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**Ethics,  
Emotion  
and the Unity  
of the Self**

**Oliver Letwin**



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OF THE SELF

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OLIVER LETWIN



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*To I.G.L.*

# Preface

This book advances various arguments about ethics, emotion and the nature of human personality. The arguments are made as briefly, as simply and as directly as I could manage, and are in ordinary English. Any reader should be able to tell quickly and easily whether or not he agrees with them.

But the book is also attempting to convey something that is not part of the direct argument and that may not be so obviously part of its intent. It is suggesting that philosophy consists of a continuing conversation, in which the ancients are still taking part as much as the moderns, and it is implying that this philosophical conversation is no more than a small fraction of a general cultural discussion which has been going on for millennia.

To emphasise the connection between my philosophical themes and general culture, I intentionally use terms drawn from art and literature to describe philosophical positions. This policy has its dangers, but it has the advantage of counteracting the misleading impression sometimes given by modern Anglo-Saxon philosophers that they have reduced philosophy to a mere racecourse for intellectual thoroughbreds. In fact, modern Anglo-Saxon philosophers have done nothing of the sort: they have played a major—though often unacknowledged and occasionally unconscious—part in the continuing cultural conversation. In this book, I am trying—by example rather than by abstract argument—to bring this fact out.

I owe considerable debts to many friends and scholars who have contributed in one way or another to the writing of the book. In particular, my thanks are due to Mr J.R. Bamborough and Professor M. Wilson who guided the PhD thesis on emotions which forms the basis of Chapter 4, and to Dr S. Letwin, Dr N. Malcolm and Dr J. Marenbon who have kindly read various drafts at various stages and have made invaluable comments. I also wish to thank the Master and Fellows of Darwin College, Cambridge, who provided me with a Fellowship and an academic home when I was much in need of both.

# 1

## The Divided Self

The contrast between romantic struggle and classical harmony is well recognised in the artistic world. Even if there are disputes at the margin, it is agreed that the romanticism of Wagner's epics, Rubens's muscular heroes and Blake's visions is fundamentally different from the classicism of a Bach fugue, a Greek sculpture, or Jane Austen's calm world of social niceties. It is not so widely recognised, but it is nevertheless true, that these same distinctions apply in philosophy. Romanticism and classicism are as discernible in philosophical attitudes as they are in artistic forms.

The hallmark of philosophical romanticism is the belief that the human condition is permanently and irremediably unsatisfactory. Everybody knows that our lives are imperfect, but the philosophical romantic goes further. Like his artistic counterpart, he takes the view that we can never be completely at home in the world because our 'true selves' are, in one way or another, compromised by the circumstances of our existence. He insists that our life involves ultimate disjunctions—between what we are and what we wish to be, between our feelings and our reason, between one aspect of our existence and another. He sees these profoundly uncomfortable disjunctions as 'the real truth about life': all pictures of life which do not include such disjunctions, he classifies as superficial images, concealing the deep tensions out of which our lives are truly constructed.

To describe a given philosopher as 'romantic' or 'classical' is, of course, to use shorthand. Few, if any, philosophers are in every respect romantics or classicists: most have some elements of each tendency, as do artists, musicians and novelists. But there are, nevertheless, marked differences of emphasis between philosophers.

Plato is the archetypal philosophical romantic. It is a commonplace that his philosophy springs from a dissatisfaction with the earthiness of our lives. He believes that our 'true selves'—our immaterial minds—are appallingly compromised by our material bodies and by the ephemeral, unreliable material world in which those bodies exist. He thinks of this materiality as something utterly disjoined from the mental, a heavy boulder which holds us back as we struggle up the hill towards the abstract, immaterial realm of truth and reality. And he believes that, in our struggle, we are faced not only with the metaphysical deficiencies of the material world but also with the moral deficiencies of our passions, which drag us away from our rational selves and divert our attention from abstract truth to material greed. He suggests, moreover, that our passions cannot ultimately be reconciled with reason; instead, our rational selves are compelled to fight unendingly against them. For Plato, we are like Michelangelo's Prisoners, caught endlessly in our stony, material, passionate selves, constantly trying to liberate our true, mental, rational selves and never succeeding. Our failure does not arise from a lack of skill: it arises because our earthiness and our passionate desires are aspects of ourselves rather than external forces; in struggling against them, we are struggling against ourselves. No amount of skill could liberate us from that struggle.

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Kant, the greatest philosophical romantic of modern times, presents the Platonic disjunction between pure reason and irrational passion in an even more acute form. He sees reason as a unifying, harmonising force, leading all rational beings to the same, true and morally correct conclusion. Passion he sees as utterly disjoined from and opposed to reason—a force leading us immorally to prefer ourselves and to oppose others. He therefore insists that we have a moral duty to ignore our passions: to ignore, in other words, all those psychological features of ourselves which in any way distinguish us from one another. This is, perhaps, the most poignant of all forms of philosophical romanticism: the self at odds not merely with itself but with the fact of its own individuality.

Interesting variants of philosophical romanticism are also provided by Hobbes and Burke. Hobbes's romanticism takes the form of belief in an unending struggle between the forces of order and the forces of chaos which pose a constant threat of breakdown of authority, under which it would become rational for us to fight each other like dogs. For Burke, the struggle is of a different kind: it is between our higher feelings guiding us towards the ends ordained by the Almighty, and our puny reason, constantly inclined to destroy the fabric of tradition and civilisation by claiming for itself the right to remake the world from first principles. These are important kinds of philosophical romanticism because, perhaps more clearly than either Plato or Kant, they locate the disjunction and the tension not merely within the individual, but within society at large: the individual, being torn between acceptance of authority and assertion of independence, or between divinely guided feelings and presumptuous reason, risks not only the disruption of his own internal peacefulness, but also the disruption of social peace and civilisation itself.

Freud, too, is a full-blooded romantic: one whose romanticism consists in the assertion that there is an ultimate disjunction not within the individual or within society but between the individual and society. He represents our lives as a constant tension between the ethical code instilled into us by society and the ever-unsatisfied demands of our own libido. As with all romantics, Freud sees no method of overcoming this tension: both the ethical code and the libido are fundamental aspects of the self which are irreconcilably opposed to one another. Indeed, Freud regards our entire lives as constructed out of a fragile artifice, designed to deal with this inevitable tension. He traces emotions such as fear to the adult's need for protection against unsatisfied libido. The infant finds that when his mother goes away he is left 'helpless in the face of constantly increasing instinctual demand' (*Inhibitions, symptoms and anxiety*, trans. J. Strachey, London, 1971, p. 54). The grown man recreates this infantile dread for himself in the 'mitigated form' (*ibid.*, p. 80) of emotional fear which throughout his life acts as a signal for him to avoid any social situation in which the demands of his libido will not be fulfilled. Such fear is unpleasant, but it is less disastrous than the total breakdown of our personalities, which would otherwise threaten constantly to occur.

This Sisyphean pessimism—common to Plato, Kant, Hobbes, Burke and Freud—distinguishes the philosophical romantics from the philosophical classicists. The classicists, like their artistic counterparts, are calmly optimistic. They deny that there is an inevitable struggle between the self and itself, and do not despair of achieving a fundamental reconciliation between the various demands of human existence. They accept all aspects of our existence as having a constructive part to play once properly moulded and mellowed.

Aristotle is, in this sense, a philosophical classicist. Unlike Kant, he recognises the material world as something existing in its own right; unlike Plato, he does not see any ultimate irreconcilability between this material world and the world of abstraction. Indeed, he regards the material and the abstract as one world seen from two points of view. Similarly, he represents mind and body not as irreconcilably opposed forms of entity, but as different aspects of a unified human being. He sees passions not as an irrational force pitted constantly against rationality, but as themselves involving reason, and hence as something ultimately reconcilable with rationality. And he understands morality not as a pure maiden sullied by contact with the rest of life, but as one part of a whole life—a part that, like all other parts, has its proper place in the world.

The prime modern classicist is Hegel. Like Aristotle, he believes that everything in the world has a place and that everything is ultimately reconcilable with everything else. The only question is how to allot each thing to its proper place in the great universal pattern. There is no hint of a fundamental disjunction between reason and irrational passion. Instead, all aspects of the world, including the desires, are held to be permeated by rationality. Hegel regards the world not as a battlefield of disjointed elements, but as a canvas on which a single, consistent picture is gradually being painted.

Of the philosophical classicists between Aristotle and Hegel, Aquinas is probably the greatest. His insistence on the possibility of a fundamental alignment between earthly and spiritual demands, and upon the possibility of an orderly progress towards that alignment, leads to a classical form of religion in which human desire of an everyday, ordinary sort plays its part in fulfilling God's designs. The hallmark of this classical theology is its belief that those aspects of human life which give men a potential for evil can be brought into harmony with the good; conquest is not needed, because there is no ultimate disjunction; an orderly re-direction of the personality can be achieved.

Locke, too, is notably classical, achieving an epistemological reconciliation of the material and the abstract world by locating the origin of abstract knowledge in the material world rather than in a separate Platonic realm, and asserting a fundamental alignment between human life and divine law. Indeed, the contrast between Locke and Hobbes is—together with the contrasts between Aristotle and Plato, and between Hegel and Kant—one of the three great set-piece encounters of romanticism and classicism in the history of philosophy.

The use of the terms 'romantic' and 'classical' in this context, and the drawing of an explicit analogy between artistic forms and philosophical attitudes, may perhaps be taken to suggest that philosophy is itself an art rather than a science, a subject in which propositions are not naively true or false. But this is by no means what I intend to suggest. The fact that there have been both romantics and classicists amongst philosophers does not indicate that each attitude is as valid as the other. No doubt the romantics, with their picture of the human predicament as an unending tension in which we are divided against ourselves, have something to offer; but Ptolemy had something to offer astronomy, and the Whig historians had something to offer history. The philosophical romantics are interesting and important, but their romanticism is wrong.

In recent years, modern Anglo-Saxon philosophers have helped to illustrate one aspect of that wrongness by indicating the connections between the mind and the body. Instead of assuming that a mind is a special kind of thing disjointed from the body, modern Anglo-Saxon philosophers have studiously broken down mental life into its component parts and

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have found links between mental attributes and bodily occurrences. Slowly but surely, the intrinsic connections between the mental and the physical have been explored, until at last the notion of a mind as an entity separate from the body has come to be deeply questioned. But this has not led to crude materialism or crude behaviourism. Modern Anglo-Saxon philosophers have not dismissed important features of our mental life such as intentions and sensations as mere physical occurrences or mere behavioural phenomena: it has been recognised that one feature of an intention or a sensation is the subject's direct awareness of his own state of mind. This recognition has led to an investigation of the nature of such special awareness—what it is and how it comes about. And in the course of that investigation, the interpenetration of mind and body has become even more apparent. Instead of the romantic disjunction between two selves, an ethereal mental ghost and a physical machine, the modern Anglo-Saxon philosophers now present us with a picture of a human being as a self whose mental and physical aspects are intrinsically connected with one another.

The belated recognition that body and mind are aspects of a single self may not be permanent: some new romantic thesis may well spring up, persuading philosophers once again to misconceive the bodily and the mental as two disjoined selves in tension with one another. But whatever may happen in this regard, other romantic misconceptions about the nature of our lives seem destined to survive unless they are firmly banished. Philosophers, and many people who are not philosophers, are likely to go on subscribing to the myth which lies at the heart of romanticism: the myth that there is, within us, a higher, purer, nobler, truer self disjoined from (and inevitably battling for pride of place against) a lower, less pure, meaner, less true self. This central romantic notion will doubtless recur, as it has already occurred, in a bewildering variety of forms. In this book, I am concerned with three such variants: first, the thesis that there is a hierarchy of activities, ranging from 'high' activities like poetry and philosophy (which a higher self within us pursues) to 'low' activities like football and sex (which a lower self within us pursues); secondly, the thesis that there is within us a moral self, subscribing to and maintaining moral values, necessarily disjoined from and in tension with an amoral self that subscribes to worldly, non-moral values; and thirdly, the thesis that there is within us a purely rational self, necessarily disjoined from and in tension with a passionate self.

The first of these three theses was, in effect, promulgated by Plato and has had an influence so profound that almost all of us have a tendency to accept it without question; the second is maintained by most modern philosophers, many of whom regard it as obviously true; the third, which held sway for centuries, is now increasingly questioned by philosophers but is still widely accepted outside philosophy faculties. All three theses are wrong and dangerous.

## 2

# High Activities and Low Activities

John Stuart Mill was a utilitarian, born and bred; but when he came to write his defence of utilitarianism, there was one aspect of the doctrine that he could not accept. He could not stomach the suggestion that the pleasures of push-pin are equivalent to the pleasures of poetry. Indeed, he denied that such a suggestion had ever been made. He maintained that every utilitarian theorist had assigned 'to the pleasures of the intellect, of the feelings and imagination, and of the moral sentiments a much higher value as pleasures than to those of mere sensation' (*Utilitarianism*, II). He discussed in detail the difference between 'higher' and 'lower' pleasures, and he unashamedly declared the intrinsic superiority of the higher.

Mill's attempt to distinguish the higher from the lower was not an eccentric excursion into intellectual snobbism. Ever since the time of Plato, Western European culture has been infected with the idea that some pleasures and pursuits are 'higher' than others. Different items have taken different places in the hierarchy from time to time, but the notion that there *is* a hierarchy has persisted, and it still persists today. We may no longer play push-pin, but we do play football, and poetry is commonly regarded as something 'higher' than football.

This conception of a hierarchy of pursuits permeates our moral and social life. Polytechnics try to turn themselves into universities because their staffs fondly imagine that 'pure' academic research is a 'higher' thing than the study of bridge-building and business management. Mothers cry over children who could have become impoverished and second-rate physicists and who opt instead to be rich and effective scrap merchants. Of course, these conceptions are not universally shared. Jane Austen does not put farmers below intellectuals or, indeed, any pursuit intrinsically above or below another. But the Jane Austens are few and far between. The celebrants of hierarchy are much more numerous, and not only amongst those who consider their own pursuits to be superior: many people, at least in 'polite' society, who are themselves consistently engaged in mundane activities, regard these as 'lower' than the ethereal pursuits of their academic and artistic counterparts. Even those who attend the Tottenham v. Arsenal match may ruefully admit that they are engaged in a lower pursuit than those who spend their Saturday afternoons ensconced in Shakespeare and Eliot.

How has this notion of a hierarchy of pursuits come to be accepted? Can it be justified? Are there any intellectually respectable grounds for asserting that poetry is 'higher' than football?

Mill himself provided an argument. He maintained that:

On a question which is the best worth having of two pleasures, or which of two modes of existence is the most grateful to the feelings, apart from its moral attributes and its

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consequences, the judgement of those who are qualified by knowledge of both, or, if they differ, that of the majority among them, must be admitted as final. (*Utilitarianism*, II)

In other words, the place of a given pursuit or pleasure in the hierarchy of pursuits and pleasures is determined by the majority verdict of those who have experienced both it and the other pursuits or pleasures with which it is being compared.

This argument is clearly insufficient to establish the superiority of poetry over football. It is undoubtedly true that some people who are acquainted with both poetry and football prefer poetry. But it is not by any means true that the majority do so. Indeed, since most people have some acquaintance with both, and since many more people play or watch football than write or read poetry, it seems likely that the ‘majority verdict’ of the *cognoscenti* would result in a victory for football rather than for poetry. Of course, one could rig the verdict by insisting that only those who are professional poets are truly acquainted with poetry, while anyone who has ever seen a football match is acquainted with football; in that case, the majority of those ‘competent to judge each’ would certainly favour poetry. However, one could perform exactly the same trick in reverse, maintaining that anyone who had ever read a line of poetry was sufficiently expert in that field, whereas only the professional footballer was competent to judge that sport—in which case, football would clearly receive a thumping majority.

The truth is that no one knows either how to construct a fair comparison, or what the result of any fair comparison would be; nor does it matter. Those who believe that poetry is a ‘higher’ form of activity than football certainly have not come to their opinion as a result of deed polls amongst the experts. Nor should they have done: this is not a practical decision to be taken by a group, where individuals each have a right to a say and a majority verdict is therefore a useful device. On the contrary, the existence or otherwise of a hierarchy of pursuits is a matter of truth or falsehood: there either is or is not such a hierarchy. The ‘majority view’ is no more important in this case than it is in deciding between the validity of two mathematical or historical arguments.

What other, more convincing, argument can be produced for the existence of a hierarchy of pursuits? Is poetry *morally* superior to football? The answer must surely be that it is not. No doubt, some poets and readers of poetry are morally better than some footballers and football spectators. But there is no evidence that this is either the normal case or intrinsically related to the nature of the activities. It is certainly possible for poets to be morally bad and for footballers to be morally good.

Clearly, both football and poetry are in themselves morally neutral. Perhaps, in one sense, all activities are morally neutral: even killing can have good effects and be committed with noble motives. But poetry and football are more thoroughly neutral than this. Killing a human being is, *prima facie*, morally wrong; playing or watching football is not. Putting one’s life at risk to save a drowning man is, *prima facie*, morally noble; reading or writing poetry is not: writing poetry can involve any number of moral evils, from plagiarism to sarcasm; reading poetry can be an excuse for not helping with the housework and for many other forms of indifference to the concerns of those around one. True, football does not have any *prima facie* moral advantage over poetry; but neither does poetry over football.

Nor is poetry put above football by its moral *effects*. Certainly, football can corrupt crowds, but poetry can corrupt nations: Plato may have been wrong to banish the poets

from his Republic, but one can understand why he might have thought it morally necessary to do so. Of course, football can destroy the moral integrity of those who play it, by turning them into brutes. But poetry can destroy the moral integrity of those who write it, by turning them into helpless day-dreamers or frustrated failures.

Another sign of the moral equivalence between poetry and football is that both are supererogatory. There is nothing morally wrong with someone who neglects to play or watch football; such failure is quite unlike a refusal to help an aged relative in need. But the same is true of poetry: we do not regard someone as morally inferior because they lack poetical interest. Of course, it would be morally wrong for someone to prevent others from engaging in poetic pursuits without good cause; but it would be equally wrong to impose arbitrary bans on football.

In short, the hierarchy of pursuits cannot be a moral hierarchy.

Could the hierarchy be aesthetic? At first sight, this seems a much more plausible hypothesis. Isn't great poetry far more beautiful than football could ever be?

But, on closer inspection, the hierarchy turns out to be no more justified in aesthetic than in moral terms. No doubt, the poets and poetry readers would maintain that great poetry is more beautiful than great football. But would even they argue that bad poetry is more beautiful than great football? Does not bad poetry, indeed, appear even more ugly to the poet than bad football? 'Lilies that fester smell far worse than weeds.' And might not the aesthetically-minded football devotee take exactly the opposite view, regarding the best football as far more beautiful than the best poetry?

If one were asked to say whether, rank for rank, poetry is more beautiful than football, or vice versa, one would be hard-pressed to give a sensible answer. One does not have to be a genre theorist in aesthetics to believe that rankings of beauty between fundamentally different modes of art, let alone between art and non-art, are extraordinarily difficult to make and extraordinarily open to doubt.

The real difference here is not that football is more or less beautiful than poetry, but that poetry aims at beauty, whereas football does not. And this gives us no reason for classing poetry as a 'higher' activity than football. Philosophy, mathematics and religion also aim at things other than beauty. But no one would say that they are, on that account, 'lower' than poetry. True, their principal aims—truth, knowledge, spiritual awareness and moral illumination—are traditionally regarded as 'higher' than the aim of football, which is merely to play well and to win the game. But to impute a higher value to a pursuit because of its intrinsic aim is to indulge in the form of teleological heresy that Herbert decried when he wrote about the motives that make 'drudgery divine'. The fact that a given aim is intrinsic to an activity does not by any means guarantee that this aim will in fact be achieved. Who is to say whether moral and spiritual illumination have more frequently been achieved through prayer than through cricket? Who is to say whether truth has more frequently been ascertained on purpose than by accident?

If one ranks an activity according to the aims intrinsic to it, and ignores the extrinsic aims brought to the activity by those who engage in it, one ends up in a muddle that can be morally damaging. The artist who maintains that his art is worth more than cooking, because its intrinsic aim is to create beauty rather than merely to feed the body, is all too likely to leave his wife in the kitchen day and night while he gets on with far more congenial

tasks. If she, out of love for him combined with a strong sense of moral duty and advanced culinary skills, creates the most delicious soufflés for the family, while he produces one bad canvas after another, the judgement that he is engaged in a higher or more worthwhile pursuit, because its intrinsic aim is higher, seems perverse.

A further argument often advanced on behalf of the alleged superiority of poetry is its ‘permanence’. Often enough, the so-called lower activities are castigated for their ephemerality and contrasted with the permanent attributes of the so-called higher category. The accumulation of wealth, the cultivation of bodily beauty and physical skill are said to have short-lived results; whereas a concentration on music, poetry, fine art and pure mathematics is said to yield lasting, indeed eternal, benefits. From time to time, this thesis has attained the status of a religious creed, and it has been used to justify extreme religious hostility towards all ‘mundane’ and ‘physical’ activity.

