntarism does not answer the normative question because it does not explain why the sovereign has the *authority* to make normative claims on us. Voluntarism requires that there are authoritative legislators, which then requires if we are to show voluntarism to be true that we already understand the source of some authoritative norms, that is, understand how the legislators came about in the first place. At best, what the sovereign has is power – and power and authority are two

distinct concepts (Korsgaard 1996, 104). The normative question demands that we determine what gives the proposed source of normativity its normative authority, that is to say, what *justifies* the power it has over us.

Realism is the view that there are intrinsically normative entities. The realist attempts to terminate the infinite regress of asking “But why?” when faced with accounts like voluntarism. It simply says that normativity is an irreducible concept and that asking searching for explanations of why something is normative is a mistake (Korsgaard 1996, 32). It is clear, then, that realism fails to answer the normative question because it implies that the question shouldn’t even be asked – the point of realism is that we don’t have to ask, “Why is *that* normative?”

It appears that the normative question “slips through our fingers” if we try to answer it with these views (Korsgaard 1996, xii): Secondly, realism reduces to an infinite regress of asking “Why”? unless it can be shown that some actions or duties are intrinsically necessary. Realism and voluntarism posit the source of normativity to exist somewhere outside of human nature; the former proposing it comes from intrinsically good or valuable entities like “the good” which supposedly exist as “part of the furniture of the world”, as Mackie put it (Mackie 1990, 16), and the latter proposing it comes from some genuinely superior entity which possesses such authority, typically divine. In contrast, Korsgaard’s solution to the normative question lies within human nature, rather than outside it: “Morality... is grounded in human nature and certain natural human sentiments” (Korsgaard 1996, 48). Moreover, she thinks and tries to argue in her book that “obligation is what makes us human” (Korsgaard 1996, 5).

The third view, reflective endorsement, is also one which aims to ground normativity in human nature. In particular, it attempts to ground normativity in the self-reflective power of each individual—their ability to endorse an action or belief upon reflection. Human beings are not only conscious (like non-human animals) but also *self*-conscious. We have desires and beliefs, yes, but the essentially self-reflective nature of humanity which arises from that self-consciousness means we are forced to reflect on those desires and beliefs. Now, reflective endorsement is a response to the concern that morality might not survive this reflection: our reflective nature causes a problem for us because even if we believe an action is right and even if we feel motivated by to act on it because of its apparent rightness, we can still reflect on those facts and call our beliefs and motives

into question (Korsgaard 1996, 49). Korsgaard explains that reflective endorsement theorists respond to this worry by applying the following methodology: a clear statement of the problem is also a statement of the solution. So, if the problem is that morality might not survive our own reflection, then the solution is that it *might*. If reflection poses a threat to morality, then reflection might also save it (Korsgaard 1996, 49). Korsgaard does not intend to criticise this view – in fact, she thinks the logical consequence of the views shared by some adherents of reflective endorsement, particularly David Hume, J. S. Mill and Bernard Williams, is Kantian moral philosophy. This shall become clear later.

While our essentially self-reflective nature is fundamental to Korsgaard’s own normative theory, she argues that reflective endorsement alone is not sufficient as an answer to the normative question. This is because it still does not explain how our reflective capacities properly *ground* normativity—reflective endorsement, as Korsgaard calls it, only *endorses* a particular action or belief, and this endorsement is not what the normative question asks about. The normative question asks us what *justifies* normative claims, not simply what endorses them. This view doesn’t explain what gives reflective responses to our actions normative force. How can reflective responses, particularly reflective endorsement, give rise to norms (Korsgaard 1996, xii)? While Korsgaard criticises this view on these grounds, her own theory of normativity is constructed from it. Kant’s ethical system is viewed by Korsgaard as a distinct form of reflective endorsement – it is reflective endorsement *plus something*, and that *something* is what truly grounds normativity in human nature. This is what I will now discuss.

