

**SELF-RESPECTING PRACTICAL REASON:
An analysis of self-respect and its implications for practical reason.**

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the
requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

of

RHODES UNIVERSITY

by

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March 2001

Abstract

What should I do? As long as I am aware of the relevant facts of the situation and deliberating soundly, Bernard Williams argues that I should do what I want to do. It makes no sense to say that there are reasons that are fixed objects of concern, or values, that exist for an agent regardless of what she is in fact motivated to do. Reasons, for Williams, are hypothetical. I argue that he takes this view of practical reason because of a prior answer to the question "How should I live?". A universal account of the good life would mean an account of values, or interests, that all human beings should have. Williams thinks it is not possible to give a universal account of the good life for human beings; any such account must be constructed out of the particular reasons of a community. But, he takes a constructivist view of the good life because he thinks that to be universal an account of the good life would have to be objective. Since objectivity cannot be achieved, he argues, neither can universality. Williams is only half right. That objectivity is not possible is inconsequential. A foundation for ethics has to be internal, but this does not preclude it being universal. I develop such a foundation based on the Aristotelian conception of human nature. A life cannot be wholly good if it is not self-respecting. Moreover, self-respect fits the framework for the specification of the good life that this foundation provides: I argue that self-respect can be shown to have a structure which provides an account of real interests - reasons that are objects of fixed concern. As such, reasons recognise rather than construct the good, making categorical reasons possible. A person can have a reason to change or act, even if reason itself cannot effect that change or action. Thus, I can be wrong about what I should do not only by being wrong about what would count as a satisfaction of my interests, but also by being wrong about what my interests are.

CONTENTS

<u>1. Introduction</u>	Pg. 1
<u>2. The Neo-Humean Challenge: no reasons without motivations</u>	Pg. 5
1.1 <u>The Common Ground</u>	Pg. 6
1.2 <u>Williams: the necessary explanatory role of reasons</u>	Pg. 8
1.3 <u>Williams' Account of Normativity</u>	Pg. 12
1.4 <u>Problem Cases</u>	Pg. 20
<u>3. Real Interests: a foundation</u>	Pg. 27
2.1 <u>Williams: Reasons for Scepticism</u>	Pg. 29
2.2 <u>Rescuing Real Interests</u>	Pg. 35
<i>2.2.1 Internal vs. External</i>	Pg. 36
<i>2.2.2 An Internal Account of Human Nature</i>	Pg. 41
<i>2.2.3 Williams' Further objections</i>	Pg. 46
<u>4. Real Interests: self-respect</u>	Pg. 59
3.1 <u>An Appropriate Response to Worth</u>	Pg. 61
<i>3.1.1 Respect</i>	Pg. 65
<i>3.1.2 Self-Respect</i>	Pg. 77
<i>3.1.2.1 Integrity</i>	
<i>3.1.2.2 Authenticity and Identity</i>	
<i>3.1.2.3 Autonomy and the Value of Self-Respect</i>	
3.2 <u>How is a Response to Worth Possible?</u>	Pg. 94
<i>3.2.1 Basal Self-Respect</i>	Pg. 99
<u>5. Conclusion: reasons without motivations</u>	Pg. 110
<u>6. Bibliography</u>	

Introduction

The natural product of the advance of science has been to render the human life self-enclosed and purposeless; human life has no externally guaranteed pattern or purpose, unity or sense. Our being here cannot be absolutely justified: we are simply here as transient mortal creatures subject to chance. All we have is human life as it is experienced, which has no access to anything outside of it. The character of an individual human being is also contingent. Who an individual is, and the way she experiences her life, has much to do with her concrete situatedness in a particular historical, social, political, and familial context. She is not self-sufficient and she is predisposed to certain patterns of activity. Her consciousness is not a transparent glass through which she views the world; she views the world through her particular set of concerns.

We have no recourse to an external objective picture of human beings that could provide us with a knock-down argument for how we ought to live. Moreover, how we do live is largely a contingent matter of what kind of motivational set we happen to have. Bernard Williams concludes from these two points that our values are thus constructed out of the reasons, or motivations, we happen as a community to have. He concludes, in other words, that we cannot give a universal account of the good life for human beings. He bases his account of practical reason on his constructivist answer to the question "How should I live?"

I examine his account of practical reason in chapter one. What we want is given to us by our motivational set. Practical reason can tell us how to get what we want. There are reasons, though, and not just motivations. An agent can have a reason to act in a certain way even if she is not motivated to if she is ignorant of a fact of her situation that, if she were aware of it, would motivate her to act in the right way. An agent can also have a reason without a motivation if, through unsound deliberation, she is not aware of a particular element in her motivational set. However, an agent can be fully rational as long as she has full knowledge of her situation and deliberates soundly.

The notion of what it is to be fully (practically) rational is founded on a conception of how it is good to live. The kind of answer given to “What should I do?” depends on a prior answer to “How should I live?”. And this answer should be true to human nature. In considering how human beings should be, it matters how they are. But ethics should also be a hypothesis of good conduct and how this can be achieved. It needs to contain a worthy ideal. In considering how human beings should be it matters that we ask how we can make ourselves better. There is thus a worry that Williams’ account is too closely tied to our actual psychology, since what is valuable for an agent ultimately depends on her particular motivational set. This does not do justice to the nature of value by leaving enough space for a worthy ideal.

There is widespread agreement that self-respect is an important element of a worthwhile life. If an agent does not respect, or recognise in her thought and action, that she is a human being, it is not possible for her to live a good human life. Moreover, living well is impossible if she feels worthless. The *prima facie* evidence is that self-respect would be in an agent’s best interests. There are cases of individuals, however, who pass Williams’ requirements for full rationality and yet do not have self-respect. I present these problem cases at the end of chapter one. The intuition here is to say that these individuals do have reasons to act differently even though they cannot reach the motivation to act differently through practical reasoning. There is a sense in which they are irrational by being unresponsive to reasons: fixed concerns or values that should prompt them to act in appropriate ways. What they are unresponsive to is the nature and worth of their selves.

I argue that this motivates a different account of practical reason, one based on a universal answer to “How should I live?” an answer that is for everyone. The worry here, however, is that in considering how we can become better we might move too far away from how we actually are. A good human life must first of all be a human life. This account must remain true to the points made above: all we have is human life as it is experienced, and it is experienced as contingently constructed and subject to chance. With no external guarantee of sense or unity, if there is to be any kind of coherence it must be sought within a human experience that has nothing outside of it.

In chapter two I argue that an external, objective perspective is not necessary for an account of values and reasons that all human beings share. I develop an internal, or intersubjective, account of human nature that shows that, even taking the contingent construction of individuals' motivational sets into account, there are certain values that are essential characteristics of human beings. This forms a foundation from which to develop a universal answer to the question "How should I live?". I argue that self-respect is a useful notion to use in developing this answer because it fits closely the framework, provided by this foundation, for the specification of the good life.

Self-respect has a structure. In chapter three I show that in order to have uncompromised self-respect an individual must exhibit various kinds of coherence. These go beyond the requirement of coherence imposed by Williams' notion of a sound deliberative route, in that self-respect requires that an individual have certain kinds of elements in her motivational set: self-respect imposes substantive constraints. An agent's desires must recognise the good. I argue that this analysis of self-respect provides the worthy ideal, and it is based on an account of human nature. It thus covers both aspects required by an ethical theory, without recourse to a pseudo-objective point of view.

It is in anyone's best interests to live a self-respecting life. This has implications for practical reason. An individual has reason to do what it is in her best interests to do. Since self-respect imposes substantive constraints on an individual's motivational set, an agent can be mistaken about what she has reason to do if her desires do not recognise her good. She can be irrational in the sense of being unresponsive to reason. Sound deliberation and knowledge of the relevant facts of her situation may not be able to effect a change in her; nevertheless she can still have a reason to change.

In the last section of the third chapter I explore the way in which an individual's being able to respect herself depends on the social and political environment she finds herself in. The character, or motivational set, of an agent is largely constructed by her upbringing in a

particular social and political environment. Her practical reasoning on its own is powerless to give rise to a completely new motivational outlook. Williams concludes from these two points that her motivational set is fixed in the sense that reason cannot criticise her motivations and tell her what she should want. But, since an account of real, or best, interests is possible, and since whether an individual has these interests in her motivational set depends to some extent on her social and political environment, it follows that this account of self-respect has implications for politics as well as for practical reason.

All individuals view the world through a particular set of concerns, or motivations. This does not mean that we cannot identify better and worse ways of looking at the world, or better and worse 'patterns of attention'. Since motivational sets are constructed, it follows that there are better and worse ways of constructing them. It is in the interests of all human beings to live in a society that makes uncompromised self-respect possible, and in everyone's interests to create such a society.

1. The Neo-Humean Challenge: No Reasons Without Motivations

Two central questions in practical philosophy are “How should I live?” and “What should I do?”. Practical Reason is concerned with the capacity of reason and argument to prescribe or select particular courses of action. It thus seems to be concerned with providing an answer to the second question, rather than the first, in that it attempts to give an account of what the fully rational individual would do in particular circumstances. The two questions are, however, connected. An account of the fully rational individual generated by a theory of practical reason depends importantly on a prior answer to the question “How should I live?”. One way to assess a theory of practical reason, then, would be to test whether it rests on an adequate answer to this first question. In part, this can be seen as a question about what an agent should value, that is what she should actively seek to include in her life in order to make it worthwhile living.

There are a number of competing approaches to practical reason. In this thesis I will be focusing on two: the **Neo-Humean** and the **Aristotelian**. In this chapter, I set out the common ground between them before examining the **Neo-Humean challenge** as raised by Bernard Williams. Williams’ position can be summed up by saying that reason can tell us how to get what we want but not what to want, or what we should want. I argue that the ideals of full rationality set by his account are set too low. Williams does not allow reasons to play enough of a normative role. I argue that his account of normativity stems from the kind of answer he thinks is possible to the question “How should I live?”. This answer is inadequate, thus his account of practical reason is inadequate. Using cases of individuals who lack self-respect, I argue that there is motivation for a different (Aristotelian) kind of answer to this question. These are cases of individuals who pass Williams’ requirements for full rationality, but who we would hesitate to call fully rational. This opens the way for a theory of practical reason in which reasons play a stronger normative role: reason can tell us what we should want, not only how to get what we want.

Nevertheless, Williams' challenge is not one to be taken lightly. Important aspects of it need to be overcome. If an Aristotelian response is to be successful it must first provide an independent account of an agent's real interests. It must show that reason can tell us what we should want. Relatedly it must show how an agent can be mistaken about her own real interests. It must explain how a consideration can be a reason for an agent to act, even if after deliberation she is not motivated to act in this way. If reasons are to play more of a normative role than Williams allows, it must be shown how it can make sense to say that an agent should want something, even if she is not motivated to want it. This will be the work of subsequent chapters.

1.1 The Common Ground

In talking about an agent's reasons for action, we can identify two logical roles that reasons play. First, reasons justify actions. For an agent to be practically rational is for her to approximate to some ideal of practical rationality. For her to have a reason to act in this sense is for her to have recourse to a standard that justifies her action, or a **normative reason**. Normative reasons answer the question "Why should she do that?". They are prescriptive. Take the situation in the opening scene of *King Lear*: Lear's daughters can either give him the flattery he desires in an attempt to win the biggest share of his kingdom, or they can opt for honesty and refuse to take part in his test of their 'love' for him. An example of a normative reason here might be one that prescribes honesty over flattery.

But reasons also answer the question "Why did she do that?". Reasons explain actions and they do this by citing the psychological states constituting the agent's motivation to act, her **motivating reason**. Regan chooses to flatter her father because she wants a good share of his kingdom.

Although normative reasons and motivating reasons are logically independent, there is widespread agreement on a conceptual connection between them. On any credible view it must be allowed that the explanation of an action may lie in the agent's awareness of the

normative reason she has to perform it. She did that because she believed she should do that. Cordelia answers “Nothing, my lord.” to Lear’s demand that she say something to compete with her sisters in giving the most eloquent expression of love for him, because she believes that honesty and integrity are more valuable than flattery.

At least sometimes, an agent is right about her normative reasons and responds rationally to them. An explanation of her action could only ever fail to refer to her normative reason in so far as she was either irrational or misinformed about her reasons. In either case, the conceptual connection between normative and motivating reasons breaks down. An example of irrationality might be a case of weakness of will. In such a case, an agent is aware she has a normative reason to act; yet she fails to be motivated to act. An agent might be misinformed about her reasons if she formed them on the basis a mistake about some fact of her situation, thus she would not have a real normative reason to act.

This common ground to contemporary theorising about practical reason can be formulated as the **internalism requirement** on normative reasons:

- *A normative reason for an agent to x must be a consideration the agent’s awareness of which would motivate her to x if she were thinking about it fully rationally and with full knowledge.*

To sum up: Neo-Humeans and Aristotelians agree that a normative reason to act will be a motivating reason for an agent if she knows all the relevant facts and is being fully rational. This is the internalism requirement. This connection between normative and motivating reasons will only break down, then, if the agent is misinformed about the facts, or is being irrational. Only in these circumstances is it true to say that there is a normative reason for an agent to act, something that she should do, even if she is not motivated to act in this way.

Whatever being fully rational consists in will thus affect what considerations can legitimately be called normative reasons. Just what reason can prescribe when an agent is deliberating about what to do, will depend on what it means to be fully rational. It is this question, of just

what reason can prescribe, that Bernard Williams focuses on in his papers '*Internal and External Reasons*'¹ and '*Internal Reasons and The Obscurity of Blame*'².

1.2 Williams: the necessary explanatory role of reasons

Williams emphasises that an agent's reasons must say something distinctive about her. In particular, to say that an agent has a reason to x is to say that she herself could undergo the rational deliberative process issuing in the motive to x. Only under these circumstances could the claim that she has a reason to x make sense. From these considerations, Williams concludes that all reasons are **hypothetical**: an agent having a reason to x is conditional on her having a prior motivation to x somewhere in her subjective motivational set. The ideals of practical rationality, then, are relative to an agent's existing motivations. What we can coherently say about what she should do in a particular situation will depend on what motivations she has. Reason can tell you how to get what you want, not what you should want - except in the case of the specification of what would count as fulfilling a prior, given end, such as deciding what would count as an entertaining evening.

This represents a challenge to anyone who wishes to argue that there are **categorical** reasons, reasons that can be truly ascribed to an agent independent of her existing motivations. First, I examine Williams' account. I argue that his account of normativity rests on a **constructivist** view of the relation between reasons and value: what an agent has reason to pursue is what is valuable for her. The kind of person it is good for her to be is constructed out of her existing motivational set. This view of value comes from the kind of answer he thinks is possible to the question "How should I live?". In other words, Williams' claim that an agent's reasons must say something distinctive about her, that she should be able to undergo the relevant rational deliberative process, does not by itself issue in his view of reasons as hypothetical.

¹ In **Moral Luck** (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981)

² In **Making Sense of Humanity** (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995)

As the internalism requirement is stated above, it is possible for the agent to become aware of a normative reason that generates a new motivation for action, independent of her existing motivations. Williams argues that this is not enough to satisfy the motivational, or explanatory, requirement on reasons. If there are reasons for actions, it must be possible that an agent could act *for* those reasons and thus that they would figure in some correct explanation of her action³. If an agent is to act *for* a normative reason, the link between the agent's awareness of a normative reason to *x* and the motivation to *x* must be of a particular kind. Simple awareness producing a motivation is not a sufficient condition for an agent to act *for* a normative reason, as opposed to just (accidentally) in accordance with it. The link between the normative reason and the motivation must be made via a rational process on the part of the agent. The motivation must arise because the agent sees it as a normative requirement, not just as an unconscious causal consequence. An agent must stand in the right relation to her reason, which means, for Williams, that there must exist a sound deliberative route for a normative reason to issue in a motivation to act, such that that reason can figure in an explanation of the action.

The internalism requirement should thus be reformulated as follows:

- *R is a normative reason for an agent to x only if, with full knowledge, rational deliberation could rationally guide her to be motivated by R to x.*

If an agent satisfies these two conditions, first, full knowledge of the relevant facts of her situation and second, a sound deliberative route to her motivation, then she will stand in the right relation to her reason. In other words these are the conditions of what it is to be fully rational. If this is right, then, Williams argues, the relation between reasons and motivations will be hypothetical.

Williams does not view deliberation in the simplistic Humean sense as including only instrumental reasoning. Deliberation includes also constitutive reasoning, reasoning about what will count as the achievement of your end. The imagination plays a key role in deliberative activities; careful thinking about what would count as achieving a particular end,

³ 'Internal and External Reasons', p102

or thinking about what it would be like to achieve an end can add or subtract particular motivations. Nevertheless, he emphasises, deliberation must start from somewhere, that is, from some existing element in the agent's subjective motivational set.

In order for an agent to stand in the right relation to normative reason R , R must have a way into the deliberative process. So there must be some existing element of her subjective motivational set already 'sympathetic' to R , if the link between R and her motivation to x is going to be such that R can figure in the explanation of her action. Thus, an agent having a reason to x is conditional on her having an appropriate motivation. Reasons are hypothetical. It does not make sense to say that an agent's awareness of a normative reason can produce a new motivation for action, independent of her existing set of motivations. More importantly, it does not make sense to say that an agent has a reason to act in a particular way regardless of her actual motivational state.

Williams challenges the defender of categorical reasons to show that there can be any further conditions involved in standing in the right relation to reasons, in other words, to show that there is more to being fully rational. He does not think that his challenge is likely to be met, for what makes a hypothetical reason true for an agent is clear: it is her having an appropriate element in her motivational set. But what could make a categorical reason true? If it is true, it is true regardless of the agent's motivational state. But, remember, there is a conceptual connection between the normative and explanatory roles that reasons play. Remember, too, that theories of practical reason agree that this conceptual connection only breaks down when the agent is either unaware of some fact of the situation, or she is being irrational. To be a reason for action, rather than something else, a categorical reason must be able to figure in a correct explanation of that action. But, motivations explain actions. A psychological link, then, is required if a categorical reason is to do its explanatory work.

From the section on common ground outlined above, remember the theorists agree it is plausible to say that an agent *believing* she has a normative reason to act could provide her with, or constitute, a motivation to act. Thus, the requisite psychological link would seem to be

provided by her believing a categorical reason. If she believes she has a categorical reason to act, then the agent has the appropriate motivation. In other words, a hypothetical reason is true of her. Williams now asks: what makes it the case that the reason figuring in the explanation of her action is categorical and not hypothetical? It cannot be just her psychological state, since that is the same as that required for a hypothetical reason to be true. So there must be something distinctive about the psychological link in this case that makes the reason categorical. There must be something special about what it is to come to believe a categorical reason for action. In other words, if categorical reasons exist, then there must be some right way of looking at things, such that in coming to believe such a reason she is considering the matter aright.

The categorical reasons theorist must place an extra consideration on what it is for an agent to stand in the right relation to her reasons. If she is to act *for* her reason, not only must the link between the normative reason and the motivation be made via a rational process on the part of the agent, she must also be considering the matter aright. But, says Williams, if this extra consideration of considering the matter aright is to be part of what it is to be fully rational, then it must at least entail that if she deliberated correctly, she would come to be motivated by this categorical reason, *regardless of her prior motivational state*. If this is what is needed to make categorical reasons true, then they are incoherent for there is nowhere for this correct deliberation to start from. That is, what is needed to make categorical reasons true entails the claim that pure reason can give rise to a new motivation, a claim widely regarded as highly implausible and one a practical reasons theorist would do well to avoid.

The categorical reasons theorist has to make sense of the idea that in coming to believe the categorical reason, an agent is considering the matter aright. Only then can the claim that an agent is irrational if she is not motivated to act for a categorical reason, make sense. And the charge of irrationality is precisely the charge the categorical reasons theorist needs to be able to make, given that the agent has full knowledge of her situation and remembering the two ways in which the conceptual connection between normative and motivating reasons can break down. Take the case of someone who consistently refuses to look after her health, or

someone who consistently fails to respect other people. The categorical reasons theorist must show how it can make sense to say that these individuals have *reasons* to behave otherwise, even though they lack the relevant prudential or moral motivations. It must be shown that there is legitimate force in saying that these individuals are *irrational* as opposed, or in addition to, saying that things would be better (for us) if they were differently motivated.

1.3 Williams' account of normativity

In all of this Williams has made much use of the explanatory role of reasons. What space is left for the normative role in an account of rationality that is relative to the agent's existing motivations? Yes, reasons explain actions and they do that by citing motivations. But it is not Williams' view that in any and every case of motivation there is a reason for action. In that case, reasons for action would be purely descriptive. There would be no reasons, only motivations. It must at least sometimes be the case that an agent is wrong about her reason for acting, even if she has a motivation to act; otherwise the concepts of rationality and irrationality would have no meaning. Reasons prescribe as well as describe actions. As Williams says, it is important that claiming that an agent has a reason to *x* has normative force. In order for the term 'reason' not to have too narrow a definition, claiming that an agent has a reason to *x* must mean more than just saying that she is presently disposed to *x*. One reason why it must do so, says Williams, is that it plays an important part in discussions about what people should become disposed to do⁴.

Standing in the right relation to your reasons involves, on Williams' account, full knowledge of the facts of the situation and sound deliberation. These two conditions, he says, allow for the normative role of reasons. But, it is not clear that these conditions give enough meaning to the concepts of rationality and irrationality: it is not clear that they allow for enough ways for an agent to be wrong about her reasons. The important point to note now, however, is that it is not clear that these conditions alone provide Williams with the resources he needs to give the account of normativity that he does. There seems, sometimes, to be a tension between

⁴ *'Internal Reasons and the Obscurity of Blame'*, p36

Williams' initial Humean assumptions, and the normativity he wants to allow, although much hangs on the purposely-vague notion of a 'sound deliberative route'. The space he does allow for normativity shows that there is a crucial background assumption at work when he moves from emphasising the explanatory role normative reasons must play to the conclusion that all reasons are hypothetical. That reasons are hypothetical is not entailed by this explanatory role, unless this other assumption is accepted. In other words, Williams' reformulation of the internalism requirement such that being fully rational involves only knowledge of the relevant facts and sound deliberation, depends on his prior assumption about the nature of rationality. It is this prior assumption, which stems from the answer he thinks it is possible to give to "How should I live?", that militates against the existence of categorical reasons; not, primarily, his account of the explanatory role normative reasons must play.

His first condition for the existence of a reason to act is knowledge of the relevant facts. An agent can thus be wrong about having a reason to act if her motivation to act is based on a false belief about some relevant fact of her situation. An AIDS patient believes she has reason to take this medicine, Virodene. Only Virodene is in fact an industrial solvent and is not real medicine at all. Her motivation is based on a false belief, thus she does not have a true reason to act. If an agent can falsely believe that she has a reason to act, it follows that she may not know of a true reason she has to act. This is so if she is ignorant of some fact that would motivate her to act, given her existing motivations.

Williams says that the reasons that can correctly be ascribed to an agent in the third person, are coextensive with the reasons that she can ascribe to herself as a result of deliberation⁵. So, given that an agent knows all the relevant facts of her situation, deliberation plays a crucial role in what reasons she, and we, can say she has. Thus, from his second condition, a source of an agent's ignorance of her reasons could be that she is unaware of some element in her motivational set. But, since an agent must act *for* her reasons, such an element could only provide her with a reason to *x* if there was a sound deliberative route between *x*-ing and this element. Deliberation has extensive influence over an agent's motivations. The

⁵ *'Internal and External Reasons'*, p103

deliberative process can both add and subtract elements from this set. But it can only do so in a way that is controlled by other existing motivations - deliberation must start from somewhere. Such deliberative activities as thinking about how to combine satisfying different motivations; how to solve conflicts between them; or finding constitutive specifications of given ends may either make an agent aware of a reason she has, but did not know it, or lead her to see that she does not have a reason she thought she did. In this, imaginative engagement plays a key role.

In all this, it is not entirely clear what the limits are to what motivations an agent might arrive at by deliberating soundly from her existing set of motivations. Williams regards this as a desirable feature as “there is an essential indeterminacy in what can be counted as a rational deliberative process”. Saying that an agent has a reason to *x*, then, on this hypothetical conception of reasons, can be more or less vague, depending on how ambitious or imaginative a piece of reasoning is required to move from the agent’s existing motivations to a motivation to *x*. This shows, says Williams, that there is a wide, largely undetermined, range of states that can count as an agent having a reason to *x*.

Exactly how the reason to *x* is relative to the agent’s existing motivation may be vague. But saying that she has a reason to *x* does not mean that she has no other, and no stronger, reasons to do something else in the particular situation. Presumably, on Williams’ account, the strongest reason to act that an agent has in a particular situation, given that she knows all the relevant facts, will be linked to, or given by, her strongest motivation.

How then can reasons form part of the discussion of what people should become disposed to do? How can reasons be prescriptive? Williams explores the space for normativity that his notion of a sound deliberative route opens up in his paper ‘*Internal Reasons and the Obscurity of Blame*’. It is here, however, that there seems to be some tension between Williams’ notion of reasons as relative, and the normative role he wants them to play. A process of sound deliberation has normative force because it can change the agent’s existing motivations, in the ways outlined above. In this way, reasons can be prescriptive, rather than

just purely descriptive of what she is already motivated to do. When we talk of blaming an agent for a specific act or omission (what Williams calls 'focused blame') we are saying that the agent 'ought to have' acted differently. This means, necessarily if 'ought to have' is to have any force, that the agent could have acted differently. This suggests that she had a reason to act differently, one of which she was not aware, or that she ignored. Focused blame seems necessarily connected with an agent's reasons for action. An examination of focused blame is thus useful for identifying considerations that count as normative reasons, considerations that would motivate an agent to act, if she were being fully rational. On Williams' account, this means that an agent cannot be blamed for a specific act or omission unless she could have reached a motivation to act in the right way (the way she is being blamed for not acting) by a sound deliberative route, from her existing motivations.