The intellectual deficiencies of this argument are glaring. True, a Shakespeare sonnet, once published widely, discussed in learned terms and memorised by a million schoolboys may live longer in the memory than an FA Cup Final. But there are incalculable numbers of poems that have been forgotten, indeed entirely obliterated from record, in a far shorter space of time than it takes to forget a memorable football match. No doubt, many poets like to delude themselves that their products will be everlasting; and footballers are perhaps less prone to this form of self-congratulation. But there is neither any empirical evidence for supposing, nor any a priori reason to suppose, that the ‘higher’ activities are intrinsically longer-lasting than the ‘lower’ form.

The permanence of the ‘higher’ activities is sometimes said to lie not in their results but in the capacities which give rise to them. Intellectuals are particularly prone to regard the cultivation of the intellect as something which will put a person in good stead throughout his life, whereas the cultivation of footballing skill cannot last much beyond middle age. It is comforting for the poet and the historian to imagine that they will be able to do their poetry long after the tennis superstars have lapsed into infirmity. But this argument is based on a highly selective reading of the facts. The sad truth is that the capacities for the higher activities are not intrinsically more stable or permanent than those for the lower. True, poets traditionally have a longer span than footballers; but mathematicians and ballerinas do far worse in this respect than money-makers and street-sweepers. True, a tennis player can be destroyed by an attack of polio; but a historian can have his talents swept clean away by a car accident or a stroke. Like everything else in human life, the capacities for ‘higher’ activities are, so far from being permanent or eternal, ephemeral and constantly unstable.

Nor does the pursuit of the ‘higher’ activities intrinsically enable a person to withstand the winds of fortune with greater fortitude. Boethius’ philosophy may have consoled him in his extreme duress, but Dylan Thomas’s poetry left him a prey to drink, misery and early death. Stoicism and fortitude are moral qualities which do indeed lend a certain permanence to life; but they have nothing whatsoever to do with the choice between ‘lower’ and ‘higher’ activities. Some of those whose lives seem most to be founded upon rock are engaged in absolutely everyday occupations; whereas many of those engaged in artistic and intellectual pursuits are redirected by every wind that blows.

The one remaining argument for the relative permanence of the ‘higher’ activities is Plato’s. He attributes greater permanence not to the activities themselves, nor to the

capacities which give rise to them, nor to the results they produce, nor to the moral attitudes they engender, but rather to the objects with which they are concerned. The intellect, according to Plato's account, focuses on the unchanging realities; whereas mundane activity consists of engaging with the changeable phenomena of earthly existence: concepts outlive physical movements. This is ostensibly a more powerful argument than any of the others, because its premiss is undoubtedly true: concepts *do* outlive physical movements. But why should a preoccupation with longer-lived objects make an activity intrinsically superior? Almost nothing passes faster than a human emotion, but we do not consider a preoccupation with the emotional state of others inferior. Rocks last longer than political events; but we do not regard geology as intrinsically more worthwhile than the study of political history. Certain kinds of tree outlive cathedrals; but we do not think of botany as superior to architecture. A Platonist, who believes that only the eternal is real and that concepts are eternal, does, indeed, have reason to put theorising above practical activity—since, in his view, the one is dealing with truth and the other with mere illusion. But for the rest of us, who cannot see that the physical world is any less real than the conceptual world, there is no reason to have such a preference. If atoms are as real as numbers, the nuclear physicist need not rank himself any lower than the mathematician on account of the shorter life-span of his objects: nor do most of us rank him lower. Why, then, should the poet's long-lived concepts out-rank the footballer's momentary agility?

Can the hierarchy of pursuits be established on some other basis? Are the 'higher' pursuits more difficult, more complex, more important in the effects that they have upon the world, more likely to enlarge the personalities of those engaged in them or more beneficial to mankind in general?

The answer to all of these questions must surely be: no.

It is manifestly nonsensical to assert that poetry is 'more difficult' than football. True, someone who is tall, well-built, physically co-ordinated and athletically fit, but dyslexic, rhythmically deaf, and completely uneducated, will find football a great deal easier than poetry. But a frail consumptive, who is physically ill-co-ordinated and cowardly, and who has a natural gift both for diction and rhythm, will find poetry a great deal easier than football. There is no way of knowing whether, on average, poets would be better at football than footballers at poetry, or vice versa. The only systematic difference is that—because the notion of 'higher' and 'lower' pursuits has taken root in our culture—many footballers may well regard poetry as something beyond their reach; whereas many poets may well, mistakenly, think of football as something intrinsically easy. This sort of error is not merely a harmless eccentricity: it can lead to disastrous results. A mathematician who becomes a financier, and finds that easy, may be falsely persuaded—and may persuade others—that management, requiring still less intellectual exertion, would be easier yet: the result may be a thoroughly disgruntled workforce managed by a person who has no aptitude for leading men.

It is equally wrong to argue that poetry is made 'higher' than football because of being more complex. In the first place, there is no reason to regard complexity as an advantage. The song of a nightingale may be less complex than the gas ovens of Auschwitz; a Stradivarius violin is certainly less complex than a modern hi-fi system. A world in which the complex was valued more highly than the simple would be unattractive, uncomfortable and morally corrupt. But even if complexity were an advantage, it is by no means clear that

poetry would win the day. By what standards is a Shakespeare sonnet more complex than the organisation of the World Cup? Is a Japanese haiku more complex than the millions of co-ordinated movements made by a skilled team of footballers? If complexity were the criterion for judgement, some extremely bizarre hierarchies of value would emerge.

Nor can the superiority of poetry be attributed to the importance of its effects upon the world. It is impossible to judge whether football, taken as a whole, has had more or less effect upon the world than has poetry. The direct economic, social and moral effects of football are incalculable; the indirect effects are even greater and even less identifiable. No doubt, poetry too has profoundly influenced people's lives; but it would be a rash man who was willing to assert with confidence that the invention of blank verse has meant more to more people than the invention of rugby. In any case, the question of effect is as much of a red herring as the question of complexity. Those who regard poetry as a 'higher' activity do not do so because they believe that poetry has had a greater influence on the world, but because they believe there is something about poetry which makes it superior—regardless of its influence. They put the lost poems of Gerard Manley Hopkins in the same category as the best-known lines of Milton or Gray. The private, poetic musings of the footballer in his spare time are regarded as 'higher' than his public presence on the field, despite the fact that the first clearly has less effect on the world than the second.

The effect of the activity on the person who engages in it seems, at first sight, to be a more promising avenue of inquiry. It is probably true that footballers tend to have less refined personalities than poets. And this may lead the unwary observer to conclude that poetry has a better effect on the personality than football. But which is the chicken, and which is the egg? Could it not be that, because one set of activities has traditionally been regarded as 'higher', and the other as 'lower', the most refined personalities tend to find themselves being poets rather than footballers? In other words, it might be the personality that seeks out the activity, rather than the activity that moulds the personality. And there are many reasons for thinking that this is indeed the truth. In the hands of a pretentious and avaricious person, poetry can become a vehicle for pretentiousness and avarice; in the hands of a gentle and elegant person, football can become a vehicle of gentleness and elegance. The person who has the choice of being apprenticed to a poet of the first kind or a footballer of the second kind is more likely to emerge as a refined person if he chooses football. It is, in other words, not the activity, but the spirit in which it is pursued, that forms the personality of those who are engaged in it.

As fashions change, and different activities attract different classes of person, the average level of refinement with which given activities are performed, and the effects that they consequently have upon most of those who do perform them, can vary widely. Being a monk in Cluny in the thirteenth century may have been a route to the utmost refinement; being a monk in some modern Mediterranean countries can be a route to vulgarity and licentiousness. A spell at the SS military training school would not be likely to have the same effect on the personality as a spell at Sandhurst. One cannot class activities, *per se*, as higher or lower on account of their effect on the personality, because different concrete manifestations of the activity, carried out in different spirits and by different people, will have different effects upon the personality.

For the same reason, one cannot class poetry as something, in itself, more beneficial to mankind than football. From the point of view of benefit, activities are potential rather than

actual contributors. Certainly, football can be used to corrupt the masses; but so can poetry. Certainly, poetry can engage the noblest sentiments of mankind; but so, if it is conducted in the right spirit, can football. Calm, aesthetic reflection is not intrinsically more beneficial than well-ordered, courageous and elegant physical exercise. It is no accident that the Ancient Greeks had their poetry readings at the Olympics.

There is one other justification commonly given for placing poetry above football: it is said to be more ‘specifically human’ because it involves more elaborate mental activity. This, too, looks plausible at first. Poetry requires a degree of mental sophistication which primitive football does not. Above all, it requires a sophisticated grasp of language. And this restricts it to human beings. One can just about imagine a group of chimpanzees playing something resembling football; whereas one cannot imagine them producing anything recognisable as poetry. In that sense, poetry does seem to be more ‘specifically human’ than football.

But a classification on these lines commits the same fallacy as most of the other attempts to rank poetry above football. It ignores the fact that activities present human beings with opportunities rather than limitations. Chimpanzees might well kick a ball around; but, without becoming human beings, they could not invent the complex of rules, conventions and co-ordinated activities which football has achieved in human society. This elevation of the physical is, indeed, one of the defining characteristics of human existence. The beasts of the field may engage in copulation as a matter of happenstance instinct; but human beings have turned sexuality into part of a complex moral and social world. Once so elevated, football and sex can become as unmistakably an aspect of civilisation—as unmistakably human—as poetry and philosophy.

These various attempts to justify the hierarchy of pursuits fail, not because they are insufficiently ingenious, but because there is no such hierarchy. There is no respect in which poetry, *per se*, is ‘higher’ than football. A person with a certain sort of character will turn football into something superior, bringing to it high moral and aesthetic standards; overcoming its great difficulties; lending it importance both in its effect on the world and in its effect on his own personality; and disclosing it as something specifically human. Another person, with a different and lesser character, will turn poetry into something morally and aesthetically debased, posing few difficulties, having little elevating effect either on the world in general or upon his own personality—something so base as to be almost bestial.

There is nothing egalitarian, anarchistic or nihilistic about this dismissal of the hierarchy of pursuits, because it does not deny that there are distinctions between better and worse. On the contrary, it asserts that, within each pursuit, there are standards of all kinds separating the better from the worse, the morally superior from the morally inferior, the beautiful from the ugly, the difficult from the easy, the important from the insignificant, the elevating from the debasing, the interesting from the banal. There is, in other words, a definite hierarchy—but of individual performances rather than of pursuits. Once this is recognised, the moral world becomes both more intelligible and more subtle. Instead of trying to argue that the poet is *ipso facto* superior, one becomes able to admit what one in any case always recognised—that the superiority or inferiority of the poet or the footballer is dictated by the attitudes which they bring to their pursuits, and by the way they consequently engage in those pursuits, rather than being imposed by the pursuits themselves.

If there is no hierarchy of activities, why have so many intelligent people come to believe in its existence? A cynical explanation is readily available: belief in a hierarchy of activities might have been promoted by a conspiracy of the intellectuals. In true Marxian fashion, the intellectuals might have discovered that their power over their fellow human beings depended upon an assertion of the superiority of their own pursuits; and they might have indoctrinated all classes with this ideology, using their superior intelligence as a means of persuading people to accept the myth. Plato's recommendation that philosophers should be kings might be merely a more open statement of this ideology than other members of the intelligentsia are honest enough to make.

This cynical hypothesis fits well with the disdain shown by some intellectuals towards 'ordinary folk'. It also tallies with the celebration of the intelligentsia by the intelligentsia in the obituary columns of highbrow newspapers. Roughly speaking, a third-rate poet or historian gets twice as much space as a first-rate industrialist; and only the greatest of footballers gets as much as a mention. No doubt, as a result, many people prominent in mundane pursuits do accept the conspiracy theory, believing that intellectuals create a hierarchy of activity only in order to sustain their own position.

But like most cynical explanations, this conspiracy theory has a touch of paranoia about it: those facts that contribute to the thesis are noticed, while those that do not contribute are conveniently ignored. Intellectuals spend a good deal of their time engaged in non-intellectual pursuits. Characteristically, many of their friends and relations—people for whom they care, and whom they may well admire—will not themselves be intellectuals. Why, then, should they wish to rank intellectual pursuits as 'higher' than others? Would it not, from a purely cynical point of view, be more sensible for them to establish rankings within given pursuits so that they could claim superiority over their main competitors (the other intellectuals) whilst leaving their friends, relations and their own 'other selves' untouched by any stigma on account of association with 'lower' activities?

Even if there is some truth in the conspiracy theory, it is at least as likely that the mythological hierarchy of activities has been generated by philosophical romanticism rather than cynical opportunism. The philosophical romantic pictures human life as a tension between the base and the noble selves within ourselves, and this can all too easily be elided with the idea that certain activities (which the lower self pursues or wishes to pursue) are intrinsically base, whilst others (which the higher self pursues or wishes to pursue) are intrinsically noble. Poetry can easily become a symbol for all that is spiritual, mental and intellectual—a reaching up of the higher self towards the divine—vividly contrasted with, and constantly struggling against, the baseness, mundanity and physicality of the lower self with its penchant for football.

The romantic attraction to the hierarchy of activities is not just a matter of elision: belief in such a hierarchy is conceptually useful for the philosophical romantic who argues for the existence of higher and lower selves. If the hierarchy is denied, and each activity is recognised as something offering opportunities for every kind of good and bad conduct, there is no reason to postulate an intrinsic tension between 'base' and 'noble' selves. If football can be as morally and mentally elevating as poetry, and if a person can maintain high and noble standards in every aspect of his life, then a person can be the same self in each activity, coming to each with the same fundamental personality, and choosing between each as circumstances dictate, on the basis of criteria central to that personality, which are carried throughout life. If, on the other hand, a hierarchy of activity is postulated, then at

each moment of the day, a person must once again make the appalling choice between a moment devoted to the 'lower' or a moment yielded up on the altar of the 'higher', and it does become plausible to think of a person as two selves, one with a set of standards appropriate to the higher activities, the other with a set appropriate to the lower activities.

In this sense, philosophical romanticism not only leans towards a hierarchy of activities, but also finds in that hierarchy a support for its central thesis. Plato's picture of the higher, intellectual self battling against the lower self consumed by worldly desires—a picture which has all but captured the imagination of Western Europe for two thousand years and more—both nourishes and is nourished by the mythological hierarchy. And in sanctioning this myth, the philosophical romantic does immense damage. Perhaps unknowingly, he pushes his fellow men towards nihilism. For the footballer who is persuaded by the myth of hierarchy, the process starts with shame: believing football to be a 'low' pursuit, he comes to consider himself 'beneath' 'higher' pursuits. He has no doubt been taught from earliest youth that he is not 'up to' poetry and its equivalents, and he has absorbed this doctrine. As a result, he finds it very difficult to take a proper pride in his own pursuits. He may know that he is reasonably good at football; but he has been told that this is 'all he is good for'. And if the pursuit itself is not worth much—if, indeed, none of his 'low' pursuits is worth much—why should he bother to raise his standards? Why, he asks himself, should standards matter at all? Maybe for other people, engaged in the 'higher' realm, it matters whether a thing is done well or badly; but for him, who cares? And so he reaches a nihilistic despair.

The poet, infected by the romantic myth, follows a different but parallel course. His begins not with shame but with guilt, because he knows that much of his life is inevitably taken up with what the myth tells him are base activities. What is worse, he finds inevitably that many of them are extremely important to his 'lower self'. Even if he does not much care about money-making (which is unlikely) he is almost bound to care about food, sex and hot baths. But this he cannot admit to himself, because he has aspirations to occupy only the high, pure realm of poetry. The inevitable result is a grotesque pretentiousness—an effort to suggest that no part of his mind is occupied with matters of mere mundane concern. And with the pretentiousness comes preciousness: the blood drains out of his poetry because he cannot deal with ordinary activities as if they mattered in their own right. At best, he handles them awkwardly and self-consciously; at worst, he refines himself into fantasy, neglecting the 'lower' world entirely. But, if he is sensitive, he is eventually revolted by this pretentiousness and preciousness; he wants to know why he and others should keep up the pretence which wracks him with guilt and destroys his art. How can he continue to maintain that poetry really matters more than the 'lower' pursuits? But in wondering this, he begins to lose faith in the values that have become central to his conception of his own activity. He begins to think that if poetry is no better than football, nothing can be better than anything else. Once again, from a different starting point, he reaches the nihilistic conclusion that anything goes and that nothing counts.

These psycho-pathologies are, of course, parodies. Neither the footballer nor the poet passes so easily from one stage to the next as these pictures suggest; there are opportunities to draw a different conclusion at each stage, and if nihilism is reached, many other features of a person's history will have been responsible, besides subscription to the romantic myth of a hierarchy of activities. But the myth does, nevertheless, have a general tendency to

provoke shame and guilt, and thereby to undermine a person's sense of the importance of standards in each of the activities he undertakes. It has, in other words, a capacity not only to mislead intellectually but also to harm morally.

Once the hierarchy of activities is seen to be no more than myth, both the poet and the footballer are in a better position. The division of human life into the higher and the lower pursuits is replaced by an understanding of human life as a single whole within which individuals make their pursuits (whatever those may be) higher or lower, according to the way in which they conduct themselves. Instead of conceiving of oneself as a split personality—one person at the writing desk, another on the football pitch—one becomes able to see that the same person, the same life, is present in both places. True, this carries with it the recognition of responsibilities that would not otherwise occur: neglect of morally important mundanities cannot any longer be justified by a romantic appeal to the 'high' nature of the tasks performed at the writing desk; and a debased attitude to the activities of the football pitch cannot be justified by the claim that the pursuit is in any case a 'low' one. But the burdens imposed by acknowledging these responsibilities—besides being morally proper—are more than matched by the relief which follows from the revelation that one is not, after all, a split personality. The shame and guilt engendered by the romantic illusion is replaced by an attention to standards in all forms of activity and a proper pride in everything that is well done. All the normal activities of life, which the romantic tries to represent as degraded and separate from the 'higher' spiritual existence, come into view as things which can be morally, intellectually and aesthetically significant in their own right. The whole range of human life becomes something to be lived, rather than merely borne.

## Moral and Non-moral Value

Romantics are always in search of the ‘true’ self—the higher, purer being, radically disjoined from its lower, impure counterpart. In ordinary conversation, this search for the pure often takes the form of a radical separation between ‘high’ and ‘low’ activities. In philosophical ethics, it more often takes the form of a supposed disjunction between the ‘pure’, moral self and the ‘lower’ self that is concerned with non-moral values. The proponents of this ethical romanticism may side with Nietzsche, dismissing our normal morality as a slave mentality and replacing it by a boundless commitment to the highest non-moral standards of achievement. Or they may side with Augustine, dismissing worldly non-moral values as dross, and insisting that the only task for man is to keep a proper moral relation to his Creator. But these two different kinds of romantics are fundamentally at one in their belief that moral and non-moral values are utterly disjoined from one another. All ethical romantics feel sure that there is no intrinsic connection between ‘being good at’ or ‘doing well at’ some activity in a non-moral sense, and being morally good or doing what is morally right. They point out that a person may be, from a technical point of view, an excellent artist or craftsman or businessman or playwright, and may yet use this excellence to further some morally abominable aim. And they conclude that a person is bound to be torn, throughout his life, between committing himself thoroughly to the pursuit of *technical* excellence and committing himself thoroughly to the pursuit of *moral* excellence: one can try either to be a genius or to be a saint, but not both.

This ethical form of romanticism is particularly pervasive and persistent in philosophy faculties. Even modern Anglo-Saxon philosophers, who have done so much to demonstrate the intrinsic connection between reason and passion, nevertheless largely remain wedded to the romantic belief that there is an absolute disjunction between moral and non-moral values. Indeed, the romantic conception of morality as something standing completely apart from all other values and standards is so well ingrained that it has come to seem obvious: those who deny such a disjunction are therefore assumed to be talking about something other than morality as we know it.

That assumption is, however, an inherited prejudice rather than a rational argument. Before we can accept it, we have to ask whether the romantic thesis is true to the facts. Does our morality in fact consist of standards and values which have nothing to do with our non-moral standards and values? Is each of us—as the romantic claims—a moral actor trying to live up to moral standards and, separately, a non-moral actor trying to live up to non-moral standards?

The first step is to establish what is meant by the phrase, ‘our morality’, or indeed by ‘a morality’. By ‘a morality’, I mean a set of connected judgements that have what may be called ‘superiority over purposes’. As Kant and others have emphasised, moral judgements

do not have the form, ‘it is right to do X if you want Y’, but rather the form, ‘it is right to do X, regardless of whether you want the results that will flow from doing it’. This superiority over purpose is what makes moral judgements absolute or unconditional: because they are superior to one’s purposes, one cannot escape them by entertaining contradictory, non-moral purposes. A person may legitimately say that he has neglected aesthetic criteria when making a piece of machinery because his purpose was to create something useful rather than something beautiful. But a person who says that he has neglected moral criteria when doing something, because his purpose was to do something beautiful or useful rather than something morally good, thereby shows that he does not understand the claim that a moral judgement makes upon him. A morality is a set of judgements that may be defied but cannot be circumvented.

By ‘our morality’, I mean the set of moral judgements—judgements superior to purpose—that are made by myself and those with whom I regularly converse. Whether these judgements are roughly the same as those made by other groups of people at other times and places, is a matter for the historians and the anthropologists; I cannot give an answer. Nor do I have any confidence that I could prove the validity of the morality to which I subscribe if the whole of it were questioned by people from some other culture.