Korsgaard calls her view, which is derived from Kant and with some unique modifications, appeal to autonomy. This view states that our autonomy is the source of normativity. From our previous discussion, we saw the significance of self-reflection in grounding normativity in human nature. We can distance ourselves from our desires and beliefs and put them into question. (Korsgaard 1996, 93). This self-reflective capacity gives rise to our need for reasons; the reflective mind, Korsgaard explains, “cannot settle for perception and desire, not just as such. It needs a *reason*” (Korsgaard 1996, 93, original italics). Our discussion of reflective endorsement brought us to the conclusion that endorsement of a desire as it appears to the agent’s will is not enough to warrant its elevation to the status of a reason for action. It must also pass some sort of test of normativity before it can be considered one, and this is where Korsgaard thinks Kant’s moral philosophy is necessary (Korsgaard 1996, 91).

Korsgaard explains that Kant discusses the problem generated by our essentially reflective nature in terms of freedom, where freedom is “the capacity to do otherwise” as seen from the perspective of the agent who deliberates and has desires which represent possible courses of action which we may take or leave (Korsgaard 1996, 96). Our reflective nature requires that we act under the idea of freedom: we must use our reflective capacities to endorse acting on a desire for it to constitute a reason. This way, we are not slaves to our desires – we act on that desire freely. In other words, having a reason means successfully reflecting on our desires.

Deciding that a desire is a reason to act means that I must have decided, on reflection, to endorse that desire. But how did I decide that? Did I recognise something as intrinsically normative – either the desire itself or the object of that desire? I would have to address all the arguments against realism then. Or, maybe the normativity of these things comes from somewhere else – but then I am chasing the source of normativity in another regress. Korsgaard finds the answer to this problem in Kant. Kant argued that the free will must be entirely self-determining, that is, it cannot have any alien influence (including my own desires) because of the fact that it is free. In addition, because the will is free does not mean that it is lawless; on the contrary, because the will *is* practical reason, it must always have reasons – a will mindlessly acting and choosing goes against its very conception. The free will must, therefore, have its *own* law or principle. But how can it have any reason to choose one law over another for itself when it has no principles with which to guide its choice? Kant’s solution is thus: the only law a free will can possibly have, precisely because it is free, is the categorical imperative in its formulation as the Formula of Universal Law: “I ought never to act except in such a way that I could also will that my maxim should become a universal law” (Kant 2004, 15).

The reason why this law is the law of the free will is because the content of the Formula of Universal Law is essentially “empty”: all that the free will must do is choose a law. The condition that the free will must have a law might appear to be a constraint on its freedom, but because it must have *some* law by its very nature as practical reason, it is not. Therefore, the Formula of the Universal Law is indeed the law of the free will, and it tells the free will only one thing: that it must choose a law. The only constraint – which, as I just explained, is not really a constraint at all – is that the law must *be a law*. Nothing determines what that law must be. It simply describes what a free will must do in order to be what it is – it must choose a maxim it can regard as law (Korsgaard 1996, 98).

We began this inquiry by posing the normative question: what is it that justifies the pull which normative claims have on us? What is the source of normativity? This question led Korsgaard to analyse three prominent views which claimed to answer this question: voluntarism, realism, and reflective endorsement. We found that all three were insufficient as answers, though we found that the recognition of our essentially reflective nature seemed to point in the direction of an answer. In particular, there is something powerful about our ability to reflect on and endorse our desires – the reflectivity explains our need for reasons and the endorsement displays a kind of authority we have over ourselves. Still, we fell victim to the problems of realism and voluntarism, because we could not justify the endorsement of a particular desire – not on its own, anyway. Something was missing, and we found it when we considered Kant’s freedom-based formulation of the problem of self-reflection: the Formula of the Universal Law. Being a law of a free will, and the free will being by its very nature reflective on and demanding of reasons for action for itself, the Formula of the Universal Law tells us that we must in fact be a law unto ourselves. The very thing which creates the problem of normativity, that is, the reflective structure of human consciousness, provides its solution: our own autonomy the source of normativity and, in particular, the source of obligation (Korsgaard 1996, 104).