Focused blame, says Williams, asks for acknowledgement. When we blame an agent we are saying that if she were to deliberate again, and take into consideration all the factors that now might become more vivid, particularly those highlighted by the application of blame, we hope she would come to a different conclusion. Notice that Williams does not say that she must, or will, come to a different conclusion. Since there is inherent vagueness in what counts as a sound deliberative route, says Williams, there is inherent obscurity in what counts as legitimate blaming.

However, instead of opening up a clear, though vaguely defined, space for normativity, this formulation leaves it unclear whether there is a space for normativity at all. This is due to Williams' notion of reasons as hypothetical. Full rationality involves only full knowledge and sound deliberation. And, Williams says, In blaming an agent for not x-ing, although we imply that she did have a reason to x, it would be rash to imply, given her motivational set as it then was, that she had more reason to x than anything else. The question is, then, if on this hypothetical view of reasons, she really had a reason to x in any meaningful prescriptive sense. If the only conditions of full rationality are knowledge of the relevant facts and sound deliberation, it is not clear that in saying that she had a reason to x we are saying that if she were fully rational, she would have been motivated to x. This is what needs to be said to

capture the normative role of practical reasons. Williams has no resources to say that she should have had such a reason, except in so far as she herself could discover it, deliberating soundly from her existing motivations. Her motivational set, as it then was, governed her deliberation. Assume she had a sound deliberative route to x and a sound deliberative route to y . Even if the strongest elements in that set were ones the community of blamers would call undesirable or inappropriate, the ones leading to action y , it seems that there is nothing in Williams' account of full rationality to say that the 'soundest' deliberative route for her is not the one governed by these strongest elements. And surely there is a sense in which the strongest element is the one most closely tied to the action actually performed. So it is not clear that the claim 'she has a reason to x ' does in fact go beyond what she is already motivated to do. Williams has allowed for the motivating role of reasons at the expense of the normative.

Take the example of Cordelia in the first scene of *King Lear*. There are at least two courses of action open to her. She can flatter her father, or she can be honest. And it would seem plausible to say that she could reach a motivation to act in either way by a sound deliberative route. On the one hand, she could reason like this: she loves her father and she knows he can be a bit of an arrogant old fool. Why not just go along with his game and give him the flattery he wants? All in all, perhaps at this stage of his life it is better just to keep him happy. After all, he is old and not likely to change. Besides, she might get a good piece of land out of it and thus make a better marriage. So if she bends her principles a little and flatters him, everyone will be better off. Or, she could reason that her honesty and integrity are more important than what he presumes will make him happy, and that it is more important for someone to marry her for her character than her land. Assume that she decides to put his happiness above her honesty and flatter him. She reaches the motivation to do so via a sound deliberative route. If we have the intuition that she should be blamed for not being honest, that being true to herself was the stronger normative reason, it is not clear that we can support this intuition only by reference to a sound deliberative route. Yes, she could have reached the motivation to be honest via a sound deliberative route, but Williams has not yet given us the resources to say why this sound deliberative route would be more right than the

one we are assuming she actually performed, given her motivational set as it currently was. It is not clear how the notion of a sound deliberative route alone can allow us to say what we want to say, that is that being honest was the preferable action *for Cordelia herself* if it turned out that her motivational set as it was did not actually dispose her to be honest. Why should she not be dishonest? Just because there was also a sound deliberative route to honesty? What makes this the better deliberative route? If the strongest element in her motivational set happened to be a desire for her father's happiness, then, if all full rationality involves is knowledge of the relevant facts and sound deliberation, the reason prescribed for her in the third person would seem to be the one linked to this strongest motivation.

It would seem plausible to say that on many occasions of focused blame, when we say that an agent should have acted differently, both the motivation to act in the way that the agent did, and the motivation to act in the way that she is being blamed for not acting, could have been reached via sound deliberative routes. If reasons are relative then, given the agent's motivational set as it was currently organised, it is not clear what it is about this notion of a sound deliberative route that is supposed to make it better for the agent herself to have acted differently to the way that she actually acted. What makes one deliberative route better than the other? Remember, Williams says an agent's reasons for action must say something distinctive about her. That is, what is rational for her to do must in some sense be in her best interests. How, though, if rationality is just full knowledge and a sound deliberative route can her best interests in a particular situation be anything other than what she is most strongly motivated to do? How can they be anything other than what she subjectively thinks they are, given that she knows all the relevant facts in the situation? How, in other words, can reasons form part of a discussion about what people *should* become disposed to do? It seems that for this normative role of reasons to get off the ground, we must be able to criticise an agent's motivations from a third person standpoint. There needs to be some kind of external standard to be able to say that one deliberative route is better than another. In other words, for reasons to play a normative role that goes beyond that given by the 'full knowledge' requirement (the Virodene example above), there needs to be some notion of an ideal deliberator.

It is such a notion that Williams seems to be appealing to in his discussion of blame. Williams regards blaming an agent as appropriate only if the agent is part of 'our' community and thus shares similar elements in her motivational set (dispositions, evaluations, attitudes and so on)⁶. Given a community of agents with relevantly similar motivational sets, an agent may be blamed by the others if she failed to act in some appropriate way. This suggests that there was an ideal way of deliberating from these existing (shared) motivations, one deliberative route that was better than other deliberative routes to different possible actions, given that there were varying ways she could have acted in the situation. There was, in a sense, a way to consider the matter aright. Since, being a part of this community, the agent cares about having the respect of the people that she respects, we hope that blaming her will help her to see that there was a better deliberative route she could have taken. The point to note here is that Williams can only make sense of the idea of an agent having such a better deliberative route, if she shares the relevant motivations and cares about having the respect of the other members of her community. So Cordelia can only be blamed for not being honest, from the above example, if she belongs to a community that has some notion of an ideal deliberator such that considering the matter aright would be to realise that being true to yourself is more important than pandering to your father's silly wishes. But this is entirely contingent. She might very well not belong to such a community, in which case it would not make sense to say that it would be better for her to be honest.

Full rationality, for Williams, involves only full knowledge and sound deliberation. On this account, reasons can be normative in an instrumental sense: in saying that an agent has a reason to *x* we are allowed to correct any errors of fact she may have made such that her action is not actually the best way of satisfying her motivation. I have argued that in order for reasons to be normative in any sense beyond this, for them to be relevant to discussions of what people should become motivated to do, Williams introduces the notion of a communal ideal deliberator. Should people be fair? Only if they care about being fair, or if they care about the opinions of others who think fairness is important. Otherwise it does not make sense to say that they have a reason to be fair. Likewise with any virtue term.

⁶ *'Internal reasons and the Obscurity of Blame'*, p38; p41

From this we can see that Williams' account of the normativity of reasons depends importantly on a prior assumption about the nature of rationality that stems from the kind of answer he thinks is possible to the question "How should I live?". He does not think that it is possible to give an answer to this question that is an answer for every human being⁷. But, given that a community shares some general pattern of motivations, there will be a communal notion of what kind of person it is rational to be. 'We' can construct a picture of our good, or what is valuable for us, out of this general pattern of motivations. This is the communal notion of the ideal deliberator. In other words, Williams has a **constructivist** view of the relation between reasons and value. What we should value is what we have reason to pursue, given our set of shared motivations. We construct the picture of what is good for us out of our reasons, and thus ultimately out of our motivations, since reasons are relative to motivations. If this is the kind of answer we can give to "How should I live?" then it means that the considerations that make for full rationality can only be formal. If we cannot find an answer to this question that applies to all human beings, then we cannot say that there are values that all human beings should have just in virtue of being human. Thus we cannot say that there are any substantive considerations that are constitutive of rational human agency. It is this that Williams is assuming in his discussion of practical reason. Therefore, he says, when we talk about what it is an agent has reason to do, we are allowed to improve or correct her beliefs of fact and her reasoning, but we are not allowed to insert any substantive (for example prudential or moral) considerations. This is because Williams does not think that any such considerations are constitutive of full rationality. If someone wanted to argue that a certain consideration was constitutive of full rationality, integrity for example, then that person would have to show that every individual has a reason, just in virtue of being human, to structure his or her experience in terms of that consideration. As Williams says, that is a different and larger matter, all the work remains to be done⁸. Williams' account of reasons does not by itself exclude this kind of approach; he just thinks it is not possible. Hence his account of the man who is nasty to his wife. This man lacks any appropriate item in his motivational set that might give him a reason to be nicer to his wife. No matter what is said to

⁷ **Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy** (London: Fontana, 1985) ch3.

⁸ *'Internal Reasons and the Obscurity of Blame'*, p38

him, that he is cruel, selfish, unfair and so on, he just does not care. On Williams account, it is just not rational for him to be nice to his wife. To claim that in being nasty he is being irrational would be to claim that just in virtue of his being human he has a reason to use a concept like fairness to structure his experience. It is to claim that he is mistaken about his own real interests. There could even be a case of an agent who had an overwhelming need to be deceived in some way. In such a case, says Williams, we might not even be licensed to correct her beliefs of fact about this matter when saying what it is that she has reason to do⁹. Reasons are hypothetical. But, as I have argued in this section, this depends on the assumption that there are no considerations that are constitutive of full rationality. It depends on the kind of answer that Williams thinks is possible to the question “How should I live?”.

1.4 Problem cases

There are a number of cases of individuals who pass Williams’ requirements for full rationality, but who we might hesitate to call fully rational human agents. I argue that it is such cases that motivate a different kind of answer to this question and thus a different account of practical reason. These are all cases of individuals who lack self-respect in some way or another¹⁰. It seems that the very way they lack self-respect prevents the intuition that they are fully rational human agents. I examine each case in turn before outlining Williams’ possible reply. This reply will reveal exactly which aspects of the Neo-Humean challenge need to be overcome to provide this different account of practical reason. This will be the work of subsequent chapters.

The **Deferential Wife** subordinates herself completely to her husband, believing that her role is to serve him. She does not regard herself as meriting equal consideration in the marriage because she does not regard herself as her husband’s equal. Being thoroughly dependant on her husband, she does not take responsibility for her own self-definition. Her motivational set

⁹ *ibid*, p37

¹⁰ These cases come from Robin Dillon’s paper ‘*How To Lose Your Self-Respect*’ (*American Philosophical Quarterly* vol. 29, 2; 1992) p 125-139. She points out that they are not intended as psychologically accurate portraits of real people, rather as archetypal representations of deficiencies of self-respect which real people may have and which will not necessarily be exhibited in all aspects of their life and character. Furthermore, at this stage these cases are intended only to highlight the flaws in Williams’ account. A full analysis of self-respect will be given in chapters two and three.

is thus non-autonomous. She lacks self-respect in a number of ways. First, she does not recognise that she is a person and that a certain kind of treatment is due to her just in virtue of this: she does merit equal consideration in the marriage. Second, she does not realise her capacity for agency, for in subordinating to her husband she either does not make choices or makes them in terms of his standards, projects or commitments that she adopts as her own. The intuition in this case is that it does not make sense to call her a human agent, let alone a fully rational human agent. Yet she seems capable of passing Williams' requirements for full rationality. She has a motivational set, even if her evaluations, projects, attitudes and so forth, cannot properly be called her own. She is capable of knowing all the facts of a situation, and she is capable of deliberating soundly in terms of her motivational set. That this deliberation is ultimately governed by her husband's desires does not matter on this account.

The **Uncle Tom** is a Black who admires and emulates Whites, while despising those of his own race. Believing Blacks to be inferior he does not see racist, degrading treatment as degrading. Like the Deferential Wife, he lacks self-respect in that he fails to recognise that he is a person, and that as such he deserves a certain kind of treatment. His warped evaluation of himself and his race will be reflected in his set of projects and commitments, thus shaping his motivational set and his life. Again like the Deferential Wife, the intuition is that he cannot properly be called a human agent. Yet he seems to pass Williams' requirements for full rationality. There is nothing wrong with his ability to perceive the relevant factual features of any situation, and he may be very good at thinking about what to do given his motivational set. If his motivational set is consistently built on this faulty evaluative structure, then, on Williams' view, it is not in his interests to be otherwise. For no process of reasoning could change him into a self-respecting individual. There is nowhere for such reasoning to start from.

The **Self-Deprecator** is an individual who believes that fair treatment has to be earned through merit and achievement. However, she has a deep-seated view of her character as worthless and her abilities as minimal. She thus does not see herself as meriting decent treatment and willingly accepts abuse from others. A prime example of such an individual

would be Celie, the main character in Alice Walker's novel *The Color Purple*. Celie could also be described as an extreme example of a deferential wife. Raised by an abusive stepfather in the American South who does not allow her to go to school, she grows up believing that she is ugly, stupid and worthless and that she deserves abusive treatment. She allows herself to be married to a man who beats her and treats her as a slave. Better described as a doormat than as a human being, the self-deprecator does not recognise that, purely in virtue of the fact that she is a human being, she ought to resent such abusive treatment. Like the two cases above, it does not seem quite right to call her a human agent. Yet it is quite plausible to say she has a motivational set, coherently and consistently filled with evaluations, projects and commitments that reflect her profoundly low evaluation of herself. She may be motivated to actively seek out abusive treatment, or to continue a situation where she is nothing more than an instrument or slave. She thus may be capable of deliberating soundly in Williams terms, but no sound deliberative route could get her to see herself differently. Thus, says Williams, she does not have any reason to be otherwise.

At an opposite pole is the **Arrogant** individual. With her inflated sense of self-worth, she demands more than her fair share. She expects others to be servile towards her, and to place more weight on her desires than on their own. Such an individual may be highly talented and accomplished. It may be quite appropriate for her to thus view herself favourably, and to see herself as deserving a certain amount of respect and esteem from others. However, she is mistaken in thinking it elevates her to some higher-than-human status, and allows her to treat others as less than human. Or she may not be very talented or accomplished at all and accord herself a higher status in virtue of her race or class. Like the three cases above, she does not quite realise what it is to be a human being. Nevertheless, it is easy to see that she would pass Williams' requirements for full rationality.

The **Groveller** is an obsequious individual who sees no behaviour as servile, degrading or beneath her in the pursuit of her aims. More often than not these will be to win the approval of others, or certain others. This brings to mind the character of Mr. Collins in Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* and his shamelessly grovelling behaviour towards his patroness. In

recognising her personhood, a self-respecting individual not only views certain kinds of treatment as degrading, but she also has such standards with regard to her own behaviour. She could not sink below such minimum standards without losing herself. To be a self, or have an identity, is to have something that is capable of being betrayed. The groveller who lacks any such minimum standards does not have a true identity. This individual lacks self-respect in her inability to recognise that she is a human agent and an individual human agent. Yet, although she has a motivational set with no minimum standards, she does have a motivational set. She may have many goals, projects and commitments - there may be many people out there to please. Thus, she seems capable of fulfilling Williams' requirements for full rationality.

The **Perfectionist** also has a problem with minimum standards, but in a different sense. She is committed to very high standards, standards that are too high for her, perhaps for anyone, to meet. These, though, are what she regards as her bottom line standards. Like the self-deprecator she believes that even minimum self-acceptance must be earned and these are her criteria for minimum self-acceptance. Being doomed to fail to meet these standards, she is doomed to self-contempt. She lacks self-respect in that she fails to recognise an important part of her agency: her fallibility. Her standards, projects and commitments are thus predicated on a thoroughly warped view of her agency. Yet, if this warped view consistently governs her motivational set, it is difficult to see how, on Williams' account, she could have a reason to be otherwise. Even though she does not fully realise what it means to be a human agent, she could pass Williams' requirements for full rationality.

For self-respect to respect agency it must include the ability to recognise that human beings are all bound to fail in various ways and to varying degrees. Another individual who fails to recognise her fallibility is the persistently **Self-Unforgiving** person. Her lack of self-respect stems from her inability to let go of her failures (real or imagined) and move on. Like the perfectionist and the self-deprecator, this individual seems to lack a basic attitude towards herself, a basic attitude necessary for uncompromised self-respect, that might best be described as unconditional love. (Having this attitude is importantly different from being

indiscriminately self-accepting, which is another way to lack self-respect - refusal to accept responsibility for avoidable failures and lapses is another way not to respect fallibility.) This attitude gives an individual the ability to see worth in herself as a person, regardless of how she may be feeling about her character or abilities due to her failures and mistakes. It gives her the ability to see herself in the proper perspective that recognition of her personhood, agency and individuality entails, and gives her the impetus to change what needs changing. The self-unforgiving individual has a motivational set with many projects, values and commitments. She may be perfectly capable of sound deliberation. Yet her excessive preoccupation with her failures (real or imagined) prevents the intuition that she is a fully rational human agent.

The **Self-Doubter** has values and standards that reflect her recognition that she is a person and an individual, and she judges that she is living in accordance with them. Her problem is that she has no confidence in any of this. She doubts her ability to continue to live as she thinks she should; she doubts her judgement that she is in fact doing this; she doubts that she has got her values and standards right. She does have a motivational set; she is capable of deliberating soundly about what to do in the light of the facts. Yet her lack of confidence in herself suggests it is not quite accurate to call her fully rational. She seems also to lack the basic attitude towards herself necessary for self-respect.

How might Williams reply to these cases? He might point out that an important element of his account has been left out. These individuals all belong to a certain kind of community that has communal ideals regarding the nature of self-respect. It is from this perspective that these individuals have been judged and found lacking. We might try to reason with them and present comparisons between themselves and other, self-respecting, individuals, and try to show that they are just as human, just as fallible and just as deserving of fair treatment or self-acceptance. But, if an individual's entire identity is based on a faulty evaluation of herself, or if she just lacks the ability to accept herself, the fact that she cannot see herself as the same as others is precisely the problem. On Williams' account, though, if it is true that she has no element in her motivational set that could induce her to care about herself in the right

(communally ideal) way, then she does not have a reason to be otherwise. She falls outside of the community and should be regarded as a hopeless case. We might think it would be better if she were otherwise, but it is not in her interests to be otherwise. Thus it makes no sense to call such an individual irrational.

This account misses an important point about these cases, though. Williams seems to give up too soon. For the intuition is precisely that these individuals do have a reason to be otherwise - it is in their interests to be otherwise. Their lives will go better if they are self-respecting. It will not just be better for us if they are different. This is certainly true of those, like the self-deprecator and the self-unforgiving, who live miserable, self-contemptuous lives. For those individuals, like the deferential wife, who have got their evaluations profoundly wrong, the intuition is that they are profoundly wrong about their interests.

What this section suggests is that being fully rational requires recognising oneself as a person, and a certain basic attitude of self-acceptance. In other words, there are considerations that are reasons for an individual, regardless of whether or not she actually has such things in her motivational set. This is to propose a different kind of answer to the question "How should I live?" that is applicable to every individual, regardless of whether she shares relevant communal motivations.

Williams' account of what it is to be fully rational is already normative. It depends crucially on kind of answer he thinks it is possible to give to this question. As a result of this answer goodness (what it is to be a good person and have a good life) and rationality are separated. Two important aspects of Williams' challenge have to be overcome if substantive considerations are going to be part of what it is to be fully rational. The first is to show that there can be an account of real interests, that is, there can answer to the question 'How should I live?' that applies universally. Williams has reasons to be sceptical that such an account is possible. Overcoming these reasons and giving an account of real interests, in terms of self-respect, will be the task of the second and third chapters. Secondly, such an account has to provide a 'Theory of Error'. It has to be able to explain how it is that individuals

can be wrong about their own real interests. This is to show how it can make sense to say that someone has a reason to x regardless of whether she can reach a motivation to x via a sound deliberative route. This will be the work of the last section of the third chapter.

2. Real Interests: A Foundation

The point of the previous chapter was to show two things: First, that the space for normativity that Williams does allow depends on a prior answer to ‘How should I live?’ and second, that this space does not allow enough ways for an agent to be wrong about her reasons, that is, for her to be irrational or not fully rational.

Williams’ account of the right way to live is a communal one, and only applies to an individual if she shares the relevant communal motivations. If she does not, then the right way for her to live will depend on the values and motivations that she has. An individual’s reasons must say something distinctive about her. We cannot make sense of her ‘considering the matter aright’ except in terms of her existing profile of desires. Thus, to claim that there are considerations that should motivate her, if she were being fully rational, even if she cannot reach any such motivation from her existing profile of desire (the deferential wife should be motivated to make her own decisions and the self-deprecator should be motivated to feel resentment if she is made to suffer degrading treatment) is to claim that pure reason can give rise to a new motivation. In other words, because of the answer Williams thinks it is possible to give to ‘How should I live?’ he does not allow that an individual can be not fully rational by being unresponsive to reasons (considerations that should motivate her to act regardless of whatever profile of desire she actually has).

One way to respond to this challenge is to advocate an account of value that makes what is good for an agent independent of that agent’s motivational states. From this can be derived an account of reasons that gives them a similar independence. This chapter will defend such an Aristotelian¹¹ answer to ‘How should one live?’ that does allow for the possibility that an individual can be less than fully rational by being unresponsive to reasons. This is an answer that can be *for*¹² each individual in terms of what it means to be a human being, and the kind

¹¹ In shape and inspiration rather than specific content.

¹² In **Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy** (London: Fontana Press, 1985) Ch. 1-3, hereafter abbreviated as *ELP*, Williams makes the distinction between an answer that is *to* each person and an answer that is *for* each person. The former is one that any individual could recognise as one she might have given herself. The latter is one that is true for each person, but not necessarily one that each person could see to be true.

of values and motivations that are conducive to a human being living a flourishing life. It is an account of **real interests**.

Briefly, an account of real interests overcomes the Neo-Humean challenge as follows: An agent's reasons must say something distinctive about her. However, her real interests and her interests as she perceives them may diverge, to the extent that she cannot reach her real interests via a sound deliberative route. She thus may have a reason to act in a certain way without being able to undergo a rational process that would issue in a motivation for her to act in that way. The claim that her 'considering the matter aright' must be in terms of her existing motivational set no longer holds. Thus, neither does the claim that the categorical reasons theorist must resort to an implausible belief in the ability of pure reason to generate new motivations. This was only so if her deliberating soundly in terms of her existing profile of desire could not lead her to be motivated in the right way; arriving at the correct motivation would thus have to be achieved by pure reasoning. If full rationality is understood from the perspective of an individual's real interests, then, some kinds of motivations, or motivational tendencies, will be constitutive of what it is to 'consider the matter aright'.¹³

If an individual could not operate from the standpoint of her real interests, it would be a legitimate case of the conceptual connection between normative and explanatory reasons breaking down. Recall from the 'common ground' section in the previous chapter that the connection between the two only breaks down if the agent does not have full knowledge or is not being fully rational. In this case, she would not be being fully rational because she would lack the necessary elements in her motivational set that would allow her to deliberate in terms of her real interests. The deferential wife, then, could be seen to be not fully rational because she is unresponsive to reasons. There are categorical reasons out there, drawn from the account of her real interests. The fact that she is so blind to them constitutes a kind of irrationality or unreasonableness.

¹³ This is John McDowell's point in his response to Williams in '*Might there be External Reasons?*' in **World, Mind, Ethics** J.E.T. Altham and R. Harrison, Eds. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995). McDowell argues that it is not through deliberating correctly (in terms of her existing motivational set) that an agent comes to consider the matter aright, but rather that in considering the matter aright (where that includes the right kind of motivational set developed, for example, by a good upbringing) an agent comes to deliberate correctly.

An account of real interests, then, serves to deny Williams' reformulation of the internalism requirement. The result of this reformulation was that if an agent were to have a reason to *x*, then she would have to be able to reach a motivation to *x* via a sound deliberative route. Thus she would have to have a desire in her motivational set already sympathetic to *x*-ing - normative reasons became hypothetical. The Aristotelian account does not claim that motivation can happen without desires. But, with an account of real interests, desires can be correct or incorrect. An agent has a normative reason to *x* if *x* is in her real interests, or good. What makes *x* good is independent of her actual, contingent, motivational set. On this view, her actual motivational state may fail to have the good as its object, even if she has been through the procedures of deliberative reflection that Williams' requires. She still has a normative reason to *x*, even if she cannot recognise it. And she cannot recognise it because her desires in this instance are incorrect.

Much has to be done, however, to show that an account of real interests can work. Williams thinks that it cannot. First, then, I will examine his reasons for scepticism. Second, I argue that these reasons can be overcome and outline the shape that an account of real interests would need to have to do this. In the third chapter, I give an account of real interests, in terms of self-respect, that fits such a shape.

2.1 Williams: Reasons for Scepticism

The Socratic question 'How should I live?' is one that asks for the conditions of the good life, the right life for human beings as such. Williams gives an analysis of how the question takes us this far,¹⁴ but he does not think that the resources we have will take us as far in answering it.¹⁵

If the answer is going to be for everyone, that is, say something about how anyone should live their life just in virtue of the fact that they are human, then it will have to be grounded in a theory of rational action. Just as 'What should I do?' asks for the best reason for acting on a

¹⁴ *ELP*, Ch. 1.

