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## FOUNDATIONS: PRACTICAL REASON

The project of the last chapter, which tried to ground ethical life in well-being, sought determinate conclusions about the shape of a whole life, from substantive beliefs about human nature. We saw that it needed very strong assumptions to hold it together, assumptions we cannot accept.

There is another project that also tries to start from the ground up but claims to deliver less, from less. Instead of giving an account of a fully developed life, it offers certain structural or formal features of ethical relations. Instead of relying on a specific teleology of human nature, it starts from a very abstract conception of rational agency. It still tries to give an answer to Socrates' question, though a minimal one. It gives the answer to each agent, merely because the agent can ask the question. Hence its answers are more abstract and less determinately human than those in the Aristotelian style. This type of argument yields, if anything, general and formal principles to regulate the shape of relations between rational agents. These are the concerns of Kant.

This may seem a surprising thing to say. Kant's name is associated with an approach to morality in which, it is often supposed, there can be no *foundations* for morality at all. He insisted that morality should be "autonomous," and that there could be no reason for being moral. A simple argument shows why, in the Kantian framework, this must be so. Any reason for being moral must be either a moral or a nonmoral reason. If it is moral, then it cannot really be a reason for being moral, since you would have to be already inside morality in order to accept it. A nonmoral reason, on the other hand, cannot be a reason for being moral; morality requires a purity of motive, a basically moral intentionality (which Kant took to be obligation), and that is destroyed by any nonmoral inducement. Hence there can be no reason for being moral, and morality presents itself as an unmediated demand, a categorical imperative.

It is specifically morality that Kant introduces, and we shall face wider questions about this conception of the ethical life when we come to that subject in Chapter 10. Kant's outlook indeed requires that there be no reason for morality, if that means a motivation or inducement for being moral, but it does not imply that morality has no foundations. Kant thought that we could come to understand why morality should rightly present itself to the rational agent as a categorical demand. It was because rational agency itself involved accepting such a demand, and this is why Kant described morality in terms of laws laid down by practical reason for itself.<sup>1</sup>

In his extraordinary book *The Groundwork of the Metaphysic of Morals*, the most significant work of moral philosophy after Aristotle, and one of the most puzzling, he tries to explain how this can be. I do not want to try to set out the argument, however, by directly expounding Kant. That would involve many special problems of its own. I shall treat his outlook as the destination rather than the route and shall develop in the first place an argument that will be simpler and more concrete than Kant's.<sup>2</sup> The failure of that

argument to give morality a foundation will help to show why the Kantian conception needs to be as metaphysically ambitious as it is. I do not believe that Kant's argument succeeds either, but one has to follow it a long way down to find out why not.

Is there anything that rational agents necessarily want? That is to say, is there anything they want (or would want if they thought hard enough about it) merely as part or precondition of being agents?

When they are going to act, people necessarily want, first of all, some outcome: they want the world to be one way rather than another. You can want an outcome without wanting to produce that outcome—you might prefer that the outcome merely materialize. Indeed, there are some cases in which the outcome you want will count only if you do not directly produce it (you want her to fall in love with you). But, in direct contrast to that possibility, in many cases you essentially want not only the outcome, but to produce the outcome. To put it another way (a way that is complicated but still conceals some complications), the outcome you want itself includes the action that your present deliberation will issue in your doing.<sup>3</sup>

We do not merely want the world to contain certain states of affairs (it is a deep error of consequentialism to believe that this is all we want). Among the things we basically want is to act in certain ways. But even when we basically want some state of affairs, and would be happy if it materialized, we know that we do not live in a magical world, where wanting an outcome can make it so. Knowing, therefore, that it will not come about unless we act to produce it, when we want an outcome we usually also want to produce it. (There is a direct analogy to this in the principle that, when we want the truth, we want to know the truth.<sup>4</sup>) Moreover, we do not want it merely to turn out that we produced it; we want these thoughts of ours to produce it. The wants involved in our purposive activities thus turn out to be complex. At the very least, what we want is that the outcome

should come about because we wanted it, because we believed certain things, and because we acted as we did on the basis of those wants and beliefs.<sup>5</sup> Similar considerations apply to keeping things that we want to keep.