This easy acceptance of parochiality would no doubt horrify some philosophers. They would argue that a morality so circumscribed is not a morality at all; they would insist that a morality must involve duties, and they would say that duties cannot arise out of mere opinions. Putting their argument in the form of a question, they would ask why, if my morality were no more than a set of culturally based judgements, I was not willing to abandon it whenever abandonment grew convenient. And they would ask what reason I had for holding any of my moral views if I could not provide a rational justification for them.

These worries have arisen repeatedly in one form or another since the time of Plato; but they are groundless. One may, to begin with, have many reasons for holding to a given moral view, even if one cannot provide a rational justification for the whole of one’s morality. The moral views held by any sane person are not a random collection; they are connected with, and are dependent on, one another. Typically, the moral argument proceeds from one judgement to the next: ‘don’t you think *this* would be a good idea?’, ‘and if you do, aren’t you bound to admit that *this*, too, would be desirable?’ Each party to the argument tries to persuade the other that the case in dispute is similar in some relevant respect to some other case or cases about which both parties hold the same view. So, too, with internal moral deliberation, my reason for holding to a certain judgement will be that it accords with the rest of my views. The fact, if it is a fact, that I cannot provide proof of the validity of the whole system of views does not deprive me of the ability to deliberate, argue, or conduct moral life.

Nor does this inability to provide ultimate rational justification make me more likely to abandon my morality when abandonment would be convenient. A moral judgement is one that commends, permits or condemns independently of purpose. As such, it carries with it the injunction to ignore convenience, and thereby itself provides me with sufficient grounds for not changing my mind in the face of inconvenience. Of course, as a matter of practice, I cannot guarantee that I will stick to my morality in the absence of any ultimate proof of its validity; but I could not guarantee such loyalty even if I did believe that there were an ultimate proof, since I might either change my mind about the validity of the proof itself or fail to do what I believe to be right.

None of this shows that the morality shared by myself and my acquaintances is in fact without ultimate rational justification. The point is merely that I can have something recognisable as a morality even if there is no such justification: I can have a set of views about what should be done, regardless of purpose; I can argue for any one of these views in terms of others; and I can recognise that each view, being superior to my purposes, carries with it a reason for loyalty in the face of inconvenience.

What is the scope of this morality? What do we make our moral judgements about? These questions matter because modern moral philosophy has been hampered by an excessively narrow conception of our morality. Indeed, ethical romanticism has been greatly assisted by the willingness of its adherents to ignore aspects of our morality which do not fit conveniently with their theories. Any satisfactory explanation of our morality needs to account for all the features of that morality, not just for some of them. What are these features?

In the first place, we judge the actions of one person towards another. We believe that a person should keep his promises, that he ought to be just, that he ought to be beneficent, and that he ought to do these things for the right reasons. But this is not the whole of our morality. We make moral judgements about things other than interpersonal relations. One object of our moral concern, which has recently received a little (overdue) attention, is our relation to the animal kingdom. The attention happens to have been bestowed by utilitarians, and the topic has consequently been subject to a kind of planning blight: no one else will develop it. But one does not have to be a utilitarian to notice the facts. We think it wrong for a person to act in certain ways towards animals, or at any rate towards some animals; and the wrongness, here, is moral—the judgement has superiority over all purposes. If a person is in the habit of torturing a cat before breakfast, we would advise him to stop, not on the grounds that desistance would be more convenient for him or more useful for achieving his general purposes, but rather on the grounds that the practice is morally objectionable. Any explanation of our morality needs to account for this view.

Another aspect of our morality too often neglected by modern moral philosophers is our attitude towards creativity—human inventiveness. In the past, some philosophers have recognised the importance of creative, inventive activity or have at least attributed importance to some of its forms such as the creation of the beautiful and the interesting: Aristotle describes the ‘life of the intellect’ as ‘the best life for man’ (*Nicomachean ethics*, X, vii); Mill gives ‘mental cultivation’ a central place in his ethics (*Utilitarianism*, II); and Moore calls ‘the consciousness of beauty’ a ‘raison d’être of virtue’, a ‘rational ultimate end of human action’ (*Principia ethica*, VI). But it has recently become fashionable to talk as though judgements about a person’s commitment to creativity were non-moral. Bernard Williams, for example, argues that a great creative artist like Gauguin may, under certain circumstances, be justified in ‘turning away from definite and pressing human claims in order to live a life in which...he can pursue his art’, and adds that the justifications which can be given for such actions ‘are not moral’, and concludes that ‘we have...deep and persistent reasons to be grateful’ that our world is not one in which morality is ‘universally respected’ (*Moral luck*, Cambridge, 1981, p. 23).

Why should such judgements be called ‘non-moral’? In Sartre’s famous example—where a man is faced with a choice between caring for his aged mother and going off to fight for

his country—the problem is clearly a moral one, because two judgements, both of which are superior to the subject's purposes, are in conflict; we believe that a man, regardless of his wants, ought to attend both to the needs of his parents and to the needs of his country. The position is surely similar when a person who has dedicated his life to the creation of new mathematics or the building of fine bridges is faced with a choice between spending the evening with his demanding, crippled mother, and leaving her alone in order to get on with his mathematics or bridge-building. We think, of course, that the man has a duty to be kind to his mother; but we also recognise that there is a conflict between the fulfilment of this duty and the pursuit of his lifelong creative commitment. And the conflict is moral—superior to all purposes. Whether the man will receive some much-coveted prize for his work is irrelevant; indeed, we would despise him if he thought prizes comparable with the needs of his mother. Only the creativity itself is important enough to be set against the claims of filial duty.

The case would be the same if the creativity in question were of aesthetic rather than intellectual or practical importance. An artist faced with the choice between improving the fresco that completes his life's work at the eleventh hour before the plaster sets and spending the evening with his crippled mother, has a real problem. And the problem, once again, has nothing to do with convenience. If the artist were merely saving himself the trouble of working rather late, or if he were hoping to make more money on the sale of the picture, we would think that he had no case for abandoning his mother. What causes the problem is that the art itself matters—matters enough to vie with his duty.

Why, then, is it so often said that the pursuit of creativity has no moral importance? The reason is that there is no convenient moral category into which such an activity can be put. One certainly cannot call it a duty: no one is blamed for failing to take up a career as an artist or a mathematician or a bridge-builder. Nor can one call it a right. To say that a person has a right to do something is to say either that others have a duty to help him to do it (a positive right) or that others have a duty not to prevent him doing it (a negative right). That I do not in general have a positive right to do my mathematics is clear: nobody has a duty to help me do it. And although I certainly do have a negative right to do it, this is merely part of my general negative right to spend my evenings as I choose, free from external influence. Such a negative right is by no means sufficient even to provide an argument for one's abandoning a crippled mother: we would think it altogether disgraceful for a person to sacrifice his crippled mother to read novels, despite the fact that he has an undeniable negative right to do so. In short, I have less than a duty or a positive right to do my mathematics, but more than a merely negative right. I have a claim to do it—a claim that can be set against my personal obligations.

Since we have, at present, no term to describe such claims, I propose to invent one. I shall call them 'moral subjunctives'. As the name implies, a moral subjunctive is a judgement that has not quite attained the status of the moral imperative. Instead of the injunction, 'you must', we have the permission, 'you may'. And what characterises a subjunctive as moral is its capacity to stand against a moral imperative. In general, the injunction 'do this, regardless of your wants' overrules whatever is in opposition to it; but in the case of a moral subjunctive, there is a conflict: duty has met its match—'there are circumstances under which you may do this, even though it conflicts with a moral obligation'. The conflict between imperatives and subjunctives is rare, and painful. Rare, because one can usually manage to do both what one may and what one must; and painful,

because any truly unavoidable strife between the ‘may’ and the ‘must’ can be resolved only by the adoption of a course of action that fails to satisfy either the one or the other. Moreover, decisions between imperatives and subjunctives, where the two do conflict, tend to be exceedingly rough and ready. When the duty to care for others unavoidably conflicts with the permission to exercise one’s own creativity, none of us feels confident that we know how to balance the two considerations: we simply take a plunge.

This rarity, painfulness and arbitrariness is equally characteristic of conflict between one imperative and another: the apparent clash between two duties can usually be avoided by a person who exercises sufficient imagination; but where the clash is genuinely unavoidable, it can be resolved only by an unsatisfactory decision to neglect either one duty or the other. That decision will be an existential leap in the dark—a moment of unguidable choice between, say, the duty of general beneficence and the duty to respect the rights of the individual. In short, the pattern of conflict between imperatives and subjunctives mirrors the pattern of conflict between one imperative and the next. Neither the fact nor the character of the conflict gives any more grounds for doubting the presence of the moral subjunctive in our morality than they do for doubting the presence of the moral imperative.

Once the concept of a moral subjunctive has been introduced, our judgements about the creation of the beautiful, the interesting and the important easily find a home. One has neither as much as a duty, nor as little as a right, to pursue such creation; one has a moral permission to do it—a permission that can be set against, can perhaps sometimes triumph over, one’s moral duties. But this permission is qualified in an interesting way: it depends upon one’s being sufficiently good at the kind of creative work one is doing. Indeed, the strength of the subjunctive is in direct proportion to the extent of one’s abilities. As Bernard Williams points out, Gauguin’s case for gross dereliction of family duty turns upon his having been a great creative artist: if he had been only moderately good, we should have allowed him (at most) small transgressions of duty. At the opposite extreme, a person who has no talent whatsoever for mathematics, and who is engaged in performing routine addition sums for the sheer fun of it, cannot use this as a reason for failing to attend to his family. This example also draws attention to a second qualification: the creative work in question must be central to one’s life; if it is merely peripheral, the subjunctive becomes exceedingly weak. A person whose life is devoted to topology—a person who *is* a topologist—may legitimately neglect some otherwise important duties for the sake of his studies; but a person for whom topology is merely a hobby cannot claim the same exemption from duty. The explanation for these two qualifications will appear in due course. Here, it is sufficient to note the regularly neglected fact that our morality does contain a number of subjunctives, which give a special permission (under certain circumstances) to evade what would otherwise be our moral obligations to other persons.

Another neglected aspect of our morality is self-regarding virtue. This is the form of virtue displayed by a person when he is acting non-socially. Courage, industriousness and self-control are all needed if a person is to fulfil his duty towards others; but they may also be exhibited in the course of non-social activities. A lone explorer may be courageous in the face of the elements; and a hermit may temperately avoid various forms of self-indulgence. For Aristotle, there is no question of a difference in status between self-regarding and other-regarding virtues: the ‘good life’ is one governed by qualities such as prudence, temperance, courage and patience. These qualities may be displayed in aspects of conduct

that concern other people, or they may be displayed in aspects of conduct that do *not* affect others. Acting rightly towards others is seen by Aristotle as merely one part of a morally virtuous existence.

In most modern Anglo-Saxon philosophy, the part becomes the whole. Morality is represented as being concerned exclusively with the relations between people. We hear a great deal about rights, duties, obligations, respect for other persons, doing as you would be done by, and promoting the happiness of the greatest number; but we hear very infrequently about the courage of the explorer, or the self-control of the hermit. And on the rare occasions when we are told about the self-regarding virtues, the tone is dismissive: such qualities as courage, industriousness and self-control 'are not in themselves *moral virtues*'; they are merely useful attributes. Indeed, agreement on this point transcends all other disagreements: Hare, Rawls, Smart, Stevenson, Warnock and Williams are divided in nearly every respect save in their common view that morality is a matter of interpersonal relationships.

Is this modern Anglo-Saxon view correct? Does our approval of self-regarding virtue have a status radically different from that of our approval for the fulfilment of social duty? The attempts of modern philosophers to justify this view have not been convincing. Witness, for example, Warnock, who argues that qualities such as courage and temperance 'are not *moral*' because 'they may be wholly self-profiting, and even very damaging to others and the agent himself (*The object of morality*, London, 1971, p. 79). In so far as this argument rests on the accusation of self-profit, it begs the issue, since the question at hand is whether virtues that are wholly self-profiting can nevertheless have the same status as virtues that are related to other persons. Nor is it material that self-regarding virtues can be positively 'damaging to others', for so too can the other-regarding virtues: my generosity towards a beggar may make him less likely to seek proper work. Indeed, Warnock admits such possibilities when he says that other-regarding virtues are 'not...necessarily effectively good for persons other than the agent himself. And yet, having admitted this, he continues to assert that the other-regarding virtues are more '*moral*' than their self-regarding counterparts because they are 'essentially...good for persons other than the agent'—which is once again to beg the question whether those virtues that are 'essentially' good for others have a radically different status from those virtues that are 'essentially' concerned with the self. To this question, Warnock never directly addresses himself.

Other modern philosophers do more nearly address themselves to the status of the self-regarding virtues. Baier says explicitly that 'if individuals live by themselves and cannot affect one another, then, morally speaking, there is nothing they may not do or refrain from doing. A world of Robinson Crusoes has no need for a morality and no use for one.' And he defends this by arguing that one's moral obligation to fulfil one's duty towards others cannot be matched by any parallel obligation to be self-regardingly virtuous because 'one cannot be literally under an obligation to oneself. There can be no such thing as upsetting the moral relation between oneself and oneself, no such thing as restoring it' (K. Baier, *The moral point of view*, Ithaca, 1958, pp. 215–17). This argument—which was considered and rejected by Kant in the *Metaphysic of morals*—has been taken up by a number of modern philosophers, and is put best by Marcus Singer, who says that the self-regarding virtues must be matters purely of prudence rather than of moral duty because, in the self-regarding case, the duty would have to be to oneself, and 'a duty to oneself...would be a duty from

which one could release oneself at will', which would be 'self-contradictory', since 'a "duty" from which one could release oneself at will is not, in any literal sense, a duty at all' (M.G.Singer, 'On duties to oneself, *Ethics*, vol. 69, 1959, pp. 202–3). The apparent plausibility of this line of argument is deceptive. It may well be true that one cannot, in a literal sense, have a 'duty to oneself. But why need self-regarding virtues involve duties to oneself? Why cannot such virtues involve duties *tout court*, duties that are not *to* anyone? To assume that all duties are duties to someone is merely to beg the question. Nor can the argument be redeemed by the assertion that the word 'duty' actually *means* a duty to someone, since the word need not be used. One may say that a person morally *ought* to be self-regardingly virtuous without mentioning 'duty'.

A more powerful argument for the modern view is suggested by Strawson in his article on 'Social morality and the individual ideal' (*Freedom and resentment and other essays*, London, 1974, pp. 26–45). The article itself is concerned not so much with the status of the self-regarding virtues as with that of self-regarding decisions, such as a person's decision about his own career. But Strawson's line of reasoning is applicable also to the virtues. Suitably adapted, it runs: no one has a right to impose self-regarding virtues upon another person; the decision to follow or to leave the path of these virtues is consequently 'up to the person himself; such virtues have a quite different status from that of social duty, by which one is bound regardless of one's own preferences. This argument is serious because it identifies the real difference between self-regarding virtues and social duty: other people have a claim upon one when it comes to social matters, and they do not usually have such a claim in respect of self-regarding virtue. But this premiss cannot support the conclusion that approval for the self-regarding virtues is a mere preference—a 'liking' that a person may adopt or abandon at will, just as he may adopt or abandon a liking for lamb chops or Camembert. Other people do *not* always have a right to make one do what one ought morally to do. A wife ought morally to behave considerately towards her husband; but neither the husband nor anyone else generally has a right to force her to behave in this way. And if there are social duties that other persons do not have a right to enforce, then it is conceivable that self-regarding virtues, too, may be morally compulsory despite being non-enforceable.

Modern philosophers have been unsuccessful in justifying the view that our approbation for self-regarding virtue has a radically different status from our approbation for the fulfilment of social duty, because that view is mistaken. Judgements about self-regarding virtue can have the same status as judgements about social duty. They can share that 'superiority over purpose' which is the hallmark of the moral. Of course, self-regarding virtue is sometimes praised conditionally: 'it was a good thing for him to be courageous, because he would not otherwise have got what he wanted'; 'she was right to be patient if she wished to marry him'; 'anybody who hopes to lose weight needs to be temperate'. And there are other times when conditional versions of these judgements are made *en route* to the production of a final decision: 'you ought to be patient, unless there is some other, more important, principle at stake'. But there remains a set of final and particular judgements about self-regarding virtue that are, in the required sense, unconditional. When I praise the lone explorer for his courage, I am not saying that he behaved wisely, given his wants, nor yet that being brave is in the abstract a nice idea; I am saying, rather, that he—in his position—was, in an absolute sense, *right* to be courageous, regardless of his purposes:

that he would have been *wrong* to be cowardly. I am, in other words, making a judgement that has the same formal status as a judgement about social duty—a judgement that cannot be dismissed as either aesthetic or prudential, a judgement that is (in a normal sense of the term) characteristically ‘moral’.

The scope of our morality is, then, wider than is often supposed by philosophers. We are concerned not only with the relations between one person and others, but also with the relations between people and animals, with the moral subjunctives governing human creativity, and with the self-regarding virtues. Our concerns with these matters are moral because our judgements about them have the independence of purpose which mark them off as what Kant would have called ‘categorical’: we believe that it is right to behave in a certain way towards animals, to take certain attitudes towards creativity, and to adopt certain self-regarding virtues—regardless of whether it happens to be convenient or inconvenient to do so.

Is this variegated morality of ours a mere assortment of judgements, unconnected with one another? Or is it a coherent whole, bound together by some general principle of which all the particular judgements are manifestations?

In modern Anglo-Saxon philosophy, the principle most often put forward as an explanation of our morality is ‘utility’. This is not to say that utilitarianism is always put forward merely as an explanatory theory; it is sometimes advanced either as a justification of our moral judgements or as the basis of a new and improved morality. But utilitarians do frequently regard their theory as merely explanatory, and the explanation that they offer is, essentially, that our moral judgements are expressions of the principle ‘seek to satisfy people’s preferences’.

This utilitarian claim has to be taken seriously, because the wish to satisfy other people’s preferences clearly *does* underlie much of our morality. The question is whether it underlies all of our moral judgements, and whether it is a principle that can, on its own, explain those judgements.

Some of the arguments that are regularly made against the utilitarian explanation are unconvincing. It is often said, for example, that utilitarianism cannot explain the special moral obligations that we believe people have towards their friends and families. The basis of this accusation is that the principle of utility commands us only to benefit humanity as a whole, and does not tell us to place particular emphasis upon the interests of our kith and kin. But the utilitarian could easily rebut the accusation by pointing out that benefits at home are more easily identified than benefits abroad: a person who is genuinely concerned to benefit humanity will concentrate upon helping friends whose needs he can discern, rather than strangers about whose real condition he knows little or nothing. Indeed, the utilitarian can plausibly claim that his theory gives an exact account of our views about special moral obligations: in utilitarian theory, and in our morality, one ought to sacrifice one’s friends and family only when the benefits accruing to humanity are both enormous and next to certain. The son of the camp Commandant in Belsen would have good reason to shoot his father if, but only if, the Allies were approaching, the order to kill the remaining prisoners was about to be given, and that order would certainly not be given in time by any other officer present.

Another unconvincing accusation is that utilitarianism fails to account for the sanctity of the individual. In McKloskie's example, an administrator is faced with the choice between riots in which many deaths are certain to occur and the killing of one innocent man whose execution would assuage the passions of the rioters. The example is meant to illustrate the gap between the utilitarian, who would unblinkingly consign the innocent man to death for the sake of the majority, and the rest of us, who would at least wonder whether this would be fair to the innocent man. But to postulate such a gap is to ignore the distinction between act-utilitarianism and rule-utilitarianism: of course, from the point of view of this one incident, the loss incurred by executing the single individual is outweighed by the gain of preserving the multitude; the act-utilitarian would accordingly proceed to immediate execution; but for the rule-utilitarian, what counts is the precedent set rather than the single case—our moral outrage at the killing of the innocent man can be explained as a symptom of our adherence to the general (and generally beneficial) rule, 'do not kill the innocent'.

The opponents of utilitarianism sometimes reply that the distinction is illusory, that rule-utilitarianism collapses into act-utilitarianism since one can always refine a rule to take account of a particular case. This argument is undoubtedly correct if utilitarianism is taken as a recipe for a new morality: if the aim of the new morality were to maximise benefit, the most effective means would be to modify rules such as 'do not kill the innocent', to ensure that the innocent *were* killed whenever this would save more lives than it cost. But if utilitarianism is taken as an explanation of our current morality, rather than as a basis for a new morality, such refinements need not enter the picture. The utilitarian can plausibly claim that our morality does, as it happens, contain some fairly simple (and generally beneficial) rules such as, 'do not kill the innocent', and he can argue that the presence of these rules makes us unwilling to despatch the innocent individual even in cases where this conflicts with the advantage of the majority. He can, in other words, explain our belief in the sanctity of the individual as the product of an attachment to rules of thumb.

The utilitarian can construct a similar defence against Bernard Williams's attack. In Williams's example, a South American villain presents an innocent bystander with the choice between allowing several men to be shot, or shooting just one of them himself and thereby saving the rest. Williams points out that we are torn between the belief that the bystander should save the majority, and the opposing belief that he should avoid shooting anyone himself. And Williams argues that the utilitarian cannot explain this reluctance to approve of the man taking the shooting upon himself, since shooting one to save many is clearly more likely to satisfy more preferences than choosing not to shoot one and seeing the rest killed. As in the previous case, this attack would be justified if the utilitarian were claiming to provide a recipe for morality: if the aim of morality were to maximise benefit, the bystander would clearly have to shoot the one individual and save the rest; there would be no grounds for doubt, and no justification for reluctance. But if the utilitarian is merely seeking to *explain* and not to justify our present morality, then he can do so by invoking, once again, the distinction between rule and act. On the whole, society benefits from the rule: 'do not yourself kill an innocent person for any reason whatsoever'. And the rule-utilitarian can reasonably argue that it is this rule which makes us unwilling to approve wholeheartedly of the killing, despite the fact that—in the case in question—such a deed would undoubtedly maximise the aggregate satisfaction of preferences.