At this point, Korsgaard makes a distinction which Kant does not make, namely one between the Formula of the Universal Law (which she now refers to as the “categorical imperative”) and the Formula of Humanity (which she now refers to as the “moral law”). Recall the moral law: “So act that you use humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of any other, always at the same time as an end, never merely as a means” (Kant 2004, 38). It is the law of the Kingdom of Ends; it tells us to act only on those maxims that all rational beings could agree to act on together. The categorical imperative does not tell us the “domain” over which it should run for each choice of a law, that is, its duration or the degree to which it . For example, imagine what our behaviour would be like if we choose the law to be “act on the desire of the moment” – then, every desire we have would constitute a reason for action. Now, Korsgaard points out that if the domain over which the categorical imperative runs is all rational beings, we get the moral law. So, the moral law is a special case of the categorical imperative: it tells us that our maxims must be able to be considered as laws for the Kingdom of Ends.

Now, the “empty formalism” of the categorical imperative is, according to Korsgaard, not so empty, and not so formal (Korsgaard 1996, 99). She points out that the

reflective structure of the mind forces us to have a conception of ourselves, just as it forces us to distance ourselves from our desires and question them. This is noticeable when we deliberate: there is something “over and above” every desire we have, “something which is *you*, and which *chooses* which desire to act on”. Combining this with our understanding of the categorical imperative, we find that “the principle or law by which you determine your actions is one that you regard as being expressive of yourself. To identify with such a principle of way of choosing is to be... a law to yourself” (Korsgaard 1996, 100).

This conception, which Korsgaard calls *practical identity*, is “a description under which you value yourself, a description under which you find your life to be worth living and your actions to be worth undertaking”. One’s practical identity is complex as it is determined by the various elements of one’s conception of oneself. We have conceptions of our *identity as* a human being, a man or a woman, an adherent of a certain religion, or a member of a certain profession, among many other things. Korsgaard claims that these different identities “give rise to reasons and obligations”, more specifically, “your reasons express your identity, your nature; your obligations spring from what that identity forbids” (Korsgaard 1996, 101). This is easiest to see when we consider specific roles we take on. For example, if I am a doctor, I am obliged to respect patient confidentiality and the normativity is actually “built right into” the role (Korsgaard 1996, 101). Korsgaard brings in the notion of integrity here to explain what is so significant about preserving or respecting our practical identity – in order to *be* something, we must have integrity. If we lose our integrity by violating our obligations, we lose our identity. We stop being who we are. To a greater or lesser extent, we lose that conception of ourselves under which we valued ourselves and stop living that life which we found to be worth living. Korsgaard explains,

When an action cannot be performed without loss of some fundamental part of one's identity, and an agent could just as well be dead, then the obligation not to do it is unconditional and complete. If reasons arise from reflective endorsement, then obligation arises from reflective rejection... An obligation always takes the form of a reaction against a threat of a loss of identity (Korsgaard 1996, 102)

So far, we have established a very promising source of normativity in the sense that it seems like it is flexible enough to give rise to obligations related to all normative categories, including the charientic. However, we do not have charientic reasons or obligations just yet. We need to establish that autonomy is appropriate as a source of charientic reasons, which shall be done next.

4.3. Grounding charientic reasons and obligations

In this part of the chapter, I explain how Korsgaard's account of normativity gives rise to charientic obligations. Objections to this argument and to Kant and Korsgaard's theories are given in Chapter 5 with my responses.

In the previous chapter, I suggested that Korsgaard's theory of normativity can be generalised from morality to other areas of human value, that is, to non-moral *proper normative categories*, such as the charientic. This generalised version is what Korsgaard calls a unified theory of normativity. Korsgaard explains that while she does not argue for a unified account of normativity in her book, she believes that it is possible to construct one from her theory, and that it "will show up" through the course of her arguments (Korsgaard 1996, 21). Recall also that Korsgaard claims that it would be contrary to her claims to suggest that *all* obligations are moral (Korsgaard 1996, 91). The fact that Korsgaard thought this point was important enough to mention suggests that she had anticipated the possibility for her normative theory to give rise to non-moral obligations. These two statements suggest the applicability of her normative theory to non-moral normative categories, such as the charientic. Here, I intend to argue that such an account does indeed explain the existence of charientic obligations. I also address an objection to my argument for this claim, namely, that moral concepts are typically received as the only kinds which have sufficient "normative strength" to be meaningfully related to the concept of obligation.