This adds up, then, to the following: on various occasions we want certain outcomes; we usually want to produce those outcomes; we usually want to produce them in a way that expresses our want to produce them. Obviously enough, on those occasions we do not want to be frustrated, for instance by other people. Reflecting on all this, we can see that we have a general, dispositional, want not to be frustrated, in particular by other people. We have a general want, summarily put, for freedom. This is not to deny that sometimes we want to lose freedom, to be frustrated by others, even to be coerced—but then we do not want to be frustrated in obtaining that.<sup>6</sup>

It is not enough, though, for this freedom merely that we should not be frustrated in doing whatever it is we want to do. We might be able to do everything we wanted, simply because we wanted too little. We might have unnaturally straitened or impoverished wants. This consideration shows that we have another general want, if an indeterminate one: we want (to put it vaguely) an adequate range of wants.

It does not follow from all this that we want our choices to be as little limited as possible, by anything or anyone. We do not want our freedom to be limitless. It may seem to follow,<sup>7</sup> but to accept it would be to leave out another vital condition of rational agency. Some things, clearly, are accessible to an agent at a given time and others are not. Moreover, what is accessible, and how easily, depends on features both inside and outside the agent. He chooses, makes up plans, and so on, in a world that has a certain practicable shape, in terms of where he is, what he is, and what he may become. The agent not only knows this is so (that is to say, he is sane), but he also knows, on reflection, that it is necessary if he is indeed going to be a rational agent. Moreover, he

cannot coherently think that in an ideal world he would not need to be a rational agent. The fact that there are restrictions on what he can do is what requires him to be a rational agent, and it also makes it possible for him to be one; more than that, it is also the condition of his being some particular person, of living a life at all. We may think sometimes that we are dismally constrained to be rational agents, and that in a happier world it would not be necessary. But that is a fantasy (indeed it is the fantasy).

Similar conditions apply to the agent's knowledge. Acting in a particular situation, he must want his plans not to go wrong through ignorance or error. But even in that particular case, he does not want to know everything, or that his action should have no unintended consequences. Not to know everything is, once more, a condition of having a life—some things are unknown, for instance, because they will form one's future. If you cannot coherently want to know everything, then you also cannot coherently want never to be in error. They are not the same thing (omniscience is not the same as infallibility), but there are many connections between them. For one thing, as Karl Popper has always emphasized, you must make errors, and recognize them, if you are going to extend such knowledge as you have.

These last considerations have concerned things a rational agent does not need to want, indeed needs not to want, as a condition of being such an agent. They assume him or her to be a finite, embodied, historically placed agent: the only kind of agent I take there to be, with the marginal or dubious exception of corporations and similar agencies, and (with the same exceptions) the only ones that could be the concern of ethics. (Even those who believe in God, though they take him to be an agent, should not take him to be the concern of ethics.) I suppose this is what most people would expect. But it has some important consequences, which will concern us later.

As rational agents, then, we want what I have summarily called freedom, though that does not mean limitless freedom. Does this commit us to thinking that our freedom is a good and that it is a good thing for us to be free? One path leading to this conclusion would be to say that when an agent wants various particular outcomes, he must think that those various outcomes are good. Then he would be bound to think that his freedom was a good thing, since it was involved in securing those outcomes.<sup>8</sup>

Is it true that if we want something and purposively pursue it, then we think of our getting that thing as good? This is a traditional doctrine, advanced in Plato's *Meno* and hallowed in a saying of scholastic philosophy, *omne appetitum appetitur sub specie boni*, everything pursued is pursued as being something good. It seems to me not true. In any ordinary understanding of good, surely, an extra step is taken if you go from saying that you want something or have decided to pursue it to saying that it is good, or (more to the point) that it is good that you should have it. The idea of something's being good imports an idea, however minimal or hazy, of a perspective in which it can be acknowledged by more than one agent as good. An agent who merely has a certain purpose may of course think that his purpose is good, but he does not have to. The most he would commit himself to merely by having a purpose would presumably be that it would be good for him if he succeeded in it, but must even this much be involved? Even this modest claim implies a perspective that goes somewhere beyond the agent's immediate wants, to his longer-term interests or well-being. To value something, even relatively to your own interests, as you do in thinking that it would be better "for me," is always to go beyond merely wanting something. I might indeed come to put all the value in my life into the satisfaction of one desire, but if I did, it would not simply be because I had only one desire. Merely to have one desire might well be to have no value in my life at all; to find all the value in one desire is to have just one desire that matters to me.<sup>9</sup>