¹⁵ *ELP*, Ch. 3.

particular occasion, 'How should I live?' asks for the manner in which an individual has most reason to live. This does not mean, however, that for the answer to be coherent it must put forward an ideal that promises to satisfy the interests of any previously well-defined motivational set (making it rational, in the straight-forward self-interested sense, for anyone to pursue). Apart from the possibility of such an ideal being highly unlikely, intuitively an individual's manner of life has much to do with the kind of person she is. Put another way, it is a question about what kind of person it is most rational to be. The answer, then, will at least partially define what kind of motivational set, and therefore what kind of interests, an individual needs to have in order to have a flourishing life.

An Aristotelian account typically further grounds a theory of rational action in an account of human nature and human flourishing. Given our nature, we have a certain *ergon*, or function, usually expressed as the *characteristic activity* of human beings. Aristotle identifies this function as activity that either expresses or requires reason - the first denotes theoretical, and the second practical, reason. Human nature and human flourishing are connected in that a good human being performs her function well. The virtues, or excellences, are those properties that allow a human being to perform its function well. The kind of person it is rational to be, then, is the one who has the virtues. This is what makes for a flourishing life. A human being's real interests, then, are those given by the virtues.

A virtue is an internalised disposition of desire, action and feeling. It is also an intelligent disposition, involving judgement. Nevertheless, if an individual lacks a certain virtue, generosity for example, she will be unable to suddenly produce in herself the virtue via a sound deliberative route. The sound deliberation, in Williams' light, of the miserly individual, will be highly unlikely to produce a motivation for a generous action. This is so particularly if it is understood that to be a proper (fully virtuous) generous action it would have to be done for the right reasons and with the right feeling. The first person deliberations of the generous agent, in the appropriate situations, are not self-conscious calculations that a generous act is required, or of how much would constitute generosity. The virtue term itself does not occur in her deliberations, she performs these acts under other, typically other-regarding, descriptions.

The miser, to get back to her, might conceivably find herself in many situations in which it would make sense to say that she has reasons to be generous. Only she cannot see this because she is unable to consider these matters aright. She may come to see situations like this correctly, but this will require Scrooge-like inspiration and conversion, not reasoning. Practical reason is limited in its ability to generate the rational way to be, that is, an agent does not become a good practical reasoner through reason alone. Virtues are not mere habit - right judgement as well as right feeling is required in deciding what kind of description the facts of the situation will fall under. Nevertheless, they are acquired for the most part as a result of good upbringing, habituation and experience.

This last point may make it seem a little odd, or unfair, that someone who lacks a certain virtue could be called not fully rational. For one thing, the miser may be quite adept at sound deliberation. For another, it might not be her fault that she lacks generosity. Perhaps she suffered through some terribly deprived childhood, or perhaps miserliness is a long-standing family tradition. This may make saying it is in her interests to be generous seem implausible. How could it be good *for her*, for the particular person she is, to act differently to how her sound deliberation tells her to act? Part of the answer to this question comes from the point made above: to give an Aristotelian answer to 'How should I live?' is not to propose an ideal that will automatically be in everyone's interests considered in terms of their existing motivational sets. It is to give an account of what kind of person it is rational to be that will partially define what has to be in a motivational set. It follows from this that an agent may have a reason to be different even if she could not undergo a process of deliberation that would issue in the change. The next and most obvious question is then: what makes something count as a real interest? According to what standard is an element of a motivational set appropriate or inappropriate?

This is where the account of human nature and human function steps in. Consider an individual who undergoes some kind of radical transformation such that she acquires a new outlook or motivation. What must be true if this change is to have been in her real interests? As Williams' points out, it cannot simply be a self-validating change: S. is brainwashed into

becoming a member of a new age spiritualist cult, for example. For it to have been in the agent's real interests, it has to be true that before the change she lacked a quality characteristic of human beings, and a quality necessary to live a good human life. Moreover, since it is her interests that are in question, it must be that before she misconceived her interests, and that doing so was a main symptom of what was wrong with her. Her change in outlook, says Williams', must be explained by reference to some general incapacity from which she suffered and that was remedied by this change. The term 'general incapacity' signals first that the agent's prior misconception of her interests must not simply be constructed afterwards to fit the content of the change, as in the brainwashing example. Second, it signals that it is not enough for there just to have been a change in outlook. She must have suffered from a genuine incapacity to acknowledge things that, in circumstances of a particular kind, human beings should acknowledge as part of their effective functioning.

The notions of human nature and human functioning thus play a crucial role in an account of real interests. It is Williams' position, however, that such notions cannot provide a coherent foundation for an account of real interests and the worthwhile, or flourishing, life: Aristotle could not do it and he had a much better suited-to-the-task conception of human nature than any available to us. And his conception is not available to us.

Aristotle's account of human nature was based on an outdated and false metaphysical teleology, strongly tied to his cosmology, argues Williams. It was a perfectionist theory, according to which each natural kind of thing was endowed with a function. A member of a natural kind achieved a flourishing life if it fully realised its function. Such a member of a natural kind possessed a nature in virtue of which it belonged to that kind - its essence. This nature was constituted by a special subset of all the potentialities for change, those that could explain the entity's behaviour teleologically, that is, in reference to the good member of its kind that it would become if it developed properly. The nature of a thing was thus constituted by its set of potentialities for proper development. Its function was to realise that set of potentialities that could be explained teleologically, thus becoming a good entity of its kind. His view was that each kind of thing had a clear and singular kind of path, and an in-built drive

to follow this path, leading towards its own perfection. All of these paths converged to form a harmonious whole.

This was the view of nature that underpinned Aristotle's ethics, argues Williams. But, despite these rich teleological resources, Aristotle did not do enough to show how this view resulted in his account of real interests. Aristotle was committed to arguing that all the virtues, or excellences of character would fit together harmoniously. Moreover, he was committed to showing that the two very different ways in which human beings performed their function of the active exercise of reason, practically and theoretically, would fit together harmoniously, with excellence in intellectual inquiry representing the higher development. There is a gap, Williams seems to be saying, between the account of human nature and the supposed perfection of human nature, that Aristotle did not do enough to fill. For the account of what human nature was remained rather sketchy - a life that involved the active exercise of reason and, from the *Politics*, a life that was sociable. How exactly Aristotle got from these two points to his substantive account of the good for human beings, as representing the full realisation of rationality, is not clear.

The agent himself got to the life of well being largely through upbringing, habituation and experience. But here too, says Williams, Aristotle failed to fill the gap between nature and perfection in a satisfactory way. For, if an account of real interests is not to be just purely ideological, then the account must provide a **theory of error** - a substantive account of how it is someone can come to be wrong about her own real interests. On Aristotle's account, an agent came, through bad upbringing, to take pleasure in the wrong sorts of actions, that is, non-virtuous actions. But according to his teleological universe each thing had an in-built drive to attain its own perfection. Aristotle did not do enough, says Williams, to explain how it is that this was frustrated by a bad upbringing such that it was still in this agent's interests to be other than he was, even after this upbringing.

Aristotle's account of human nature thus fails in two main ways to provide an independent foundation for ethics. First, it is just false. We do not have recourse to Aristotle's picture of the

universe. Second, even if it were true, it did not do enough to show that the ethical life, or the Aristotelian ethical life, was indeed the full realisation of our human nature.

Our resources now, argues Williams, are much less likely to succeed than Aristotle's. What is needed is an independent (of assumed ethical considerations) account of human nature and well-being. Some such independence is needed if the account is to provide a firm foundation for ethics in some form, a standard against which to judge the ethical and the non-ethical life, as well as competing accounts of ethical lives. To do this, the account would have to be closely related to the complex aspects of human personality; determinate in its results; and favourable to ethical considerations of some kind. We just do not have such an account, says Williams. Evolutionary Biology, Socio-biology and Psychology all fail to show that the life of well-being is the ethical life, unless, as in the case of some psychological theories, they themselves already contain ethical thought. This suggests further, that we should be sceptical about the very possibility of an independent account.

It is true that we do need to live in society. As such, some ethical considerations need (for effective functioning) to form part of the lives of quite a number of people. And, as Williams points out, the formation of these dispositions is a natural process in human beings, much like the formation of a language.¹⁶ It is true then, that ethical value does, in some sense, lie in the self in terms of what kind dispositions that self has. (From the point of view of the self who has those dispositions, value will lie in things outside of herself - the things those dispositions are directed towards). It is true, in a way, that agents' dispositions are the ultimate supports of ethical value.

Aristotle is right, then, to make ethics a matter of what kind of person an agent is, that is, to put substantive ethical dispositions into the content of the self. But he is wrong to think that this can be reconciled with an external, absolute understanding of nature. In other words, Aristotle held the view that an independent account of what sorts of dispositions people should have could be derived from an absolute understanding of human nature. Thus, the

¹⁶ *ELP*, Ch. 3 pp 47-48

virtuous agent reflecting from his virtuous perspective (that he could not not do since this perspective formed a substantive part of his self) could come to see that his point of view and the outside point of view matched perfectly. He could see the virtuous life as the full realisation of human nature.

Since we have no reason to believe that an absolute understanding of human nature will determine one ethical life over another, it is just not true that the perspective of the virtuous person is the only one that matches with an understanding of human nature. That agent's perspective is only one of many compatible with human nature. Without Aristotle's assumptions, the fact that ethical value lies in peoples' dispositions has no way of providing a secure foundation for ethics, or for determining one kind of ethical life over another.

The most that is possible then, says Williams, is an answer to "How should I live?" given by a community or society that share substantive ethical dispositions. We cannot give a teleological answer for each person. Hence his theory of practical reason.

2.2 Rescuing Real Interests

This section presents, in three stages, the shape that a theory of real interests must have in order to overcome Williams' reasons for scepticism. First, I argue that an *external* account of human nature is neither necessary nor sufficient to provide a foundation for an attempt to answer "How should I live?". As Williams suggests, such an account is not possible and even if it were, it would be of dubious relevance to ethics¹⁷. I argue that the appeal to human nature must be internal to ethics if it is to be at all profitable. (There seems to be some tension in Williams' position on this issue¹⁸, for despite his reservations about the relevance of an external account, he does argue, as discussed in the previous section, that a foundation for ethics would have to be external.) Second, I examine how this internal account of human nature is arrived at and how it provides a foundation for a theory of real interests. Williams has a response to this kind of attempt. In the third part of this section I argue that these

¹⁷ *ELP* Ch 3. pp. 45-51

¹⁸ This point is made by Martha Nussbaum in her paper "Aristotle on Human nature and the Foundations of Ethics" in *World, Mind, Ethics* J.E.T Altham and R.Harrison, Eds. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995) pp. 89-90.

criticisms can largely be overcome by the account as it stands. Those that remain will be dealt with in the following chapter on self-respect.

2.2.1 *Internal vs. External*

In the previous chapter, and in 2.1, I tried to show how Williams' theory of practical reason depends on his prior answer to the question "How should I live?". Here I argue that Williams' scepticism about an answer to this question that can be *for everyone* is itself dependent on a Neo-Humean view of practical reasons, as is his view that a foundation for such an answer would have to be external. It is this Neo-Humean framework that obscures another genuine philosophical position: that a successful foundation for ethics, an answer that is *for everyone*, can, and must, be internal to ethics¹⁹.

As Williams points out, the Aristotelian is not committed to putting forward an ideal of the good life that will automatically appeal to any set of interests, or any motivational set. That would be to make eudaimonia a prudential good. The search for a specification of eudaimonia is a search for what kind of person it is rational to be. It is a search for the right way to live, or be, rather than a search for a list of lives that could be seen to be right or wrong, considered from some neutral outside perspective. Eudaimonia, or flourishing, is not some neatly packaged goal but rather the character of a life as a whole. Williams makes it clear that we do not have an external perspective available to us, and he is right to suggest such a perspective would be of dubious relevance. All that is relevant is the internal perspective of human lives as they are actually lived. On the Aristotelian view, considering the matter aright, or having the right set of interests, values and motivations, is constitutive of flourishing.

If we are to have reasons, rather than just motivations, full rationality cannot just be a formal matter. As I argued in 1.3, the normative role that reasons actually play is not adequately covered by the notion of a sound deliberative route. Only when his answer to "How should I live?" is included, is the full picture of Williams' theory of practical reason given. The two

¹⁹ This is similar to John McDowell's view in "*The Role of Eudaimonia in Aristotle's Ethics*" in **Essays on Aristotle's Ethics** A.O. Rorty, ed. (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1980) particularly pp 368-73.

questions cannot be separated if we are to give an adequate picture of practical reason. In other words, some considerations of some sort will be constitutive of what it is to be fully rational, and thus what it is to deliberate correctly. On Williams' picture these considerations are localised to particular communities; different communities will have different considerations. All that is available to us is the internal perspective, constituted by whatever set of considerations we happen to have, or, in other words, internal appeal to what we already value. There is thus no perspective from which to come up with a set of values, or real interests, that everyone should have. Reason cannot tell us what we should want.

So, for Williams, on the one hand there is the dubious relevance of the external perspective to ethics, and on the other, there is the hope it seems to offer of an Archimedean point, a foundation for the attempt to answer "How should I live?" such that it can be an answer for everyone. Further, it is just because this external perspective is not available to us that Williams is sceptical about the possibility of an account of real interests. However, it seems to me that the very reason for his demanding an external perspective, from which this scepticism results, is that he is already operating within a Neo-Humean framework of practical reason.

The effect of construing the appeal to human nature as an appeal to something external is to make eudaimonia, or the account of real interests, into a prudential good. In other words it is to make it into a life that can be seen to be maximally desirable from any, or from a neutral, perspective. This is expressly, according to Williams and explained above, what Aristotle is not doing. To say that the account of human nature must be external, in other words, is to make Aristotle slide from being committed to giving an answer *for* everyone to being committed to giving an answer *to* everyone. Not only does this misconstrue the role of the function argument in the Aristotelian approach, but it also runs the risk of missing the point of ethics all together.

To see how this slide results from viewing Aristotle from a Neo-Humean perspective on practical reasons, it is necessary to consider in some detail why Aristotle would be interpreted as offering an independent account of human nature as a justification or foundation of his

account of real interests. Disputes about how a human being should live, are disputes about what eudaimonia is, or what the good life consists in. Consider a dispute between X, who says that a human being should live a life of virtue, and Y, who believes human beings should live lives of selfish interest.²⁰ That eudaimonia is often translated as 'happiness' is due to the fact that the term is, according to Aristotle, only correctly applied to the life that is maximally attractive, or desirable. This suggests that the 'should' in the two competing theses of what eudaimonia consists must be justified by considerations about the desirability of the competing lives. In other words, it is a kind of prudential should. As a result of the function argument, or the appeal to human nature, Aristotle identifies eudaimonia with rational activity in accordance with excellence. This he further specifies as the life of virtue. Because the 'should' in the dispute above has been shown to be a kind of prudential should, this suggests that Aristotle is committed to a prudential justification of his own recipe for eudaimonia: it must be possible to demonstrate that it is that kind of life that is in fact the most desirable for a human being.

If Aristotle is supposed to be committed to this, then it is natural to suppose that the function argument plays a decisive role in his account. As McDowell puts it, a natural speculation will be that the argument is meant to bring the investigation of human nature to bear on the specification of the good life.²¹ In other words, that it is meant to show that Aristotle's account of eudaimonia as the most desirable life is grounded in some prior and independent theory of human nature.

It is true that eudaimonia is a kind of prudential good. Doing well (living according to Aristotle's recipe for eudaimonia) is the same as doing well (as one would wish: living in one's best interests). But this equation can be understood in two distinct ways. It is only if it is entered from the right hand side that the function argument needs to be understood in the way outlined in the previous paragraph - that is, as an appeal to an external account of human nature. And it is only from the perspective of the Neo-Humean view of reasons that we need to make our way into the equation from the right hand side. Williams' Neo-Humean view

²⁰ In this I am following John McDowell, "The Role of Eudaimonia in Aristotle's Ethics" pp 367-73.

²¹ John McDowell, "The Role of Eudaimonia in Aristotle's Ethics" p 369

of reasons, recall from chapter one, is that a genuine reason for acting is only a reason if it satisfies some element that is already in the agent's motivational set. If this thesis is accepted then, if Aristotle's conception of eudaimonia is to be justified as the most desirable life, we will first have to come up with an independent account of best interests (that is, make our way into the equation from the right hand side) that Aristotle's recipe for eudaimonia satisfies. Within this framework, disputes like the one mentioned above, if they are to be recognised as genuine disputes, must in principle be resolvable by some sort of external decision procedure, independent of any one of the particular theses in the dispute. Thus, if operating within the Neo-Humean framework, it is natural to suppose that the appeal to human nature must be external: In other words, that a prior, independent investigation into human nature provides us with a specification of the best interests of all human beings. It is this the success of this that Williams is sceptical of.

However, the equation can be understood the other way round; this enables a different understanding of the prudential nature of eudaimonia. If it is understood in this way, the function argument can be seen to be playing a different role.

If we enter the equation from the left hand side, then the specific conception of eudaimonia will itself inform what counts as best interests on the right hand side. In other words, if an agent really embraces a conception of eudaimonia, his prudential reasoning - reasoning in terms of benefit and harm - will derive from this conception. Other considerations that may have looked like potential advantages or losses on the right hand side would now be silenced. If someone really embraced a virtue like generosity, for example, the sacrifice of her own personal use or enjoyment of her property would not count as a genuine loss. And no payoff from being more selfish would count as a genuine advantage. It is not as if the Aristotelian approach, in attempting to show that the virtuous life is worthwhile, is committed to a weighing up of benefits and losses considered from a perspective outside of this life, such that the benefits of the virtuous life outweigh the losses. This would be an attempt to give an answer to "How should I live?" to everyone. It is not as if the missed chance of pleasure from being more selfish is an admitted loss, counterbalanced by something further gained from being

generous. For the generous agent, it would not count as a loss at all. As McDowell puts it, to embrace a specific conception of eudaimonia is see the world in a particular way, such that the reasons for acting in particular circumstances do not override other considerations that might have been reasons from some other perspective, but bring it about that these other considerations are silenced - they are not potential reasons at all.²²

Understanding the equation in this way changes the role of the appeal to human nature by way of the function argument. The specific conception of eudaimonia no longer has to be justified by showing that such a life maximises the satisfaction of a set of desires that all human beings have by virtue of their nature, or function, where that set is established by a prior and independent "value-free" theory of human nature. Williams is right to insist that such a perspective is not available. Moreover, to suppose that an external account of what it is the business of human beings to do could generate normative conclusions seems to miss the point of ethics. If we did have an external foundation for ethics, we would have some externally fixed points. These would generate some absolute prohibitions against certain courses of action that could not be altered by anyone's choices. But points fixed externally do not seem to be the action-guiding criteria needed for ethics. Atrocity should be avoided because of what it is, that is for ethical reasons - what we value, and not because some wall of scientific fact has blocked us.²³ All that is available to us, and all that should be available to us, in giving an account of how human beings should live and what they should and should not do, is internal appeal to what is valuable. Ethical value lies in peoples' dispositions. Williams is right to suggest that the external perspective is of dubious relevance, and right to insist that the internal perspective is all that is available.

²² John McDowell, "The Role of Eudaimonia in Aristotle's Ethics" p 370

²³ Martha Nussbaum, "Aristotle on Human Nature and the Foundation of Ethics", p. 122.

2.2.2 An Internal Account of Human Nature

If there is no external account of human nature available, then there is no external decision procedure available for resolving disputes like the one between X and Y mentioned above. This does not mean that there is thus no role for human nature to play in providing a foundation for ethics. It does not mean that a universal answer to “How should I live?” is not possible, or that there is no coherent way to proceed in developing an account of real interests. It does mean that the role of the function argument will have to be understood in a different way. Williams seems to view it as Aristotle appealing to nature to obtain a full story of human natural perfection, from which a similarly full account of ethical conduct would straightforwardly follow.²⁴ Rather, it should be understood as providing a framework within which discussion about the specification of the good life can go on.

Understanding the equation from the left hand side means that the Aristotelian approach has to begin with an account of doing well - living according to Aristotle’s recipe for eudaimonia - that is grounded in an account of the function, or characteristic activity of human beings, without purporting to adopt an external or independent view of human nature. In other words, the conception of human nature must itself be “value-loaded”.²⁵ This section argues that such a conception is available to us, and that it can provide a coherent foundation for attempts to answer the question “How should I live?”.

First, I outline what this conception of human nature is, and how it is established by internal appeal to what we value. Second, I show how it can be seen to provide a foundation for ethical inquiry.

To enquire into what a good life is for a human being, it must first be established what counts as a life for a human being. In her two papers, “*Aristotle on Human Nature and the*

²⁴ Martha Nussbaum, “*Aristotle on Human Nature and the Foundation of Ethics*”, p. 88.

²⁵ John McDowell, “*The Role of Eudaimonia in Aristotle’s Ethics*”, p371.

*Foundations of Ethics*²⁶ and “*Non-Relative Virtues: an Aristotelian Approach*”²⁷, Martha Nussbaum argues that Aristotle establishes this by internal appeal to forms of life. It is her argument that, given the way that human beings experience and live their lives, certain elements can be established as necessary for a life to be called human. This serves to establish some limits on what can count as a motivational set for an individual, if that individual is to live a human life. The role of the appeal to human nature in the Aristotelian approach is not, then, to provide a full story of human natural perfection and thus a full specification of the good life. Rather, it provides a foundation for further such specification: as Aristotle puts it, a sketch that must be filled in later.²⁸ Nussbaum suggests, interpreting Aristotle, that such further specification is, and must be, an ongoing interpretative project if it is not to miss the point of ethics and of living well. Absolute answers drawn from some absolute understanding of nature are not what we find in Aristotle, but they are neither necessary nor sufficient for an enquiry into the human good.²⁹

Nussbaum locates Aristotle in a tradition of Greek thought that explores the forms of life distinctive to human beings, as both limited and capable, caught as we are in some sense between the gods and the beasts. In the first paper on human nature, she examines Aristotle’s arguments for the two most essential elements that make a life human - practical reason, from the function argument in **The Nichomachean Ethics**, and sociability, from the **Politics**. For human beings to live their lives as they do, they must value both practical reason and sociability. That these arguments proceed from an internal perspective of human lives and how they are lived can be seen as follows. First, the function argument: Aristotle defines this as the search for the characteristic activity of human beings. A good human life must first of all be a human life. Aristotle is asking, if human beings are active rather than idle by nature, if there is something characteristic of this way of being active such that without this characteristic, the being would not be human. What makes a being human, Aristotle concludes, as opposed to an animal or a plant, is the active exercise of reason. Nussbaum argues, and offers substantial textual support, for understanding this conclusion to mean, not

²⁶ See note 12 above.

²⁷ In **The Quality of Life** M.Nussbaum and A.Sen, Eds. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993)

²⁸ Aristotle **The Nichomachean Ethics** D. Ross, ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980) 1098a20-6

²⁹ Martha Nussbaum “*Aristotle on Human Nature and the Foundations of Ethics*” pp 121-4

that the elements of lives that we share with plants and animals, like nutrition, growth and perception, are in no way essential or characteristic of human beings, but rather that the defining characteristic of a human life is that these other activities are structured by reason. A life for a human being must be organised in some way by practical reason. The good life must, then, be sought within the group of such lives. This, as Nussbaum points out, does not rule out much except an extreme form of hedonism and the sleeper's life of non-guided digestive functioning. But the important thing to note here is the way it rules such lives out. It is not, importantly, by way of a knock-down proof from a fixed area of external fact.

A defender of, for example, an extreme form of hedonism, can reply by refusing to value reason. The mindless life is not ruled out by external facts of nature. But a particular kind of self-validating argument is available in discussions of the value to be placed on practical reason. For to participate in any sort of discussion about what the good life consists in is to implicitly accept the value of practical reason. There is, as Susan Hurley points out, a pragmatic, rather than logical, inconsistency in adopting a sceptical view of the value of practical reason. Some aspect of the form of life, activity or mentality of the sceptic has implications inconsistent with the content of her view.³⁰ And even for the individual who does not participate in the discussion of the value of practical reason, it will be very difficult not to operate in daily behaviour and speech without using practical reason. (It does not have to be good reasoning - bad or careless reasoning is still reasoning). It would seem that human life as it is lived requires the valuing of practical reason. Still, a sceptic could choose the mindless life, although, to be consistent, choosing would have to be renounced after this initial decision. But the cost of such a choice would be high, for the living out of this view would negate her essential properties as a human being. The sceptic could no longer participate in any form of life that requires the valuing of practical reason. She could no longer live a human life, and as such would no longer be regarded as fully human. Such an individual, like the survivor of a frontal lobotomy - to use Nussbaum's example, would be owed an ethical treatment different to that of other human beings.

³⁰ Susan Hurley, Commentary on "*Martha Nussbaum's Non-Relative Virtues: an Aristotelian Approach*" in **The Quality of Life** M. Nussbaum and A. Sen, eds. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993) p271

Establishing the value of sociability proceeds along similar lines. Again, the argument begins with an appeal to forms of life and then establishes the conditions necessary for such forms of life to obtain. Again, the self-validating argument is available in arguing against those sceptical of the value of sociability. In the passages that defend friendship, or sociability more generally, as a necessary and natural element of human life, Aristotle's method is not one of detached discovery but one of setting down and examining ordinary beliefs. The naturalness of friendship or sociability is put forward as a matter of evaluative judgement - it is physically possible to live without others, but human beings generally do not choose to live that way.³¹ The support for the claim that sociability is an essential element of a human life is purely internal. It comes from claims about preferences, choices, and judgements - particularly evaluative judgements about what would make a life worth living. The claim is that certain human beliefs and practices are so deep and pervasive as to be constitutive of humanness. This sets the context from within which the search for the good life must go on.