Korsgaard acknowledges potential difficulties regarding a unified theory of obligation, that is, a general theory of obligation which justifies not only the source of moral obligation but also non-moral obligation, such as aesthetic or charientic obligation. Normativity is multifaceted concept in the sense that there are interdependent normative concepts like "obligation, rightness, goodness, meaning, knowledge, beauty, and virtue", but it seems that there is only a subset of such concepts in relation to which the concept of obligation has any meaning or makes sense. It seems like morality is the only kind of human value with which the concept of obligation can be used without diluting the very meaning or the practical import of the concept.

Other forms of value seem to be less conceptually and practically tied to the concept of obligation. Korsgaard writes: "Obligation, the most obtrusively normative of these concepts, seems sternly to command; while beauty only to attract and meaning

perhaps to suggest” (Korsgaard 1996, 19-20). There is a spectrum of “normative strength” which all normative concepts can be placed on, where the concept of obligation is probably the strongest, and only other “strong” normative concepts can be conceived of in terms of obligation. Typically, these strong normative concepts are the moral ones. In other words, there is some sense in which to use the terms “strong” and “weak” to classify normative categories which relates to the inclusion of the concept of obligation into their collection of concepts and terms. Typically, then, morality would be seen as a (usually *the*) “strong” normative category and non-moral normative categories as “weak”. Figuring out where the division between the “strong”, which may be rightly associated to obligation; and “weak” concepts, which may not be rightly associated to obligation, is a difficult problem.

It is more easily accepted that there exist moral obligations than aesthetic ones, for example, and much less for prudential, economic, or indeed charientic ones; this can be seen by a brief survey of what moral philosophers even concern themselves with (usually the moral), while the possibility of aesthetic obligations, and even aesthetic reasoning itself (see, e.g., (Sibley 1969, 445)), for example is viewed with suspicion. The main reason such obligations are viewed with suspicion is that they are reducible to moral obligation or moral norms (see e.g., (Kubala, 2020) for a discussion about this). There seems to be a conflict in consensus on the existence of aesthetic obligations. Press speaks of how “we tend to detach aesthetic experience from other powers and interests and are reluctant to accord it to the seriousness of... moral conviction” on the one hand, while on the other hand, we feel in aesthetic matters the existence of “an ‘ought’ comparable to the ‘ought’ of moral obligation” when we, for example, say that “one ought to go to the exhibit... and look hard at the Cézannes, and prefer them to Dufys... and for no specifically moral reason” (Press, 552). Since philosophers have taken an interest in this relationship which we have to the aesthetic, there are a good number of papers on the subject of defending the existence of aesthetic obligations. However, to my knowledge no such paper has been written defending the existence of charientic (or “charientic-like”) obligations; and the existence of prudential reasons has even been attacked (see (Worsnip 2018)), never mind charientic obligations. What I am trying to get across here is that there is some property of morality which we do not so easily see in other areas of value, and this property is somehow related to the fact that we typically only conceive of, or care about, moral obligations. I believe that this tendency is misguided; in particular, I believe that we do have non-moral obligations – and that the reason we often do not perceive, consider, or

care about such obligations is because of the (incorrect) assumption that because morality is the “most important”, and more specifically, that the others are not important really at all. However, under Korsgaard’s theory of normativity, specifically the importance of practical identity in determining normative reasons, there is grounds for the claim that non-moral normative categories are in fact “important” and that we can indeed have normative reasons and even obligations which are non-moral. Her account allows for obligations to legitimately arise from normative categories of varying “normative strength”; of course, this is because for her account, the normativity is to be located in practical identity. So, Korsgaard’s account is a good candidate for a theory of normativity which will help show the existence of charientic obligations.

The foundations of a unified account of normativity show up in Korsgaard’s work primarily from the concept of practical identity. Korsgaard argues that obligations (in general) arise from considerations of one’s practical identity, in particular, they constitute a rejection of something which threatens your practical identity (Korsgaard 1996, 150). I therefore focus on showing that charientic conduct can infringe on a person’s identity. If we consider basic examples of charientic conduct and recall the kinds of attitudes associated to charientic (dis)approval, it almost looks like instances of conflict between one’s practical identity and this conduct would merely result in annoyance, akin to the annoyance Glassen mentions when we have to put up with someone whom we express charientic disapproval towards. However, there are other possibilities for conflict which have much more serious implications for the agent’s practical identity.