Even if we give up the traditional doctrine, however, so that I do not have to see everything I want as good, it might still be true that I should see my freedom as good. "Good for me," I suggested, introduces some reference to my interests or well-being that goes beyond my immediate purposes, and my freedom is one of my fundamental interests. So perhaps I must regard my own freedom as a good. But if so, I must not be misled into thinking that my freedom constitutes a good, period. This would be so only if it were a good, period, that I should be a rational agent, and there is no reason why others should assent to that. In fact, it is not even clear that I have to assent to it. This begins to touch on some deeper questions about my conception of my own existence.

Everything said so far about the basic conditions and presuppositions of rational action seems to be correct. The argument that tries to provide a foundation for morality attempts to show that, merely because of those conditions, each agent is involved in a moral commitment. Each agent, according to this argument, must think as follows. Since I necessarily want my basic freedom, I must be opposed to courses of action that would remove it. Hence I cannot agree to any arrangement of things by which others would have the right to remove my basic freedom. So when I reflect on what arrangement of things I basically need, I see that I must claim a right to my basic freedom. In effect, I must lay it down as a rule for others that they respect my freedom. I claim this right solely because I am a rational agent with purposes. But if this fact alone is the basis of my claim, then a similar fact must equally be the basis of such a claim by others. If, as I suppose, I legitimately and appropriately think that they should respect my freedom, then I must recognize that they legitimately and appropriately think that I should respect their freedom. In moving from my need for freedom to "they ought not to interfere with me," I must equally move from their need to "I ought not to interfere with them."

If this is correct, then each person's basic needs and wants commit him to stepping into morality, a morality of rights and duties, and someone who rejects that step will be in a kind of pragmatic conflict with himself. Committed to being a rational agent, he will be trying to reject the commitments necessarily involved in that. But is the argument correct? Its very last step—that if in my case rational agency alone is the ground of a right to noninterference, then it must be so in the case of other people—is certainly sound. It rests on the weakest and least contestable version of a “principle of universalizability,” which is brought into play simply by *because* or *in virtue of*. If a particular consideration is really enough to establish a conclusion in my case, then it is enough to establish it in anyone's case. That must be so if enough is indeed enough. If the conclusion that brings in morality does not follow, it must be because of an earlier step. Granted that the original claims are correct about a rational agent's wants and needs, the argument must go wrong when I first assert my supposed right.

It is useful to consider what the agent might say in thinking out his claims. It could be put like this:

I have certain purposes.

I need freedom to pursue these or any other purposes.

So, I need freedom.

I prescribe: let others not interfere with my freedom.

Call the one who is thinking this, the agent A. Assume for the moment that we know what a “prescription” is, and call this prescription of A's,  $P_a$ . Then A also thinks

$P_a$  is reasonable,

where what this means is that  $P_a$  is reasonably related to his, A's, being a rational agent. A can of course recognize that another

agent, say B, can have thoughts just like his own. He knows, for instance, that

B prescribes: let A not interfere with my freedom,

and, calling B's prescription  $P_b$ , the principle of universalizability will require A to agree that

$P_b$  is reasonable.

It may look as if he has now accepted B's prescription as reasonable in the sense of making some claim on himself. This is what the argument to morality requires. But A has not agreed to this. He has agreed only that  $P_b$  is reasonable in the same sense that  $P_a$  is, and what this means is only that  $P_b$  is reasonably related to B's being a rational agent—that is to say, B is as rational in making his prescription as A is rational in making his. It does not mean that B would be rational in accepting  $P_a$  (or conversely) if in accepting it he would be committing himself not to interfere with A's freedom.

The same point comes out in this: one could never get to the required result, the entry into the ethical world, just from the consideration of the *should* or *ought* of rational agency itself, the *should* of the practical question. The reasons that B has for doing something are not in themselves reasons for another's doing anything. The *should* of practical reason has, like any other, a second and a third person, but these forms merely represent my perspective on your or his interests and rational calculations, the perspective of "if I were you." Considering in those terms what B should do, I may well conclude that he should interfere with my freedom.