The rule-utilitarian can use the same argument to explain why we think it important for a person to have a form of integrity that consists in understanding one's role in one's community, and what that role implies. We think that if a person is a priest, he should behave like a priest; and that if he is a Prime Minister, he should behave like a Prime Minister. The act-utilitarian cannot account for this belief. To such a utilitarian, what counts is the result of a person's actions, not the relation of those actions to the actor's position: if the priest can increase human happiness by taking a mistress, the act-utilitarian commands him to do so; if the Prime Minister can increase happiness by betraying his country, the act-utilitarian raises no objection. In this, the act-utilitarian is clearly at odds with our morality. But the rule-utilitarian can explain our views by pointing out that it is generally beneficial for society—and thus for the aggregate maximisation of satisfaction—that we should be able to rely on a person acting in a manner appropriate to his position: if Prime Ministers were generally willing to betray their countries, we would be unable to conduct civilised politics. And this general rule could be understood as the basis of our reluctance to approve such lack of 'integrity', even on those few occasions when it would lead to maximal utility.

The fact that the utilitarian theory can explain our belief about special obligations, individual rights and integrity should not, however, be taken as a sign that the theory is an adequate account of our morality. It is in fact thoroughly inadequate, because it is radically incomplete. The utilitarian claims that all our moral judgements are expressions of the principle 'be beneficent' or 'maximise the satisfaction of preferences'; but, without invoking some further, non-utilitarian theory, he cannot provide a definition of beneficence or utility that will make this claim plausible. In the most naïve form of the theory, 'maximising utility' is taken to mean giving people whatever they want, so that it is thought beneficent to give an Aborigine a time-bomb if he unwittingly desires to handle the lethal object. The discrepancy between such a naïve form of utilitarianism and our morality is too obvious to require exposition. More sophisticated utilitarians talk of 'what a person really wants', and by this they mean either what a person would want if he were fully informed about the facts of the case, or what a person would be grateful for in the long term. But these definitions fail to make utilitarianism plausible as an account of our morality. We do not consider it beneficent or morally proper for a man suffering from a contagious disease to embrace his girlfriend, even if the girl knows about the risks and wants to be embraced. Nor do we think it beneficent or morally desirable to give a community of hippies hallucinogenic and mind-destroying drugs, even if (indeed, particularly if) it is certain that they will be so corrupted by the drugs that they will come to be grateful for them in the long term. Our morality does not endorse all attempts to satisfy either informed or long-term preferences. How, then, is the utilitarian to identify the preferences that should be satisfied? His only recourse is to define utility as the satisfaction of those preferences that a person ought to have. He is then in a position to advance the undeniable thesis that we think it a good thing to give people what we think they ought to want. But such a truism can hardly pose as an explanation of our morality: to turn it into an explanation, we would have at least to add some more substantial, non-utilitarian account of the reasons why we think people ought to want some things and not others. Utilitarianism is therefore, at best, a half explanation.

There is, however, another less commonly recognised sense in which utilitarianism is no more than half an explanation: it cannot account for all the aspects of our morality. Most importantly, it cannot explain our attitude towards the self-regarding virtues—our

admiration for the courage shown by the lone explorer in the face of the elements, or for the mental discipline of the hermit who avoids self-indulgence. These attitudes certainly cannot be explained in terms of personal utility. There is no evidence that courage, patience, and temperance always, or even generally, conduce to the greater ‘happiness’ of the subject, or to the more complete satisfaction of his preferences than do their opposites, cowardice, impatience and intemperance. And even if there were such evidence, it would be beside the point, since the status of our judgements in favour of the self-regarding virtues would be compromised by any dependence on personal satisfaction. If the reason for admiring these virtues were that they contributed to the subject’s happiness, then we would have to say that the lone explorer was admirable whenever he did anything that did so contribute; but there would not, of course, be anything morally admirable about his having a tendency to make his tent comfortable or to do all sorts of other things that might conduce to his own happiness.

There is one ingenious way of explaining our admiration for self-regarding virtue in terms of general utility. If—as seems likely—a person often needs qualities such as courage, patience and temperance in order to achieve social goods, and if—as also seems likely—these qualities are acquired by practical training and habit, then the utilitarian may argue that we praise and admire them even when they are manifest in self-regarding ways only because such praise and admiration may reinforce a person’s tendency to manifest them in circumstances where they are socially beneficial. But this utilitarian argument is weak even in its own terms, because qualities like courage, patience and temperance are also useful and indeed, absolutely essential—for crooks and tyrants, and, in their hands, cause social ills rather than social welfare. In the absence of any evidence that these qualities are generally more beneficial than harmful, the utilitarian cannot explain why they are strongly admired rather than being treated as morally neutral.

Utilitarianism is, then, unsatisfactory as an explanation of our morality. Although many of the attacks that have been made on it are not convincing, it has two outstanding deficiencies. Its claim that our moral judgements about interpersonal relationships are expressions of the principle, ‘maximise utility’, can be made plausible only if a suitable definition of ‘utility’ can be found and the utilitarian cannot provide such a definition. Nor can a utilitarian, on any definition of utility, account for the strong moral value that we attach to the self-regarding virtues.

Most modern Anglo-Saxon moral philosophers who reject utilitarianism favour one version or another of Kantianism, invoking the principle ‘do only that which you could command all others to do’ as the fundamental explanation of our morality. This principle has been interpreted in two ways, both of which have some foundation in Kant’s own writings. According to the first interpretation, the injunction is: ‘do only that which you could, *without logical self-contradiction*, command all others to do’. According to the second interpretation, it is: ‘do only that which you *would be willing* to command all others to do’. Although these two interpretations are significantly different from one another, they both lead—albeit in quite different ways—to the Kantian conclusion that morality is a species of consistency. But for the purposes of investigating ethical romanticism, the important point is neither the differences nor the conclusion: it is whether the Kantian injunction, interpreted either way, is a satisfactory explanatory principle of our morality.

Kantians usually concentrate upon interpersonal relationships. Whether they can account for our moral views about such relationships is a matter of debate. There are some rather obviously puzzling cases, such as that of the sado-masochist, who argues that—on both interpretations of the Kantian principle—it is legitimate for him to engage in his sadistic practices because (1) he could without logical contradiction command everyone else to do the same; and (2) he would in fact be delighted if this command were obeyed. But such trite examples are not sufficient to cast serious doubt upon, let alone to discredit, the Kantian account of the morality of interpersonal relations. Ingenious Kantians can find—indeed, have found—ways of dealing with the obvious, and even with the less obvious puzzles. The development of Hare’s view of the ‘fanatic’ provides an interesting example of the subtleties that the Kantians deploy. Hare considers the case of a fanatical Nazi who is in favour of some appalling deed such as the extermination of the Jews, and who is consistent enough to believe that he, himself, would be worthy of elimination if it transpired he were Jewish. In his early work, Hare concluded that the Kantian has no defence against such a fanatic—which is in effect to say that the Kantian cannot account for our moral disapproval of the Nazi view. But in his later work, Hare finds a way of remedying this defect: he argues that the Nazi is failing to engage in the ‘critical thinking’ (i.e. the imaginative reconstruction of the preferences of other people) that would enable him to understand what he would feel if he were Jewish. According to this thesis, the fanatic is not justified in favouring anti-Semitic genocide—because, if he really understood what it would be like to be Jewish, he would not be willing to recommend this as a universal policy.

Whether this argumentative strategy is successful is open to doubt. And there are similar doubts about other Kantian explanations of the interpersonal aspects of our morality. The real weakness of the Kantians, however, lies in another direction: not in their account of interpersonal relationships, but rather in their account of the rest of our morality. How can a Kantian explain, for example, our moral views about the treatment of animals? Suppose that I am on the point of committing some act of wanton cruelty towards a horse: if I ask myself whether I could, without logical self-contradiction, command everybody else to do the same, the answer is that I could—there is nothing logically incoherent about a world in which the mutilation of horses becomes a regular pastime. And I shall produce the same response when I ask myself whether I would be *willing* to have everybody acting in this way; if I enjoy it, why shouldn’t everyone else have a go? The Kantian therefore seems to have no grounds for objecting to the cruelty; and this is in clear contradiction to our morality.

The Kantian can, it is true, rescue his thesis by taking the horse’s point of view into account: the question would then be whether I, as an animal of indeterminate variety (either horse or human) would be willing to countenance horse-mutilation as a universal practice. The answer would then be in the negative—since, if there were the slightest chance of my being a horse rather than a man, I would wish to avoid mutilation at all costs. But this method of dealing with the problem backfires horribly. It forces the Kantian to conclude that there is no difference between the proper way of treating human beings and the proper way of treating other animals: we all become animals of indeterminate variety. Before I ride the horse, I have to ask whether I, *qua* horse, would be willing to countenance this becoming a universal practice. And if the answer (how arrived at?) were ‘no’, then I would be obliged not to ride.

This conclusion is at least as much at odds with our morality as the more normal Kantian view that conduct towards animals is never a matter of ethical concern. We believe—our actions and our conversation show that we believe—both that behaviour towards animals is morally important, and that it is *not* governed by the same rules as behaviour towards human beings. This belief cannot be accommodated within the Kantian scheme: for the Kantian, there must either be equal rights and a point of view for every creature, or the total domination of one species over another.

The Kantians are also unable to account for our moral attitude towards creativity. The first version of the Kantian injunction ('do only that which you could, without logical self-contradiction, command all others to do') certainly allows a person to be creative, since there would be nothing logically self-contradictory about commanding all mankind to do the same. But the injunction also allows one *not* to be creative, because this, too, could be recommended to all mankind without risk of logical incoherence. In other words, this first version of the imperative is too even-handed. It fails to endow creativity with a special moral status. It fails to explain why the mathematician, torn between the duty to look after his wife and the demands of his work, has a real moral problem; if the duty is a duty, and the work is a matter of moral indifference, neither commanded nor forbidden, the mathematician must clearly attend to his wife.

The second version of the Kantian injunction—'do only that which you would be *willing* to command all others to do'—is even less capable of explaining the moral significance of creativity. Indeed, if morality were based upon this principle, preoccupation with any single creative activity would be positively immoral. None of us would be justified in becoming full-time artists or mathematicians or bridge-builders or military strategists or politicians, since none of us would be willing to command all men to do the same: for the good reason that obedience to such a command would cause the collapse of both industry and society.

These deficiencies are not merely accidental. They arise from the Kantian obsession with the imperative. To a Kantian, the imperative is the only possible form for a moral judgement. No room is left for what I have called moral subjunctives—judgements of the form, 'you may', which do not establish duties, but which do establish claims strong enough to set against obligations to other persons. It is the failure to allow for such subjunctives that prevents Kantians from understanding our moral attitude towards creativity. For our attitude towards such creativity is essentially subjunctive. We do not believe that a person has a duty to be creative. Nor do we believe that other people have a general duty to assist them to be creative. But we do believe that a person *may*, under certain circumstances, engage in such creativity even if this conflicts with his other obligations. To the Kantians, deprived as they are of the concept of the moral subjunctive, this belief of ours is quite incomprehensible. They can only mutter: 'no imperative, no moral claim'. The sadness is that Kant himself, the first major thinker to turn his attention to the forms of moral judgement, should have neglected the subjunctive form, and should thereby have induced his followers to neglect the moral status of creativity.

There is a further serious deficiency in the Kantian scheme. Like utilitarianism, it cannot account for the self-regarding virtues. Clearly, our admiration for the courage of the lone sailor and the temperance of the hermit cannot be founded upon our respect for the first version of the Kantian imperative. The lone sailor could, of course, be courageous himself

and could recommend courage to all others, without risk of logical inconsistency. But he could also be cowardly and recommend cowardice to others; there is nothing logically incoherent about the command, 'whenever you are doing anything alone, and the slightest danger threatens, change course instantly'. Nor would the sailor's courage be reinforced, or his cowardice disallowed, by the second version of the imperative: if he is himself willing to fly from every storm, he would no doubt be willing to command all others to do the same. The Kantian is therefore bound to take the position that cowardice, intemperance, and the like, are morally unimpeachable so long as they do not adversely affect other people, and so long as they are practised by a person willing to command his fellows to exhibit the same vices. This position is coherent: but it is at odds with our moral attitude. We do not think that the coward saves himself from blame by recommending his cowardice to all others.

Both Kantianism and utilitarianism fail as explanations for our morality. In many respects, they are different from one another, and the reasons for their failures as explanations of our morality are different. But there is one important respect in which Kantianism and utilitarianism are similar to one another: they share the romantic view that there is no connection whatsoever between moral and non-moral values.

The world is full of non-moral values. When we praise a person for doing his job with panache, making mathematical discoveries, or playing a symphony well, we are not making a moral judgement, since these high levels of performance may have been achieved through grossly immoral exploitation or abuse of colleagues and subordinates. But we are nevertheless making a judgement of value; the job, the mathematics and the symphony are, in some non-moral sense, 'well done' and 'good of their kind'.

The utilitarian does not merely distinguish between morality and such non-moral values: he believes that there is a complete disjunction. He argues that, from a moral point of view, it is a matter of absolute indifference whether a piece of work is done 'well' or 'badly': concern with such non-moral judgements is regarded as a mere superstition; the only thing that matters morally is whether the work is done in such a way as to maximise the satisfaction of preferences. The most powerful illustration of this point is the utilitarian view of intellectual accuracy. In itself, such accuracy has no moral merit for the utilitarian: it is of moral value only in so far as it tends to make people happier, and any intellectually accurate statement or theory that could be shown to threaten human happiness in the long run would be regarded as an evil by the utilitarian.

The Kantian, for different reasons, also believes that there is an absolute disjunction between moral and non-moral values. He argues that any link would hopelessly compromise morality, introducing an element of choice or happenstance into what ought to be a rational necessity. The hallmark of morality, according to the Kantian, is its intrinsic universality: moral standards are the same for all rational creatures because such standards emanate from the pure dictates of reason; this universality and purity would be destroyed if morality were in any way connected with the non-moral values which emanate from the particularities of individual human lives.

The important point about these utilitarian and Kantian views is that they open the possibility of frequent and irreconcilable conflict between moral and non-moral values. If my moral values had absolutely no connection whatsoever with my non-moral values, I

might be faced—throughout my life—with a choice between the one and the other. I might regularly find that I could not, morally, do the things necessary to do my job properly or to make mathematical discoveries. Under such circumstances, I might come to regard morality as an external force, constraining me—preventing me from living up to my non-moral values. This would not be a question of morality merely inhibiting me from satisfying occasional whims—as any morality must—but rather of a morality repeatedly preventing me from acting in accordance with my own non-moral *judgements*: a morality, in effect, preventing me from ‘doing things well’. If that were, indeed, my position, I might have Bernard Williams’s ‘deep and persistent reasons to be grateful’ that our world is not one in which morality is ‘universally respected’.

Utilitarianism and Kantianism are, in other words, romantic theories which, by positing an absolute disjunction between moral and non-moral values, represent mental life as divided between two radically disjoined forms of judgement, with the constant danger of a struggle between the two for pre-eminence. This pessimistic, romantic view has not been held by all moral philosophers. There is another tradition of moral thought, radically opposed to both utilitarianism and modern Kantianism, which does not see morality as utterly disjoined from non-moral values, but instead identifies the moral as that which leads to the fullest development of the whole individual, including those aspects of the individual that are revealed in his non-moral values. This view originates in Aristotle, and is to be found in the work of latter-day Aristotelians such as Aquinas, Hegel and Bradley. Like Aristotle, the Thomists and Hegelians defend their view by introducing a teleological metaphysic. The universe is held to be aimed towards a goal. Each thing in the world is held to have a part to play, a function, in achieving that goal. The function of the bee is to make honey, just as the function of a boot is to be walked in. This functionality is held to be the measure of value: a thing is good if it fulfils its function, and defective if it does not. But a thing is also held to be *defined* by its function—a bee *is* a maker of honey.

The measure of value is therefore the same as the measure of self-actualisation: an item in the world is more or less fully itself accordingly as it is a good (i.e. functional) or bad (i.e. non-functional) example of its kind. A chair that can be sat upon with ease is both a good chair and fully a chair, whereas one so broken up that nobody could possibly sit upon it, even for a second, is so bad a chair that it is hardly a chair at all. And this is held to apply to human beings even more than to chairs. A man who fulfils his function is held to be both a good man and fully a man; a man who fails to fulfil his function is held to be defective, both in the sense of being bad, and in the sense of being only a parody of a man. Goodness, including moral goodness, is therefore understood as the business of making oneself what one really is—realising oneself—by developing all of one’s powers in the right way so that one is capable of fulfilling one’s function. The task of the moralist is to determine man’s place in the teleological scheme, thereby to know his function, and thus to determine what it is good for him to do.

In recent years, this teleological metaphysic has been described as a mere unverifiable speculation, and the idea of a general metaphysical system underlying human values has been abandoned. But the Aristotelians have something else to offer besides their general teleology. Their talk of the moral importance of self-realisation—and in particular of the moral importance of realising a person’s capacities for achieving certain standards of activity—draws attention to the connection between morality and non-moral standards. For

the Aristotelian, morality is not a hostile force competing with our non-moral judgements; it is, on the contrary, something that intrinsically leads us towards ‘doing things well’ in a non-moral sense.

I shall argue that this Aristotelian insight is central to the understanding of our morality, that although the Kantians are right about the *form* of our moral judgements (classifying them as those judgements superior to purpose), the *substance* of our morality—what we value morally—is derived not from this abstract form, but from our non-moral standards. I shall suggest, in other words, that:

the fundamental belief underlying our morality is that a person should engage in intelligent, purposive activity to the highest possible non-moral standard, and should promote such standards in others.

I shall argue that all of our moral views are expressions of this ‘principle of standards’.

What is meant by ‘an intelligent, purposive activity’? Amongst the activities that do *not* qualify are: sleeping, basking mindlessly in the sun, and day-dreaming. One may, of course, go to sleep or bask in the sun with a purpose; but the ‘activity’ itself does not involve forming intelligent purposes or making decisions. This is in contrast to the activities that *do* qualify as intelligent and purposive, amongst which are: playing golf, running a business and conducting a symphony. In each of these cases, the forming of purposes and the making of decisions is internal to the performance. An intrinsic part of playing golf is aiming to hit the ball in a certain sequence; an intrinsic part of running a business is intending to sell one commodity rather than another; an intrinsic part of conducting a symphony is deciding to lead the orchestra through the score at a certain pace. It is the presence of such aims, intentions and decisions within the activity that defines it as intelligent and purposive.

Only activities that are, in this sense, intelligent and purposive can be performed well or badly. Such evaluations would be quite out of place in an activity that was not, in the required sense, intelligent and purposive. One might, of course, say that someone ‘slept well’ or ‘had a good sun-bathe’; but this would not constitute an evaluation of the person’s performance within the activity; it would merely tell us that the ‘activity’ had fulfilled its external purpose—that the sleep or the sun-bathe had, involuntarily, ‘gone well’. In an intelligent, purposive activity such as golf, by contrast, one does evaluate the participant’s performance. Such activities have standards *intrinsic* to them. A good player of golf not only holes the ball, but also does so in a way that conforms with the rules and intrinsic purposes of the game. Using a game of golf for an external purpose—e.g. to embarrass one’s opponent by cheating—may constitute a clever manœuvre, but it does not constitute playing to a high standard.

The standards of good and bad performance differ from one activity to the next, not only in substance but also in category. Sometimes, as in manufacturing, they are set principally by the consumer; at other times, as in philosophy, principally by the practitioners. Sometimes, they are judged by the nature of a product—a car or a sewing machine; sometimes, by the nature of an achievement—the conquest of Everest, or a win at bowls; and at other times, by the quality of an action—an elegant dance or a well-turned salute. Nor are these distinctions dichotomous: a single activity may simultaneously be subject to several different forms of judgement and standards.

Besides being complicated, standards are changeable. The conception of a good speech or a good salute may alter from time to time and from person to person: different demands may be made, different rules laid down. Indeed, a person may sometimes have his own standards, shared by nobody else. But even when standards are in this sense personal and subjective, they must nevertheless be in principle public and factually explicit. To have meaning, a standard must be something whose achievement can in principle be judged by observers conversant with the relevant practice. In this sense, a standard is necessarily objective.

Where an activity is intelligent, purposive and governed by standards, people may be said to engage in it at varying levels of proficiency. The ultimate achievement is the full development and exercise of one's abilities to the point where one performs all intelligent, purposive activities perfectly. This ultimate is impossible, not only in practice but also in theory: there are many activities—such as artistic creation—to which the notion of perfection does not apply. But one can aim constantly at better performance. It is the pursuit of such standards of performance in oneself and others that I hold to be the explanatory principle of our morality.

It may be thought that there are five obvious objections to this thesis:

*Objection 1: The principle of standards is an empty theory because it does not provide any criterion for deciding which activity a person should be performing to a high standard at a given moment.*

In one respect, this objection is valid. The principle of standards does not provide an absolute criterion for ranking activities. It does not tell us whether we should, at a given moment or during the course of our lives, seek rather to play the piano beautifully or to do mathematics cleverly or to make delicious cakes. Nor does the theory tell us whether it is better to spend our lives performing a few activities at a very high standard, or exercising many at a lower standard.