Let us consider a class of reasons which are good candidates for charientic reasons. Consider subcultures in the UK during the 1970s or 1980s, such as punks, mods and skinheads. A punk or a skinhead would reject the formality and politeness of British culture on the grounds that it threatens their identity as a member of that subculture; they would not engage in English pleasantries, dress in the accepted style of the time, or go to a wine bar. This might be seen as adherence to a moral principle, such as rejecting the moral corruption of the wider society. However, many subcultures in reality have no specifically moral basis; consider, for example, mods and rockers in the UK (c. 1960s/70s) – they had no specific moral message to display to the world or each other. Their being mods or rockers was based on their enjoyment of a particular *style* which they incorporated as *part of their identity* as a member of that subculture. And as a result of this, they make decisions based on purely charientic matters. In other words, they have charientic reasons. They are

charientic because, for example, their taste and their outward expression of that taste is involved. An inclination to avoid wine bars, specifically *because* of the snobbishness associated to them, is a wholly charientic matter. These examples also constitute reflective rejections based on one's practical identity, for being a member of a subculture surely constitutes a part of a person's practical identity. For the punk to go into the wine bar would be a complete diminishment of his identity as a punk – it would defeat the very meaning of punk and therefore comprise his own integrity. Thus, we have here a class of reasons which are charientic and are made on the basis of a threat against the agent's identity. These, to me, look like a good example of a charientic obligation under Korsgaard's account.

5. Objections to Korsgaard and Kant

In this chapter, I discuss and respond to possible objections to my account as well as objections regarding fundamental aspects of Kantian and Korsgaardian moral theory.

5.1. The implausible subjectivity of practical identity

One substantial objection which may be made against Korsgaard's theory, particularly the application of practical identity, is that it produces an implausibly subjective account of normativity. Korsgaard's account, as understood so far, runs the very real risk of being too close to ethical egoism: to do what is consistent with your practical identity (which is entirely subjective) is what you *should* do. It is not far off from ethical egoism; it is egoism with integrity.

However, Korsgaard sees this worry and elaborates on an important concept which dissolves this problem—the Kingdom of Ends. Acting consistently with our practical identity does not simply involve doing whatever we wish as long as it maintains our integrity as a brother, a husband, a worker, a member of this subculture, or an adherent of that religion. It also involves acting with integrity as a member of the Kingdom of Ends. Korsgaard's interpretation requires the adherence to the Kingdom of Ends and so the way in which the categorical imperative moulds itself around our practical identity also has constraints in that we are also recognising ourselves and others as members of the Kingdom of Ends (Korsgaard 1996, 100). Korsgaard explains:

But this reason for conforming to your particular practical identities is not a reason that springs from one of those particular practical identities. It is a reason that springs from your humanity itself, from

your identity simply as a human being, a reflective animal who needs reasons to act and to live. And so it is a reason you have only if you treat your humanity as a practical, normative, form of identity, that is, if you value yourself as a human being. (Korsgaard, 1996, 121)

I believe this additional detail resolves the worry that Korsgaard's theory reduces to a kind of "egoism with integrity" because it specifies in greater detail what it means to act consistently with our practical identity in a way that maintains the essence of Kantian ethics. Because we have to act consistently with our practical identity *as a Citizen of the Kingdom of Ends*, to which every other human being is a member, we have already "built in" to the condition of consistency with our practical identity the notion that we must act in a way which respects the humanity of others as well as ourselves.

5.2. Self-legislation

Here, I discuss and respond to one important objection to Kantian ethics which follows into Korsgaard's theory or normativity, and which therefore must have a response for my arguments to constitute a proper defence of the claim that there exists charitable obligations. This objection regards the Kantian moral concept of self-legislation. Voluntarism, as discussed in the Chapter 5 of the thesis, is the view that obligations can only arise from a genuine superior legislator. The typical candidate for this legislator is a divine entity. Rather than accept this view, Kant tried to derive the truth about morality from pure reason alone. This involved proposing that every human being can self-legislate. The idea of self-legislation is controversial but it is a very interesting problem, and so I want to provide my own defence of this idea, in turn defending Kant and Korsgaard's theories of ethics and normativity, respectively.

