1. INTRODUCTION

Ben Eggleston’s comment nicely weaves together several strands of the approach to normative ethics that informs the essays in Part II of *Facts, Values, and Norms*. I quite agree with what he says concerning how and where the strands might reinforce one another, so I will concentrate in my reply on the places he finds strains and gaps – especially his questions concerning the nature of valoric consequentialism and how it might differ from more familiar forms of consequentialism.

As mentioned in the *Précis* above, the chief aim of valoric consequentialism is to translate as directly and faithfully as possible into the domain of practical ethics what I think of as the guiding consequentialist idea: the touchstone in moral assessment is the effect of what we do and how we are on the good of all concerned. I take “good” in the broad sense that extends beyond welfare, and includes all the forms of intrinsic value realized in and through our lives. The basic evaluative category of valoric consequentialism is *fortunateness*. Roughly, the fortunateness of \( x \) – where \( x \) ranges over acts, motives, experiences, practices, act-tendencies, etc. – is a function of how much \( x \) contributes to the overall good of those affected; \( x \) is more fortunate than \( y \), other things equal, to the extent that \( x \) contributes more than \( y \) to this good.

2. ACT UTILITARIANISM, RULE UTILITARIANISM, MOTIVE UTILITARIANISM, AND COOPERATIVE UTILITARIANISM

Straight off we see differences between valoric consequentialism, on the one hand, and act or rule utilitarianism, on the
other. The latter are theories of moral rightness, an essentially deontic, binary notion, as applied to individual actions. Moral fortunateness is an evaluative notion, a matter of degree, and directly applicable to a wide range of moral phenomena.

Does this difference in the entry-point of consequentialist assessment into practical ethics matter? Consider: By an act-utilitarian standard, all suboptimal acts are morally wrong alike. By a rule-utilitarian standard, all acts out of compliance with an acceptance-optimal code are wrong alike. But from a valoric consequentialist perspective, a near-optimal act may be almost indistinguishable morally from an optimal one, and crucially different morally from an act far from optimality. Such differences in magnitude become especially salient when we consider an agent’s acts over time. Looking through the aperture of right and wrong, we see in the evaluative foreground the relative frequency or proportion of right acts. Yet imagine two well-disposed agents who face a similar series of choices, one of whom devotes equal energy to detail in almost every decision while the other is more selective in her attention. Over a span of time, the first, let us say, acts optimally with high consistency, but loses sight of the forest for the trees and acts quite non-optimally in a few very consequential decisions. The second acts sub-optimally much more frequently, but by focusing attention and effort on the larger choices, acts in these cases acts much closer to optimally. From the standpoint of consequentialism’s guiding idea, mere frequency of right action seems to have little significance compared with overall advancement of the good.

Similar differences arise when we consider the evaluation of practical dispositions and motives. Are the best dispositions from a consequentialist standpoint those that lead most reliably to right action? The example above suggests otherwise—selective attention might be a more fortunate practical attitude in general, despite a higher frequency of right actions. Moreover, a good deal of the value contributed by attitudes and motives to the value of an agent’s life and the lives of those around her is not a matter of action. Thus, in