But this lack of a criterion for ranking activities does not make the theory empty. On the contrary, it is a strength of the theory, because our morality also lacks such a criterion. We do not distinguish morally between the man who devotes his life to bridge-building and the man who devotes his life to administration. If we do attempt to make such judgements, and argue about them, we eventually give up in disgust, admitting that this is a case of *chacun à son goût*.

Our morality is in this sense liberal: it admits of many possible forms of life, and does not establish a hierarchy amongst them. The principle of standards echoes this liberalism.

*Objection 2: The principle of standards does not account for the fact that we condemn murderers and other evil-doers; a crime is, after all, a highly intelligent and purposive form of activity; a believer in the principle should therefore recommend us to engage in it to the highest possible standard.*

This objection ignores a vital part of the thesis. The principle is 'that a person should engage in intelligent, purposive activity to the highest possible standard *and should promote such engagement in others*'. Crime clearly does not promote standards of performance in other people. Indeed, no form of killing, maiming, imprisonment or other maleficence can fall into this category. Such actions will—according to the principle of standards—be justified

(or indeed permissible) only when the deprivation of opportunities experienced by the victim leads to greater gains in the standards achieved by other people.

The principle of standards does not, of course, seek to provide a calculus of gain and loss. It implies that it is *ipso facto* a bad thing to reduce or impair a person's abilities, whether that person is oneself, or another, or a multitude of others. And it does not attempt to tell us, any more than our morality tells us, how we should balance one such evil against another. At most, it suggests that, *ceteris paribus*, the impairment of one person's abilities to perform activities successfully is a somewhat less bad result than the impairment of many people's: but *ceteris* rarely are *paribus*. Here, as elsewhere, the purpose of the principle is to identify the principle underlying our morality, not to reform that morality or to make it more precise than it is.

*Objection 3: The principle of standards is just another form of utilitarianism or consequentialism.*

The principle of standards is in one way like utilitarianism: it makes consequences important; it pays attention to the effect of actions upon the subject and upon other people. In this sense, the principle is 'consequentialist'. But the proponent of the principle does not need to be ashamed of this. Our morality, too, is to some degree consequentialist. Of course we concern ourselves with intentions, reasons and characters; but we also concern ourselves with the states of affairs—the consequences—that actors, with their characters and reasons, bring about through their actions. None of these categories is primary in our morality. We believe that a person should bring about the right sorts of consequences for the right sort of reason, with the right sort of intention, and as part of the right sort of character—each form of rectitude being equally and independently important. None of this is denied by the principle of standards.

Unlike utilitarianism, the principle does not commit its subscribers to the naïve view that consequences are primary. The principle places emphasis on character—a character so endowed with the self-regarding virtues that its possessor is able to perform intelligent, purposive activities to the highest possible standard; also on intentions—the intention to promote the successful performance of such activity in oneself and others; and on reasons—the acknowledgement that such promotion of successful performance is an overriding reason for action. Because the thesis is not seeking to justify or reform our morality, it does not need to impose an artificial primacy of consequences: it merely seeks to identify the criterion of goodness that underlies all our moral judgements—whether of character, reason, intention or result: the promotion of the highest possible standards of activity in oneself and others.

*Objection 4: Judgements based on a concern to promote non-moral standards cannot be truly moral judgements because they do not have the independence from, or superiority over, particular purposes that characterise the moral.*

This objection confuses purposes and standards. When a person is teaching someone to drive, his purpose may be to earn his salary by any means possible; but fulfilling this purpose by keeping the pupil ignorant so that he keeps coming back for more lessons does not constitute promoting a high standard of driving. On the contrary, such an attitude involves

teaching badly oneself and inducing another person to drive badly. Like any intelligent, purposive activity, teaching and driving have their own *intrinsic* standards, and it is these that the principle of standards exhorts us to promote: merely achieving a preference or purpose that one happens to adopt when one is engaged in the activity is by no means the same as living up to those intrinsic standards. Judgements based upon a concern for non-moral standards of performance are, therefore, absolutely independent of the particular purposes entertained by given performers on given occasions. Such judgements do *not* have the hypothetical form ‘if you want X, do Y’; they have the categorical form ‘since you are engaging in activity X, live up to the standards appropriate to that activity and help others to do so’. As a result, they are characteristically *moral* in form.

*Objection 5: It is not clear how a person can identify the activity in which he is engaging at a given moment, or how he can tell which non-moral standards apply.*

This objection is, in one sense, valid: each activity can be described in several different ways, and different standards apply accordingly as different descriptions are chosen. A person who is building a road may either be engaged in construction *tout court*, or he may be engaged in the creation of an entire transport system. In the first case, the appropriate standards have to do with the effectiveness of the road as a road, whereas in the second the standards have to do with the effectiveness of the road as a contribution to the entire system: something that is good as a road may nevertheless be worse than a railway for getting people from A to B. Similar examples could be adduced from every walk of life. And there is no hard-and-fast method of determining which level of activity a person is engaged in at a given moment, or which standards ought to apply. Nor does the principle of standards supply any new method of arriving at such determination.

But this is not a lacuna in the thesis. It is a feature of our world, which gives rise to moral problems in exactly the same way that the thesis leads one to expect. Medical scientists are regularly faced with a moral dilemma between advising high standards as doctors (curing this patient) and achieving high standards as scientists (spending time on research). The dilemma is real, because our morality—being based upon the principle of standards—does not offer us a hard-and-fast means of deciding between the two possible activities or between the two sets of standards appropriate to them: it merely tells us that both considerations—both sets of standards—are important, and that a balance therefore needs to be struck. Where two people genuinely disagree about the non-moral standards appropriate in a given case, they are likely also to disagree about the morally desirable course of action. No amount of theorising will wish such arguments and balancing acts away. Nor, however, will any amount of theorising persuade us that there are no standards appropriate to given activities. In practice, we recognise and live by such standards day in, day out: if (unimaginably) we ceased to do so, our entire form of life would collapse in ruins.

If the obvious objections against the principle of standards do not apply, what are the arguments in favour of the thesis?

*Argument 1: The principle of standards accounts for our beliefs about the other-regarding virtues.*

A banal but nevertheless important advantage of the thesis is its ability to account for the complexity of our beliefs about the other-regarding virtues—those virtues that people

should show towards one another—of which the first is beneficence. According to the principle of standards, the virtue of beneficence is not the same as mindless ‘do-gooding’; it consists not merely in ‘being nice’, but in helping people to perform intelligent, purposive activities to the highest possible standard. Thus, the schoolmaster who punishes his pupil to help him learn to read is beneficent, regardless of whether the pupil now, or in the future, is pleased to have been punished or to have acquired the skill of reading; the act is beneficent because it increases the pupil’s ability to perform an intelligent, purposive activity. Conversely, the hippy who gives heroin to his girlfriend is not beneficent, even if the girl wants the drug now and will want it yet more hereafter, because the use of heroin will diminish the girl’s ability to perform activities to a high standard.

These examples show that the principle of standards is capable of explaining aspects of our morality that utilitarianism leaves unexplained. In contradiction to utilitarianism, and in tune with the principle of standards, we do regard the schoolmaster as beneficent and the hippy as evil, regardless even of the long-term preferences of their beneficiaries or victims. Nor are these exceptional cases: we generally regard actions that help the subject to perform intelligent, purposive activities as beneficent. True, we disapprove of busybodies who constantly interfere in people’s lives with the intention of ‘helping them to improve themselves’. But this disapproval stems from our distaste for the motive or for the means, rather than for the ostensible intention: a busybody is condemned because he interferes with people without in fact helping them to perform intelligent, purposive activities to the highest standard, either because he is really interested in his own glory rather than in their benefit, or because he is too foolish to see that constant interference is not the best way of helping people to exercise and increase their abilities.

One of the advantages of the principle of standards is that it can make sense of this fine distinction between forms of interference. Because our morality is founded upon a concern for high non-moral standards, we praise and admire those acts that intrude upon a person’s freedom in such a way as to promote such standards; but at the same time we despise all those intrusions that, through domination or excessive restriction, or by any other means, impede a person’s performances. Here, too, the balance is difficult to achieve—difficult enough to constitute one of the great moral challenges, and difficult enough to be analysed into a plethora of different qualities. We require a person to exhibit towards others not merely beneficence in general, but also its sub-species: generosity, magnanimity, sympathy and sensitivity. The utilitarian may in practice be sufficiently sophisticated to admit these shades and tones of beneficence; but his fundamental thesis does not allow him to recognise such shades in his moral judgements. For utilitarianism, generosity consists merely in giving people what they—now or in the long term—want to possess; magnanimity consists merely in allowing people to escape what they want to avoid; sympathy, merely in imagining what will please people; sensitivity, merely in recognising what will be hurtful to people.

By contrast, for us, and for the principle of standards, such qualities involve not merely a recognition of want but also, and primarily, a judgement of need. A person who has these qualities constantly starts with the desire to promote the standard of the recipient’s performance of intelligent, purposive activity—a need of which the recipient may not even be aware; this desire is then balanced against the acknowledgement that, to achieve such standards, the recipient requires a great degree of freedom and will also generally (though

not always) be the best judge of his own best course of action. Real generosity is therefore, for us and for the principle of standards, a balance between giving what the giver thinks the recipient needs, and giving what the recipient himself thinks he wants; magnanimity, a balance between allowing those things that the judge thinks the judged needs, and allowing those that the judged himself thinks he wishes; sympathy, a balance between imagining for oneself what will open the way to a renewed vigour, and seeing what the other thinks will be soothing; sensitivity, a balance between recognising what will hurt profitably and what will hurt damagingly. Because, in each case, the ground of the judgement is the desire to bring about high standards of performance of intelligent, purposive activity, and because in each case this desire is accompanied by the knowledge that one cannot usually make such judgements accurately on behalf of another person, each quality becomes, and remains, a delicate tension between interference and subservience—a tension that has to be resolved, case by case, by the exercise of a practical wisdom that cannot be given in a recipe, and that must be acquired by long and often unsuccessful practice. Unlike utilitarianism, the principle of standards acknowledges and accounts for this tension, and thereby explains the delicacies of our attitudes towards beneficence.

The principle of standards also explains our attitude towards the somewhat harsher virtue of honesty. This is in contrast with the failure of both the strict Kantian and the utilitarian. The strict Kantian begins with his fundamental assertion that we may morally do only what we could command all others to do; he then notes that, when choosing whether or not to perform a dishonest act, we logically cannot issue the universal command, ‘be dishonest when you choose’, since this command, if made universal, is a nonsense; obedience to it would make all utterances untrustworthy, and would thereby rob the distinction between the honesty and the dishonesty of meaning. The strict Kantian therefore concludes that dishonesty is never permissible; but this doctrine is notoriously too strenuous to match our morality, which at times permits us to approve of dishonesty, because its consequences seem so beneficial. The strict Kantian is unable to explain such laxity.

The utilitarian, on the other hand, is unable to explain the intensity of our moral attachment to honesty. The act-utilitarian is totally at a loss, since his thesis would give honesty no intrinsic value whatsoever. Act-utilitarianism requires us to regard an act as good or bad accordingly as it does or does not maximise the satisfaction of preferences, regardless of its honesty or dishonesty; whereas we in fact regard dishonesty as something to be avoided under all but exceptional circumstances. The rule-utilitarian can in principle overcome this difficulty, since he can explain our attachment to honesty as a product of our adherence to a general rule that generally results in the satisfaction of preferences. But his view that preference-satisfaction is the basis of our morality obliges him, for the sake of consistency, to argue that such adherence is superstitious and that if we were sensible, we would be attached not to honesty in itself, but rather to honesty-in-so-far-as-it-promotes-the-satisfaction-of-preferences.

And this doctrine misses the point: *we are* attached to honesty in itself; what we require is an explanation of this fact, rather than a utilitarian theory that dismisses that attachment as a superstition.

The principle of standards escapes the defects of both the Kantian and the utilitarian, explaining both the intrinsic value that we attach to honesty, and our willingness to approve of dishonesty under certain circumstances.

Ordinary honesty—presenting things as one sees them—is generally a help to other people who are trying to achieve high standards: it is easier to do things well if one is not being misled by another person’s lies. Intellectual honesty—trying to see things as they are—is also generally a help to high standards of performance: it is easier to do things well if one is not being misled by one’s own or other people’s intellectual laziness. But these connections between honesty and standards are merely like the utilitarian account: they explain our attachment to honesty only in so far as it generally contributes to higher standards. Honesty, in fact, has a closer connection with the principle of standards than these generalisations suggest. Honesty is *itself* a motive for doing something well: namely, for representing things as they are and for seeing things as they are. High standards of accuracy spring out of honesty: to be dishonest either in the ordinary or in the intellectual sense is in itself to forsake such standards. This is true, regardless of the effects that the forsaking of accuracy may have on other aspects of life.

The principle of standards consequently gives honesty a special place, identifying it as a virtue intrinsically related to high standards of accuracy. This is in marked contrast to the utilitarian, who has no special brief for honesty, and who can at best explain our views by speculating that honesty satisfies more preferences than it leaves unsatisfied. But the principle of standards at the same time avoids the strict Kantian view that all forms of dishonesty are at all times impermissible. For although the principle of standards gives honesty an intrinsic moral value, that value is nevertheless capable of being overridden by other moral considerations. A minor dishonesty of politeness may be legitimate, or even praiseworthy, since—despite its intrinsic defect as a motive for lower standards of accuracy—it may smooth the way for a host of high standards of other kinds. And a major dishonesty may on a given occasion be legitimate or even required, since it may be useful to, or even a necessary condition of, the preservation of life and engagement in intelligent, purposive activities. The principle of standards thus explains not only our deep attachment to honesty, but also our willingness to approve abandonments of it from time to time.

*Argument 2: The principle of standards accounts for our beliefs about the self-regarding virtues.*

The superiority of the principle of standards over Kantianism and utilitarianism as an explanation of our morality is most evident when one considers those ‘self-regarding’ virtues that a person displays when he is ‘on his own’: the courage of the lone sailor, the humility of the hermit, the patience and self-honesty of the intellectual in the garret, and the self-restraint of the tramp who keeps himself from drinking the remainder of the whisky bottle. The utilitarian cannot account for such virtues because there is no evidence that self-regarding courage, humility, perseverance, honesty and restraint always conduce to the greater satisfaction of preferences than their opposites: cowardice, pride, impatience, dishonesty and intemperance. Nor can the Kantian provide a satisfactory account, because many of the self-regarding virtues can be universally ignored, and the corresponding self-regarding vices universally recommended, without any species of inconsistency.

The principle of standards, however, can account for our admiration of these virtues, because they are all motives for excellence. This is not merely to say—as a consequentialist might—that courage, perseverance and self-restraint happen frequently to raise the standards achieved by a person. It is, rather, to say that these virtues are established, specified, defined by their connection with standards. Courage *is* a willingness to pursue high standards in the

face of danger. Aristotle's thesis that a virtue like courage consists of a mean between the 'too much' and the 'too little' is absolutely applicable: the 'too much' (i.e. rashness) and the 'too little' (i.e. cowardice) cease to be motives for high standards and become ends in themselves. When a big-game hunter is rash, he is intent on rushing into danger, heedless of the effect of catching the lion; when he is cowardly, he is intent on rushing away from danger, equally heedless of high standards of hunting. Only the courageous man keeps his mind on the job when danger sets in. Of course, courage can often be a motive for pursuing high standards in bad activities: a courageous thief keeps at his thieving when faced with danger, neither rushing rashly towards the danger nor fleeing cowardly from it. This is why we call courage a self-regarding virtue. In respect of the self, it is always—by definition—a motive for excellence; whereas in its effects on others it can be harmful, reducing other people's capacities to achieve high standards. Perseverance falls clearly into the same category. It is by definition a motive for excellence, since it is a willingness to persist with the pursuit of high standards in the face of difficulty: too much of this quality—persistence as an end in itself, even when no higher standard can be achieved—is mere stubbornness; too little—a willingness to desist even when this leads to lower standards—is weakness. But true perseverance, like courage, can also be a motive for achieving high standards in a bad activity that is harmful to other people's capacities. It is intrinsically linked to high standards, but only in respect of the self. In a less obvious way, the same is true of a softer self-regarding virtue such as self-restraint. This virtue, too, is intrinsically connected with the pursuit of excellence: a person has the quality of self-restraint when he allows himself only such indulgences as contribute to the pursuit of high standards—when he keeps his mind on those standards and does not allow himself to be distracted by the 'too much' (self-denial) or the 'too little' (self-indulgence). But this quality is equally linked to the pursuit of high standards in bad activities which harm others: the criminal, too, needs self-restraint if he is to execute his crimes to a high standard.

The principle of standards is, in other words, capable of explaining both the moral admiration which we attach to the self-regarding virtues, and our classification of them as self-regarding. The admiration arises from their intrinsic connection with the pursuit of high standards by the subject; the classification as self-regarding arises from the lack of any necessary connection with the promotion of high standards for other people.

*Argument 3: The principle of standards accounts for our beliefs about the treatment of animals.*

Another advantage of the thesis is its ability to account for our moral beliefs about the treatment of animals. We regard it as morally wrong wantonly to mistreat an animal; we regard the same mistreatment as morally worse if applied to one of the 'higher' animals than to one of the 'lower'; and yet we place all animals 'below' human beings. The utilitarian can certainly account for our general concern, since animals have preferences that cry out for satisfaction; but he cannot account for the hierarchy that we impose, because he has no grounds for supposing that the preferences and satisfactions of men are superior to, or are more worthy of respect than, the preferences and satisfactions of chimpanzees; or that these are superior to the preferences and satisfactions of domestic cats. The Kantian is also in difficulty, since he must either allow cat-torture on the grounds that it can be universally recommended to human beings without inconsistency, or else banish all differences

between the treatment of different species on the grounds that every creature has a point of view which should be taken equally into account.

The principle of standards does not face these difficulties. The proponent of this thesis can plausibly explain the fact that animals count in a way that vegetables and minerals do not. His explanation is that animals, unlike vegetables and minerals, have the ability to perform intelligent and purposive activities, and that we therefore have a general duty to further—or at least not wantonly to stunt—the successful exercise of these abilities. But the abilities of animals to perform intelligent, purposive activities cannot be developed as far as those of human beings: one can condition a dog to take many sorts of order, but one can only to a very limited extent educate it to form and execute purposes of its own. The principle of standards therefore also explains our beliefs about the relative importance of different living things. We care morally about the fate of animals because they have some ability to engage successfully in intelligent, purposive activity; but we rank human beings above animals and some animals above others because their abilities to achieve high standards of performance are greater.

*Argument 4: The principle of standards accounts for our attitude towards creativity.*

The ability of the principle of standards also to explain our attitude towards creativity is another of the advantages. It offers a natural explanation of the fact that, although a person does not have a duty to be creative, he may under certain circumstances have a claim to be so which can be set against moral duties.

A person who has devoted his life to a particular form of activity—such as art, mathematics or bridge-building—and who as a result performs it extremely well, is not only achieving very high standards in that activity, but also depends on a high level of dedication to achieve those standards. When Monet painted the water-lilies, when Newton invented calculus and when Brunel spanned vast rivers, they did something superbly well—something which they could not have hoped to match if they had been constantly diverted from their work. It is therefore no surprise to the proponent of the principle of standards that we attribute special moral importance to the pursuit of creativity in those who possess talents for such creation to a remarkable degree. But it is also no surprise that this moral importance is expressed in the form of a subjunctive rather than in the form of an imperative: even the great creator can engage successfully in other activities, and engagement in these other activities is legitimate. The most we can say is that, in a given case, a person's talent for a particular form of activity—his capacity to rise above the general standard of performance—is so great that his failure to exercise it would constitute an appalling waste. This waste might well be compensated by some form of extreme beneficence such as helping a crippled mother to remain mentally alive and to achieve standards of activity which would not otherwise be open to her. The principle of standards can therefore explain both sides of our attitude to high-powered creativity: our admiration for it, and our recognition that it is not of overriding importance.

*Argument 5: The principle of standards accounts for our attitude towards love and friendship.*

The final advantage of the principle of standards is its ability to account for our moral beliefs about love and friendship. We do not absolutely demand that a person should be a lover or a friend: the life of a hermit may, under some circumstances, be admired. And we

also admit that both love and friendship may be woefully perverted: literature is full of such perversions. But, despite these caveats, we generally regard love and friendship as morally valuable: we generally think it a cause for shame if someone has no loves or friendships, and a cause for admiration if his loves and friendships are enduring and deep.

The Kantian cannot explain these attitudes. His thesis does not oppose love or friendship, but it does not commend them either. From his point of view, there is nothing wrong with a person who loves no one and likes no one, because no form of self-contradiction is implied by such isolationism. The utilitarian, meanwhile, favours love and friendship, but only in so far as they lead to greater satisfaction. He can explain our belief that these relationships are commendable, but he cannot explain our belief that they are *intrinsically* commendable. So far as he is concerned, it is a matter of mere guesswork whether the lover or the friend gains or suffers more by his loves and friendships than the ‘insulated’ man who avoids all real affections. Our belief that even the failures are worthwhile is incomprehensible to the utilitarian.