As we have seen in Chapter 4 of this thesis, Kantian moral philosophy is centred around the capacity for individual's to legislate themselves. This is defended in Korsgaard's account by way of recognising the philosophical significance of the structure of our consciousness. It is so significant that the force of normative claims we make comes from humanity itself. The notion that we self-legislate, that is, give ourselves obligations, however, is rather controversial.

For example, Anscombe immediately rejected Kant's notion of self-legislation in her 1958 paper *Modern Moral Philosophy*, claiming it to be absurd. She argues that the very concept of legislation is such that an individual cannot legislate themselves; there must be a genuine moral superior, a sovereign, to legislate (Anscombe

1958, 13). Agam-Segal in his 2013 essay *Is Self-Legislation Possible?* clarified the specific problem of self-legislation from Anscombe's point of view and concluded that self-legislation requires a kind of "splitting the self". The idea of splitting the self is not so uncommon and there are many ways in which a kind of split is recognised in everyday experience. For example, Korsgaard mentions the familiar claim "I couldn't live with myself if I did that" (Korsgaard 1996, 101) This is a linguistic expression which hints at the existence of two selves in (at least) the realm of practical reason. While philosophical canon tells us not to rely on linguistic conventions for our philosophical arguments, there is intuition in this convention (among others) which does indicate a reality, in my opinion. I shall now elaborate on this further, as a reply to the objection that Kantianism requires implausible splitting of the self.

Given that a genuine authority must be able to observe its inferiors in order to be able to effectively reprimand offenders, this splitting of the self must allow oneself to observe one's *voluntary* actions. However, according to Agam-Segal, it appears that this splitting only occurs in relation to involuntary action; for example, when we say things like "I found myself smoking" (Agam-Segal 2013, 11). However, this instance doesn't strike me as relating to involuntary action – while smoking is highly addictive and can cause smokers to form habits, a choice is made when one lights a cigarette and inhales. Smoking is a voluntary action. Further, I do think that we can split the self in a way which allows us to observe ourselves in our voluntary actions. Take the familiar phenomenon of feeling like you are watching yourself doing something you know you shouldn't do. You are aware of what you are doing and you are watching, as if from above, from the perspective of that part of yourself which has more agency over themselves.

I will now explain what exactly this part of yourself is. I think the way to split the self is to split the part of us that considers itself to be a Citizen of the Kingdom of Ends – the part of us which consists in our "moral identity", as Korsgaard puts it – with the part of us which relates to our other practical identities and which exists in the "here and now" (Korsgaard 1996, 121). It is the split between the part of us which acts in the external world and is subject to contingent facts of it, and the transcendental self. The part of us which identifies as a Citizen of the Kingdom of Ends exists because of the qualities of humanity itself – our self-reflective nature, and so on. This part of us is what characterises humanity – in particular, it allows us to conceive of and have values and norms at all, and therefore it must be superior when it comes to matters of practical reason.

I can defend this superior part of the self against the conditions which Pufendorf set out for a genuine superior who command us: Pufendorf claims that an obligation is bestowed upon an individual by (i) a superior, (ii) one who has the strength to inflict some injury on an offender, and (iii) one who has just cause to require us to curtail the individual's will as he sees fit (Korsgaard 1996, 25).

I have already explained that (i) is satisfied. Condition (ii) means that the transcendental self as I have described it can inflict injury on an offender. I think this is so, but not because the transcendental self has to do anything to punish the offender; rather, the transcendental self is powerful in a way that our own consciousness of it when we commit the offence consists in a sufficient punishment. In any case, people will often avoid their obligations if they can get away with it, so the ability of the "outsider" superior to punish is undermined; whereas the self will always know and therefore be able to punish as described. For condition (iii), I think it is fair to say that the self has the most just cause to restrict its own will. The transcendental self is the one who is rational – the one who reasons and represents the fundamental aspects of our humanity. One response to this could be that, if the legislator is a benevolent divine entity, then it would still have greater cause to legislate than the self. My response to this is that a truly benevolent God would bestow upon us free will, for a God who forces his command does not have true authority – he has only power.