What of the sceptic who denies the importance of sociability and insists that the good life is the life of solitary self-sufficiency? There would seem to be a pragmatic inconsistency between the content of this view and human life as it is experienced. As with the sceptic who denies the importance of practical reason, it would be difficult to truly live out this denial without becoming a completely non-social anthropomorph. The cost of such a position then would be an opting out of the human community all together. Human life as it is lived seems to require the valuing of sociability, and other responsiveness, at least in some minimal form. The argument for the value of sociability, then, has the same self-validating character as the argument for the value of practical reason. The point is not that there is some scientific, external fact about us that prevents the sceptic from making such a choice. Rather, it is that such a choice would flout our most deeply held evaluative beliefs about what makes a life worthwhile. At this level the life that could be considered human and the life that could be considered worthwhile overlap - the claim is that some of our evaluative beliefs are so integral to our identity that a life that did not value sociability, say, could not be considered a human life.

³¹ Nussbaum defends this interpretation by examining the account of the value of friendship in **The Nichomachean Ethics** and the account of the naturalness of society in Book 1 of the **Politics** in "*Aristotle on Human Nature and the Foundations of Ethics*" pp 102-110

I said above that Nussbaum locates Aristotle in a tradition of Greek thought that explores the essential nature of human beings as both capable, as opposed to beasts, and limited, as opposed to the gods. Identifying practical reason and sociability as essential elements of human lives identifies distinctive human capabilities. What of our limitations? When introducing the list of virtues, Aristotle proceeds by first isolating a sphere of experience that figures in more or less any human life, and with regard to which any human being will have to have some attitude rather than another and make some choices rather than others. The “thin” account of a virtue will be whatever being stably disposed to choose well, or act appropriately, in each sphere consists in.³² Aristotle then defends a full, or “thick”, definition of the virtue in each case. But the important point for the moment is that the process of identifying what Nussbaum calls the “grounding experiences”³³, in each case, may be seen as the continuation of the internal account of human nature. Our mortality and the fact that we have bodies of a certain sort with a certain range of desires and appetites, our capacity for pain and pleasure and the fact that all human beings need things that they do not control, all these things form a structuring framework of the internal perspective of what it is to be a human being. Their importance, from the ethical point of view, is that they form a structure of the areas in which human choice is both non-optional and somewhat problematic - given these limitations, how is it best to go about the business of living?

The appeal to human nature, then, is not so much an appeal to some independent account of the perfect functioning of human beings. Rather, it serves to provide a framework within which the search for the good life can go on. It provides a foundation for the further specification of real interests. And it is a good foundation because of its broad acceptability across time and place. This can be seen from the self-validating character of the arguments for practical reason and sociability. Moreover, at the level of the grounding experiences there is substantial overlap and convergence among different cultures.³⁴ It turns out that human

³² Nussbaum gives a detailed analysis of this process in *“Non-Relative Virtues: an Aristotelian Approach”*

³³ Martha Nussbaum *“Non-Relative Virtues: an Aristotelian Approach”* p 247

³⁴ As such, Nussbaum argues, it can incorporate what is true in the cultural relativist’s claim that these basic experiences are to some extent differently constructed by different societies.

nature is not a thing, but an internal perspective - the most fundamental and broadly shared experiences of human beings.

2.2.3 Williams' Further Objections

Williams does not think this attempt to rescue real interests will work.³⁵ His objections take issue with the two main features of Nussbaum's account: 1. it is evaluative and 2. it is internal. As for 1, Williams argues that it is simply false that an account of human nature can or should be evaluative. His objection to 2 is more complex. He does not argue that Nussbaum's account is false because it is internal. Rather, he concedes that the Neo-Aristotelian enterprise can, and should, be understood internally. He concedes also that Aristotle may have seen it in such terms. But that does not mean that we can see it as Aristotle saw it. In making her account both internal and Aristotelian, Nussbaum faces a dilemma. On the one hand, if it is to be linked closely enough to Aristotle to say anything substantial about what the good life consists in, it becomes unacceptable. Her account leaves out Aristotle's cosmology and theory of nature more generally, which is what allows Aristotle to give the content that he does to the good life. On the other hand, if her account is 'harmonised' with Aristotle's, and therefore made acceptable, it becomes vacuous. Underlying both objections is the position Williams took in **ELP**: for an account of real interests to be universal, it must be, or at least some aspect of it must be, objective.

The advance on Williams' position in **ELP** is his concession that both the Aristotelian and Neo-Aristotelian approaches can be understood in coherentist and hermeneutical terms, that is, internally. But he still thinks that both fail to provide a foundation for ethics, and thus any hope for a universal account of real interests, because they do not have recourse to standards sufficiently independent of ethical demands and hopes, that is, objective standards. There are many (internal) accounts of the good life and more than one interpretation of Aristotle's account. Such standards would be necessary to justify the claim that any one account was indeed an account of real interests. Aristotle's own such standards, drawn from

³⁵ Bernard Williams "Replies" in **World, Mind, Ethics** J.E.T. Altham and R. Harrison, Eds. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995)

his cosmology and so on, are no longer available to us and Nussbaum provides nothing to take their place.

Nussbaum thinks that nothing is needed to take their place; we can identify universal values without them being objective. Indeed, she argues that the demand for objectivity misses the point. I argue that to a large extent Nussbaum's account can overcome these objections as it stands. Objection 1 can be dealt with if the two stages of the Aristotelian account are kept distinct - to give an account of the human life before giving an account of the good human life. I argue that Williams does not note sufficiently the kind of values that Nussbaum is arguing for in developing an account of the human life. The second objection misses the force of Nussbaum's point that a successful foundation for ethics would have to be internal. Moreover, the charge that it is vacuous also results partly from a confusion between the two stages of the Aristotelian approach, and it does not take full account of the role accorded to practical reason and sociability. I discuss objection 1 first and give my reply before moving on to objection 2.

Nussbaum argues that the questions of whether a creature is a human being, or whether it is the same human being, are evaluative questions. In this she attempts to bring together two issues: the possible and the worthwhile. She argues that the necessary conditions for a life being a human life, is a matter of whether that life is something that I could choose. But, surely to ask whether I survive a life is not the same thing as to ask whether I consider it a life worth living? Nussbaum's reply is that these would only be two different questions if questions of personal identity were matters of fact having no connection with judgement and choice.³⁶ It is not so for Aristotle. What the arguments for practical reason and sociability show is that they are valued in such a deep and pervasive way that if a life, or way of being, did not contain them I could not consider it a life for me.

This is just not true, according to Williams: whether I have a worthwhile life or not, or whether a particular life is mine, cannot be simply a matter of what I value. As Aristotle points out,

³⁶ Martha Nussbaum "Aristotle on Human Nature and the Foundation of Ethics" pp 105-6

eudaimonia is in part a matter of luck; whether I have a happy life or not is not just up to me. It might be the case that an individual experiences such radical bad luck that she is unable to include or pursue any of the activities that she values. Nevertheless, it would still be her life. What her life is is partly a matter of luck. It cannot be the case, then, that the judgement that a particular life is or is not hers, should be one and the same as her judgement as to whether it contains the activities that she values most. Williams accepts that the question of whether a given life could be mine is evaluative in an obvious sense of being a focus for what I value, hope and fear. But, in another and more important sense for the purposes of the present discussion it is not, for the answer cannot be determined by what I value. Someone whose religion is deeply constitutive of his identity, for example, might deny that a life without that religion could be worthwhile, or even that his continued existence depends on his adherence to that specific religion. But the fact that he has such a religion is contingent. He might have been born to a completely different family in completely different cultural circumstances.

The key to overcoming this objection is to note, which Williams does not seem to do sufficiently, that the project of identifying the worthwhile or desirable life on a basis of an understanding of human nature proceeds in two distinct stages. The objection only seems to hold as a result of a confusion that arises if these two are not kept distinct.

A good human being performs her function well. A function must first be identified before it can be specified what it is to perform that function well. As in **ELP**, Williams seems here to be assuming that to identify the function, or characteristic activity, of human beings is immediately to give a full specification of the worthwhile life. However, Nussbaum's express task, in the two papers discussed above, is to identify the function of human beings. It is an attempt to establish a coherent foundation for the attempt to answer the question "How should I live?". She is thus operating at the level of what counts as a human being, not yet what counts as a good human being. Making the question of whether something is a human being evaluative does not entail denying that a good human life is in part a matter of luck.

Williams' statement of Nussbaum's position, while maybe not incorrect, is misleading, in the same way as his criticism is misleading. He sums up her position as: "...an attitude to certain activities, that they are worth pursuing or worthily part of my life, carries with it an attitude to the possession of certain lives or states of being: that because they do not contain or honour those activities, I could not at a level that really matters count them as mine." And after making the point about luck, the criticism runs: "But then it cannot be the case that my identity within a way of life - the question whether it is my life - can hang on my declaration or resolution that his way of life does not come up to my expectations, or does not sufficiently honour activities by which I set great evaluative store." Both these statements allow for a confusion between identifying the human life and identifying the good human life. They make it seem as if the question of whether a life is mine is a matter of my individual, however idiosyncratic, idea of what the good life should be or contain: if, at a deep level, philosophy is an activity by which I set great evaluative store, then a life without philosophy could not be my life. But Nussbaum is not operating at the level of a specification of eudaimonia. Her project is to search for a common human nature. Her argument is that whatever the circumstances of a particular human life, no matter what horribly unlucky things happen, the daily activities of this life will presuppose the valuing of practical reason and sociability. I might wake up tomorrow changed into someone who lives in the trailer park of an obscure North America town, my major goal in life having been transformed into the desire to appear on the Jerry Springer show. No matter how nasty I might consider such a life to be, from my current perspective, it would still be a recognisably human life because it contains practical reason and sociability, in however minimal a form. If, however, I suffered some terrible accident and ended up brain dead attached to life support machines, I would no longer be capable of living a distinctively human life.

All the different lives that we consider human require the valuing of practical reason and sociability in some way, however minimal. Those lives that do not value practical reason or sociability at all, as a result of some pathology or consistent scepticism, are not fully human. As such, the beings living such lives will merit different ethical treatment. Nussbaum claims,

with her self-validating arguments, to have identified values that all human beings hold just in virtue of being human.

Williams way of putting her position suggests that in conflating the possible and the worthwhile, Nussbaum is conflating the question of whether a life is human with the question of whether the life is good. In fact, she takes pains to point out that this is not what she is doing: she is concerned to provide a framework within which the specification of the good life can take place, and she is critical of Williams' assumption that a full specification of the good life will straightforwardly flow from an account of human nature.³⁷ Williams argues that what we value, or the activities we are able to pursue, is partly determined by luck. Luck is prior to value. In making the question of whether a given life is human an evaluative question, however, Nussbaum does not have to deny the important place of luck. In making it an evaluative question she is not making it a question of whether it is the worthwhile, eudaimon, life. In an important sense, value is prior to luck: all human lives, no matter what the contingent circumstances, require practical reason and sociability in some form. No doubt how these values are given expression will be in part a matter of luck.

I now move on to the second objection. Nussbaum wishes to make her account internal and Aristotelian. But, says Williams, if it is to be linked close enough to Aristotle's account to say something substantial about what the good life consists in, then it becomes unacceptable. On the other hand, if the link is such as to harmonise Nussbaum's more modern ethical outlook with Aristotle's, then her account becomes vacuous. This charge that Nussbaum's account is either unacceptable or vacuous also results, partly, from not keeping clear the distinction between giving an account of function and giving an account of good functioning. Also, it misses the force of Nussbaum's point that a successful foundation for ethics would have to be internal.

I discuss the charge that her account is unacceptable first. Nussbaum is attempting to keep an Aristotelian account of human nature, on Aristotelian principles, without reinstating

³⁷ Martha Nussbaum "Aristotle on Human Nature and the Foundation of Ethics"

Aristotelian cosmology or physics. There is a danger, says Williams, that to leave behind the cosmology and physics is to leave behind the elements that make his account of human nature acceptable. Williams accepts Nussbaum's account of the function argument: that the human function should be expressed as a life characterised or structured by reason. As Nussbaum points out, this does not rule out much. The requirement of sociability is thus introduced to help specify eudaimonia. The use of reason must form a basis for the social life. This line of argument is deceptively simple, argues Williams. It assumes answers to old and important questions, not least those raised in Books i and ii of Plato's **Republic**. There, Glaucon and Adeimantus agree that human beings are essentially or typically rational and that they essentially or typically live in society. But they are still able to deny that the best use of reason is that within the restrictive requirements of society. Just because sociability is typical does not mean it is really good for human beings. Aristotle is able to counter this line of thought by way of his cosmology, and his theory of nature more generally, which is presupposed by his ethics. It is this that allows his strong view of the harmony among themselves of human capabilities and needs³⁸ such that the social use of reason is the best use of reason. It thus makes a big difference to the acceptability of Aristotle's account of human nature whether or not it is supported by the rest of his theory. With no such support, Nussbaum's account becomes unacceptable.

On the other hand, to take the second half of the objection, if the link between Aristotle's account and Nussbaum's more modern one is weakened so as to avoid the problem of the lack of cosmology, then her account becomes so vague as to altogether lack content. Once practical reason, sociability and the grounding experiences are in place, the way to move towards a specification of the good life is via our best ethical understanding. The approach should be internal, what Nussbaum characterises as a historically evolving process of interpretation and discussion involving competing specifications of eudaimonia. This is what it means, to return to McDowell's point, to enter the equation from the left hand side. Williams concedes that the Aristotelian enterprise should not be understood as what he calls a 'top-down' enterprise that moves from an account of humanity independently understood to an ethical form of life (what McDowell would call entering the equation from the right hand side).

As such, it is possible to harmonise the two accounts. If our ethical understanding has moved to a point where, for example, liberal ideals of autonomy are very important, then this can be made to fit with a broadly Aristotelian understanding of human beings. But this does not introduce a very strong relation with Aristotle, suggesting as it does that all his ethical theory requires is that the account of the good human life be consistent with what one takes human beings to be, including particularly practical reason and sociability. And if this is all that is required for an ethical theory to be Aristotelian, Nussbaum's position verges on the vacuous. For any and every social system inevitably passes the test, in the sense that human beings must have had these capabilities for the system to have come into existence.

The way to avoid saying nothing at all interesting, says Williams, would be to provide some constraints on what can count as the best understanding of these human capabilities. These constraints must to some extent be independent of distinctively ethical considerations. It is not enough to say that Aristotle's own account, and those of his medieval and modern conservative followers, are wrong because they do not fit with a liberal understanding. Nussbaum needs to explain what, apart from this, is wrong with such views.

Thus an Aristotelian account of human nature, if it is to be useful for providing a universal answer to "How should I Live?" cannot be exclusively internal and evaluative. For Nussbaum's account to work, it needs to be backed up by an independent external (scientific) account of human nature. Aristotle's cosmology must be replaced by something similarly external, independent of our distinctively ethical demands and hopes.

This seems to be the same thing as saying that the Neo-Aristotelian enterprise must proceed in a top-down fashion, that is, from an external account of human nature to an ethical form of life, if it is to succeed. Yet Williams explicitly says he no longer wants to claim this. Perhaps this apparent contradiction can be resolved if Williams is understood as saying that it is the account's pretences towards universality that necessitate objective standards. The enterprise can be understood to proceed internally, but then it must give up its pretensions of universality.)

The charge that Nussbaum's account is unacceptable can be overcome if careful attention is paid to the importance of a foundation for ethics being internal. In saying her account is unacceptable because it lacks Aristotle's cosmology, Williams is again demanding the kind of external independence that Nussbaum argues is neither necessary nor sufficient. It is just not the right kind of thing to serve as a foundation for ethics. The internal argument for sociability, with its self-validating structure, is independent in the right way. Nussbaum acknowledges that the sceptic can deny that the absolute best use of reason is for the basis of a social life. The inconsistency involved in the sceptic denying the importance of sociability is a pragmatic inconsistency. There are no knock-down arguments that demonstrate the falsity of such a sceptical position.

All we have is internal appeal to what we value. For ethical purposes, we do not need anything more. Our ethical problems and questions arise out of human life as it is lived. The materials needed to address those problems, and those needed to construct the good life, need to come from the same place. As Williams puts it: we need to live in society, and that is an inner need not just a technological necessity. To live in society, some sort of ethical considerations are necessary. In other words, some sort of structuring use of reason that can form the basis of the social life is necessary. Any independent theory that showed that we would not be really (in some absolute objective sense, whatever that might be) happy living under some such adequate ethical conditions, would not tell us how to live. Rather, it would tell us that we could not live happily. Nussbaum is not concerned to find such absolute answers. Her remarks about why a foundation would have to be internal suggest that such answers miss the point of ethics.

The self-validating arguments, for both practical reason and sociability, function as transcendental arguments - arguments concerning how certain forms of life are possible, or what the necessary conditions for them are. These arguments have the form: p, necessarily if p then q; therefore q. The minor premise p is established pragmatically, by participation in forms of life. It is conceded by something the sceptic does or is, hence the pragmatic

inconsistency that results when the sceptic denies q. The type of pragmatic support that establishes the minor premise can be characterised as presuppositional.³⁸ Both practical reason and sociability are presupposed in many of our activities (particularly those that result from the limitations that differentiate us from the gods). Forgoing such activities would be terribly costly; it would completely alter the nature of a life. Therefore, valuing practical reason and sociability are essential characteristics of a human life. There is no necessity here. It is possible to opt out and cut ourselves off from other people, or refrain from deliberation, language or thought. The cost might not be worth paying, but we could pay it. There is no hard external obstacle to block certain sceptical views. Nussbaum's point, however, is that this lack of necessity is no loss. In fact, it is part of what gives ethics much of its point. A foundation has to be internal if it is to be pertinent to the lives that human beings are actually trying to lead. Just as a human life is an internal perspective, so is the good human life. The good human being does good things, or avoids doing bad things, for the right, that is distinctively ethical, reasons. Her actions are chosen, not dictated by the necessity in some absolute independent account of human nature. This is Nussbaum's point when she says that atrocity ought to be avoided because of what it is, for ethical reasons, and not because some wall of scientific fact has blocked us.

The self-validating arguments for practical reason and sociability get their force from a pragmatic inconsistency in the position they argue against. The forms of life, activity or mentality of she who is sceptical about the value of practical reason presuppose the valuing of practical reason, for example. Williams might reply that this kind of presuppositional pragmatic support undermines objectivity. Although the cost may be high, the sceptic can opt out of practical reason by giving up her present form of life. If she does so, nothing is presupposed and there is thus no pragmatic inconsistency, thus nothing is shown. That the rest of do not choose to pay these terrible costs does not prove that the sceptic is wrong to do so. The only thing that could prove the sceptic wrong would be proof that practical reason is really, objectively, valuable. Whether the sceptic is wrong cannot depend on what forms of life

³⁸ Susan Hurley, Commentary on "Martha Nussbaum's *Non-Relative Virtues: an Aristotelian Approach*" p 272

we go in for and what they presuppose. Forms of life and what they presuppose are contingent; an objective world is not obliged to conform to our presuppositions.

Nussbaum might reply that this objection again misses the point. She is concerned to provide an account of the essential characteristics of the human life, as a prelude to an account of the good human life. She claims, with her self-validating arguments, to have identified universal values. Engaging in various thought experiments we find we cannot imagine a human life that all together lacks either practical reason or social responsiveness. The sceptic who opts out is no longer living a recognisably human life. Therefore, since the good life for a being must first be a life for that being, he is not living a good human life either. To claim that the sceptic who opts out of practical reason can only be proved wrong if it is proved that practical reason is objectively valuable is to miss the point. It is to miss the point by changing the question. For such a life would no longer be recognisably human - it would be the life of the grazing animal or the shellfish. So to ask if practical reason is really valuable is in effect to ask if it is best to live the human, rather than some other kind, of life. Williams is sceptical about the very possibility of an account of objective values (recall the discussion of **ELP**, Ch2). Perhaps this question is not answerable - all we have is internal appeal to what we value. But, just because an account of objective values is not possible, it does not mean that an account of universal values is not possible; it does not mean that we cannot establish a foundation for answering the question "How should I live?"³⁹

If this side of the second objection can be disarmed, what of the charge that without some independent standards to fill the gap, Nussbaum's account achieves nothing? Again in this objection Williams does not seem to sufficiently acknowledge the importance of the account

³⁹ If presuppositional pragmatic support for the minor premise in these arguments still seems too weak, Hurley identifies a stronger kind of pragmatic support that is closer to demonstrative. The mark of such support is that the sceptic's expression of her position does not merely presuppose something inconsistent with that position; it actually demonstrates the falsity of it. And opting out is self-defeating; it implicitly concedes the very thing she is sceptical of - the person who is sceptical about the existence of language, for example. As far as essential characteristics of human beings are concerned, Hurley puts forward the claim that the distinctive mark of persons is their capacity for higher-order attitudes. We are pragmatically committed to there being reason to exercise this capacity, and therefore to its value, through our regular exercise of it. Being sceptical about the value of higher order attitudes is itself a higher order attitude, and the distinctive mark of a person. The desire or intention not to have any is also a higher-order attitude. Suicide or brain surgery is self-defeating because the decision that it is preferable is an expression of the capacity for higher-order attitudes. We do not, however, get full demonstrative support in the evaluative realm because the sceptic who opts out does not exactly concede that which she is sceptical about, i.e. that there is reason to exercise her capacity for higher-order attitudes, only her pragmatic commitment to this capacity. But to ask for more than this is to ask for objectivity, which seems to miss the point in the way described above.

being internal. Moreover, he does not fully recognise the role that practical reason and sociability play in the account - it is Nussbaum's argument that these are independent enough to replace external independent standards. Again, in overcoming this objection, it is important to carefully note the distinction between giving an account of a human life and giving an account of the good human life. Williams' statement of her position is misleading. Although it may not give a clear and straightforward specification of the good life, it does provide a substantial foundation. Perhaps, in some sense, the less harsh charge that the account does too little is accurate. However, this is not a fatal objection.

As discussed above, Nussbaum's project, at this stage, is to provide an account of the human life. To this end, following Aristotle, practical reason, sociability and the grounding experiences are identified as essential characteristics of a human life. At this level, the fact that every actual social system passes the test, and that Aristotle's ethical outlook can be harmonised with one that is more modern, is only to be expected. It would be odd if the result were at all different: all the lives are instances of human lives. In terms of identifying a foundation for the good life in a common human nature, it appears as though Nussbaum has at least hit on the right elements. The fact that her account does not yet exclude anything is not a bad thing.

Perhaps her account would be vacuous if it did only this and did not provide any further guidelines for specifying the good life. But it is not so. Williams says that in order to avoid looming vacuity, the Aristotelian must provide some independent constraints on what can count as the best understanding of human powers, and that these must to some degree be independent of the distinctively ethical demands and hopes.⁴⁰ Prior to this, when talking about why the concept human being cannot just be evaluative, he says that it (human being) had better retain some classificatory and explanatory force. Without this, the project of using it in identifying the worthwhile life would be vacuous.⁴¹ It is Nussbaum's argument, however, that sociability and practical reason, because of their self-validating structure - they are values

⁴⁰ Bernard Williams "Replies" p200

⁴¹ Bernard Williams "Replies" p198

presupposed in any human life, are what give the concept human being its classificatory and explanatory force, for ethical purposes.

Moreover, it seems that practical reason and sociability themselves are meant to function as independent constraints as what counts as the best understanding of our powers. This point can be explained as follows: The specification of the good life must proceed internally. The advantage of Nussbaum's account over one that stops with individual subjective preferences is that it identifies foundational values that provide a framework for that specification. It allows us all to talk about the same thing. The way in which it is envisaged that the specification of the good life will proceed is not at all in terms of the search for absolute answers. This misses the point, as discussed above. Nussbaum characterises this process of specification, interpreting Aristotle, as a historically evolving project of self-perpetuation/inquiry/creation that can only be done well if room is always left for the play of the imagination and for improvisatory responsiveness to the flow of history.⁴² As she points out in "*Non-relative Virtues*", it is probably true that what it is to choose well in any specific area of experience will admit of multiple specifications. But this is not necessarily a bad thing. Moreover, the more careful the understanding of the grounding experiences, the better the possible specification.⁴³ The more precisely the problems that human beings encounter, and the circumstances in which choices have to be made, are understood, the better the resources for assessing competing responses and for understanding what it might be to act well.

Nussbaum's account highlights the importance of politics with regard to the formation of an individual's motivational set (whereas Williams does not address this point at all). Aristotle's account aims to provide instructions for the future legislator. Not only does the importance of practical reason to the human life rule out certain extreme ethical positions, it also helps to give content to those instructions, as does the requirement of sociability. Many conceivable political and economic arrangements, Nussbaum argues, remove humanity by removing choice from areas of people's lives. Moreover, the claim that each of us lives by a conception of personal identity according to which part of what we are is a being essentially related to

⁴² Martha Nussbaum "*Aristotle on Human Nature and the Foundations of Ethics*" p123

⁴³ Martha Nussbaum "*Non-Relative Virtues: an Aristotelian Approach*" p 248

others by ties of recognition and concern, is not something that has really been taken to heart by much philosophical or economic theorising, for example.⁴⁴ These last three points, about how the grounding experiences, practical reason and sociability function to help specify the good life, suggest the way in which they can function as independent constraints, while remaining internal. In deciding between Aristotle's own substantive ethical outlook, or those of his modern conservative followers, and the modern liberal account, these elements provide the framework for discussion and also the reference points, or the tools, for deciding which account is best. The main point to note, here, is that the answer will have to be reached via ethical argument, and not because a biologist has discovered something.