The principle of standards can explain the belief that love and friendship are intrinsically morally valuable. For loves and friendships are not things that—in the sentimental, colloquial phrase—one ‘has’. Rather, one *makes* them. They call on every resource of intelligence and imagination; they are indeed, *par excellence*, examples of intelligent, purposive activity. Deep love and friendship is therefore one of the ends that the principle of standards represents as intrinsically and morally important. But the principle can also explain our attitude towards the hermit. No individual can hope to engage successfully in all activities all the time; we have many options open—many routes to activity and improvement. The hermit chooses one such route: he sacrifices his abilities for love and friendship, and seeks instead to engage in some other set of lonely activities, and to practise self-regarding virtues. We therefore admit his life as morally permissible, though we recognise the loss that he suffers.

Nor does the principle of standards commit us to an undiluted admiration for all loves and friendships. Successful performances that are held to be intrinsically valuable may nevertheless become so consuming that they reduce the subject’s opportunities to perform other activities successfully. For us, and for the principle of standards, a love or a friendship becomes perverted once it makes the participants slaves of an obsession and prevents them from achieving the general standards of performance that they might otherwise have achieved.

I have advanced various arguments in favour of the principle of standards as an explanation of our morality: it can account for our beliefs about the other-regarding virtues; about the self-regarding virtues; about duties to animals; about creativity; and about the moral value of love and friendship. And I have replied to a number of obvious objections: the principle of standards is not empty because of its refusal to rank activities; it does not commend murder or other forms of gross maleficence; it is not, in any deleterious sense, another version of utilitarianism or consequentialism; it does not fail to acknowledge the special form (the ‘categorical’ independence of purpose) that characterises moral judgements; and it does not depend on precise agreement about the nature of the activity in which a person is engaging at any given moment or about the standards appropriate to that activity.

It is important to be clear about the status of this argument. I do not, by any means, intend to suggest that the principle of standards ‘justifies’ or ‘validates’ or provides a ‘rational ground’ for our morality. Nor do I mean to suggest that the morality of all people at all times will necessarily conform to what I have described as ‘our morality’; or that their morality will be explicable in terms of the principle of standards. I mean to suggest only that one possible morality—a morality shared between myself and those with whom I regularly converse—does have this form and *is* explicable in terms of this principle.

But the central point is *not* that some other morality may be different; it is that, for us at least, the war between moral and non-moral standards is fiction rather than fact. If our morality is, indeed, based upon the belief that a person should engage in intelligent, purposive activity to the highest possible standard and should promote such standards in others, then there is—for us—no need to choose between the pursuit of high non-moral standards and the pursuit of high moral standards. There are not two selves, one setting moral standards, the other non-moral standards. Instead, in seeking high non-moral standards for ourselves and for others, we are *ipso facto* acting morally: there is just one self, setting, and attempting to live up to, both sets of standards as part of the same enterprise.

Of course, there remains the problem of balance: how much time and effort to devote to the pursuit of higher standards in oneself, and how much to devote to promoting high standards in others. No moral theory that seeks to explain our morality as opposed to reforming it can dispose of this question because our morality itself does not solve it for us. If we fail to pursue high standards ourselves, people will rightly regard us as hopeless layabouts or as deeply uninspiring examples; these will be moral judgements. If, on the other hand, we spend our entire time tuning up our own standards of performance in various activities and fail to concern ourselves in the least with the encouragement of standards in others, we shall rightly be regarded as selfish and lacking in kindness. Because our morality is based upon a concern for standards everywhere, rather than merely in ourselves, it leaves us with an inescapable obligation to balance different goods.

But a balancing act is not warfare: there is no ultimate disjunction or tension between two absolutely different sets of standards, as the romantic pessimists would have us believe. Instead, our moral standards express our continuing concern to promote high non-moral standards of performance in all men (indeed, in all creatures), and this continuing concern is manifested in a continuum of co-ordinated effort, coherently evoking all the faculties and all the aspirations. Unlike the romantic pessimist, who condemns the search for non-moral perfection to the rubbish heap of human history, our morality—unified by the principle of standards—asks men to ‘do well’ in every respect, and to help all others do so. If we did not already have such a morality, we would want to invent it.

## 4

# Reason and Passion

The thesis that human beings are torn between the pursuit of moral excellence and the pursuit of non-moral excellence has traditionally been linked to an equally false thesis that human beings are torn between reason and passion. Plato's picture of a rational self battling against the irrational, passionate self has been absorbed by every schoolboy. It is generally believed that anger, sorrow and desire are dangerous, irrational powers that can all too easily overtake us and cause us to do what our reason forbids.

This image of a disjunction and tension between the rational and the irrational is common to two different kinds of romanticism. There is the dry, teutonic, Kantian romantic, who maintains that the salvation of humankind depends on the absolute subjugation of the irrational by the rational. And there is the poetic, Burkean romantic, who maintains that salvation depends upon abandoning the pretensions of puny human reason in favour of guidance by the passions, because the passions have, in history and under the guidance of the Almighty, created rivers through which human life can run towards its destination.

Jane Austen would not have seen much sense in either of these forms of romanticism. Her characters are not Herculean figures, holding apart the warring armies of passion and reason. They are people whose passions, though real, are inextricably connected with their understanding of the world and of one another. They lead more or less sensible lives, accordingly as they are more or less capable of maintaining 'composure'—that is, the capacity to interpret to themselves the cognitive, rational foundations of their own passions, and thereby to reconcile these passions with the rest of their lives. In other words, Jane Austen sees each passion as expressing—being founded upon—a certain attitude towards the world; an attitude taken up by the subject of the passion because of the way in which that person understands the world.

This thoroughly unromantic understanding of passion has always had its philosophical adherents. Unlike Plato, Aristotle never suggested that there need be a permanent struggle between reason and passion; like Jane Austen, he regarded the passions as expressions of cognitive attitudes which could be gradually altered by the cultivation of new habits of thought. Something of the same conception may perhaps be found in Aquinas and in Hegel. But it is modern Anglo-Saxon philosophy that has thoroughly and conclusively established the intrinsically cognitive and, in that sense, rational nature of emotion.

The argument that has established this point is extremely simple and absolutely compelling: it is, that we do not recognise any human condition as an example of passion or emotion unless that condition is based on the subject's understanding of his own situation. If a man starts back, trembling and nauseated on coming face to face with a lion, he is said to be in the grip of the emotion, fear, because his symptoms arise from an understanding on his part that he is in danger; if the starting, trembling and nausea had been caused directly by an electric shock, without any perception of danger on his part, then they would not constitute the emotion, fear.

Each emotion is, of course, connected not just with cognition in general, but with a particular form of cognition—a particular understanding of the world. It is nonsense to say that someone is angry because he approves of what has been done; such a thing could be said only by someone who was either making a joke or else was misinformed about the meaning of the words he was using. One might, of course, approve of something, whilst for some other reason being angry; but approval itself cannot be a reason for anger, any more than disapproval can be a reason for joy. Anger, fear and sorrow intrinsically involve the cognitive judgement that one's situation is not as it ought to be; whereas joy involves the judgement that one's situation *is* as it ought to be. Fear involves the judgement that one's situation is flawed because of the possibility of some event in the future which may in principle be averted—i.e. a danger; whereas sorrow involves the judgement that the flaw is a certainty. It is true, of course, that one can become frightened of some event that is unchangeable, but only if one either mistakenly believes the event to be changeable, or else imaginatively recreates for oneself a set of circumstances in which it was still changeable, as when reading a novel. Similarly, a convinced pessimist like A.A.Milne's Eyore may be miserable about what are in fact mere possibilities, but this is because his pessimism extends to treating possible evils as disasters which are already unavoidable.

Not all emotions are as neatly packaged as these examples suggest. If a person feels himself trembling on being told that his son has been shot but is likely to survive, he may well be unsure whether his response is one of anxiety for the son's safety or relief at his escape from death. But, even in the case of such mixed or uncertain emotions, reason is and has to be present. The feeling of trembling is recognisable as emotional only because it has been caused by the subject hearing and understanding the news; if the cause were cold weather rather than a cognitive perception of the situation, it would be called shivering from cold, not trembling from emotion.

The most complex emotions, like love and jealousy, cannot be tied down to a single judgement. If Harold is in love with Jane, he will no doubt be delighted when he hears her praised, angry when he hears her slandered, and afraid when he hears that she's in danger. If he is jealous, he will not only be miserable when he sees her dancing with John, but also overjoyed when he sees that John is an appalling dancer. But all of these different attitudes are based upon judgements of the situation, and upon an understanding of the relationship between that situation and the subject's projects. It is because Harold knows what is going on, and how it will affect him and Jane, that his responses to the various things that happen constitute both the particular emotions of the moment and the general conditions of love and jealousy.

The passion on which the romantics normally dwell most is desire. They represent desire as an irrational experience or sensation that has the capacity to cause actions independently of (and counter to) reason. The inadequacy of this thesis becomes evident when we recall that most of our desires are not manifested in the form of experiences or sensations, but rather in the form of dispositions or tendencies to perform voluntary actions. My desire to write this book is not, for the most part, an experience that I undergo as I write, but rather a tendency or disposition on my part to continue until the end. And one sign of this is that the 'strength' or 'intensity' of my desire is measured not by the vivacity of my sensations, but by my resistance to obstacles: if I continue, despite all enticements to desist, my desire is strong, even if I have not experienced a single sensation; whereas if I abandon my writing

at the slightest opportunity, my claim to have a strong desire will be dismissed, regardless of the sensations that I may have experienced.

These observations about the logic of desire make nonsense of any attempt to separate it from reason, since all dispositions or tendencies to perform voluntary actions involve reason. My desire to eat strawberries—that is, my disposition or tendency to eat them—involves at least three forms of rationality. I must be able to recognise them. I must be able to think of means of getting them. And I must have acquired the skill of employing those means with at least some degree of success. These forms of rationality—recognition, imagination and co-ordination—are not mere incidental accompaniments to the disposition; they are intrinsic to it. Without them, the systematic pursuit that constitutes the disposition could not exist. If I did not have the ability to recognise a strawberry when I saw one, I could not deliberately seek them in preference to other fruit; it would be a matter of pure chance whether I ate them. But even if I were capable of recognition, I could not regularly pursue the strawberries unless I was also able to imagine means of finding them; in the absence of such imagination, I could at most happen upon them serendipitously. And even recognition combined with imagination about means would not be sufficient to establish a regular pattern of strawberry-seeking: the pattern would be visible only if I were also able to make at least some recognisable moves towards obtaining them, either physically manipulative (e.g. grabbing them) or verbal (e.g. asking for them); and all such moves require a degree of intelligent co-ordination.

True, the reasoning involved in such recognition, imagination and co-ordination is practical rather than theoretical. To manifest the disposition, I need to know in practice *how* to recognise, *how* to imagine means, and *how* to make co-ordinated moves; I do not need to know, in the abstract, *that* a strawberry is such and such a kind of a fruit, *that* the best means for obtaining one are these and these, or *that* the first move should be described in a certain way. But this practical knowledge is every bit as rational as the theoretical variety. Indeed, theoretical knowledge ultimately depends upon practical abilities: only those who have the practical skill of using conceptual languages can engage in theory. Knowing *that* a certain proposition is true or false depends upon knowing *how* to formulate and interpret the proposition in question; knowing abstractly that some object is a strawberry depends on—is, indeed, an exercise of—the practical skill of knowing how to spot a strawberry. To say that dispositions or tendencies to perform voluntary actions involve practical reason is therefore to say, without qualification or apology, that they involve rationality. And if our desires are often cast in the form of such dispositional tendencies, then they, too, must involve reason; they must, indeed, be manifestations of our rationality.

Of course, desires are not merely dispositions or tendencies to perform voluntary actions. When two lovers yearn to be with one another, or when an angry man sees his enemy and has an intense urge to attack him, these are not merely preferences exhibited in tendencies and dispositions; they are episodes of experience—‘goings-on’ of which the subject is directly aware. Such episodes take at least two different forms: some are passive ‘wishes’ or ‘yearnings’ that are not associated with any immediate programme of action—yearning to be on the move, or yearning for the return of a lost one; others are ‘urges’ to perform certain specific and immediate acts—an urge to tell the ticket inspector that he is an idiot, or an urge to grab the last piece of chocolate.

Active urges are the form of desire most frequently set against reason in the romantic picture of mental life. The traditional Kantian romantic represents the moral man as one who follows his rational perception of the proper course of action despite his urge to do the opposite; and the traditional Burkean romantic reverses this picture, arguing that reason should be a slave to urge, employed to calculate how the urgently desired end can most sensibly be achieved. In both versions of the romantic account, the urge itself is held to be an experience wholly disjoined from rationality.

The traditional attempt to separate reason from urge has seemed plausible because urges have been represented as sensations that cause one to act. If an urge is a sensation, like a pain or an itch, it cannot be regarded as endowed with reason; and if it is also causally related to action, it will be an irrational force opposing rational calculation. This causal theory of urge finds support in the common metaphor of force and resistance: we speak of an urge 'driving one to action', and of a person 'resisting his urges', both of which locutions would be appropriate if urges were causes. But congruence with metaphor is not a sufficient argument. Those who support the causal theory of urge are under an obligation to provide a plausible account of the form of causality that is involved, and this cannot be done.

In what sense could felt urges be causes of action? Clearly, they are not causally necessary, since I often act without experiencing any preceding urge, as when I write this sentence. Nor can they be causally sufficient, since I sometimes experience an urge and yet refrain from action; much of what we call 'self control' involves this sort of internal opposition. The only possibility, therefore, is that urges are causally contributing in the sense of being sufficient to bring about action, when combined with other psychological or physiological causes. A causal theorist might say, for example, that my urge to scratch myself is the sort of thing that would cause me to scratch if, but only if, I have at the relevant time no overriding moral or prudential objections to such scratching. But this causal account misrepresents the relation between a person and his actions. If the account were correct, I would on some occasions be the spectator of a voluntary action such as scratching myself: supposing that I had no objection to scratching, the urge would force me to scratch without my having to do anything further in the matter. Whereas, in fact, I am never the spectator of my own voluntary actions: no matter how strong my urge, and no matter what my psychological or physiological state, I always have to do something after the urge in order to scratch myself: I have to scratch myself.

A further objection to the causal theory is that it cannot account for the infallible capacity of the subject to identify his urges. If the theory were correct, my recognising a given sensation as 'an urge to take a piece of cake' would depend upon my identifying the sensation as 'that which would (given the correct conditions) cause me to take the cake'; and such causal identification, being an observation about contingent fact, might be mistaken. In other words, the causal theory implies that a person may be mistaken about his own urges. But this implication is false. Just as a person cannot be mistaken about whether he is in pain, so he cannot be mistaken about his urges: anything that seems to me to be painful is painful; and anything that seems to me to be an urge to perform a given action is an urge to perform such an action—regardless of subsequent empirical findings.

If felt urges are not 'sensations that cause action', what are they? I answer that they are sensations of discomfort allied to conscious beliefs about immediate means of relief. This, I shall call the 'sensation belief theory of felt urge: the theory cannot be proved true; but it can be shown to have considerable explanatory power.

Felt urges have four principal characteristics. (1) They are a form of active desire: to have an urge is to be disposed to act. (2) They concern the present: to have an urge is to want to act now, not later. (3) They are mental episodes: to have an urge is to have a feeling. (4) Their objects are always and incorrigibly known to the subject: to have an urge is infallibly to be aware of the action that one wants to perform. All of these characteristics can be explained by identifying a felt urge as ‘a sensation of discomfort allied to a conscious belief about immediate means of relief’.

Let us suppose that I have an uncomfortable sensation of thirst, and am aware that I could relieve this discomfort by immediately drinking a glass of water in front of me. According to the sensation-belief theory, this is a paradigmatic case of feeling an urge; and it has each of the required characteristics: (1) I have a disposition to drink because my thirst, being a discomfort, is a sensation that I am, *ceteris paribus*, disposed to remove, and I know that by drinking I shall remove it. (2) My concern is with the present, because I know that I could *immediately* take the glass of water. (3) I am actually experiencing something, because I can feel the discomfort. And (4) I am infallibly aware of the object of my urge, because that object is specified by my own conscious belief about the deed that would relieve my discomfort.

The sensation-belief theory can, in an analogous way, account for a wide range of urges, including the urge to eat, the urge to scratch, the urge to sneeze, and the urge to excrete. In each case, the urge consists in a feeling of an uncomfortable sensation (hunger, itching, tickling in the nose or throat, pressure on the bowels or pancreas), accompanied by a conscious belief about some presently available means of relief. And the theory can also accommodate less obvious cases, such as that of a lover who feels an urge to caress his beloved, or that of a son-in-law who feels an urge to tell his mother-in-law that she’s an idiot. For in such cases, too, there is a discomfort allied to conscious belief about immediate means of relief—though here, the discomfort arises not from physiological depletion or irritation, but from the frustration of action. Where action flows smoothly and uninterruptedly, without any preceding discomfort and without any disruption, we do not feel any experience of urge. The lover does not feel an urge—does not have time to feel an urge—if he caresses his beloved as soon as the idea occurs to him. Nor does the son-in-law feel an urge if he finds his insult arising naturally in the course of the argument. Rather, as Ryle points out, the feelings of urge are experienced when the subjects are ‘inhibited from acting’ (*The concept of mind*, London, 1963, p. 103): the lover feels an urge to caress when, with an uncomfortable effort, he holds back from caressing and knows that he could dispel the discomfort by ceasing to hold back; the son-in-law feels the urge to insult when he has the words on the tip of his tongue, and painfully keeps himself from uttering them. This is what explains the connection of urge with habit: as it becomes habitual for me to carry through with a certain action, holding myself back becomes more difficult and more uncomfortable; and the sensation of that increased discomfort—allied to the conscious belief that I could relieve myself by continuing with the action—constitutes an intensified urge.

The sensation-belief theory is important because it implies that urges are intrinsically connected with, rather than disjoined from, rationality. An irrational being might be so constructed that it automatically reacted in certain ways to certain sensations caused by certain stimuli. But only a rational being could possess the skills of recognition and imagination required to form a belief about the means of altering his sensations. To have such a belief is to possess a form of practical, rational understanding. Moreover, the urge

will be present only when the practical belief about moves towards relief is allied to a disposition to engage in those moves. And a dispositional tendency to engage in voluntary action can be manifest only by a being endowed with yet another aspect of practical rationality—manipulative co-ordination. For without co-ordination, the being would be capable only of haphazard activity; he would not be able to organise voluntary actions into coherent patterns or tendencies.

In short, if the sensation-belief theory is true, felt urges necessarily involve the same three forms of practical reason—recognition, imagination and co-ordination—that are present in purely dispositional forms of desire. And if this is true, then the traditional account of reason and desire as opposing forces in moral life is false, both in respect of dispositional desires and in respect of felt urges. The self cannot be the subject of a struggle between reason and desire, because desire of both kinds is in itself intrinsically rational.

The powerful onslaught launched by modern Anglo-Saxon philosophy ought to have persuaded people that reason and passion, so far from being two disjointed ‘selves’ in the human psyche, are intrinsically connected with one another. Everyone ought to have been persuaded that the passions, whether in the form of the emotions or in the form of sheer desire, intrinsically involve rational judgements and rational capacities. But there is no sign that the medicine has worked. Indeed, the patient is still terminally ill: almost everyone still believes that reason and passion are fundamentally disjointed from one another. Why is this?

It is tempting to dismiss this persistent and widespread view as a mere superstition which deserves no further comment. But the temptation needs to be resisted: so many people may be wrong about the nature of passion; but they must have some reason for thinking what they do. And the reason is not far to seek. It is very well expressed by the theoretical psychologist, P.T.Young, who writes that:

If all behaviour were well-organised and directed towards a goal, there would be no need for a concept of emotion (*Motivation and emotion*, New York, 1961, p. 344).

There is something obviously right about this. If one could imagine a man who always did what was prudent, who never said an unnecessary word, whose heart never gave an unnecessary flutter, who never contemplated impractical possibilities, one would have imagined a man without emotions. The concept of emotion is intrinsically linked with the impractical, the imprudent and the unnecessary. Emotion is, in other words, in some sense a disruption of ordinary business-like activity. And since ordinary business-like activity is the paradigm of rational conduct, the connection between emotion and the disruption of such activity makes it plausible to think of emotions as somehow irrational.

It is not, however, easy to specify what form this emotional disruption takes. Young’s theory is that an individual is subject to an emotion if he

is affectively disturbed by the environmental situation to such an extent that his cerebral control is weakened or lost and sub-cortical patterns and visceral changes appear (*Motivation and emotion*, p. 358).

But this description cannot account for the calm passions, fleeting resentments, the passing disappointments, surprises and pleasures which are manifest only in a momentary thought or a slight change in the tone of voice, and which do not by any means weaken or destroy the subject’s mental control.

A more refined account of emotional disruption was provided by John Dewey in two important articles written in the 1890s. Dewey starts with the Darwinian view that there are certain actions which were once performed by our ancestors or ourselves as part of achieving some end, but which now remain only in the form of automatic beginnings of action. He maintains that such automatic beginnings of action can sometimes be provoked by circumstances which also give rise to fully developed, purposeful activity. If, for instance, someone tells me that I am a coward, I may have an automatic tendency to tighten my fist (perhaps inherited from an ancient tendency to fight), and yet may on this occasion decide that it is appropriate to laugh the insult off. Dewey believes that the ‘conflict and competition’ between the automatic beginning of action and the fully developed, purposeful activity is ‘the disturbance of the emotional seizure’ (‘The theory of emotion’, *The psychological view*, vol. II, 1895, p. 29). Emotion is, in other words, conceived as the disruption of an automatic bodily response by a conscious cognitive response.