The self, on the other hand, has genuine authority as a legislator, because we value our own desires, interests, goals, and beliefs; we care about a command we might make on ourselves; and we can understand and identify with it. To reference morality in particular, morality is rather meaningless if the individual who acts morally hates that he does, and would rather act according to a different set of rules. Korsgaard understands this idea. She says of the occasional difficulties in maintaining one's integrity, "This is why it is best if we love our values as well as having them" (Korsgaard 1996, 103) The relation between the transcendental self and the "here and now" self is one of authority, not power, and that authority, Korsgaard says is the true source of obligation (Korsgaard 1996, 104).

6. Conclusion

The aim of this thesis was to defend and develop Peter Glassen's arguments that charientic judgements are properly evaluative judgements distinct from other universally recognised sorts of evaluative judgements, such as moral, aesthetic, prudential and economic ones; as well as explain the existence of charientic obligations. In the introductory chapter, the background and aims of this thesis were outlined. In Chapter 2, the details of Glassen's paper were discussed and the concept of the charientic was clarified.

In Chapter 3, I defended and expanded Glassen's arguments that charientic judgements are distinct properly evaluative judgements. In Chapter 4, I argued that there exist charientic obligations using Korsgaard's interpretation of Kantian normativity. I believe that arguing for this claim and giving it a solid grounding with philosophical argument is important because it means that charientics should therefore be of interest to moral philosophers and receive more scholarly attention. In particular, this finding draws attention to charientic conduct in everyday life and enriches the study of human behaviour and value. In this chapter I also addressed an objection to my argument, namely, that moral concepts are typically received as the only kinds which have sufficient "normative strength" to be meaningfully related to the concept of obligation. I responded to this by explaining that the same "hierarchy" of normative concepts in terms of strength does not exist in Korsgaard's normative theory.

In Chapter 5, I discussed and responded to objections to the arguments of Kant and Korsgaard. For Kant's, I addressed the objection put forth by Anscombe regarding self-legislation. I addressed this objection by arguing that the splitting of the self which is necessary to give rise to a part of the self which is sovereign can be found in the split between the transcendental self and the "here and now" self. For Korsgaard's, I addressed the objection that grounding normativity in practical identity produces an implausibly subjective account of normativity. I addressed this objection by arguing that Korsgaard's addition of the moral law and moral identity as a kind of regulator of our conduct eradicates the risk of the account being too subjective.

Of course, it is a strong claim to say that a Kantian theory of normativity is right, and even more so to say that Korsgaard's particular theory is right. Kant's ideas as well as Korsgaard's have been the subject of much controversy. So, for those that do not adhere to Korsgaard's account in particular, more work must be done to strengthen my claim that

charientic obligations exist; however, all I intended in this thesis was to provide a plausible defence, consistent with my own philosophical commitments, that such obligations exist.

One advantage of my argument is that it allows us to conceive of the existence of charientic obligations while accounting for differences between values, and in particular values regarding charientic conduct, held by different groups; for example, my argument can account for the valuing of vulgarity within certain subcultures, while also the valuing of avoiding vulgarity in general scenarios. The high degree of relativity in charientic values across different areas of society and in the obligations themselves, which seem to conflict with the very idea of an obligation, is seen not to conflict at all – the nature of the obligation actually complements this relativity, thanks to its basis in practical identity.

One possible avenue for further research regards the politics of the charientic. Glassen remarks in his paper that there is an “aura of class distinction” about the charientic virtues: the conscious acquisition of charientic virtue is often a practice reserved for the middle or upper classes, while the working class typically lack the resources to pay significant attention to such virtues. Moreover, it has been argued that vulgarity is a positive trait of the working class; see (Frost, 2016). Charientic virtue (elegance, etc.) is a political tool. It would be interesting to see an analysis of the uses of charientic virtue and vice in politics and observe what theoretical observations arise from this.

Abstract

It is a standard problem of value theory, broadly construed, to identify, classify, and analyse evaluative judgements. In 1958, Peter Glassen argued that judgements regarding vulgarity or elegance, which he calls “charientic” judgements, are (i) properly evaluative judgements; and (ii) distinct from other types of universally recognised evaluative judgements, such as moral or aesthetic ones. The goals of the current work are firstly to defend and develop these claims to establish the charientic as a proper normative category, and secondly to show, using Christine Korsgaard’s theory of normativity from her 1996 book *The Sources of Normativity*, that there exist charientic obligations. Grounding obligations in practical identity, a conception of oneself under which one finds oneself valuable, is key to establishing the existence of charientic obligations.