The charge that this account is entirely vacuous seems too harsh. It ignores the fact that it is an attempt to identify the human life, not yet to give a specification of the good life. Moreover, it misses the force of the point that a foundation for ethics must be internal, and ignores the arguments for, and the role Nussbaum accords to, practical reason and sociability. It might still appear, though, that the account as it stands has not done enough in lighting the way for the specification of the good life - it still seems rather inconclusive and indeterminate. This objection is not fatal, however, as I argue in the next chapter, for what it has done is establish a foundation on which to build. I introduce the concept of self-respect as a vehicle for advancing the specification of the good life. This further overcomes Williams' objections as it shows that the foundation can be built on, and that at the level of the good life it is not true that no lives, or ways of living, are excluded.

⁴⁴ Martha Nussbaum "Aristotle on Human Nature and the Foundations of Ethics" p 109

3. Real Interests: Self-Respect

A brief summary of the argument so far: Williams argues that practical reasons are hypothetical - an agent does not have a reason to x if she cannot reach a motivation to x via a sound deliberative route. In chapter one I argued that this account of practical reason is based on a prior answer to the question "How should I live?". Williams' answer is that only a constructivist account of the good can be given - we construct our picture of the good life out of the motivations that we, as a community, have. No universal answer is possible. I argued that this account of reasons is inadequate because it does not allow reasons to play an adequate normative role. In particular, it does not allow for an agent to be irrational, or not fully rational, in the sense of being unresponsive to reasons. Reason alone may not be able to make the arrogant individual behave differently, or see that she is wrong. But that does not mean that she is therefore not wrong, and has no reason to change.

To support the claim that full rationality includes being responsive to reasons, an answer must be given to "How should I live?" that is at least an answer for everyone, that is, universal. A recognitional account of the good must be given. This allows for the possibility that an agent can be wrong about her own best interests. If desires recognise, rather than construct, the good, it follows that desires can be correct or incorrect depending on whether they have the good as their object. Chapter 2 laid the foundation for such an account, an account of real interests, and attempted to answer Williams' sceptical objections. His main objection, both in **ELP** and in "*Replies*", is the lack of independent (of ethics) support for the account of human nature. He argues that for the answer to be universal it must be to some extent objective. Nussbaum, on the other hand, argues that universality is possible without objectivity. Indeed, if there is to be a foundation for ethics, to demand that it be objective is to miss the point of ethics. I argued that Williams' objection results from already adopting a Neo-Humean framework of reasons; misses the force of the requirement that a foundation for ethics would have to be internal; and does not keep the distinction between the two levels of the Aristotelian account, functioning and good functioning, clear.

The next stage of the argument is to provide an account of real interests, a recognitional account of the good, from which categorical reasons will flow. Nussbaum establishes a framework within which real interests may be sought. She marks human beings off from both beasts and gods, as both capable and limited. Practical reason and sociability are the characteristic activities of human beings. Our limitations suggest some grounding experiences, experiences shared by all humans. These are areas of human life with regard to which any human being must make choices. Nussbaum's proposal is that practical reason and sociability play an architectonic role in the specification of what it is to choose well in any specific area. This is the outline sketch for an account of real interests - that is, good functioning in each sphere. Nussbaum's claim is that, further developed and filled in, this account will retain the grounding in actual human experiences that is the strong point of Aristotelian ethics, while gaining the ability to criticise local and traditional moralities in the name of a more inclusive account of the circumstances of human life, and of the needs for human functioning that these circumstances give rise to.

What is left of Williams' objections is the worry that this account does too little. Practical reason and sociability admit of multiple specifications, and Nussbaum's remarks about how a specification of the good life should proceed remain too general and indeterminate. To dispel this worry, as I promised at the end of the last chapter, I now introduce the concept of self-respect. I argue that this concept is useful in focusing the debate, as it deals with a single issue or area in which individuals have to have some attitude rather than some other, and choose in some way rather than some other: the self and its worth. Moreover, it does not assume too much or too little. Self-respect marks the sphere for investigation and specification, but it is as yet a thin account of what the proper attitude towards one's worth is. As such, it provides a neutral term under which competing specifications of this attitude can be discussed.

Furthermore, self-respect is a good concept to use in advancing the specification of the good life as it fits the shape, or the outline sketch, that Nussbaum's foundation has set up for an account of real interests, in the following ways: it is internal in nature; it has the same self-

validating structure as the value of practical reason and sociability; it is integrally related to, even in part constituted by, social responsiveness and relations with others, on the one hand, and choice and good reasons on the other.

In the first section of this chapter I build up this picture and thus build up an account of real interests. Here I make two main claims. First, to be a human agent at all presupposes the valuing of self-respect in at least some minimal form. Being human requires a response, or an attitude, to one's own worth. Even a negative response is evidence that self-respect is valued. Second, an analysis of the concept of self-respect reveals that full, uncompromised self-respect has a structure; content can be given to the idea of an appropriate response to worth. In determining what kind of a self merits full, uncompromised self-respect, I examine cases of individuals who lack it.

Recall from 2.1 that to fully answer Williams' objections, a theory of real interests must contain a theory of error - an account of how individuals can be wrong about their own interests. I aim to do this in the second section of this chapter, with an analysis of how an appropriate response to worth in the self is made possible. I argue that an individual's attitude to herself can be substantially influenced by the society she lives in, and thus that there are important connections between politics and self-respect.

3.1 An Appropriate Response to Worth

In identifying what kind of a self merits uncompromised self-respect, this section proceeds in a number of stages. As an introduction, I outline how self-respect is a necessary element of a human life. I argue that it has the same self-validating structure as practical reason and sociability; it thus forms part of the foundation of what it is to have a human life. I then examine the *prima facie* evidence for the claim that self-respect must be a part of any good, or flourishing, human life. The next stage is an analysis of the concept of respect. Finally, I apply this to the concept of self-respect to generate a picture of real interests. The problem cases from the first chapter will be revisited here. Throughout, the strong connections

between practical reason, sociability and self-respect will be apparent - I argue that the specification of the good life that results from this analysis closely fits the Aristotelian requirements for the connection between functioning and good functioning.

It seems reasonable to claim that the self, or consciousness of the self, is a grounding experience - an experience shared by all human beings. Moreover, all human beings have to have some attitude or other towards themselves. Satisfying needs and desires, and pursuing plans are evidence of self-respect. An individual's caring about what she wants presupposes her caring about herself. Any kind of action, then, that is not coerced or automatic, requires self-respect in some minimal form. Any individual who is an agent in the world, who makes and acts on choices, presupposes that her desires and needs are worth satisfying and therefore that her self is worth something.⁴⁵ Indeed, it is difficult to imagine a human life that all together lacks self-respect, or does not value self-respect at all. It is difficult to imagine a human agent moving around and functioning in the world, and yet completely lacking self-respect. Human life as it is lived presupposes that there is reason to value self-respect. Any individual is pragmatically committed to valuing self-respect, at least in some minimal form.

Self-respect thus has the same self-validating structure as practical reason and sociability. The sceptic who claims that self-respect is not valuable is guilty of a pragmatic inconsistency. The very expression of her opinion may count as evidence of self-respect, for her supposing that she has opinions worth expressing presupposes some sort of regard for her own worth. Moreover, if she lives a recognisably human life as an agent in the world, her activities presuppose self-respect. If she chooses to opt out and not value self-respect, that choice itself would be evidence of self-respect. It would show that she believes in her (her self's) ability to make good judgements, and that she is prepared to stick by them. Opting out is in a sense self-defeating, for it implicitly concedes the sceptic's pragmatic commitment to self-respect.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ Even someone who act s on plans that are not her own, for her to be recognisable as a human being, rather than a programmed machine, say, would have to have some minimal kind of self-respect to act at all. Even in the extreme case of the individual who lacks any autonomous needs or desires, the fact that she acts at all presupposes that she considers it worthwhile to act; that her self is worthwhile - even if only as an instrument for another's purpose.

⁴⁶ In this, the pragmatic support for self-respect seems to be closer to demonstrative, rather than presuppositional. See note 40 above.

It might be objected here that it is false to claim that the sceptic who opted out would no longer be recognisably human, and it is false that self-respect in some minimal form is an essential element of a human life, because there are cases of individuals who lack self-respect and yet remain recognisably human. It is important to note here that being sceptical of the value of self-respect is not the same thing as being sceptical of the value of your self. Moreover, I shall be arguing that the self-respect such individuals lack is full, uncompromised self-respect.

The self-doubter manifests a lack of self-respect. She has some minimal self-respect in that she has desires and plans and tries to act on them. But she lacks confidence in her judgement and in the plans she has made, and in her ability to carry them out. Her lack of confidence may cause her to be sceptical of her own value, but at the same time she may be very conscious of the value of self-respect. Her misery is caused by her lack of it. It is even an indirect recognition of its importance. The self-deprecator has an extremely low sense of self-worth. But she is not sceptical of the value of self-respect. Her particular understanding of what self-respect is that it is earned by merit alone. Self-assessment reveals her character and abilities have no merit. Thus she believes she deserves degrading treatment. This does not entail the denial of the value of self-respect. Just the opposite. The fact that she does judge herself so harshly by the light of what she takes the standards for self-respect to be, presupposes that she places value on those standards. In other words, the self-deprecator's miserable situation presupposes her valuing self-respect.

If any recognisably human life presupposes the valuing of self-respect, how does this help in specifying the good life? For, again, nothing has been excluded. But, if the above remarks are right, then the foundation has become firmer. The starting point was that individually and collectively human beings take thought about what to do. Now we see that self-respect is crucial, at least from the individual point of view, to making and carrying out decisions about what to do. While not a clear and uncontroversial concept, self-respect provides a way forward. There is a difference in valuing self-respect and actually having full, uncompromised

self-respect. (There is a difference in valuing practical reason and being practically rational). If something interesting can be said about what uncompromised self-respect consists in, then something will have been said about the good life. At least part of an answer will have been given to “How should I live?”.

On the face of it, self-respect has good grounds to be included in a conception of the good life. There is widespread agreement that it is of great importance. Self-respect may not be sufficient for a good life: a self-respecting individual may have a terribly harsh and unlucky life. Nevertheless, it has good claim to being a necessary condition. Individuals who lack self-respect, like the self-deprecator, the self-doubter and the perfectionist, live miserable lives. Rawls, in **A Theory of Justice**, characterises it as the most important primary good, owing to the psychological power it gives human beings to pursue their life plans.⁴⁷ An individual who has self-respect is able to justify herself, to herself and to others. She takes pride in her character, abilities and achievements, judging that she is becoming a kind of person it is worth being, which in turn gives her the zest to carry on being that person. Self-respect is thus instrumentally useful in that it shields individuals from the adverse opinions of others. It is also good in that self-respecting individuals refuse to submit passively to victimisation, and resent gratuitous indifference to their concerns. Furthermore, self-respect is stable. It does not seem accurate to say that someone whose sense of self-worth fluctuates with the weather has full self-respect. Self-respect enables an individual to keep failures and misadventures in perspective. Put negatively, it is the absence of habitual regret and guilt and shame. If the dominant flavour of a life were self-contempt it would be difficult to see how it could count as a flourishing life. Moreover, felt lack of self-respect is debilitating in that it further impairs effective human functioning - the satisfying of desires and the pursuing of plans.

It is the subjective feeling of self-respect, then, that most obviously supports the inclusion of self-respect in any conception of the good life. A closer look at the complex nature of self-respect, though, reveals that its primary importance runs deeper than just its subjective,

⁴⁷ John Rawls **A Theory of Justice** (Oxford University Press, 1972) pp. 440.

psychological benefits. A useful way to discover, and to help make sense of, this complexity is to examine the concept of respect on its own.

3.1.1. *Respect*

Following Stephen Darwall's widely accepted⁴⁸ account, I identify two kinds of respect⁴⁸: recognitional and evaluative. The two are connected. Evaluative respect is only properly directed towards human beings or, more specifically, human agents. A distinctive mark of human agency, or the capacity for practical reason, is recognition respect. As Darwall puts it, the connection between respect and agency is striking.⁴⁹ Evaluative respect is thus conditional on recognition respect; that an individual exhibits recognition respect for things outside of herself is the proper grounds for evaluatively respecting her. Recognition respect, though, can have entities other than human beings as its objects. Moreover, I argue that both kinds of respect comprise a triadic relation between attitude, conduct and object.⁵⁰ If any one component is missing, respect is qualified. Respect that lacks a respectful attitude is insincere; without respectful conduct, is suppressed; and if it not directed towards a worthy object it is unwarranted.

Respect means to 'look back at', and the core concept in any account of respect is that of worth. These two aspects of respect suggest a useful analogy: respect is like a perceptual capacity, the capacity to recognise, or to evaluate, worth. I develop this analogy in this section with reference to the two kinds of respect and their component parts. It will play an important part in the account of self-respect, and in explaining how it is that people can be wrong about their own interests.

People talk of respecting other people's feelings, nature, humanity, and the law. A doctor might talk of respecting the standards of her profession, a fisherman of respecting the sea,

⁴⁸ Stephen J. Darwall "Two Kinds of Respect" (*Ethics*, vol. 88, 1977) pp. 36-49. This is developed further with regard to self-respect by Robin Dillon in "How To Lose Your Self-Respect" (*American Philosophical Quarterly*, vol. 29.2, 1992) pp. 125-139

⁴⁹ "Two Kinds of Respect" p48

⁵⁰ Here I draw on Diana Meyers "Self-Respect and Autonomy" in *Self, Society and Personal Choice* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989) pp. 215-224

and a tennis player of respecting his opponent's backhand. It is also appropriate to talk of respecting someone's character, or his or her particular talent as an artist or a cricket player.

Two distinct attitudes can be identified here. In the first group, respect is characterised by recognition of some feature or fact of the thing in question that is then given its due weight in deliberation about what to do. Respecting a family's grief, for example, involves recognising their feelings and behaving accordingly. More specifically, the recognition serves to shape the range of eligible actions. A doctor who respects the standards of her profession will not consider using her patients to test experimental drugs without their consent. A respect for nature will preclude littering. Although this recognition does contain an element of evaluation, as the fact or feature recognised is thus evaluated as important, the evaluation differs from the kind found in the second group. When it is someone's character or particular ability that is respected, the respect is characterised by an appraisal of excellence. As a human being, or as engaged in some specific pursuit, the individual is held to manifest excellence. Although it might also be appropriate to talk of this kind of respect as recognising excellence, the key to understanding the difference between the two kinds of respect is to understand the difference in their objects. In the first case, what is recognised is something relatively fixed, or some fact about the way the world is, or the way human beings are. Recognition respect can be characterised as recognising status. Evaluative respect, on the other hand, can be characterised as a response to merit. I discuss each attitude in turn before bringing out the connections between them.

Recognition respect is the disposition to weigh appropriately in deliberation some feature of the thing in question and to act accordingly. 'Disposition' implies that something settled or relatively long-term. It would not be true to say that a lawyer respected the standards of her profession if she allowed them to influence her decision making in a selective or episodic way. What does it mean to weigh some fact or feature appropriately in deliberation? Respecting humanity, for example, involves regarding the fact that something is a human being as placing restrictions on what one should do. The recognition in this case restricts the class of eligible actions. Darwall characterises recognition respect only in this negative way, as

restricting action. But recognition respect can also weigh positively in deliberation by pointing to what should be done. Respect for the environment, for example, can lead to the establishment of a conservation area. A doctor's respect for the code of ethics of her profession may lead her to expose the actions of a colleague that she deems to have violated these standards. Respect for humanity may lead to a country's efforts to provide all its inhabitants with adequate housing, water, and sanitation. To have recognition respect is to be willing for one's behaviour to be both constrained and directed by a regard for a particular fact or feature. In other words, it is to have a disposition to take certain considerations seriously as reasons for acting or not acting. It is to have standards, or dispositions to choose.

There is a strong connection, then, between recognition respect and the capacity for practical reason. Practical reason is deliberating about what to choose, how to act, and how to plan one's life. An agent is a person who acts or has the power to act for reasons. Practical reason is thus essential to agency. Agency does not only involve first-order decision to do this and that. The wanton individual, who reasons instrumentally to some extent to get what she wants, has no personal standards with which she identifies and that curb her impulses. Her lack of higher-order attitudes means she is not strictly regarded as an agent.⁵¹ Human agency is not merely a matter of choosing actions; it also comprises the establishment of constraints on choice. To have dispositions to choose, or to take considerations seriously as reasons for acting or not acting, is recognition respect. It is to recognise those considerations as important enough to enter into deliberation.

Recognition respect, for the self and for things outside of the self, is thus constitutive of agency and an expression of the capacity for practical reason. An examination of evaluative respect, and the way it is grounded in character, will make the nature of this connection clearer. Evaluative respect is the positive appraisal of an agent, either as an individual or as engaged in some specific pursuit. The appropriate grounds for such respect are that the agent has manifested characteristics that merit this positive appraisal, that is, excellences. The appropriate characteristics are those that constitute, or are based on, character.

⁵¹ See Susan Hurley "Commentary on Martha Nussbaum's 'Non-Relative Virtues'"; also, note 40 above.

Evaluative respect does not essentially involve dispositions to act or refrain from acting for certain reasons. However, it does need to be supported by good reasons. The agent must be worthy of evaluative respect. What makes an agent worthy are the dispositions, those that form her character, that recognise (they are dispositions of recognition respect) reasons for acting and not acting. In order to merit evaluative respect, an individual must exhibit recognition respect. In other words, she must recognise reasons that are fixed features of concern, or values.

When we say that a cricket player or a doctor are respected for their ability in their respective pursuits, it seems that the respect has little to do with character and much to do with the talent and skill that they exhibit. But accomplishment in a particular pursuit depends on character in at least two ways. First, purely natural capability, like the ant's capability to lift large loads, is not the proper object of evaluative respect.⁵² Although, it may be the proper object of recognition respect.) Amazement might be appropriate here, but not respect. If an agent is capable of some amazing mental feat purely in virtue of being accidentally struck by lightning, for example, though this feat may be widely admired, neither it nor her ability to perform it are appropriate objects of respect. But it is very rarely the case that human achievement is the result of pure natural ability. A talent as a cricket player must be developed, disciplined and exercised in the face of various obstacles. This will call into play features of character; most prominently perhaps the disposition to weigh this talent appropriately in deliberation, to see it as requiring some courses of action and foreclosing others. In other words, the cricket player must have recognition respect for his talent. Second, the human pursuits within which an agent may earn evaluative respect have standards, codes of ethics that define appropriate and inappropriate behaviour within that pursuit. To earn evaluative respect it is not enough to just exercise the skills that define the pursuit, the agent must also demonstrate commitment to these standards.

Commitment to these standards, as I said above, is recognition respect for them. The disposition to recognise these standards as important, will shape the agents behaviour. It may

⁵² Stephen Darwall "Two Kinds of respect" p42

also be properly said to be part of the agent's character. When an individual is given evaluative respect as a person, what is appraised is her merit as an agent, a being capable of acting for reasons. More specifically, what is appraised is the kinds of reasons she acts on, that is, her dispositions to choose.⁵³ A single respect worthy choice is not sufficient to earn evaluative respect. She must be generally disposed to make such choices. An agent's dispositions to choose constitute character; character, at least in part, involves the idea of fairly long-term dispositions to choose. In other words, recognition respect is essential to character.

Examples of such dispositions would be honesty, generosity or temperance: self-reflective habits of acting on particular reasons, or recognising particular considerations as important and as shaping choice and action. Meyers suggests that these sorts of dispositions be characterised by being 'open to cultivation'; the agent has some sort of control over them.⁵⁴ Pretty eyes or a knack for picking up foreign languages are not proper grounds for evaluative respect, but reliability, sympathy and self-possession can be. Lacking the former does not undermine an individual's capacity for agency, whereas lacking the latter can be paralysing.

Recall the grounding experiences, areas of human life in which all human beings must make some choices than others, and have some attitude, rather than another. For example, all human beings have bodies that, although the experience of the body is culturally influenced, provide parameters ensuring overlap in experience as far as hunger, thirst and desire are concerned. All human beings have to have some attitude, and make some choices, with regard to the satisfaction of these appetites. An agent concerned to choose well - to make for a flourishing life - is an agent concerned to choose for good reasons, whatever she may take those to be. Thus she will develop a disposition to choose. Recognition respect is thus connected with character and virtue of character. Character includes not only dispositions to act on particular reasons, like honesty or generosity, but also higher-level dispositions like resoluteness or prudence. In other words, it includes the disposition to act one what one takes

⁵³ As such, the grounds for evaluative-respect are not as broad as those for esteem. And this seems correct. A person can be esteemed without being respected, for her elegant appearance, for example, or her clever wit.

⁵⁴ "Self-Respect and Autonomy" p214

to be supported by the best reasons. The examination of evaluative respect, then, shows that it is predicated upon recognition respect.

Recognition respect may be characterised as the attitude it is appropriate for an agent to bear towards those things that deserve consideration in deliberation about what to do. Evaluative respect is an attitude of appraisal of that individual as just that sort of being, an agent, capable of expressing such considerations in action. The important question to answer, then, is exactly what are the things that deserve consideration in deliberation about what to do? Which things deserve recognition respect, or, to put it another way, what are the objects of an agent's real interests? It is this question, I argue, that self-respect can go some way towards answering.

But first, more needs to be said about the relation between respect and worth, and the goodness of respect. Also, after this, putting together the remarks about worth and the previous account of the two kinds of respect, the analogy of respect as a capacity for the perception of worth can be developed.

Recognition and evaluative respect each comprise a triadic relation between attitude, conduct and object. (Because this is true of both kinds, I will speak here of respect generally, pointing out any significant differences along the way.) Respect, in which one component of the triad is defective, is still respect in a sense, though it is qualified.

Respect without a respectful attitude is at the very least insincere. A person in court may have no respect for the law and yet behave respectfully in order to avoid being charged with contempt. A daughter may outwardly show every sign of respecting her elderly parents wishes, and go out of her way to make them as comfortable as possible, while inwardly irritated or seething with resentment at the fact that she has this responsibility and her siblings do not. In both these cases, recognition respect is compromised. A person who gives the appearance of having evaluative respect for another's character, or merit as revealed in some particular pursuit, for whatever ulterior motive, cannot be said to really respect that person.

Respect without respectful conduct is suppressed. If an agent inwardly respects a certain political figure, say, but the community she belongs to does not, she may, if it is that kind of highly politically tense society, refrain from expressing her respect for fear of her community's reaction. Her respect is thus compromised. Or she may have recognition respect for an unorthodox life plan that she does not express by living it out because she is afraid to go against convention.

Most importantly, for the purposes of this chapter, respect is compromised if it is not directed towards a worthy object. For respect to obtain, good reasons are necessary. A person who is indiscriminately respecting does not understand what respect is. To see this, consider the contrast between respect and trust.⁵⁵ Subjectivity governs the logic of a concept like trust or anger or delight. Beliefs, feelings and conduct instantiate the concept. Trust, in other words, is fully intelligible in the absence of a trustworthy object. No doubt it is generally a good idea if trust is supported by good reasons, that is, trustworthiness, but it is not something less than full trust if it is misplaced. If I believe in someone's discretion and I confide in her, I have in fact trusted her even if she turns out not to be discrete. Someone may talk of trusting the strength of a tree branch to hold her up. If the branch breaks the trust is not tarnished; it is not made less than complete, though its wisdom may be doubted. Anger functions in a similar way: a person can feel and act angry with someone, yet have no good reason for it. It is still anger, even if it is unjustified anger. It makes sense to describe someone as being indiscriminately trusting. Respect, on the other hand, does seem qualified if it lacks an appropriate object, that is, good reasons. I can in a sense misplace my respect. For example, I respect someone who misrepresents herself and pretends to have qualities she does not have, and I later discover this. But in such a case the respect that had obtained would be tarnished; it would not be complete. Similarly, if I never find out what this person is really like but continue to respect her for excellences of character she does not really have, my respect is compromised. A stranger can be trusted, but not respected.

⁵⁵ Here I am drawing on Diana Meyers "*Self-Respect and Autonomy*" pp 217-221

Respect requires knowledge of the object, particularly, knowledge of its worth. Compare respect with sympathy and resentment, which also both require attitude, conduct and appropriate object to obtain. There is something suspect about a person who has sympathetic feelings for, and commiserates with, someone who appears, and is in fact, perfectly happy, having suffered no misfortune. Similarly, there is a reluctance to ascribe unqualified resentment to an agent who feels slighted and acts resentfully towards a colleague whose conduct is above reproach. Like respect, sympathy and resentment are properly given, or felt, only when they are deserved. The mere perception on the part of the one doing the sympathising, resenting and respecting, that it is deserved is not enough. Unlike trust, what grounds respect is the object. It is not enough that an agent perceives an object to be worthy of respect, it must actually be worthy.