No doubt Dewey is mainly thinking of quite violent emotions, but his theory is nevertheless better able than Young’s to accommodate the calm passions, since even a slight irritation, disappointment or relief may be accompanied by a holding back from action. It is not uncommon, for instance, to hear someone say that for a moment he thought he might do something unpleasant. There are, however, other objections to Dewey’s theory. If I throw myself into joy, without the least effort at self-control, without any conflict between automatic and purposeful behaviour, won’t that be just as much a case of emotion as any that Dewey can adduce? Can I not wallow uninhibitedly in my sorrow? Of course, such self-indulgent emotions are very often mere pretence; but there is no reason to suppose that they are always so, and in such cases, there does not seem to be any tension between an inherited automatic response and a conscious programme of action.

A different account of the disruptive quality of emotion is given by Sartre in his ‘Sketch for a theory of the emotions’. Sartre points out that human beings normally regard the world as a collection of objects causally related to one another. This means that they recognise that certain actions need to be performed in order to achieve certain effects, and recognise, too, that—since only one action can be performed at a time—it is impossible to change everything at a single blow. The achievement of any given effect is consequently ‘difficult’; it involves solving a series of problems, and solving them in the right order. If the difficulty becomes too great for someone to bear, then, instead of continuing to attempt a rational solution of the problem, he may have a fit of anger, or run away terrified. According to Sartre, these escapes from difficulty are a sort of ‘magic’; when someone engages in ‘magical’ activity of this sort, the world ceases to be regarded in terms of cause and effect and instead takes on qualities such as ‘hateful’ or ‘terrifying’. And the angry or frightened person, instead of realising that the world appears to have these qualities only because he is engaging in magical behaviour, believes that the objects around him really are hateful or terrifying in the same way that he might at other times believe them to be wooden or grey. He reacts appropriately to the new-found qualities of the world, without any abstract or self-conscious awareness of what he is doing, just as he might at other times chop down a piece of wood with an axe or repaint something grey, without having to engage in any abstract speculation about the nature of his activity. Sartre holds that this kind of magical reworking of experience constitutes emotion. He adds that such reworking occurs not only when people face insoluble problems posed by a world of cause and effect,

but also when people come face to face with objects which cannot be regarded as things to be made use of—namely other people and such objects as are invested with the personality of other people.

This theory avoids the pitfalls of Young and Dewey. Unlike Young, Sartre can accommodate the calm passions by describing them as momentary and incomplete magical disruptions of business; and, unlike Dewey, he can explain uninhibited indulgence in emotion as an utter absorption in the magical world. There is, however, also another less attractive feature of Sartre's theory. This emerges when he describes joy as:

Magical conduct which tries, by incantation, to realise the possession of the desired object as an instantaneous totality...the various activities expressive of joy, as well as the muscular hypertonicity and the slight vascular dilation, are animated and transcended by an intention which sees the world through them. This world seems easy, the object of our desires appears to be near and easy to possess. Every gesture is a stronger approbation. To dance, to sing for joy—these represent the conduct of symbolic approximation—of incantation. By this means the object—which in reality one could not possess except by prudent and, after all, difficult actions—is possessed at once and symbolically. ('Esquisse d'une théorie des émotions', *Actualités scientifiques et industrielles*, Paris, France, 1035, pp. 38–9)

Is it plausible to describe the quiet joy a person might feel on learning of a friend's minor success in these terms? Need there, in such a case, be any 'incantation', any effort to 'realise' a 'possession' as an 'instantaneous totality'? The answer is provided by Sartre himself when, instead of attempting to fit his thoughts to this sort of calm emotion, he says that 'we must...distinguish between the joyful feeling which betokens an equilibrium or a state of adaptation, and emotional joy' (op. cit., p. 38). This amounts to saying that since emotion is (according to Sartre's theory) a particular magical reworking of experience, any calm and relatively uneventful episode which we could normally call an emotion, but which does not involve such a magical reworking, is *ipso facto* not an emotion. In other words, Sartre is unable to apply his theory to the case of quiet joy; and this indicates that there is some defect in his analysis of the disruptive quality of emotion.

Similar problems afflict the explanation of emotional disruption recently put forward by W.Lyons (*Emotion*, Cambridge, 1980). Lyons says that an emotion must involve a 'physiologically abnormal state'—i.e. the emotion in some sense disrupts the normal workings of the body. Here, too, the case of quiet joy seems to be inexplicable: if my joy is expressed in the jauntiness of my step and in the tune I am humming, without my experiencing any unusual physiological changes, how can it be said to have disrupted my normal bodily state? Similarly, with a dull form of sorrow a person might find that he could not bring himself to smile when people make jokes, and this alone could convince him (and everybody else) that he was sorrowful without there being any 'abnormal' physiological occurrences.

Young, Dewey, Sartre and Lyons do not succeed in identifying the particular form of disruption involved in emotion. But they are nevertheless pointing to something extremely important, because emotion does in some way distract from ordinary business; it is in some way linked with the concepts of the imprudent, the impractical and the unnecessary. This aspect of emotion is connected with its relation to passivity. As Richard Peters has pointed out, emotions arise when individuals 'are passive rather than active' ('Motivation, emotion

and the conceptual schemes of common sense' in T. Mischel (ed.), *Human action, conceptual and empirical issues*, New York, 1969, p. 156). We regularly talk of people being 'made miserable' and of their being 'in the grip of fear'—locutions which suggest passivity rather than activity. Indeed, the association of emotion with passivity is so ingrained in the popular consciousness that the term 'passion' has come to be used as a virtual synonym for 'emotion'. And this capacity of emotion—indeed, of all passions including urges—to grab people, to render them helpless, is part of what makes emotion disruptive. When an emotion comes along, it becomes difficult, sometimes almost impossible, for the person involved to continue his ordinary, rational, business-like activity. He feels himself to be in the sway of a foreign power. Hence the impression that emotion is an irrational force set over against the rational self.

These facts of experience speak louder than all the volumes of modern Anglo-Saxon philosophy. They induce people to go on believing—despite arguments to the contrary—that passions *are* irrational forces. They make people go on believing the Platonic picture of man as a divided being.

One can see why people who experience emotion as a disruptive force are inclined to think of it as an irrational force. But, for all its plausibility, the conclusion is mistaken. And the error derives from a failure to recognise the systematic ambiguity of the term 'rationality'.

'Rationality' has two distinct senses. It can mean the exercise of reason: in this sense, recognition, imagination, co-ordination, judgement, preference and all other forms of cognition are rational. Or it can mean the exercise of 'right reason': in this sense, a man is acting rationally if he does what he knows will achieve his ends, and irrationally if he does what he knows will not achieve his ends. People are usually rational in both senses: they engage in activity which is both cognitive and explicitly designed to achieve their ends. Indeed, the term 'rationality' is applied to both, because cognition is so frequently and so fundamentally linked to the fulfilment of ends. One can, however, engage in activity that is rational in the first sense and not in the second. The great tennis player who studiously avoided stepping on the lines throughout his career was displaying 'rationality' in the sense that he had made a (cognitive) decision to behave this way; but he was acting 'irrationally' in the sense that he knew his action did not contribute to his aim of winning the game, and he had no other particular reason for avoiding the lines.

Once these two forms of rationality—the cognitive and the end-related—are clearly distinguished, it becomes possible to understand how emotion or passion, though thoroughly cognitive, can nevertheless be, in another sense, disruptive and 'irrational'. This comes about because the peculiar form of disruption or 'irrationality' involved in emotion is the disturbance of the normal relations between a value-judgement of a situation and the expression of that judgement in activity. Normally, when a person judges his situation as favourable or unfavourable, he expresses that judgement—if at all—in some activity which is instrumentally related to it: that is, he seeks to achieve ends or results in accordance with it. When this occurs, both forms of rationality are present: rational cognition in the judgement, and a 'rational' or 'business-like' implementation of the judgement in activity. Most of life is like this: if a person judges some job as worth having, he will typically express the judgement in efforts to get the job. There are, however, occasions when the normal instrumentality of business-like existence (the normal 'rational' connection between

value-judgement and action) breaks down—occasions when a person behaves in ways or feels sensations that express a value-judgement of a situation, but that are *not* intended to achieve any result appropriate to it. Such ‘useless’ expression of judgement is the hallmark of emotion.

When Thomas leaps with joy on discovering that he is awarded the school prize for Mathematics, he is expressing a favourable judgement of the situation; but he will no doubt admit that he leaps simply because he feels like doing so, without having the least intention of achieving anything. The position is similar when Harold is gloomy and unresponsive following the death of his wife, or when John retires to his office after a stormy meeting in the boardroom and sits there feeling tense and almost shaking with fury. Unfavourable judgements of the situation are being expressed, but by behaviour and sensations which are not designed to improve matters.

A disruption or qualification of instrumentality may be present in episodes of emotion, even when these episodes are to some degree connected with instrumental acts. If I angrily slam a door that has been banging with the wind, then my action is in part an instrumental expression of my judgement—something done with a purpose of remedying the undesired banging—but there may nevertheless be some qualification of instrumentality, since the anger may give rise to a vehemence in the slamming that is quite unnecessary, and even unhelpful; the anger may, in other words, add something ‘useless’ to the otherwise ‘useful’ act. And it is this addition of ‘uselessness’ that distinguishes the activity as emotional.

Another case of the same sort is heartfelt congratulations. If I display signs of delight when I am congratulating someone on a recent achievement, my joy—the smile, the look in my eyes—may well make the purposeful, instrumentally organised announcement of my favourable judgement more convincing. And yet, the expressions of joy need not themselves be instrumentally linked to that judgement. On the contrary, their power to make the announcement appear sincere derives precisely from their being understood as performances that were *not* intended to further my aims—performances whose guilelessness is guaranteed by their purposelessness.

This uselessness is what distinguishes a husband, who strikes his wife in the course of a violent row concerning a now-ended but only recently discovered adulterous relationship, from a bank robber, who coshes a recalcitrant clerk in order to get at the money. In each case, the behaviour of the person who is doing the hitting expresses an unfavourable judgement of the situation. And yet, we would not describe both acts as expressions of anger. Certainly, the husband’s aggression might be described in this way; but the robber’s would be described as a straightforward, unemotional crime. The difference is that in the robber’s case, the coshing of the clerk ‘makes sense’ because it is instrumentally related to his judgement of the situation—it helps him to get what he wants; whilst in the husband’s case, the hitting of the wife is not instrumentally related to the judgement—it does not make sense. The husband, unlike the robber, strikes in the knowledge that he cannot thereby improve the situation, because the adultery is already past. The explanation ‘he did it because he was angry’ becomes appropriate when the possibility of instrumental explanation fails.

A conceptual connection between emotional episodes and the disruption of instrumentality is also apparent in cases of fear. It is true that we sometimes apply the term ‘fear’, even when the subject’s behaviour is instrumentally related to his judgement of the situation: we

say that Mr Gorbachev signs the arms limitation treaty because he ‘fears’ that otherwise the Americans will outpace him, and the act here is certainly instrumental to the prevention of the undesired circumstance. But would we say that such signing constituted an emotional state of fright? Would we not say, rather, that—in the emotional sense of the word—Mr Gorbachev acted fearlessly in signing the document without a quavering hand? Only if Mr Gorbachev, in addition to signing the treaty, began to tremble and to do and feel other things that bore no instrumental relation to his judgement of the situation, would it become reasonable to describe the episode not merely as an example of unemotional ‘fearing that otherwise’ but also as an occurrence of emotional fear.

The same point arises in connection with love. The person who is consistently kind to others may be said to act out of ‘love’ for humanity. But when such a person engages in one of his acts of kindness—for example, looking after an old neighbour in distress—we do not describe this instrumental attempt to alter the situation for the better as an emotional episode; we merely say that the person acted well. If, on the other hand, John meets Jane whom he has been thinking about and discreetly trailing for the last week, and if, on meeting her, he fumbles for words and constantly readjusts his tie, then we do call this non-instrumental, ‘useless’ behaviour an ‘emotional’ expression of love.

The existence of a conceptual link between emotionality and the disruption of instrumentality is also suggested by the fact that behaviour, which at first appears to be an expression of emotion, will cease to be so regarded if it is discovered to be instrumentally connected with the judgement from which it arises. If James coos with apparent delight when his aunt gives him a lollipop, a bystander (who is aware that James is doing this only in order to enhance his chances of getting a second lollipop) will regard the act not as a genuine expression of joy, but as a calculated and dispassionate contrivance. If a wife begins to moan when she sees her husband dancing with another woman, this might at first seem an expression of misery; but if we discovered that the wife had acted in this way only in order to harm her husband’s reputation more effectively, then her action would be described as something that was merely made to *look* like misery. Or again, if a child began to play with his father’s cigarette lighter, and the father shouted at him to put it down, one might at first take the shouting to be an expression of wrath; but if it became evident that the father had put on an irate tone of voice only as a means of obtaining obedience rapidly, and hence preventing the child from hurting himself, the instrumental connection between the judgement and its expression would make this, too, recognisable as a dispassionate rather than an emotional act.

The connection with non-instrumentality also serves as a basis for distinguishing emotional predicates like ‘sorrow’, ‘fear’, ‘love’, and ‘jealousy’ from predicates like ‘esteem’, ‘respect’, ‘disapproval’ and ‘caution’, which equally denote patterns of cognitive activity, but which we do not call emotional. The distinction is between those predicates that, in at least one standard use, denote the non-instrumental expression of judgement, and those that never denote such non-instrumentality. Thus, ‘fear’ is an emotional predicate (‘an emotion’) because one of its standard uses is to describe episodes in which the subject non-instrumentally, emotionally, expresses his judgement that he is in danger; whereas ‘cautious’ is an unemotional predicate, because to qualify as cautious, the person must not merely express a conservative judgement of the situation, but must also systematically attempt to fulfil that judgement in an instrumental fashion.

It is this connection with non-instrumentality that gives emotion its justified reputation for being ‘irrational’ despite its manifest connection with rationality in the sense of understanding and cognition. Emotion is ‘irrational’ in the sense that it disrupts or qualifies normal ‘rational’ business-like activity, because it involves the expression of a judgement, whether in actions (voluntary and involuntary), in physiological occurrences or in sensations, which do not carry that judgement through in a normal business-like way. Emotion is, in other words, ‘irrational’ in the sense that it is ‘pointless’. Emotion ‘does not make sense’ in the way that normal business-like activity does, and this ‘nonsense’ is its ‘irrationality’.

Once it is understood that the irrationality of emotion consists in its non-instrumentality, its ‘uselessness’, rather than in any disjunction between reason and emotion, it becomes possible to understand the sense in which emotions are passive. There are clearly all sorts of senses in which emotions are highly active. They can involve literal physical activity: a person who slams a door in fury is active compared to a person who lies still in a hammock. But readily observable physical movement is not the only kind of activity. A person is also active if he is engaging in some invisible behaviour such as the silent solving of a mathematical problem; and in this sense, too, emotions are active—fear can take the form of silent worry. Nor do we speak only of behaviour itself as active. A person is also said to be active in respect of changes in the world which have been brought about by his behaviour: if, in a blind rage, I fire a gun at a politician, I am active in respect of his death, whilst the bystander who merely watches is passive. A person is also said to be more active if his behaviour is voluntary than if it is involuntary—turning the door-handle is more active than having it turned by someone on the other side. And many expressions of emotion *are* voluntary: leaping for joy, or hanging one’s head in sorrow are things that one does, not things that merely happen to one.

In all these senses, emotions can be active. But there is one special sense in which emotions must be passive if they are judgements ‘uselessly’ expressed. This is the sense in which Charlotte Brontë’s heroines are passive. They have strong preferences, but they do not make co-ordinated efforts to bring about what they prefer. These novels are called ‘tragedies of passivity’ because people are thought to be ‘active’ if they make efforts to mould the world to their will, and ‘passive’ if they merely hope that the world will alter in their favour. This special form of passivity—the failure to mould the world in accordance with one’s preferences—is clearly present whenever a judgement of preference is made and then ‘uselessly’ expressed, as it is in emotion. If I sense that a colleague is about to be promoted, and if I judge this to be a bad thing because it blocks my own chances of promotion, but then express this judgement in ‘useless’ emotional ways, making bitter remarks and addressing him in a hostile voice, then I am being, in an important sense, passive; I am failing to take active steps, such as working harder or marrying the boss’s daughter, which would give me a better chance of being promoted and thus be ‘useful’, instrumental expressions of the judgement. This does not apply only to envy. The genuine tears of a sorrowful man express his judgement that the situation ought to be changed, but they are not aimed at bringing about that change. The genuine smiles and relaxation of the happy man express his judgement that the situation is as it ought to be, but they are not aimed at prolonging that situation. This is what leads us to talk of the emotional state as something which, for all its active ingredients, ‘comes over’ or ‘comes upon’ us and renders us passive.

True, an emotion can sometimes qualify rather than prevent an attempt to affect the world in accordance with one's judgements. One can be in an emotional state and simultaneously be active in the sense of attempting to affect the situation in a certain way—as when a young man tremblingly asks his beloved to marry him. But a person can be active in this sense only in so far as his condition is not purely emotional. The young man may both tremble and perform an act that is not *per se* an expression of emotion, such as asking for his beloved's hand in marriage; but if his trembling is so pronounced that it prevents him asking, then his response is, in the relevant sense, thoroughly passive, and, for the same reason, wholly emotional. The description of emotion as 'a judgement "uselessly" expressed' accounts for the traditional association of emotion with passivity because it asserts that, to the extent that a person is in an emotional state, he is necessarily subject to the form of passivity which consists in the failure to set about affecting one's situation in accordance with one's judgements.

A signal instance of such emotional passivity is the form of desire known as 'passive wishing' or 'yearning'—the yearning to be on the move, or the yearning for the return of a lost one. These yearnings are emotions that people feel when they make a judgement of some future circumstance and have no intention of implementing that judgement in a business-like way. A person who yearns to own a great painting derives joy from imagining how much he would like showing it to his friends, but he also feels sorrow when he realises that he is not in fact going to be able to buy it. Nostalgia, too, is like this, in relation to the past rather than the future: the nostalgic person first joyfully imagines the past as a possible future, and then recognises with sadness that this future is, after all, past.

What marks off yearning and nostalgia is precisely their 'useless' passivity—the person's acknowledgement that his judgement will not or cannot be carried through into business-like activity. If this passivity disappears, if the person sets about making money to buy the painting, or persuading people to recreate the past of which he approves, then the yearning and the nostalgia also disappear, because they are too thoroughly 'useless' and passive to sustain that level of active achievement. The person is now swept up in the project of purchasing the picture or of recreating the past: the tinge of sadness that accompanied the recognition of inevitable failure; and that made his condition one of yearning or nostalgia, has disappeared.

It is important to notice that this analysis of the relations between emotions and passivity does not preclude the possibility of a person being morally responsible for his emotional state. If the necessary passivity of emotion consists not in an absence of behaviour or control over behaviour, but rather in the failure to set about affecting one's situation in accordance with one's judgement, then it is possible to ascribe moral praise or blame to certain aspects of emotional states. Most of us attach moral significance not only to intentions, actions and effects, but also to the way in which a person regards or understands the world, and his own position in it: to live with a set of smouldering, incapacitating resentments is generally conceived as something evil. And on this view of morality, emotions as I have described them will—despite their passivity—be of the utmost moral importance because every expression of emotion is to be understood as the expression of a judgement or attitude. The fact that in emotion the judgement is expressed 'passively' or 'uselessly' is irrelevant; the presence of judgement is enough to give the emotional state a moral significance.

Nor should it be thought that aspects of emotion beyond the subject's control are to be exempted from moral evaluation. True, there is a general principle that a person is morally praiseworthy or blameworthy only for what he can alter—the principle sometimes expressed as 'ought implies can'. But this principle is compatible with the attachment of blame to uncontrollable expressions of emotion because, although one cannot alter those expressions at the time of their appearance, one can (as Aristotle suggests) gradually turn oneself into the sort of person who has certain emotions and makes certain judgements. If I teach myself over the course of many years to attend to and act in relief of the pain and misery of others, I am likely, when I see the child run over by the bus, to find myself regarding the situation as one contrary to my preferences; and this unfavourable judgement, if it is manifested in any emotion, will be manifest in sorrow rather than in joy. If, therefore, one manifests joy under such circumstances, albeit in a manner beyond one's present control, one may legitimately be blamed for having become—having allowed oneself to become—the sort of person who makes the wrong sort of judgements under those circumstances.

The description of emotion as a 'useless' expression of judgement can, then, explain two features of the world. The first is that emotions are generally regarded as a species of passivity; and the second is that people are often praised or blamed even for those aspects of their emotional states that they cannot control. Given certain theories, such as Locke's view that an emotion is merely a sensation, the passivity is explicable but the moral praise or blame is not: why blame someone for experiencing a certain sensation? One might as well blame him for experiencing an itch. Given other theories, such as Solomon's description of emotion as 'a basic judgement about our Selves and our place in our world', the attribution of praise and blame is comprehensible, but the attribution of passivity is unintelligible, since there is nothing intrinsically passive about a judgement of the world. Only when attention is drawn to the 'useless' way in which judgements are expressed in emotion, does it become possible to explain both the special connection between emotion and passivity, and the fact that at least some of us attach great moral importance to all aspects of our emotional states. The moral praise or blame attaches to the judgement which is being expressed in the emotion, whilst the special passivity arises from the fact that the expression itself never takes the form of a fully active, business-like attempt to achieve results in accordance with one's judgements.