References

- Agam-Segal, R. (2013). Is Self-Legislation Possible?: Kantian Ethics after Anscombe, in Bacin, S., Ferrarin, A., La Rocca, C., and Ruffing, M. *Kant und die Philosophie in weltbürgerlicher Absicht: Akten des XI. Kant-Kongresses 2010*, De Gruyter, Berlin, pp. 3-14
- Alvarez, M. (2017, Winter). Reasons for Action: Justification, Motivation, Explanation. *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Retrieved March 31, 2023, from <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/reasons-just-vs-expl/>
- Anscombe, G. E. M. (1958). Modern Moral Philosophy, *Philosophy* **33**(124): 1-19
- Feinberg, J. (1987). *Offense to Others: The Moral Limits of the Criminal Law, Vol. 2*, Oxford University Press, Oxford
- Foot, P. (1972). Morality as a System of Hypothetical Imperatives, *The Philosophical Review*, **81**(3): 305-316
- Frost, A. (2016, August 25). The Necessity of Political Vulgarly. Retrieved March 14, 2023, from https://www.currentaffairs.org/2016/08/the-necessity-of-political-vulgarity?fbclid=IwAR1fBkK9Ia_GfudIL_hN4b21AZoo6KjTKo7s_xuxEfmouPGdKEuidP3Jah8
- Glassen, P. (1958). "Charientic" Judgments, *Philosophy*, **33**(125): 138-146
- Halliwell, S. (1991). The Uses of Laughter in Greek Culture, *The Classical Quarterly*, **41**(2): 279
- Hamann, B. (2012). *The Relucant Empress: A Biography of Empress Elisabeth of Austria*, Faber & Faber, London
- Kant, I., Korsgaard, C., and Gregor, M. (trans.) (ed.) (2004). *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, Cambridge Texts in the History of Philosophy, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge
- Kieran, M. (2002). On Obscenity: The Thrill and Repulsion of the Morally Prohibited, *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, **64**(2): 31-55
- Korsgaard, C. (1996). *The Sources of Normativity*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge

- Kubala, R. (2020). Aesthetic Obligations, *Philosophy Compass*, **15**(12): 1-13
- Mackie, J. L. (1990). *Ethics: Inventing Right and Wrong*, Penguin Books, London
- Nussbaum, C. (2016). *Understanding pornographic fiction: sex, violence, and self-deception*, Springer, Berlin
- Shafer-Landau, R. (2000). A Defense of Motivational Externalism, *Philosophical Studies: An International Journal for Philosophy in the Analytic Tradition*, **97**(3): 267-291
- Sibley, F. (1959). Aesthetic Concepts, *The Philosophical Review* **68**(4): 421-450
- Packer, M. (1996). The aesthetic dimension of ethics and law: Some reflections on harmless offense, *American Philosophical Quarterly*, **33**(1), 57-74
- Worsnip, A. (2018). Eliminating Prudential Reasons, in Timmons., M. T. (ed.), *Oxford Studies in Normative Ethics Volume 8*, Oxford Studies in Normative Ethics, pp. 236–257

Non-exclusive licence to reproduce the thesis and make the thesis public

I, Natasha Jade Bailie,

1. grant the University of Tartu a free permit (non-exclusive licence) to

reproduce, for the purpose of preservation, including for adding to the DSpace digital archives until the expiry of the term of copyright, my thesis

The charientic: a neglected normative category,

supervised by Francesco Orsi.

2. I grant the University of Tartu a permit to make the thesis specified in point 1 available to the public via the web environment of the University of Tartu, including via the DSpace digital archives, under the Creative Commons licence CC BY NC ND 4.0, which allows, by giving appropriate credit to the author, to reproduce, distribute the work and communicate it to the public, and prohibits the creation of derivative works and any commercial use of the work until the expiry of the term of copyright.
3. I am aware of the fact that the author retains the rights specified in points 1 and 2.
4. I confirm that granting the non-exclusive licence does not infringe other persons' intellectual property rights or rights arising from the personal data protection legislation.

Natasha Jade Bailie

22/05/2023