Respect without a worthy object is unwarranted, though it can still be called (compromised) respect. Respect can be unwarranted for different reasons. My unwarranted evaluative respect for the person who was not who I thought she was, was naive, or innocent. I had the right idea about what was worthy but I was mistaken about her instantiation of that worth. If the object grounds respect, respect can also be unwarranted because an individual is mistaken about what is actually worthy. In such cases it is either misguided, if what is respected is trivial, or corrupt, if what is respected is bad.

Respect that is compromised because one of its three components is either missing or defective is less intrinsically good than uncompromised respect. This just seems obvious. Respect without a proper object is unjustified; without a respectful attitude is insincere; and without respectful conduct is suppressed. Like insincere sympathy, or unjustified resentment, there is something wrong with it. Evaluative and recognition respect are instantiated only if grounded in worthy objects. The proper object of evaluative respect, recall from above, is an agent who exhibits recognition respect. Whether recognition respect, assuming there is both attitude and conduct, is uncompromised or not depends on the worthiness of its object. The crux of the matter, then, for the purposes of this chapter, is to identify the proper objects of

recognition respect. If there is no worthy object, there is no recognition respect. And if there is no recognition respect, there can be no uncompromised evaluative respect.

I want to end this section with some further remarks about the relation between respect, practical reason, virtue and eudaimonia, and how respect can be understood to function like a perceptual capacity. In book 1 of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle claims that eudaimonia is the end of all action. John McDowell, in "*The Role of Eudaimonia in Aristotle's Ethics*", argues that this should be understood as an indicative thesis - eudaimonia is that for the sake of which all action is undertaken. Aristotle has not yet defended his specific conception of eudaimonia; he is not claiming here that everyone in fact aims for this. Everyone has her own end, or conception of the good life, but this may differ from someone else's.

There are two worries to be overcome if this thesis is to stand. The first is whether eudaimonia is more than just a verbal unification of divergent ends, such that it is true to say that at some level of specification there is one end of action common to everyone. The second worry is whether it is true to say that there is in any interesting sense, one end for any individual agent's actions.

To overcome the second worry, McDowell argues that 'action', here, needs to be understood in a particular way. Action cannot be understood as just any voluntary or purposive doing, or just any deliberative desire. For then Aristotle would be flatly contradicting himself: he recognises the existence of *akrasia*. The incontinent person has a conception of what it is to do well, yet voluntarily and purposively, allows himself to pursue a goal that is contrary to what doing well, in the circumstances, would be. Action, then, must be understood as that which issues from a *prohairesis*, or a deliberative desire to do something with a view to doing well. Moreover, while making has an end other than itself, Aristotle states that action cannot, for good action itself is its end.⁵⁶ For a bit of behaviour to count as an action, it must be undertaken as a constituent means to eudaimonia. In other words, the agent must be able to

⁵⁶ *The Nicomachean Ethics* 1140b6-7

express her reason for acting by saying “doing this is, in these circumstances, what doing well is.”

What is the point of claiming that action is by definition bits of behaviour, issuing from a prohairesis, undertaken as a constituent means to eudaimonia? The point, argues McDowell, is that if we can answer the first worry and find that some more than merely verbal unification of divergent ends in life is given by the specification eudaimonia, then ‘undertaken as a constituent means to eudaimonia’ marks out a distinctive kind of reason that an agent can have for acting as he does. We can understand such a distinctive kind of reason: it is the kind for which someone acts because it seems to her to be what a human being, in the circumstances, should do. And it is of ethical interest because it is indicative of the agent’s character.

The function argument helps to comprehend what this distinctive sort of reason might be. Recall from the previous chapter that the conclusion of the function argument is not Aristotle’s own substantive conception of eudaimonia. The human life is a life characterised by practical reason. Aside from excluding the brutish life, then, the conclusion is neutral. If the function of human beings is rational activity, then the good for human beings is rational activity in accordance with excellence, or virtue. A dispute about what human beings should do, in any particular circumstances, can also be understood as a dispute about what human excellence is; what would be the best reasons to act on, or what it would be to choose well. An agent who acts on her own prohairesis, which all with the capacity for practical reason are able to do, reveals, by the action with its reasons, her character. To act on a prohairesis, a deliberative desire with a view to doing well, is to form a conception of the good life and act according to it. It can also be characterised as attempting to choose well by acting according to a conception of human excellence, or virtue.

One way to clarify the connections between practical reason, choosing well (virtue) and eudaimonia is through the concept of respect, particularly recognition respect. Recall from above that recognition respect is constitutive of agency. This is the same as saying that

higher-order attitudes are constitutive of agency - though, I argue, uncompromised recognition respect is not just another name for higher-order attitudes; it is a class of higher-order attitudes, those that are grounded in worthy objects. Respect is aimed at worth. To live according to a prohairesis is to live according to a conception of eudaimonia, or a worthwhile life. To act on a prohairesis is to be able to characterise that action as what, in the particular circumstances, doing well is. To be able to live according to a prohairesis, then, is to have recognition respect.

Recognition respect is the kind of attitude it is appropriate to bear, as an agent, towards those things that deserve consideration in deliberation about what to do. To have recognition respect is to have standards, dispositions to choose and to act for what one takes to be good reasons. What an agent recognition respects is constitutive of her character. Recognition respect, then, can be taken as a further way to understand the distinctive sort of reason for acting that McDowell talks about, the sort of reason for which someone acts when he does what she does because that seems to her to be what a human being circumstanced as she is should do. This behaviour, with its reasons, is indicative of her character. In other words, what an agent recognition respects marks out her conception of eudaimonia. If something can be said about the proper objects of recognition respect, something will have been said about human flourishing.

I argued above that recognition respect is strongly connected to virtue. Given the subsequent remarks, it is now possible to say that uncompromised recognition respect, in any area or 'grounding experience' in which human beings have to make choices, is essential to virtue. To have any particular virtue, is to have a stable disposition to choose well in that particular area; it is to give due regard the right, or worthy, considerations in deliberation. In other words, it is to exhibit recognition respect.

Recall from chapter two that in the Aristotelian account, virtues are those properties that allow, and are, good functioning. What is virtuous for an agent to do is what it is in her real interests to do. A human being is one who values practical reason, sociability and self-

respect. She also has to make choices in various areas of human life. A good human being is one who chooses well (is virtuous) in those areas, in other words, chooses in a way that makes for a flourishing life. In this section, I have argued that one way to understand the link between functioning (the capacity for rational activity)⁵⁷ and good functioning (virtue, or excellence), is via the concept of respect. Recognition respect is constitutive of agency and marks the higher-level exercise of the capacity for practical reason. It is also constitutive of character and virtue. That virtue involves recognition respect, allows the development of the analogy of respect as a perceptual capacity, the capacity to perceive worth.

A virtue is an internalised disposition of desire, action and feeling. It is also an intelligent disposition involving judgement. Recall the equation from chapter two: Aristotle is committed to the claim that doing well in the sense of living virtuously, is the same thing as doing well in the sense of living in one's best interests. I argued that the equation should be entered from the left hand side, which was what was required to give an internal account of human nature. If an agent has a particular virtue, this will define what is in her interests. To be generous is to see the world in such a way that the considerations that could lead to more self-interested action are made comparatively invisible. The considerations that stand out, which are seen more clearly, are those that require the generous action.

Recognition respect can be characterised in the same way. An agent who has recognition respect for the environment, which might arguably be called one of our grounding experiences, will see the world in a certain way. Certain considerations will stand out more clearly as meriting consideration in deliberation and as constraining her possible actions. Other considerations and courses of action will be comparatively invisible: the use of products that contribute to the destruction of the ozone layer, for example. Recognition respect is like a kind of perception. If it is uncompromised, and particularly if it is grounded in an appropriate object, then it can be characterised as the capacity to perceive worth.

⁵⁷ In the next section I elaborate on this to include the other elements of human nature that I have argued for, namely the valuing of sociability and self-respect.

3.1.2 Self-Respect

Self-respect is a multifaceted notion. As with respect, the organising concept is that of worth. Around that concept is a tangled constellation of attitudes, beliefs, desires, dispositions, commitments, expectations, actions and emotions that express or constitute the sense of that worth; and with it the disposition and desire to protect and preserve that worth. The *prima facie* remarks about the good of self-respect, above, were about the good of evaluative self-respect: the agent's positive appraisal of her character and abilities, confidence and pride, that enable her to live her life assured that the way she is living it is worthwhile. She can bear her own survey, as well as that of others. This kind of self-respect, as with evaluative respect, is based on recognition respect.

Recognition self-respect involves recognising that one is a human being, as opposed to a tree or a rock or a dog. This recognition shapes behaviour. A person who has recognition self-respect will resent degrading treatment. The Uncle Tom and the Self-Deprecator, who think that equal treatment has to be 'earned' by being white, or through merit, lack this kind of respect. But recognition self-respect is more complex than just a standing expectation of fair treatment, or a reaction against unfair treatment. This will form one disposition in an agent's character. Recognising that one is a human being also involves recognising one's capacity for choosing and acting, or agency. This consists of an agent's character, that is, recognition respect more generally: dispositions to act for certain sorts of reasons together with the higher-order disposition to act for what one takes to be the weightiest reasons. Evaluative self-respect is an agent's own appraisal of how good she is at recognition respect. At base, self-respect involves respect for worthy objects outside of the self. The individual who merits self-respect, then, is the individual who has recognition respect for the right things.

However, if what is good about self-respect is the psychological empowerment of evaluative self-respect, why does it matter that the agent gets the evaluation right? Why is it important for her character to exhibit uncompromised recognition respect? Why, in other words, is it

important for her to value the right things, if all that is required for the good of self-respect is that an agent feels good about herself?

First, I do not deny that compromised self-respect is not self-respect. It may very well be psychologically empowering. The deferential wife may feel good about her life and the way she is living it. I argue though, that it is less intrinsically good than uncompromised self-respect, because it does not exhibit a convergence between a subjective state and an instantiation of value. Moreover, I argue that it is often less instrumentally good because compromised self-respect is inherently more unstable; it is an edifice that is more susceptible to collapse. And, I argue that the importance of self-respect runs far deeper than the psychological benefits mentioned so far.

Everyone values self-respect in some minimal sense; it is a condition of being able to function as a recognisable human agent. Self-respect in a more robust, developed sense is essential to living a good life. Given this, I will be working with the premise that it is in everyone's real interests to have uncompromised self-respect, though the full justification for this will only become apparent later.

Character, standards and dispositions are central to self-respect. They form the core of recognition self-respect that warrants the positive appraisal of evaluative self-respect. I argue that these standards must be held in a certain way in order to merit uncompromised evaluative self-respect. Specifically, these standards and commitments must exhibit integrity, or coherence. There are several different kinds of coherence relevant here that show that both autonomy and authenticity are required for integrity.

The account of self-respect proceeds in three stages. First, I examine the kinds of coherence that constitute integrity. This account of the appropriate relation between an agent and her commitments, and between the commitments themselves, goes some way towards accounting for the lack of self-respect exhibited in the problem cases.⁵⁸ However, to explain

⁵⁸ Of chapter one, as well as others.

how coherence provides constraints on the content of an agent's principles and commitments, we need to move to the second stage: a closer look at identity, and the authenticity required by integrity. Lastly, I examine the good of self-respect, both instrumental and intrinsic, and develop the idea of autonomy as the bridge between authenticity and integrity. These three stages combine to form an account of real interests.

3.1.2.1 Integrity

What can be said about the relation between an agent and the standards and commitments (of recognition respect) that constitute her character, as well as between those commitments themselves, if that agent is to have self-respect? A plausible minimum condition might be that the relation be a coherent one; that it form an undivided whole. In other words, a good starting point would be that self-respect requires integrity. Besides meaning wholeness, integrity calls up notions like honesty, truthfulness and fairness. Both these aspects can be captured if integrity is understood as coherence.

Integrity presupposes the commitments and dispositions of recognition respect. When it is said that someone is a woman of integrity, what is being appraised is her character: the kinds of reasons for which she acts. It might be objected here that integrity presupposes only certain kinds of commitments. An agent's character may be described in terms of bottom line standards, standards that must be met if the agent is to remain herself, on the one hand and the ideals she holds for herself in the light of these standards on the other⁵⁹. If an agent lacks ideals but has bottom line standards, personal points of no return, it might be said that she lacks self-respect but it would not be fair to say that she lacks integrity. I think this is correct. However, integrity may not be sufficient, but it is necessary for self-respect. Integrity requires a 'core' of identity conferring commitments, an agent's most central values. Without this, talk of coherence does not get off the ground, and it is also what makes a loss of integrity possible - in order to sell one's soul, one must have something to sell.⁶⁰ But in an important way, these commitments form the base for self-respect. We would say that a person lacked

⁵⁹ Robin Dillon takes this view in her taxonomy of self-respect in *"How to Lose Your Self-Respect"*

⁶⁰ See Lynne McFall *"Integrity"* (**Ethics** vol. 98, 1987) pp. 5-20

integrity if her ideals did not fit with her bottom line standards. When it is said that integrity requires coherence, this does not just mean simple consistency within those identity-conferring commitments. It also means that everything else the self does must be constrained by, or consistent with, these commitments.

What kinds of coherence does integrity involve? McFall identifies four kinds: consistency between the principles and commitments themselves; coherence between principle and action; coherence between principle and motivation; and what she calls the 'first person requirement'. I argue that the coherence between principle and action extends to an agent taking responsibility for her actions. I also develop the first person requirement to show that integrity requires both autonomy and authenticity. Moreover, two further kinds of coherence can be identified. Integrity requires that there be coherence between principle and 'object', as the example of misplaced respect shows. Integrity also demands consistency in the sense of steadfastness, as the self-doubter reveals.

The most obvious coherence required is simple consistency between the standards themselves. An individual cannot maintain her integrity if she has two unconditional identity conferring commitments that conflict, for example justice and a self-interested view of personal happiness. When two commitments do conflict, through circumstances, like an agent's loyalty to his country and his love for his daughter, part of what makes the choice tragic is the loss of integrity he must suffer.

The second kind of coherence that integrity involves is coherence between principle and action⁶¹. If an agent has a certain commitment, integrity requires that she stick to it, in the face of temptation, including the temptation to redescription. After the fact, integrity requires that an agent be honest about what she has done. This suggests a closely related kind of coherence: an agent should take responsibility for her own actions.

⁶¹ On the one hand, it would seem important that integrity, like self-respect, pertain only to that which the agent chooses deliberately, or what she should have taken care to avoid (uncompromised self-respect pertains to that which an agent chooses with a view to doing well): she cannot be responsible for what one has been forced to do. But on the other hand, an agent can be forced by circumstance into a tragic choice, part of the tragedy being the inevitable loss of her integrity. And the fact that an agent is forced to do something which goes against who she is, the fact that she does it, that she stands in that kind of relation to the action is enough to cause her integrity to suffer even if she was coerced by someone else. In fact, that is part of what is wrong with such coercion. See J.J.C. Smart and Bernard Williams **Utilitarianism: For and Against** (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973) pp. 98-99

This requirement accounts for how⁶² a number of character types lack uncompromised self-respect. Shame is often argued to be the contrary to self-respect. The **Ashamed** individual is characterised as having acted against her conception of who she is, or the kind of person she would like to become. It marks a loss of evaluative self-respect, registering a negative self-appraisal. One route to shame, then, is for an agent to fail to act as her commitments or principles require: to let a friend down when she values her friendship, for example. If this failure is a serious one, if it amounts to a crossing of a personal point of no return, the agent is a **Self-Betrayer**.

Shame is important, however, for it reminds an agent about what she cares about; at the same time as registering a loss in evaluative self-respect, shame marks abiding recognition respect. A compounded incoherence, then, a double loss of integrity and self-respect, results when the agent remains shameless after flouting one of her commitments. The **Shameless** individual is one who recognises the pull of a principle or a commitment.⁶³ She is thus aware at some level just what actions would be shame producing. Yet she endeavours in just those situations not to feel shame; she pretends that she is not committed to the values that she is committed to.

The individual that manages to convince herself that her pretence is the true account of the situation is **Self-Deceived** (although this is not the only way to achieve self-deception). Integrity is often characterised as being true to oneself. Self-deception is an obvious contrary of integrity. This ties in with the point made above: respect, unlike trust, requires knowledge of the object. Self-respect is no different. To be self-respecting, an agent must at least have an accurate idea of herself.

⁶² Why they lack uncompromised self-respect, the factor(s) that are responsible for this lack, is a different issue, some of which will be touched on in the last section of this chapter.

⁶³ This variety of shamelessness is identified by Gabriel Taylor in **Pride, Shame and Guilt: Emotions of Self-Assessment** (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985) p. 83. The more obvious kind of shameless individual would be one akin to a wanton, who did not even recognise any standards or principles or commitments as exerting any kind of pull on her.

The agent who is dishonest about what she does in such a case suffers a double loss of integrity. Being honest about what one does is a requirement of integrity. This suggests that coherence between principle and action requires that an agent take responsibility for her actions. Wantons are incapable of integrity and self-respect because they cannot 'direct' their choices; they are not responsible for what they do. One way to lack integrity, and self-respect, is to feign wantonness as the **Chronically Irresponsible** do - the self-excusers and buck-passers who pretend not to be in control of their actions, and so not liable for what they are or do.

Integrity also requires coherence between motivation and principle. To have integrity, an agent must do the right thing for the right reasons. Her motivation must not involve, as Williams has argued in a different context, one thought too many. (And, again, be honest where this is not the case.) Coherence between principle and action is not sufficient. An agent's action might correspond with her principle, at some general level of description, but be inconsistent with that principle more fully specified. This is another way of saying that respect requires the right attitude, as well as the appropriate conduct and object. A particularly telling case here is the **Self-Absorbed** individual. This individual manifests a lack of self-respect. Self-respect requires, at base, identity-conferring commitments, which requires recognition respect for those objects that deserve it. Only one of these is the self. The self-absorbed individual may act according to principles and commitments. But she does not act for the right reasons, and therefore lacks integrity. For she is motivated only out of concern for the self-image that she incessantly checks and appraises. Any outward looking commitments that she may have will at base be motivated out of concern for her self-image, and not for the objects to which they are directed. The genuinely self-respecting person is committed to something larger than her own self-image. Her self-examination is limited to that which she needs to effectively pursue and protect her commitments.

The **Self-Doubter** suggests another kind of coherence essential to integrity. To have integrity, a person cannot always be questioning her decisions, judgements, and evaluations of herself. A person of integrity is consistent in the sense that they are steadfast. They stick by their

actions, decisions, judgements and evaluations. Unless of course there is reason to admit they are wrong, in which case they will do so graciously.

But these kinds of internal coherence are not sufficient for integrity. Perhaps the most important kind of coherence that integrity, and thus self-respect, requires, is what Lynne McFall calls the “first person requirement”.⁶⁴ There should be coherence between an agent’s standards and herself. It is not enough that an agent should simply absorb her principles thorough society by convention. An agent should speak “in the first person” making her principles, conventional or otherwise, her own. McFall uses the example, here of Ivan in Tolstoy’s **The Death of Ivan Ilych**. It is only when he faces death that he realises he has not lived his life as he ought to have: “It occurred to him that his scarcely perceptible attempts to struggle against what was considered good by the most highly placed people, those scarcely noticeable impulses that he had immediately suppressed, might have been the real thing, and all the rest false.”⁶⁵ If her principles are to be her own, she must choose them. In other words, autonomy is essential to integrity. But autonomy on its own is not enough. For a person could autonomously choose commitments, values and projects without them being truly her own. Sometimes people are mistaken about what they want and the kind of person they want to be, perhaps through ignorance or insufficient imagination on their part. An agent may have autonomously adopted standards that are not really hers. It is this kind of coherence that reveals the complex relation between authenticity and autonomy, required if integrity is to obtain. I argued above that self-knowledge was essential to self-respect, just as knowledge of an object’s worth is essential to respect. So it would seem essential that the standards, principles and commitments an agent adopts reflect, or are connected to, who she is. A self-respecting person must know who she is. There is a greater chance of her making authentic commitments, moreover, if she is self-reflectively, and self-critically, aware of them as her own; it is important that they be autonomously chosen, or endorsed.

The importance of autonomy for integrity and self-respect can be argued for from another direction. Recall from above that respect is not properly given if it is directed towards a natural

⁶⁴ In “*Integrity*” p. 6. She derives this from a remark of Wittgenstein’s: see note 7 on that page.

⁶⁵ Leo Tolstoy “*The Death of Ivan Ilych*” in **The Short Novels of Tolstoy** trans. Aylmer Maude (New York: Dial Press, 1946) p. 466 quoted in “*Integrity*” p. 6.

capacity. What warrants respect for human beings is their capacities to choose reflectively and to cultivate desirable dispositions to choose (that is, their capacity for recognition respect). Merely absorbing and following a socially enforced code manifests a natural capacity comparable to the ant's ability to carry heavy loads.⁶⁶ When self-respect is based on this kind of adaptability rather than on a capability for reflective choice, it is directed at a natural capacity (she is not really acting) rather than at a human being's capacity for practical reason; her distinctive capacity as an agent.

There are a number of character types that fail to have this kind of coherence, fail to meet the first person requirement, and thus lack integrity and self-respect. The **Self-Ignorant** individual is a straightforward example. A more complex one is that of the **Deferential Wife**. This is the woman that is utterly devoted to serving her husband. She does not defer to her husband as a trade-off for his deference in other spheres; she tends not to form her own interests, values, commitments and so on. If she does, she regards them as inferior to his. She is slavishly dependent, but she is happy. Much of her happiness derives from her belief that she fulfils her role very well. She may, also, have plenty of what she feels is self-respect. But, her self-respect is compromised.

Most obviously, her identity conferring commitments are not freely chosen, and she does not live autonomously. We are imagining her as extremely deferential. Imagine that she does not form any of her own interests and values. Her capacity for practical reason and agency is severely curtailed. She lacks, then, the autonomy that could provide a link between her standards and her authentic self. Without the intellectual and emotional independence of autonomy skills, it is difficult to see how she would ever know her authentic self. And however happy she may claim to be I think it is plausible to claim that underlying that is fear - she is afraid to act contrary to her husband's wishes, or go against convention, because she does not know how. She may exhibit admirable coherence between 'her' motivations, principles and action. But these do not reflect what she is. For they do not recognise the fact that she is a human being, with the capacity to make her own choices. What they do reflect is that she

⁶⁶ See Diana Meyers "Self-Respect and Autonomy" p. 226

has internalised a view of herself as something less than fully human, and thus not deserving of equal treatment.

It might be objected that the deferential wife just is deferential. That is her authentic self. Conventions have been internalised so thoroughly that that even if she did exercise autonomy skills, she would still choose the life she already has. Far from excusing her state, I think this makes it even more serious. She cannot recognise herself as a human being; her capacity to perceive worth is damaged. The advantage of an account that does not stop with subjective preferences is that it gives the opportunity to criticise the situation of people who are so persistently deprived that their motivational sets are warped as a result.⁶⁷

The **Uncle Tom** may exercise considerable autonomy skills. But at a deep level, like the deferential wife, his commitments, values and ideals are not consistent with what he is. In internalising a convention that he is inferior to whites, he recognises himself as less than human, which is not his authentic self. As in the case of the deferential wife, the in recognition respect he has for his self his capacity to perceive worth is compromised. He is blind to his status. He is a human being with the capacity for practical reason, sociability and self-respect just like any other, but he is blind to this.⁶⁸ He does have standards, but although living up to these standards may demonstrate respect for some established order or authority figure, it does not demonstrate unalloyed self-respect.

A similar blindness underlies the **Self-Deprecator's** miserable state. This is the individual who believes that decent treatment must be earned through merit. She knows she is thoroughly deficient in merit, so she accepts the doormat state. She is blind to her status as a human being. She does not recognise that she has the same essential characteristics as other human beings; she has the same dignity. She may have standards and she may act in

⁶⁷ Note that although the deferential wife has a reason to be different, it is a different issue whether anyone has the right to try to make her different, since she cannot, or does not, want to change herself. It may be best just to leave her alone. But that does not mean that she is living a good human life. This has implications for politics; it is at this level that change would be called for. I examine this issue in the last section of this chapter.

⁶⁸ In both this case and that of the deferential wife, I am assuming of course that they really do internalise views of themselves as inferior, not that they act out a strategy of any kind.

accordance with them, for the right reasons, but she is still guilty of incoherence. Her character, the recognition respect that she exhibits, is blind to her human state.

As is the character of the **Arrogant** individual, but in the opposite way. She recognises herself as something more than everyone else, and so deserving of superior treatment, when in fact she is just the same. She may think that her achievements are what merit this superior treatment: she may be an excellent doctor. While this may mean that she merits evaluative respect in this regard, it does not make her other than human. It does not entitle her, as the object of other's recognition respect, to preferential treatment. The fact that she over-inflates her own status in this way constitutes a kind of perceptual defect - she does not see worth properly. And her evaluation is incoherent because it is inconsistent with what she is. Before she is any particular kind of human being, she is a human being.

At the end of the first chapter, I sketched the **Perfectionist** and the **Self-Unforgiving** individuals as lacking self-respect due to their blindness to their own fallibility. It is a fact about human agents that we are bound to fail in many and various ways. The perfectionist has standards that are too high for her to live up to. Yet she holds them as bottom line standards that must be met if she is to achieve even minimal self-acceptance. She is guilty of incoherence for she has autonomously chosen standards that cannot reflect her authentic self. The self-unforgiving individual exhibits integrity in that she is honest about what she has done, she admits to having failed herself. But she is unable to let that failure go because she does not sufficiently recognise her fallibility. An agent's ability to accept her imperfection, because she knows that imperfection is impossible, and to let go of her failures because what is done is done, is essential to her being able to live with herself. But, as the **Indiscriminately Self-Accepting** individual reveals, and which should be apparent from the discussion of responsibility above, refusing to accept responsibility for avoidable failures and lapses is another form of not respecting one's fallibility.