The moral significance of emotion is not, however, restricted to the merit or demerit of the judgements expressed in particular emotional states at particular times. We also attach praise or blame to a person's general propensity, or lack of propensity, towards emotion. And the views that we take about such matters seems at first sight inconsistent. On the one hand, to say that someone has 'no emotions' is to make an unfavourable comment, an accusation that would typically be reinforced by derogatory predicates such as 'coldness' and 'inhumanity': one would not want to be described as a 'cold, inhuman, emotionless person'. On the other hand, it is also possible to turn the statement that someone *does* have emotions into an accusation: male chauvinists say that women should not be appointed as administrators, because they are 'so emotional', and female liberationists recognise the evaluative force of the description when they reply that women are 'no more emotional than men'. We have, in other words, a double attitude to emotion, partly favouring it, partly condemning it.

Both sides of this attitude become comprehensible when emotion is understood as the 'useless' expression of judgement.

The strange form of approval that we bestow upon emotionality, the 'warmth' that we attribute to it, becomes comprehensible when it is realised that emotions involve a qualification of instrumentality, a degree of 'uselessness'. Imagine two worlds. The first is what might be called a 'utility world', in which the only artefacts are such items as shopping lists, cash registers and instruction manuals. The second is our present world, which includes not only the items found in the utility world, but also others such as poems, sculptures and tunes. The relation between the actual and the utility worlds mirrors the relation between the emotional and the emotionless person. Just as the emotionless person is taken up with the purely business-like, instrumentally organised procedure of fulfilling his judgements, so the items to be found in the utility world—the shopping lists, cash registers and instruction manuals—are things designed to be used as aids in the successful completion of specific projects; and just as the emotional person engages in behaviour that 'gets him nowhere', so the artefacts that are added in the actual world—the poems, sculptures and tunes—to some degree qualify the business-like organisation of means and ends, because we do not think it appropriate to regard these things as mere aids to our projects. Of course, the suggestion of similarity must not be taken too far, because in the one case the qualification of instrumentality lies with the spectator (he who witnesses but does not 'use' the poem, sculpture or tune), whilst in the other it lies with the actor (he who expresses but does not instrumentally fulfil his judgement). Nevertheless, there remains an important analogy. In each case, the monolithic instrumentality of a system is being disrupted—whether the system be that of user and object used, or that of judge and judgement fulfilled.

Which of the two worlds do we prefer? Obviously, the second, fuller world that we actually inhabit—since there would otherwise be no reason for us to have expended such great efforts in bringing it about. We have, in other words, a preference for the qualification of monolithic instrumentality. And in the context of this preference, it is possible to make sense of the fact that we approve of people who display some propensity towards what we call emotion. The emotionless person, whose cognitive life is entirely taken up with the purposeful fulfilment of his judgements, seems to us unattractive and 'like a machine', not because he is really like a machine (he may be imaginative, inventive, and morally preoccupied in ways that machines are not) but rather because he shares the unmitigated directedness of a mechanistic system, and lacks the quality possessed by most human beings, of at least occasionally disrupting that directedness.

Once our approval of emotionality is seen in this light, it becomes possible to account for the odd status of the judgements in which that approval is couched. To call a person 'warm, human and emotional' is not, in an ordinary sense, to make a moral judgement. If I am trying to establish a man's moral character, my case will not be made stronger by the observation that he feels emotion: he may be highly emotional and yet in every other respect morally unworthy, always inconsiderate of others, cowardly, lacking in magnanimity, dishonest and so forth; such cases may not occur in reality, but we can at least imagine them. At the same time, attributions of 'humanity' and 'warmth' cannot be regarded as expressions of judgement concerning usefulness. We might describe a person as 'warm' or 'human' even if he had proved extraordinarily prudentially useless, as when

the Chairman of the Philosophy Faculty says that Jones, though an entirely redundant member of the teaching staff, is nevertheless a remarkably warm individual. Perhaps the most appropriate way to describe these judgements is to call them aesthetic, as is suggested by the employment of the perceptual metaphors of warmth and coldness. And yet, there is something unsatisfactory even about this characterisation, because judgements are normally called ‘aesthetic’ only if they are in some way connected with concepts such as beauty and ugliness; and it is not immediately obvious in what way emotional people are more beautiful than emotionless ones.

We can understand the fact that our favourable judgements of emotionality are so odd—neither moral nor prudential, both like and unlike aesthetic evaluations—when we acknowledge that the commendable attribute of the emotional person is the qualification of instrumentality that his life represents. Given that this is the basis for the commendation, we could hardly expect the approval of emotionality to be moral, because a person whose instrumental activities are sometimes inhibited or qualified by emotion need not be morally better than one who constantly and unemotionally seeks the instrumental fulfilments of his judgements. Indeed, the emotional qualification of instrumentality may make one morally worse: the emotionally self-indulgent layabout is morally less admirable than the dry but conscientious businessman. Moreover, our judgement in favour of emotion would clearly be something other than a prudential evaluation of usefulness, since a person whose behaviour includes disruption of instrumentality may be not more but less useful than one whose life is instrumentally organised.

There will, however, be a link between our favourable judgement of emotion and aesthetic judgement because—as Kant points out, and as the example of the utility and actual worlds suggests—one instance of our preference for the disruption of monolithic instrumentality is our preference for a world that contains what might be called ‘aesthetic’ artefacts, such as poems, sculptures and tunes. But this is not to say that we are, in any standard sense, making an assessment of beauty when we favour the qualification of instrumentality by calling it a sign of ‘warmth’, since a character whose judgements are sometimes ‘uselessly’ expressed is not thereby rendered more beautiful than one whose actions are always instrumentally organised. In other words, our favourable attitude to emotionality, springing from our general preference for the qualification of monolithic instrumentality, is like our preference for the existence of the aesthetic, but does not fit directly into any of the traditional categories of moral, prudential or aesthetic evaluations.

The description of emotion as the ‘useless’ expression of judgement also accounts in a straightforward way for the unfavourable side of our attitude of emotionality, the side that is manifest when male chauvinists say that women should not be appointed as administrators because they are ‘so emotional’. We prefer the actual world, with its poems, sculptures and tunes, to the utility world, with its shopping lists, cash registers and instruction manuals. But our preference depends upon the fact that the actual world adds to, rather than replaces, the items in the utility world. We would not be happy if there were only poems, sculptures and tunes; indeed, we would be dissatisfied if any portion of our world was so filled with aesthetic items that there were not enough utility items to do the jobs that we want done. Similarly, we praise a life that involves some emotional qualification of instrumentality, but we become displeased when the non-instrumentalities are so prevalent that the person in question cannot do what is required of him. Someone who was—*per impossibile*—entirely

emotional, whose judgements were always and in every respect ‘uselessly’ manifested, would never eat, drink or do business, would in short be thoroughly helpless, at best a self-destructive individual, at worst a drone in the community. The common dislike of ‘excessive emotion’ can be understood as a moral and prudential disapproval of those who too nearly approach this self-destructive and socially disruptive condition. It is like our disapproval of the drunkard and the drug addict.

Why does all this matter? Why should we care whether the passions are thoroughly disjoined from reason, as they have traditionally been represented, or whether they are, on the contrary, an odd and in one sense ‘irrational’ *expression* of reason?

Part of the cause for caring is philosophical. The philosophical romantic describes the human predicament as a disjunction and a tension: to make this picture plausible, he tries to establish that each human being is composed, in effect, of different selves, a ‘higher’ and a ‘lower’ aspect of the psyche. He may place the rational self above the passionate, or the passionate self above the rational; but in either case, he argues that the two are fundamentally disjoined from one another, and that they are irreconcilable forces tearing a person apart. He concludes that a person must choose between reason and passion: either reason or passion must be adopted as the ‘true self’ and be brought to dominate over the other, incompatible force.

If passion is not radically disjoined from reason—if, indeed, it is nothing other than an odd, ‘useless’ *expression* of reason—then a person cannot be represented as a composition of two separate selves, each struggling to establish itself as the true ‘me’. Of course, there will still be a distinction between ‘useful’ and ‘useless’ expressions of judgement—that is, between instrumental and non-instrumental manifestations of a judgement. A person who wishes to engage in business-like activity will still need to keep his passionate ‘useless’ expressions of judgement in check to prevent them interfering with normal, instrumental implementations. But this will be a matter of gradually acquiring certain habits of conduct, rather than of continuous tension.

If the same rational self is present as the maker of cognitive judgements, both in normal business-like activity and in passionate experience, then there is no battle between ultimately incompatible elements of the psyche. Like any other expression of cognitive judgement, the passions will be open to gradual change and refinement by persuasion, learning and the development of new habits of thought. A passion may be irrational in the sense of being ‘useless’, but it will nevertheless be sufficiently cognitive to be ‘open to reason’. The person exhibiting passions will recognise himself, and be recognised, as the same person—the same self—as when he implements his judgements in a business-like fashion. He may, indeed, find that allowing himself to develop the habit of expressing his judgements to some degree passionately may actually help him to engage successfully in business-like activity. If he is engaged in rhetoric of any kind, then allowing his passions to be evident may help to persuade his audience of the sincerity of his utterances; and if he is engaged in prolonged physical exertion (like that of a conductor in a symphony) he may find that allowing his judgements to be expressed to some degree ‘uselessly’ may carry him through the business-like performance with more aplomb than he could otherwise manage. If his judgements are themselves coherent, and if his expressions of those judgements are refined by habit, then passionate and business-like activities may come together in a harmonious, Aristotelian whole, without struggle or conflict.

To anyone interested in the philosophical study of the human mind, the contrast between these two pictures is clearly important. The recognition that passion is itself a form of reason robs the romantic of one of his mainstays. The image of the self as a being at war with itself becomes far less plausible, and the description of man as a rational animal begins to seem far more convincing—it does not any longer seem to leave out the passions.

This reinterpretation of the human self also has practical consequences. When the notion that there is a hierarchy of activities is rejected, a raft of psychological excuses goes with it; the same happens when we abandon the notion that there is a fundamental disjunction between the rational and passionate selves. Just as a person who thinks that poetry is high and housekeeping low can easily excuse himself from applying the same decent standards to housekeeping that he would naturally apply to poetry, so a person who thinks that reason is high and passion low can easily excuse himself from the blame attaching to moral monstrosities by explaining that his ‘true rational self’ was overcome by the ‘low irrational forces of passion’. Once all passion is seen to be an expression of rational judgement inalienable from the ‘true rational self’, such excuses can no longer be made. The same person is present; the same standards apply. Mean, selfish judgements expressed in emotion join hands with mean, selfish judgements expressed in ordinary business-like activity.

And with the excuses goes the fear. Just as the drudgery becomes divine when the hierarchy of activity is forgotten, the dread of the rational personality being defeated or destroyed by passion disappears when a person realises that his passions are as much a part of his ‘true rational self’ as his ordinary business-like activity. The special non-instrumental ‘irrationality’ of emotion is not denied, but it is seen as an addition to the repertoire of cognitive rationality rather than as a threat to the reason’s existence. As a result, a person does not need to achieve the total destruction of his emotions, or even the constant containment of them, in order to reassure himself that his reason is in control. He merely needs to understand the judgements of which his emotions are expressions, to question those judgements as he would any others, and so gradually to ensure that the rational attitudes expressed in his emotions are coherent with his other conceptions. And the recognition that he is capable of doing this gives him grounds for optimism: instead of having to choose between dominance by irrational passion and the horrors of a cold passionless existence, he finds himself in control of the situation and in a position to ensure that his life is neither too hot nor too cold.

The change in a person’s state of mind, on discovering that his passions are part of his rational self rather than opposed to it, is complemented by a changed attitude towards education and social policy. If the passions are understood as an aspect of rational existence, an expression of the same cognitive self that is present in ordinary business-like activity, then there is no longer any reason to regard them as forces which need to be ‘let out’ or which must not be ‘bottled up’. The stillfashionable educational theory that pupils must be encouraged to ‘release’ their feelings in order not to have them ‘pent up’ can then be seen for what it is: a superstition based on the romantic view of the passions as an irrational force. Instead of regarding the emotions as an unalterable and incomprehensible fact about his charges, the teacher who abandons the romantic view is in a position to insist that his pupils learn to make the right judgements and to regard the passions as indications of the rightness or wrongness of those judgements. So far from commending an outburst

of passion as a 'release' of forces that would otherwise become intolerable, the teacher who has abandoned romantic illusions condemns or praises the passion accordingly as it represents and expresses a commendable or blameworthy attitude to the circumstances. Similarly, the social theorist who rescues himself from the grip of the romantic myth no longer talks about the mass hysteria of the football crowd as 'a useful outlet of emotional energy', but instead sees it as a dangerous habituation of the mind to a set of attitudes which—if expressed in business-like as well as passionate ways—could all too easily give rise to the most appalling forms of human degradation.

## The Unified Self

Like all conceptions that have held sway for centuries, the romantic view of human life as a conflict and struggle between disjoined selves within the self has some truth in it. At least, it has led philosophers to recognise and emphasise important distinctions which have helped to make sense of the human predicament. The romantic idea of a hierarchy of activities has helped to emphasise the genuine differences between one kind of activity and another, and has made philosophers keenly aware that different standards of performance apply to different activities. The romantic understanding of moral judgements as elements disjoined from non-moral judgement has helped to clarify the peculiar status of moral judgements—their overriding superiority to, and independence from, particular purposes. The romantic idea of passion as a purely irrational force utterly disconnected from reason has drawn attention to the enormous differences between passion and ordinary business-like activity, and it has made us acutely aware of the ways in which the one can get in the way of the other. In all of these respects, we have to be grateful to the romantics.

But one is often grateful for the illumination cast by false theories, and philosophical romanticism—for all its illumination—is radically false. Human life does not inevitably consist of a struggle between two selves. The distinctions to which the romantic alludes are not, as he thinks, fundamental disjunctions. Activities are not in themselves high or low; there is no high self battling for dominance against a low self; a person expresses and forms his character in and through all his activities, and remains, or can remain, the same person throughout all those activities. Moral judgement is not a foreign power, standing against our non-moral values; since our morality is based upon a concern for the promotion of high standards of intelligent activity in ourselves and others, there can be a harmony of values within the self. Instead of being disjoined from rational judgement, passion is itself a non-instrumental expression of such judgement; instead of having a passionate self in tension with his rational self, a person expresses his rationality through passion as much as through business-like, instrumental activity and he is, or can be, the same person in both modes of expression.

If human life is not the constant struggle between two selves that the romantics portray, what is it? What metaphor can philosophical classicists adopt to describe the human condition? Choosing such metaphors is never easy, and it may be impossible for the classicist to find anything as simple and powerful as the romantic image of internal division. Perhaps the best that can be offered is the image of reason as a sculptor, slowly fashioning a human life and coming to understand its own capacities as that sculpted life emerges from the stone. This metaphor, of course, owes its origins to Hegel, and it is appropriate because it emphasises not only that there is a single force at work capable of creating a single, unified life, but also that the fundamental activity of the reason is the making of judgements.

Judging is in the first instance a practical rather than a theoretical activity. The primitive form of a judgement is the exhibition of a straightforward preference between two possibilities based upon a recognition of the characteristics of each alternative. When the child who has eaten two different kinds of chocolate in the past now chooses the first, a practical judgement of the most primitive kind is being made. This practical judgement need not be accompanied by any elaborate theoretical construct in order to constitute an exhibition of intelligence: the preference itself is sufficient. But to constitute a preference or a judgement, as opposed to a random move or a mere physiological event, even such a primitive choice as the child has made must have some degree of coherence with other judgements made by the same child. It has to be possible to say that the child chose this chocolate *because* of some recognition or understanding of that chocolate's relation to the past and the future; it has to be possible to say that the child would not have chosen this chocolate if he had understood the relations between it and, say, previous tastes differently.

As judgements become more complex and more interlaced with theory, coherence becomes even more important. A judgement is recognisable as such only if it can be explained within a framework: one must always be able to say that Mr A thought or decided X because he understood it to be an example of Y, and he wanted Y. And it is only possible to offer such explanations when a person's judgements are sufficiently coherent with one another to make them part of a recognisable structure. In the absence of such coherence, a person's judgements become increasingly inexplicable, and gradually cease to be recognisable as judgements at all. This process constitutes the absolute disintegration of the personality, because a person exists as a person (rather than as a mere physiological entity) only when he can be understood as the maker of judgements, and hence of choices, rather than as the mere locus of physiological reactions.

Although commonplace, these points are worth reconsidering because they identify the threat posed to the human personality by philosophical romanticism. The very *existence* of the personality is threatened by the romantic suggestion that the active reason is intrinsically incapable of maintaining coherence in its practical judgements. The romantic sees reason as aiming at something fundamentally different in its high activities from that at which it aims in its low activities; in other words, two separate networks of practical judgement are attributed to the reason, each struggling for dominance over the other. Similarly, the romantic sees a fundamental divergence between reason as a pursuer of moral standards, and reason as a pursuer of non-moral standards: once again, there are said to be two separate patterns of life in tension with one another. And the romantic sees reason as a force that faces constant diversion or even dominance by an utterly irrational, passionate self, which (because it is in no sense rational) drives action towards the random and the incoherent. The romantic is, in short, suggesting that the human personality is constantly and inevitably in danger of extinction through incoherence: he is suggesting, in effect, that each of us is really several people making a fragile pretence to be one person. This is the sense in which philosophical romanticism is deeply pessimistic about the human predicament.

Philosophical classicism, by contrast, is profoundly *optimistic*. It argues that reason need not constantly be in the process of fending off extinction through incoherence. Philosophical classicism maintains that a resolution can be achieved: a single coherent structure can be created throughout all the activities of a given person, throughout a person's pursuit of

moral as well as non-moral standards, and throughout the attitudes disclosed by passion as well as by business-like activity. The classicist is in a position to argue this because he does not believe that there is a fundamental disjunction between high and low activities, between rationality and passion, or between moral and non-moral standards; in each case where the romantic postulates disjunction, the classicist postulates ultimate congruence. Philosophical classicism, in other words, represents man as a being capable of acquiring an increasingly definite identity through ever-greater coherence in the judgements he makes: as the work of sculpture proceeds, the mass of stone becomes a more and more sharply defined figure.

The optimism of the philosophical classicist extends even further: with increasing coherence and increasingly clear personal identity comes self-possession, clarity of purpose and a capacity to be at-home-in-the-world. If a person's judgements are coherent with one another, if he is aiming at compatible things in all his activities and attitudes, then he will know easily and surely what he believes and wants, he will not find himself engaged in sudden shifts, and he will establish firmly how he stands in relation to the rest of the world. A person who exercises this capacity for unity leads the life of Jane Austen's heroes, exhibiting a degree of internal harmony that the romantic cannot imagine. There is no wild, Brontë-like 'other self' that appears when such a person is in love or misery; there is no Hyde to trouble Jekyll's placid existence; there is no pretentious worry that humdrum occupations demean the spirit; there is no sense of great endeavours and high aims constrained by a morality that fails to place value on creativity and fine workmanship; there is no fear that emotions will be compromised by rational reflection, and no ghastly prospect of the rational self being defeated by the irrational forces of passion. In all these respects, the philosophical classicist frees himself from *Angst*. But he also understands himself to be responsible for all aspects of his own life. When he is doing his work, he cannot pretend to himself that it was some other person who behaved so badly at play; when he is calmly applying instrumental reasoning, he cannot pretend that it was someone else's attitudes that were expressed in an outburst of passion; when he is trying to do some worldly thing well, he cannot cast aside his morality on the grounds that it is suitable only for slaves.

Philosophical classicism is, therefore, realistic as much as optimistic. And part of its realism consists in its recognition that the progress of a personality towards coherence and integrity, though feasible to a degree unimagined by the romantic, may nevertheless fail to be achieved. The philosophical classicist maintains only that such progress is possible; he does not by any means suggest that it is inevitable. Unity of the self is not guaranteed. A person can act as though some activities were 'low' and others 'high', adopting standards and attitudes so different in the one case from the other that he almost becomes two different people. A person can inherit, gradually grow into, consciously adopt, a morality that *is* at odds with the pursuit of high non-moral standards. And a person can allow himself to express judgements and attitudes through his passion so different from those that he expresses in his instrumental, business-like reasoning that the continuity between the two becomes almost impossible to discern. If he does these things thoroughly, he is, in a literal sense, engaging in self-destruction. If the divergence has become too radical, the personality begins to disintegrate. The philosophical classicist clearly cannot deny that this is possible—because it is the condition that we observe not only in madmen who

have lost coherence, but also in children who have not yet achieved it. In the one case, the personality has disappeared; in the other, it has not yet appeared.

Both the romantic and the classicist are bound to recognise this possibility: the difference is that the romantic regards the constant threat of such incoherence as an inevitable feature of the human condition; whereas the philosophical classicist regards any incoherence as man-made, a failure on the part of an individual. In this sense, philosophical classicism imposes on us more responsibility—indeed, a complete responsibility—for what we do and are: its optimism has a price.

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