Integrity then, involves at least 4 kinds of internal coherence: simple consistency between one's principles and commitments; coherence between principle and action, which includes

accepting responsibility for one's actions; coherence between motivation, principle and action; and steadfastness, or confidence. It also requires a kind of coherence that begins to introduce constraints on the content of an individual's principles: the requirement that an individual's relation to her commitments be in the first person, that they be her own, which involves both autonomy and authenticity.

The individual whose respect is misplaced demonstrates that another kind of coherence is necessary. This kind of individual has principles and commitments that he has autonomously chosen and that reflect her authentic self. She is also has confidence in her abilities as an agent. She has values but she is mistaken about the objects that instantiate those values. Recall the example of my misplaced evaluative respect for an individual. If an agent misplaces her respect habitually, even if through her innocence or naiveté, it would seem odd to call her person of integrity, or self-respect. Her principles and commitments do not actually cohere with the objects to which they are directed.

Other than coherence, the essential ingredient for integrity is identity-conferring commitments. Does this requirement, a 'core' that contains personal points of no return, place any constraints of the content of an individual's commitments? The **Vaguely Self-Defining** individual, for example, who wafts through life without any clear idea of what is important to her, lacks a core of identity conferring commitments altogether. As such, she cannot have integrity or self-respect. There are other individuals who, by the nature of their goals and ideals, seem to lack such a core of personal points of no return: things they could not do and remain whole, or wholly themselves. It seems that, when we grant integrity to a person, we need not approve of her commitments, but we must at least recognise them as ones a reasonable person might take to be of great importance, and might be tempted to sacrifice to some lesser, but still recognisable, goods. Integrity cannot exist where there is no possibility of its loss.⁶⁹ Where there is no possibility of conflict then, between a person's principles and some other desirable thing, integrity cannot exist.

⁶⁹ The following three cases that illustrate this point come from Lynne McFall "Integrity".

Take the **Groveller** for example. This individual is relentless in her pursuit of approval. There is nothing she will not do to get it; she is spineless. She has no concept of what she is (her authentic self), and the kind of behaviour that is fitting for human beings. Aside from this, though, she has no recognition respect - that is, for anything except approval. But it seems doubtful that this 'commitment' really counts as a commitment. She has no personal points of no return. There is nothing she will not do to achieve her goal. Spinelessness is a contrary of integrity: in every situation for the groveller, it is the easy way out. Steadfastness, honesty, in fact all the types of coherence discussed above, go by the board unless they serve the pursuit of approval.

The person who has only one principle: pleasure, seems to suffer from a similar lack of integrity. A person of integrity is willing to bear the consequences of her convictions, even when this is difficult. With this individual there is no possibility of integrity because there is no possibility of conflict, between pleasure and principle, in which integrity could be lost. As with the groveller, her goal is incompatible with integrity. The same is true of the ruthless seeker of wealth. A person whose only aim is to amass vast amounts of money is someone for whom no action, however wicked and vicious, is ruled out. She lacks the core that makes loss of integrity possible.

Someone might raise an objection to these last three cases, however. The requirement that an individual have a core of identity conferring commitments is not by itself enough to dictate anything about the content of those commitments. These individuals do live according to principles: 'Seek only an increasing bank balance', for example. And conflict is possible. This person might suffer from weak moments in which she succumbs to the temptation to give money to beggars. Or she might give in to periods of sloth in which she cravenly ignores opportunities for duplicity, theft or murder to gain cash. Similar cases can be made for the groveller and the pleasure seeker. Or for individuals whose goals are wicked, amoral, corrupt or fatuous.

3.1.2.2 Authenticity and Identity

Self-respect requires character: the principles and commitments of recognition respect. And it requires that the relation between an individual and her principles, and the principles themselves, be coherent: self-respect requires integrity. In order to develop the idea that the kind of coherence necessary is not just internal coherence, that is that coherence also puts constraints on the content of principles, we need to develop the idea that principles and commitments of a particular human being should cohere with, or be constrained by, an individual's identity as a human being. They need to be based, in other words, on the proper objects of recognition respect. Without this proper base, self-respect is compromised, for respect requires a worthy object if it is to obtain in its unqualified form. An agent whose commitments contain recognition respect for unworthy objects is one whose self is thus an unworthy object for self-respect.

I argue here that the constraints on the content of an agent's commitments come from the foundation developed in chapter two. For an agent to live a good life, she must first of all live a human life. Her principles must be coherent with what she is as a human being. I said above that an individual's recognition that she is a human being involves the recognition that she deserves to be treated as a human being, and not as a doormat, for example. It also requires recognising that she is an agent. This is constituted by her recognition respect for things outside of oneself that gives the dispositions that constitute her character. In order for her commitments to cohere with her authentic identity, they must recognise that she is a being whose essential characteristics include the valuing of the capacities for practical reason and sociability; and that as such she is the equal of any other human being. The commitments of the Uncle Tom, the deferential wife, the self-deprecator and the arrogant individual all deny this recognition with their faulty perception of their status as regards other human beings.

The grovellers, the wicked, and the amoral do the same thing. These are all individuals to whom, intuitively, we would deny an ascription of integrity, or uncompromised self-respect.

This can be explained by the fact that they exhibit incoherence: their standards, or their goals and ideals, are not constrained by recognition of what human beings are.

The groveller sees no treatment of her, or behaviour on her own part, as demeaning and degrading to her status, or dignity, as a human agent. Her unconditional commitment to seeking approval does not sufficiently recognise her humanity and her capacity for agency. Her whole life is organised around reaction to other people, rather than action.

The servile and arrogant characters examined above showed that recognition of one's status as a human being is essential to self-respect. Recognising one's own status as a human being is something that integrally involves other human beings. Status is something that is determined in relation to other things. To know her own status as a human being, then, an agent must be aware of the status of the other beings and things around her. Her identity is not shaped in a vacuum. To be aware of herself as an equal to other human beings, she must be aware of other human beings as equal. To recognise that as a human being she deserves fair treatment is to recognise that other human beings deserve similar treatment. She cannot come to the appropriate recognition of herself without taking into account the nature of the human beings around her. Uncompromised recognition respect for herself necessarily requires recognition respect for other human beings. If the self is a proper object of recognition respect in virtue of its essential humanity, all selves are proper objects of recognition respect. This is one way in which sociability, or other-responsiveness, is integral to self-respect. The wicked individual who knowingly embraces bad as good, the amoral individual who does not think in terms of good and bad at all, both exhibit a kind of arrogance. The defining mark of such individuals is that they are not responsive to the claims of others; they do not exhibit recognition respect for other human beings. To those who object that there are individuals whose authentic selves are wicked and amoral, I would reply that, as with the sceptic of practical reason, if these individuals are recognisably human, there is an incoherence somewhere, they are in some sense living a denial of what they authentically are. If an individual really was coherently consistently amoral, it is doubtful that we would be able to recognise her as a human agent. She has opted out, in a sense, of humanity.

3.1.2.3 Autonomy and the Value of Self-Respect

At the level of the good life then, the self-respecting life, many kinds of lives are ruled to be less than flourishing, because they lack the coherence necessary for self-respect. If this coherence obtains it means that the triadic relation between attitude, conduct and object is uncompromised. Coherence between motivation, principle and action accounts for the attitude and conduct. Coherence between identity and commitments accounts for the proper object. The ideals, standards and commitments that make up a particular person's conception of the good life must be constrained by the recognition respect for her shared humanity.

Any one of the cases discussed above of individuals who feel good about themselves yet whose self-respect is unwarranted, illustrate that the value of self-respect is something more than just its psychological empowerment. Compromised self-respect may be instrumentally good, but it does not express a correspondence between an individual's subjective state and an instantiation of value. It is this unity that makes respect, or self-respect, intrinsically good. Respecting, and self-respecting behaviour normally brings about good consequences. But it need not always do so. Still, there would remain something good about it if it exhibited integrity, that is, coherence of all the kinds discussed. An absence of one or other kind of coherence would contaminate it in all the ways discussed above. Yet, uncompromised self-respect would remain valuable regardless of whether it contributed to bad consequences. Only the unity between a subjective state and an instantiation of value could account for this residual, intrinsic goodness.

Compromised self-respect, of the kind that allows an individual to feel good about herself when she should not, may be less instrumentally good as well as less intrinsically good. If an agent's subjective state inflates or deflates something's value, her respect is disproportionate, and she is apt to be disillusioned and enlightened by the real value of the object. When the object is the self, her realisation that she has been deluded about her own worth can be

debilitating.⁷⁰ Compromised self-respect imposes a psychological burden. Since it is susceptible to reversal, it is tenuous, even though it may be protected by social arrangements. Diana Meyers argues that socio-economic changes, which resulted in the questioning of the traditional role for women, brought the compromised nature of a large number of women's self-respect to the surface. For those who were minimally autonomous, this was debilitating, since they lacked the skills necessary to make choices about the overall direction of their lives, and to assimilate this transformed self-perception.

Autonomy is invaluable in enabling an individual to gain knowledge of herself, and the worth of herself. A minimally autonomous individual has weak self-reading skills. She may exhibit every kind of coherence except that of the first person requirement, or the requirement that her standards cohere with her identity as a human being, like the deferential wife, for example. If an individual's standards and commitments are not autonomously chosen, often they reflect a mere imbibing of convention. Autonomy skills are essential to bridging the gap here between authenticity and integrity. If she is to attain uncompromised self-respect, she needs to attain self-critical, self-reflective awareness. To find out what she is, who she is, and what she wants, and to build this into a coherent whole, she needs the ability to make autonomous judgements and choices.

Autonomy skills are indispensable in bringing together authenticity and integrity in another way. An agent may follow a conventional life plan, while inwardly deploring it. She lacks self-respect because she lacks the attitude or the motivation that would make her actions wholly coherent. Authenticity and integrity require that she violate convention. Autonomy, and the emotional and intellectual independence it brings, will ensure her that she is not giving up others' respect in vain, as well as helping her to withstand others' ridicule.

Coherence, in all its various forms, is in an agent's real interests. And, as I suggested above, its value goes beyond psychological empowerment. Self-respect does give confidence to pursue a life-plan, and it can liberate from the opinions of others. But its significance runs

⁷⁰ Diana Meyers gives a good discussion of this in "*Self-Respect and Autonomy*" pp. 235-246

much deeper than this, as the remarks about value and identity suggest. Uncompromised self-respect is intrinsically good in virtue of the congruence it establishes between respectfulness and an instantiation of value. This not only refers to an agent's recognition of her humanity. Recognising her capacity for agency involves having uncompromised recognition respect for things outside of herself. Respect and self-respect, then, are inextricably connected to what it is to have value and meaning in a life. They are inextricably connected with what is constitutive of human worth and worthwhile human lives. To engage in and care about respecting one's self is to respond to the values of human living in such a way that one's life is guided and shaped by value.

The connection between self-respect and value explains what is so bad about self-deception - this is an avoidance of the capacity to be honest about what has value; and what is bad about those who accept degrading treatment as their due, like the self-deprecator - this carries the threat that they will accept the low valuation of themselves and thus lose the ability to perceive what has real worth.

Recognition self-respect has important implications for sociability since it requires recognition respect of other human beings. Indeed, it would seem to be a condition for living together well, as it makes possible relationships based on mutual respect. Evaluative self-respect also has significance for sociability. Monitoring each other's behaviour is essential for social living, and evaluative self-respect, the appraisal of how well one is living according to one's commitments, is a form of internalised monitoring.

Evaluative self-respect is that positive sense of self worth, resulting from an honest self-appraisal, that motivates an agent to continue to strive to live according to her principles and commitments. As such it is invaluable in helping us to live our life plans. But its help goes deeper than just confidence. A life plan is a reflection of an individual's conception of the good. It is an answer to the question "How should I live?". Answers are meaningless unless agents try to live them, and know whether they are getting them right. Evaluative self-respect plays a vital role in motivating an individual, and also in keeping track of her progress.

The connection of self-respect to value and identity suggests that an agent who completely lacked self-respect would live a meaningless life. It also suggests that a necessary condition for a meaningful or valuable life is uncompromised self-respect. To lack or to lose self-respect is to risk losing one's identity as a human being, and the ability to live a worthwhile life.

3.2 How is a Response to Worth Possible?

From the above, self-respect seems to be merely a matter of adopting and upholding the right personal standards and commitments. A self-respecting person can justify herself, to herself and to others, for she acts for good reasons. This makes it sound like self-respect is a highly intellectual capacity to do mainly with reason and judgement and choosing well, though pride, shame and resentment do play supporting roles. This does not do justice to the complexity of self-respect, as it largely ignores its experiential aspect. And, although it gives an idea of what a lack of self-respect is, it does not explain how it is that this comes about. Conversely, it gives an idea of what self-respect is without explaining how it is possible.

An essential element of self-respect is what is unobservable - the basic attitude an agent bears to herself. Recognition and evaluative self-respect do not on their own adequately capture this attitude. I argue for a third kind of self-respect, basal self-respect or self-love. This underlies both recognition and evaluative respect for it is what makes a response to worth possible. Basal self-respect further reveals the important relation between sociability and self-respect. Self-respect is a social and political, as well as an individual, matter. It is also what allows a theory of error - an account of how it is that an individual can be wrong about her own real interests.

Recall from chapter one that in order to be normative, practical reasons require a previous answer to the question "How should I live?". Full rationality is cannot just be about removing ignorance and deliberating soundly, it also involves substantive considerations or reasonable concerns. Williams argues that these concerns are localised to a particular community. But for

one who does not share these concerns, it makes no sense to say that she has a reason to behave differently for reasons are hypothetical. Williams, in other words, denies that there are categorical reasons: considerations that should motivate any agent regardless of whatever profile of desire she actually has. He denies that an agent can be irrational, or unreasonable, in the sense of being unresponsive to reasons. He takes this position because he is sceptical about the possibility of a universal answer to the question "How should I live?". This scepticism results largely from his position that such an answer would have to be objective to be universal. I argued, however, that objectivity was not necessary; in fact, a foundation for ethics has to be internal. But this does not preclude universality. An appeal to human nature gives us universal values and experiences, a foundation upon which to specify the good life, or real interests. One way to achieve such a specification is through the development of the notion that self-respect is a necessary condition of a worthwhile life.

But this brings us back to an objection encountered near the beginning of the second chapter: if this is human nature, or functioning, why is not true that everyone is living self-respecting lives? How is it that they can be mistaken about their own real interests?

First, this objection, in the light of remarks from the end of the last chapter, is no longer so threatening. If the appeal to human nature is construed as an appeal to some objective scientific account of human beings from which an account of good functioning straightforwardly flows, then it is indeed very problematic if large numbers of human beings fail to function in this way. Aristotle's answer was bad upbringing, but this does not do enough to show why there is still a reason for the vicious individual to do the virtuous thing if she has developed an entirely unvirtuous set of interests. For taking human nature to be an objective description, given the tendency here to conflate functioning and good functioning, lends an air of necessity to the link between functioning and good functioning. Keeping the distinction between the two levels of the account clear - human being and good human being - begins to make it more plausible that an agent can be wrong about her own best interests.

Every individual, if recognisable as a human being, values self-respect in some minimal way as long as there is an "I" with interests to pursue. Only a self who exhibits certain kinds of coherence warrants uncompromised self-respect. Uncompromised self-respect is intrinsically good. It is closely tied to what gives value and meaning to a life. It is also instrumentally superior to compromised self-respect, since compromised self-respect is inherently tenuous and subject to reversal. Thus, it is in an agent's best interests to have uncompromised self-respect.

Williams argues that an agent can be wrong about her own interests in two ways: she can be ignorant of some matter of fact that, if she knew it, would change the outcome of her deliberation; and she can fail to follow a sound deliberative route in deciding what to do. Certain kinds of the coherence required by self-respect are covered by the requirement that an agent know the relevant facts of her situation and deliberate soundly. But this does not cover all instances of a lack of self-respect, for self-respect is not only formal coherence.

Coherence between identity and principles, which requires both authenticity and autonomy, imports substantive constraints into the requirements for self-respect. Respect is grounded in worthy objects. For the self to be a worthy object of its own respect it must have a certain kind of character, or set of dispositions. These dispositions are constituted by recognition respect. And this in turn must recognise the right things. To be self-respecting an agent should be disposed to feel resentment if treated in a degrading manner; she should also be disposed to act in ways that do not amount to degradation of other human beings; and she should have autonomously chosen projects, plans, and commitments based on values that are constrained at base by her essential nature as a human being. Her desires, or motivations more generally, can be correct or incorrect depending on whether they have the good as their object.

But, if it is in everyone's best interests to have uncompromised self-respect, how is it that agents can be wrong about their own interests in so many cases? Ignorance might seem to cover cases of misplaced respect, for example, where an agent is ignorant of the fact that the

object of her respect does not actually contain the qualities she is respecting it for. The requirement of a sound deliberative route will cover cases of incoherence that rest on faulty reasoning, for example coherence between principle and action and simple consistency between principles. But how an agent might reply to this specification of real interests if her principles and commitments do not have the right content according to this account (like the arrogant individual or the deferential wife), or if she is unable to live out a self-respecting life? There are a number of ways such an individual might reply. First, she could deny that self-respect is valuable. Second, she might reply, although this is highly unlikely, by undergoing some kind of inspired conversion such that she ends up with a self-respecting motivational set. Third, she could accept that self-respect is valuable but deny that his is the correct specification of it. Or, and this is the crucial case for this chapter, she could reply by agreeing that is the correct specification of self-respect and asserting that this is reflected in the principles she holds, yet be still unable to respect herself. It is this last type of case that reveals that it is basal self-respect that makes a proper response to worth possible.

The individual who denies that self-respect is valuable was dealt with at the beginning of this chapter. If this individual is recognisably living a human life, then she is guilty of incoherence, for the activities of her life presuppose the valuing of self-respect. If she persists in denying its value and henceforth aims to live accordingly then she will be opting out of human life. As such, whatever life she does lead, if she manages to avoid suicide, will not be a good human life.

For the agent who undergoes conversion, remember that Williams identifies a number of conditions the change must satisfy for this it to have been in her real interests. Her change in outlook must be explained by reference to some 'general incapacity' from which she suffered and that was remedied by this change. Her prior misconception must not just be constructed afterwards to fit the content of this change. And it cannot simply be a change in outlook. The agent must have suffered from a genuine inability to acknowledge things that, in circumstances of a particular kind, human beings should acknowledge as part of their effective functioning. A conversion to uncompromised self-respect would seem to satisfy

these requirements, given the preceding arguments, but consider, nevertheless, an individual who manages to overcome her arrogance. It would be true to say that, before, she misconceived her interests and that doing so was a main symptom of what was wrong with her. Her inability to properly recognise her status as a human being, and thus also the status of every other human being, is the cause of her lack of uncompromised self-respect. As, given the above arguments, uncompromised self-respect is necessary for good human functioning, it would also be true to say that she suffered from a genuine incapacity. That is to say, she was unable to recognise things that good human beings should recognise.

A person might reply to this account of self-respect that, although self-respect is valuable, this is not the appropriate specification of it. In such a case, the discussion continues, with each side advancing reasons for why their specification gives better expression to the essential characteristics of human beings, practical reason and sociability, and better contributes to the living of a worthwhile life. For the foundation on which this specification is based has given us the common ground from which to proceed in comparing and evaluating specifications. To do this we do not need to claim there is any 'innocent eye' or objective way of seeing the world that is entirely free of cultural shaping. Everything in a motivational set is influenced by culture and environment. In many cases these produce it. There is also no need to claim that conceptual schemes are not holistic, that is, that changing one element will have implications for the scheme as a whole. None of this implies that all world interpretations are equally valid and non-comparable. The standards used to criticise must come from inside human life, as I argued in the previous chapter. There is no reason why, at the end of the day, it cannot be said that certain ways of conceptualising self-respect are more in keeping with the totality of evidence and wishes for flourishing lives. Relativists tend to underestimate the amount of overlap between cultures⁷¹. The foundation established in the previous chapter allows the possibility of getting underneath the variety and the constructive power of social discourse. Relativists tend to assume that the realisation that everyone's motivational set and worldview are constructed by society somehow creates an impenetrable barrier to critical discussion. But cross-cultural communication and debate are ubiquitous features of contemporary life.

⁷¹ Nussbaum argues this point in more detail in "*Non-Relative Virtues*" pp. 260-265.

And, being aware that one's own way of seeing is non-necessary can lead to critical debate in the search for the human good, starting within the confines of what human beings are: we value practical reason, sociability and self-respect; we are mortal; we have bodies of a certain sort; we need things that we do not control; we feel pain and pleasure; we have a certain range of bodily desires and appetites. The fact that an individual's viewpoint is contingent introduces the possibility of change, if not for the particular individual, at least for the society that helped to create her.

This brings us to the last type of case. An individual may reply that she accepts and indeed operates with this conception of self-respect, yet she is still unable to respect herself. Her plight may be characterised initially by saying that she knows but cannot feel her worth. It is this case that reveals that whether or not an individual has a flourishing life depends not only on luck and how carefully she makes her choices and what character traits she tries to develop, but also on her upbringing in a particular social and political setting. It also reveals more ways in which self-respect is inextricably tied to sociability.

3.2.1 Basal Self-Respect

The account of self-respect in terms of coherence given above characterises self-respect as a largely intellectual and largely personal phenomenon. This account is incomplete, however, because it cannot explain certain cases of damaged self-respect. An examination of these cases reveals that the emotional dimensions of self-respect are far more complexly structured than revealed so far. This kind of damage is also best explained by positing a third kind of self-respect: basal self-respect. Evaluative self-respect requires recognition self-respect, and recognition self-respect in turn requires basal self-respect. It is this third kind of self-respect that makes a response to worth possible.

On the coherence account of self-respect, an agent is disposed to feel resentment if she is treated in a way that affronts her dignity as a human being. Having the standards and commitments of recognition respect makes her liable to shame if she her behaviour is not in

accordance with them. Since evaluative self-respect is an evaluation of how well the agent is living up to her commitments, shame marks a diminished sense of evaluative respect. At the same time it reveals abiding recognition respect, for an agent would not feel shame if she did not care about these commitments. Pride is one way of characterising the feeling of a positive appraisal of oneself. An agent with uncompromised evaluative respect is one who deserves to take pride in her character and abilities.

But this analysis cannot explain certain cases of damaged self-respect where the damage plays out in the domains of pride, shame and resentment.⁷²

a) Anne is a successful professional woman. She has recognition respect for the standards of her profession and she lives in accordance with them, earning the respect of her colleagues. She has not sold her soul for success either but consistently refuses to do things that she thinks no self-respecting person would do. She has well grounded recognition self-respect and, thus, good grounds for evaluative self-respect. Yet she cannot feel the worth of what she does and is. She knows that she deserves to take pride in her accomplishments. And she truly believes that she is respect worthy. She understands that on any reasonable view she should feel satisfied with herself and her life. Instead, her emotional experience is one of inadequacy. Her failures and mistakes have a huge emotional impact on her, but when she does well she does not feel successful. Underneath there is a feeling that her success is just a fluke, her character mediocre. And she suffers a second-order loss of self-respect because her first-order emotions are so out of line with her avowed beliefs. She has tried to bring them into line, but has failed and she is ashamed of the incongruity.

b) Bill runs a business and it is central to his self-conception that he does this well. He believes that it is essential to being a good manager as well as a good human being that he treat all his employees fairly no matter what their gender or colour, which he does. In line with his beliefs is careful to point out that everyone's opinion is important, and to give everyone equal opportunity to express their opinion. And he believes that women and black people are

⁷² In what follows I draw on Robin Dillon "Self-Respect: Moral, Emotional and Political" (*Ethics* vol. 107, 1997) pp. 226-249.

as intellectually capable as white men. His staff have the utmost respect for him as a man of integrity. He exhibits coherence of all the requisite types; he believes he acts for the right reasons. As such, he deserves to have self-respect. To his shame, however, he often catches himself being automatically more inclined to accept the opinions of his white male employees, and automatically inclined to be more critical of his other employees. And these reactions are impervious to rational criticism. Moreover, he suffers a second-order loss of self-respect due to the regard that others have for him. He feels he is somehow deeply a fake and fears being exposed as such.

c) Claire has a good understanding of her status. She desires decent treatment and treats others decently. Her life has been ordinary but lucky, for he has never been treated badly herself. Yet resentment is the abiding flavour of her life. She routinely resents people for no good reason, especially people who have nicer jobs, cars, and homes than she does. She knows her resentment is unjustified, but no amount of telling herself this makes it go away. So she suffers a second order loss of self-respect because she is ashamed of her resentment and ashamed she cannot make it stop.

The issue in all three cases is the inappropriateness of the first-order emotions, or response. These seem to indicate a lack of self-respect. But their explicit beliefs and second-order emotions affirm their worth and deny the appropriateness of the first-order emotions. And this discord is puzzling. These individuals lack self-respect, but not in a way that the coherence account can readily explain. It is important to note here that the emotional first-order dimension here can be very powerful, with the capacity to affect the quality and shape of their lives in a way that their explicit beliefs and judgements do not. It is easy to imagine the debilitating effects of the psychological discord and incessant self-castigation. This suggests the emotional dimension of being toward and with oneself with regard to self-worth is extremely important.

What needs explanation then, is how the emotional dimensions of self-respect can be inappropriate, belief independent, persistent and powerful enough to shape their lives

contrary to the principles and commitments they stand by. The previous account cannot do this: it gives the impression that knowing and feeling one's worth are the same thing, and what it says about the specific emotions involved does not apply in this case. Anne should feel pride but she does not. Why? And why does it matter that she does not? Bill can identify the norms underlying his first-order shame, but he does not identify with them. Claire's persistent resentment is not an indication that she has suffered degrading treatment. It seems to belie insecurity about her worth, like protesting innocence too much belies a sense of guilt.

How are these anomalous first-order emotions to be explained? A *prima facie* plausible charge would be that they are irrational. The cognitivist approach to the theory of emotions argues that emotions have a core of propositional thought, beliefs or evaluative judgements, that carry their intentionality, differentiate them and make them liable to assessment as rational or irrational, reasonable or unreasonable.

The first way to explain these emotions as irrational, then, would be to argue that there is conflict between the beliefs of the first-order emotions and other beliefs. Anne is grossly irrational for she both believes and does not believe that she has grounds for pride. However, this approach is problematic. It requires ascribing to her a set of beliefs that she explicitly disavows that conflict with her avowed beliefs. Moreover, to explain the power of her first-order emotions, these beliefs would have to be her real beliefs, disavowals notwithstanding. First, there is no reason to ascribe this set of beliefs to her except to explain away the anomalous emotions. Second, her second order self-evaluations and her struggles to correct her emotions provide strong evidence that her beliefs are what she says they are.

Secondly it could be argued that the irrationality is within those first-order emotions. They contain false cognition's and fail to track reality, whereas the avowed beliefs do. But this does not seem accurate either. For a plausible case can be made for the claim that these first-order emotions do track reality: they reflect flawed social messages about worth. We can explain this kind of damage to self-respect by reference to these individuals internalising norms, at some stage prior to their adoption of their explicit beliefs, that reflect a lack of recognition

respect. These norms lack proper recognition respect in that they are integrally connected with oppression, encoding messages that certain groups are less than fully human, and as such less capable of practical reason and sociability and making good choices. The development of this claim clarifies the idea of respect as being like a perceptual capacity, and how it is that basal self-respect underlies the other kinds making a response to worth possible.

These anomalous emotions are perhaps best explained as unreasonable in the sense of being unresponsive to reason. They persist after rational criticism, argument and securely anchored true belief are brought to bear on them. And the emotion itself need contain no core of propositional thought for it to be unreasonable in this way. John Deigh uses the existence of such emotions to criticise the cognitive theory that defines all emotions as having as an essential element a judgement or belief.⁷³ Consider an unreasonable fear of falling where an individual feel afraid upon looking down from a precipice despite knowing that she is completely safe. What makes her fear unreasonable is not faulty reasoning resulting in false thoughts, but the persistence of a tropism that should have yielded to sound reasoning. An emotion can be unreasonable when it fails to respond to reason as well as when it contains false thoughts. Just because it is unreasonable in this way it cannot be inferred that it contains propositional thought as an essential element.

If the anomalous first-order responses of these individuals are to explained as unreasonable in this way two questions need to be answered. Where did these emotions come from? And why do they persist despite sound rational criticism?

If the emotionality of self-respect is taken seriously, it seems true to say that these individuals do not fully know their worth. They know it intellectually, but they do not understand it experientially. Some things have to be understood in both ways in order to be understood properly. Respect requires an understanding of the object - both intellectual and experiential understanding. What are these two types of understanding? Believing something

⁷³ John Deigh "Cognitivism in the Theory of Emotions" (*Ethics* vol. 104, 1994) pp. 824-854

experientially means that a belief is borne out by experience. I believe that if I stand barefoot on a sharp object it will cause me pain, because I have just done just that. My perceptual awareness bears out my belief and I hold it experientially. But sometimes, beliefs are the products of inferences. Other beliefs confirm it. Imagine an individual with a sound knowledge of the human body and its vulnerabilities. Imagine that she has been lucky enough never to have stood on a sharp object. Nevertheless, she believes by inference from other beliefs, that doing so would cause her pain. Someone might believe intellectually in the obligatoriness of truth telling after following the arguments of Kant, for example. She would believe this experientially if she came to feel the imperative force of being honest and stopped merely doing her duty. A logic student, to use Cheshire Calhoun's example, may believe intellectually in the validity of modus ponens accepting as true what her lecturer and her logic textbook tell her.⁷⁴ Her belief may come to be held experientially if she has a flash of insight and sees that it is valid. Or consider the difference between reading a play and seeing it performed. There is a sense in which the understanding of the former is more intellectual, and of the latter, more experiential.

Calhoun argues that sometimes a belief can be defective if it is held only intellectually under conditions that require it also to be held experientially.⁷⁵ The individual who believes she is safe yet still feels the fear of falling is an example of such a defective belief. Emotional engagement is part of proper understanding. Anne knows her worth intellectually but cannot feel worthy. This does not require ascribing to her a belief that she is not worthy. The proper emotional engagement is missing, and so her belief is defective.

Another distinction that serves to explain the recalcitrance and power of the first-order emotions is that between explicit and implicit understanding. Explicit understanding is representational to the individual, lying at or below the psychological surface, and articulable in propositional structures. But an individual also operates with implicit understanding, that which is implicit in certain ways of being in the world, or habitual patterns of attention. These constitute frameworks through which the individual interprets the world. It is possible for these

⁷⁴ Cheshire Calhoun "Cognitive Emotions" in **What is an Emotion: Classical Readings in Philosophical Psychology** C. Calhoun and R. Solomon, Eds. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984) pp. 336

⁷⁵ "Cognitive Emotions" pp. 337

frameworks to shape conscious experience, and conflict with avowed beliefs and judgements, without being explicitly represented in or representable to the individual. As such, they can be resistant to change through reflection, criticism and reconceptualisation, that is, tools of sound deliberation.

These distinctions between various types of understanding can be explicated further in considering where these emotions came from and why they persist. Emotions, like anything else complex about human beings, are socially constructed on several levels. Emotions are learned, as the individual develops, through what Ronald de Sousa calls 'paradigm scenarios' that go back to childhood experiences.⁷⁶ Children are deliberately taught what counts as an appropriate emotional response in particular situations in their family and society, and may indirectly imbibe what society counts as good or bad, fearful or respect worthy. Growing up, then, involves developing habitual patterns of attention that structure the way an individual experiences the world. Learning to speak and developing a system of beliefs will expand and alter an individual's understanding of the world, and intellectual understanding may come to contradict an individual's experiential understanding. And some of the experiential understanding may become implicit in the way the individual operates in the world.

The term 'habitual patterns of attention' is a useful one. It helps to show how emotions are like a perceptual capacity and why anomalous emotions may be so difficult to argue away. Growing up involves developing an emotional framework of ways in which to interpret the world.⁷⁷ Emotion and perception are importantly connected. What emotion is felt depends essentially on the way in which the situation is perceived; the way the individual has learned or decided to respond to it. In addition, emotion can shape perception. Perception is not merely a passive process either. It is an activity selection and interpretation. What is selected, and how this is interpreted, is influenced by emotional attitude. A situation will seem different, depending on how we are paying attention to it. We remark very different features of the world when we are happy, depressed, fearful or confident. The individual experience of

⁷⁶ Ronald de Sousa "The Rationality of Emotion" in **The Rationality of Emotion** (London and Cambridge, Mass: The MIT Press, 1995) Ch. 7

⁷⁷ This process need not be entirely passive, and will probably become less and less passive as the individual's cognitive capability develops. See John Deigh "Cognitivism in the Theory of Emotions" pp. 852

emotion focuses attention selectively. Emotions are among the mechanisms, argues de Sousa, that control the crucial factor of salience among what would otherwise be an unmanageable amount of objects of attention, interpretations, and strategies of inference and conduct.⁷⁸ Without emotion, human life would be difficult to imagine.

An individual operates through a contingent profile of concern. A self has a practical identity, made up of what it desires (in the broad sense including emotions), values and does. My own concerns and dispositions determine which features I notice and how I react to them. Having recognition respect for other human beings would make an individual more inclined to notice and react to unfair treatment.

Assume, for example, that Bill was raised to believe that women and black people are incapable of rivalling white men in intellectual achievement. As an adult, he came to reject these beliefs. To his mind, he has good reasons for thinking that gender and race have no bearing on intellectual capabilities. Yet he still experiences these individuals as less capable. Perhaps he has deep-rooted associations between intellectual capability and a masculine deportment (deep voice, masculine clothes and mannerisms, etc.).⁷⁹ These associations work against him holding these beliefs experientially. It is as though he is perpetually suffering from a kind of optical illusion. He is experiencing things that he knows are not there. The sincerity and firmness of his convictions do not waver, just as Anne sincerely believes she has good grounds for respecting herself. The illusion is powerful, however, as their struggles to get rid of them attest. But the need to remind themselves of their convictions springs from the force of the illusion, and not the weakness of their beliefs.

This failure to hold beliefs experientially does not stem from some radical inability (some logic students may just not be capable of insight into the validity of *modus ponens*) but is due to the implicit interpretative scheme that permeates their experience. Unlike an optical illusion, this has its origin in a set of associations and patterns of attention at a pre-reflective level that they bring to their experience. Depending on how deep-rooted, these habitual patterns of

⁷⁸ **The Rationality of Emotion**, Ch. 7

⁷⁹ See Calhoun "*Cognitive Emotions*" pp. 337

attention may be difficult to extricate, and may certainly be impervious to rational criticism. There is more to the attitude of self-respect than just acting for the right reason. For it seems, from these cases, that an individual may intellectually appreciate her worth, and act according to her principles and commitments for the right reasons, and yet still remain unable to feel the truth of what she does. As such, her understanding is defective, and her self-respect compromised.

If the attitude component of respect and self-respect is more complex in this way, it has important implications for the nature and possibility of valuing. In other words, it has important implications for what makes a response to worth possible. Recognition respect can be characterised as a form of distinguishing salience. As characterised above, it is a disposition to consider certain features of objects as important such that they figure in deliberation about what to do. But the cases above suggest that recognition respect is not complete without an experiential understanding of the object concerned. This suggests that worth, or value, is not properly understood or properly valued unless it is understood experientially. Respect must at least in part consist of emotional engagement. Jagger argues that emotions and values are closely related, in that emotions provide the experiential basis for values. The individual who comes to value truth telling intellectually as her duty through does not fully understand the value of honesty. And the person who visits a sick friend out of an intellectual understanding of her duty does not fully understand friendship. Emotional patterns of salience, or attention, develop prior to intellectual understanding and constitute a framework for the way in which an individual will operate in the world. And it is important, if she is to have a proper understanding of worth, that these patterns of attention support and foster uncompromised recognition respect. They are, in a sense, what makes a proper response to worth possible. Emotional responses may be rooted so deeply as to be relatively impervious to intellectual argument, and may recur even if an individual manages to change her intellectual convictions. And by forming emotional constitutions in particular ways, society manages to ensure its own perpetuation. In so far as these are taken to be natural, they limit theoretical vision, for they blind us to the possibility of alternative ways of living.

However, in what sense can we say that certain emotional responses are more appropriate than others? Experiential and intellectual understanding need not always be out of sync. The groveller values approval in both senses. But the groveller's self-respect is compromised in other ways, ways that suggest a way in which to determine appropriateness of emotional response. Again, we need to turn to the foundation established for the specification of the good life. I suggest that 'patterns of attention' are appropriate if they underwrite uncompromised recognition respect. In other words, emotions are appropriate if they are characteristic of a society, since emotions are socially constructed, that gives its members the tools to develop their essential nature into uncompromised self-respect. Society must be such that every member has a good chance of developing basal self-respect. Bill is incapable of uncompromised self-respect because his emotional responses prevent his having uncompromised recognition respect. Anne has at some deep level experientially understood herself as worthless. Claire's resentment can be understood as insecurity about her own worth; perhaps at some deep level she has internalised social messages about worth being conditional on material possessions.

More needs to be said about what could allow healthy basal self-respect to develop. Experiential understandings of self-worth and worth are implicitly presupposed in ways of being in the world constituted by emotional enactments, or patterns of attention. This gives more substance to the claim that respect and self-respect are like a perceptual capacity. In order to have uncompromised self-respect, an individual needs to see the world and herself in a certain way, to see certain features and objects as having certain significance. Basal self-respect can be characterised as a prereflective unarticulated emotionally laden framework, an implicit 'seeing oneself as' that structures an individual's explicit experiences of self and worth. As such, it structures the conceptual, emotional and behavioural possibilities of recognition and evaluative self-respect.

Sociability, then, is very important in the construction of uncompromised self-respect, for it is largely society that provides individuals with these basal frameworks of worth. These are constructed in the complex, emotionally charged interplay of self, others and institutions that

begins long before these and the relations between them can be conceptualised. As such, they shape and delimit individual's capacity for agency. This might happen in an individual, but it is not something she does. It is a natural response to experiences of being valued or not valued, or being valuable only under certain conditions. The family and unconditional parental love are thus essential in the development of basal self-respect. And, in societies where subordination and devaluation of categories of people pervade the social, cultural and political reality, we should expect, other things being equal, the self-respect of members of those societies to be compromised in various ways. As such, they are cut off from the possibility of flourishing, meaningful and truly worthwhile lives.

It is in human beings' real interests to develop the kinds of characters that exhibit the necessary kinds of coherence for uncompromised self-respect. It is also in their real interests to create the kind of society that makes such uncompromised self-respect possible.

Conclusion: reasons without motivations

“What should I do?” How does this analysis impact on Williams’ Neo-Humean account of practical reason? Given the preceding answer to “How should I live?” Williams’ account presents a false dichotomy on a basis that assumes more than it appears to. On the basis of the explanatory, or motivating role of practical reasons, Williams argues that either reasons are hypothetical, dependent on the existence of a prior motivation in the agent’s motivational set, or pure reason must be able to give rise to a new motivation. The Aristotelian response that I have developed, supplemented by the analysis of self-respect, shows that a middle ground is possible. Moreover, the analysis shows that the hypothetical view of practical reason is not based solely on the explanatory role of reasons, but depends on a prior answer to “How should I live?”.

Williams’ is right to attack the idea that an agent is irrational if left cold by a consideration that others think should be a reason for her to act, where the irrationality charge is supposed to indicate a knock-down argument that the agent is flying in the face of; a consideration that could motivate any human being, regardless of her motivational state. This would require that pure reason could give rise to a new motivation. But, although Williams is right about the powers of practical reasoning, this does not mean there is not more to practical reason. It can make sense to say that an agent should be motivated to act in a certain way, she does have a reason to act, even if her own practical reasoning cannot effect this motivation.

Chapters one, two and three each provide a key point to support this claim. First, full knowledge and sound deliberation are not by themselves sufficient for full rationality; even Williams’ account relies on a prior answer to “How should I live?” that imports substantive constraints into what it is to be fully rational. Second, chapter two showed that to be universal, an answer to “How should I live?” does not have to be objective. And third, the account of self-respect gives an agent’s real interests, and the points about basal self-respect and the importance of an agent seeing things in the right way, show there is more to her being aware of her real interests than sound reasoning. Motivational sets are not just given; they are

created. The answer to “How should I live?” has implications for politics as well as for practical reason. I review Williams’ argument briefly before applying these points to show how middle ground is possible.

Williams argues that the statement “A has a reason to *x*” is falsified by the agent’s lack of a motive that will be furthered by her *x-ing*. The only sense in which A can have a reason to *x* if she is not already motivated is if she is unaware that *x-ing* is a means to get something she already desires; where her lack of awareness is either a result of ignorance, or unsound deliberation.

It is thus false to say that there are reasons, meaning fixed concerns or values that should motivate an agent regardless of the actual state of her motivational set if she were being fully rational. This is due to the explanatory or motivating requirement on practical reasons. Take the case of an agent who is left cold by a consideration – a normative reason. The deferential wife just does not see that exercising her capacity for autonomous agency is necessary for her self-respect. She cannot be motivated to make her own decisions and plans. Williams suggests that what is missing here is the belief that this consideration is important. If she came to believe it to be important, she would be motivated to behave accordingly. She would, in other words, come to have a hypothetical reason true of her. In order to make sense of the reason being categorical, it would have to be true that she was coming to believe something that was true in advance of her being motivated by it. Her autonomy must have been valuable for her before she recognised it as so. For this to be true, says Williams, it must be that she acquired her new motivation because she came to believe that autonomy was necessary for self-respect and, crucially, that she did the latter because she was ‘considering the matter aright’. She came to believe because she considered the matter aright. And considering the matter aright must at least entail that she deliberated correctly. This correct deliberation cannot have been controlled by her existing motivations, for then she would simply have brought a hypothetical reason to light. But, if the rational cogency of a piece of deliberation is in no way dependent on existing motivations, how can we comprehend its giving rise to a new

motivation? The categorical reasons theorist must be committed to claiming that pure reason can give rise to a new motivation. This is just implausible.

Williams is right to point out this implausibility, but this does not quite settle the question of whether the only rationality of actions is the rationality of hypothetical reasons. The issue here is the relation between the explanatory role of reasons and their normative role. The explanatory power of reason-giving explanations depends on their being a critical dimension to the concept of rationality. To say that she acted for a reason is to say that the motivation for her action approximated to something in the nature of an ideal. Reason-giving explanations require a conception of how things ideally would be. This must be sufficiently independent of how any individual's actual motivational set operates so as to serve as a critical assessment of it. In other words, there must be a potential gap between this ideal and the specific directions in which an agent's motivations push her⁸⁰.

This was the point of the criticism, of Williams' account of practical reason, at the end of chapter one. The requirements of full knowledge and sound deliberation are not sufficient for the right amount of critical distance. The critical dimension of the notion of full rationality requires an analogous transcendence of the mere facts of an individual's psychology. I argue that the right distance requires full rationality involves substantive considerations. It requires that not only the formal process of reasoning be criticisable, but also its starting points.

The deferential wife, then, could not deliberate herself into autonomy, because she does not have the motivations constitutive of full rationality. Her desires do not recognise the good, so she is unable to deliberate fully rationally. Considering the matter aright includes having the appropriate motivational set – there is more to practical reason than sound deliberation.

But this point is only true if a universal answer is possible to the question "How should I live?" an answer that is *for* everyone. If only a constructivist, communal answer is possible, and the deferential wife belongs to a community that places no value on women's autonomy, then

⁸⁰ John McDowell "Might There Be External Reasons?" in **World, Mind, Ethics** J.E.T. Altham and R. Harrison Eds, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995) pp. 76.

there is no sense in which her motivational set could be criticised. Williams argues that a universal answer is not possible largely because he takes the position that to be universal it would have to be objective, or external. It would thus provide a knock-down argument for good human functioning. Since objectivity is not possible in the realm of the ethical, neither is universality.

Again, this is a false dichotomy between internal and relative on the one hand, and external and necessary on the other. In chapter two I argued for a middle ground- an account of human nature that was both internal and universal. The analysis of self-respect develops this foundation into an account of real interests such that recognising the value of, for example, your own autonomy to your self-respect, is constitutive of considering the matter aright.

Williams' analysis of the explanatory requirement on practical reasons, and what it would take to make a categorical reason true, is thus faulty from the perspective of this analysis because it assumes from the outset that there are no substantive considerations constitutive of full rationality or considering the matter aright. The analysis of basal self-respect helps to bring this out further. It is misleading to suggest that what the categorical reasons theorist needs to say is missing from the deferential wife is her belief that autonomy is necessary for self-respect, a belief and a motivation that she could acquire by deliberating correctly. Firstly, acquiring the belief is not always sufficient to produce the motivation – Anne believes she has good grounds to respect herself, yet she is unable to motivate herself to. One thing the deferential wife lacks is a presuppositional framework that would allow her to consider the matter aright.

When an agent deliberates, she surveys the world as it appears to her through her motivational set. Certain features and consideration will stand out as important, depending on what her motivational framework is: a miser will see the cost of everything; an ambitious person will see things in terms of opportunities for advancement; a deferential individual will perceive a situation in terms of someone else's values. Certainly, it is implausible that her

transition to seeing things in the correct way could be effected by pure reasoning – it is doubtful that there is ever such a thing as pure practical reasoning.

However, it is still possible to make sense of a transition, from deferential to autonomous, such that it is true that the deferential wife comes to be motivated by a categorical reason. Instead of making it the requirement that she come to believe that autonomy is important for her self-respect because she considers the matter aright, where this means deliberating correctly, the transition is better understood as follows: in coming to believe that autonomy is necessary for self-respect, she comes to consider the matter aright.⁸¹ This leaves it open how it is that she comes to have this belief; to account for the motivational or character shift it would have to be through something like inspiration or conversion.

There is more to an agent's being able to act in her own best interests than just correct deliberation. In particular, self-respect requires the right kind of upbringing in the right kind of social and political environment. It is a social as well as a personal matter. An agent's subjectivity must be moulded so that she is able to consider the matter aright. The analysis of basal self-respect shows how this process can be likened to an acquisition of a way of seeing things. The existence of this underlying framework and its importance for uncompromised self-respect and a worthwhile life is shown in the cases of damaged self-respect. These individuals may be viewed as having made partial conversions to uncompromised respect-respect. However, they are unable to fully recognise the worth in themselves or others precisely because there is more to considering the matter aright than just sound deliberation.

The fact that individual's always deliberate from who they are, their character or motivational set, and the fact that there is no external or objective and neutral perspective from which to criticise an individual's motivational set leads Williams to conclude that the only requirements for full rationality are full knowledge and sound deliberation. This is inadequate because it does not give the concept of full rationality enough of a critical dimension. In fact, Williams' account itself relies on a prior answer to "How should I live?" to give that critical dimension.

⁸¹ John McDowell "Might There Be External Reasons?" pp. 73.

This answer is constructivist because there is no objective perspective from which to criticise an agent's motivational set. However, an objective perspective is not necessary. An answer can be given that is for everyone, but internal. In fact, it has to be internal to be at all useful. Based on the universal values of practical reason, sociability and self-respect, an account of uncompromised self-respect can be developed that gives an account of real interests. An analysis of how a proper response to one's own worth is made possible reveals that there is more to considering the matter aright than just sound deliberation. The answer to "How should I live?" is an essential part of a full account of practical reason, and it also has implications for politics.

Given the above analysis of respect and self-respect, practical predicaments can be viewed as being structured by collections of values given by human beings' real interests. An individual perceives the world through her motivational set, from where she deliberates, and it is possible to see the world in better or worse ways. This allows that an agent can be irrational in the sense of being unresponsive to reason if her 'patterns of attention' are faulty, that is, if her motivational set does not coherently recognise the good.

A defender of the Neo-Humean account of practical reason might object that there is nothing here that Williams' view of hypothetical reasons cannot accommodate. At base, my argument rests on universal values, universal elements in human beings' motivational sets: everyone values living a good life, practical reason, sociability, self-respect. This is true, but the claim that the only rationality of action is the rationality of hypothetical reasons is too simplistic.

If the account of human nature were objective and necessary, and if an account of the good life flowed straightforwardly from it, then the distinction between hypothetical and categorical reasons would collapse because it would mark nothing. However, the account of human nature is internal and the account of the good life does not straightforwardly flow. It is important that to live a good life, an individual should do the right thing for the right reasons. Choice is central. Knock-down arguments and necessity have no place here. For good choices, just as for reason-giving explanations, there must be a potential gap between the

ideal and the specific directions that an agent's motivations push her. For good ways of being in the world to exist, the possibility of bad ways of being must also exist. Human beings all make choices, and thus deliberate, from a particular motivational set. The recognition that an individual's upbringing in a particular social and political environment significantly impacts on her ability to make good and bad choices, and may even serve to give her a motivational set that serves to deny her essential humanity, means that practical reasons are better understood as categorical. Although an agent values self-respect in some minimal form, a bad upbringing may make her unable to reach the motivation to act in an uncompromised self-respecting manner via a sound deliberative route. It may warp her imaginative understanding of what counts as acting in a self-respecting manner.

Williams' makes a distinction between internal, by which he means hypothetical, and external, or categorical reasons. His argument claims to show that external reasons are incoherent, and that all practical reasons are hypothetical, on the basis of the necessary explanatory role of reasons. This analysis has shown that what Williams takes this distinction to be between is significantly based on the kind of account he thinks it is possible to give of the good life for human beings. Williams argues that for there to be considerations that are in the interests of all human beings, or universal reasons, pure reason must be able to motivate. He conceives of external reasons as objective and necessary. This is because he argues that to be universal, an account of the good life must be objective, straightforwardly flowing from an objective account of human nature. Universal reasons would stem from this account of the good life. Because objectivity is not possible here, neither are external reasons. All that is left are internal, hypothetical, reasons.

But, a middle ground is possible. In order to be categorical, it is not necessary that reasons be external. This is because it is not necessary that an account of human nature and the good life be objective in order to be universal. An account of categorical reasons, reasons that should motivate an agent regardless of her actual motivational state, can be developed out of an internal account of the values that all human beings share. Internal need not mean hypothetical, and categorical need not mean external. Internal categorical reasons, arising out

of an account of what it is to live a self-respecting life, better capture both the normative and the explanatory roles that practical reasons must play.

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