But can I "prescribe"<sup>10</sup> this for him? What does it mean? Certainly I do not want him to interfere with my freedom. But does this, in itself, generate any prescription that leads to obligations or rights? The argument suggests that if I do not prescribe

that others ought not to interfere with my freedom, I shall be logically required to admit that they *may* interfere with it—which I do not want to do.<sup>11</sup> What the argument claims is that I must either give them the right to interfere with my freedom or withhold that right from them. The argument insists, in effect, that if I am to be consistent, I must make a rule to the effect that others should not interfere with my freedom, and nothing less than this rule will do. But the rule, of course, just because it is a general rule, will equally require me not to interfere with their freedom.

But why must I prescribe any rule? If I am in the business of making rules, then clearly I will not make one enjoining others to interfere with my freedom, nor will I make one permitting them to do so. But there is another possibility: I do not regard myself as being in this business, and I make no rule either way. I do not have to be taken as giving permission. If there is a system of rules, then no doubt if the rules are silent on a certain matter (at least if the rules are otherwise wide enough in their scope), that fact can naturally be taken to mean permission. The law, like other sovereign agencies, can say something by remaining silent. But if there is no law, then silence is not meaningful, permissive, silence: it is simply silence. In another sense, of course, people “*may*” interfere with my freedom, but that means only that there is no law to stop, permit, or enjoin. Whether they “*may*” means they “*can*” depends on me and what I can do. As the egoist Max Stirner put it: “The tiger that assails me is in the right, and I who strike him down am also in the right. I defend against him not my right, but myself.”<sup>12</sup>

I can also ask why, if I am going to prescribe that much, I should not more ambitiously prescribe that no one interfere with whatever particular purposes I may happen to have. I want the success of my particular projects, of course, as much as anything else, and I want other people not to interfere with them. Indeed, my need for basic freedom was itself derived from

that kind of want. But the argument is certainly not going to allow me to prescribe for all my particular wants.

The argument depends on a particular conception of the business of making rules, a conception that lies at the heart of the Kantian enterprise. If I were in a position to make any rules I liked and to enforce them as an instrument of oppression, then I could make a law that suited my interests and attacked the competing interests of others. No one else would have a reason to obey such a law, except the reason I gave him. But the laws we are considering in these arguments are not that kind of law, have no external sanction, and respond to no inequalities between the parties. They are *notional* laws. The question “what law could I make?” then becomes “what law could I make that I could reasonably expect others to accept?” When we reflect on the fact that everyone asks it from an equal position of powerlessness—since these are laws for a kingdom where power is not an issue—we see that the question could equally be “what law could I accept?” and so, finally, “what laws should there be?”

If this is the question, asked in such a spirit, for such a kingdom, then we can see why its answer should be on the lines of Kant’s fundamental principle of action, the Categorical Imperative of morality, which (in its first formulation<sup>13</sup>) requires you to “act only on that maxim through which you can at the same time will that it should become a universal law.” But the problem immediately becomes: Why should one adopt such a picture? Why should I think of myself as a legislator and—since there is no distinction—at the same time a citizen of a republic governed by these notional laws? This remains a daunting problem, even if one is already within ethical life and is considering how to think about it. But it is a still more daunting problem when this view of things is being demanded of any rational agent. The argument needs to tell us what it is about rational agents that requires them to form this conception of themselves as, so to speak, abstract citizens.

It might be thought that the question answers itself because, simply as rational agents, there is nothing else for them to be, and there is no difference among them. But to arrive at the model in this way would be utterly unpersuasive. We are concerned with what any given person, however powerful or effective he may be, should reasonably do as a rational agent, and this is not the same thing as what he would reasonably do if he were a rational agent *and no more*. Indeed, that equation is unintelligible, since there is no way of being a rational agent and no more. A more sensible test would be to ask what people should reasonably do if they did not know anything about themselves except that they were rational agents; or, again, what people should do if they knew more than that, but not their own particular powers and position.<sup>14</sup> This is an interesting test for some things; in particular, it is a possible test for justice, and in that role it can be proposed to those with a concern for justice. But it is not a persuasive test for what you should reasonably do if you are not already concerned with justice. Unless you are already disposed to take an impartial or moral point of view, you will see as highly unreasonable the proposal that the way to decide what to do is to ask what rules you would make if you had none of your actual advantages, or did not know what they were.

The Kantian project, if it is to have any hope, has to start farther back. It has to be, in a vital way, more like Kant's own project than the argument I have just outlined. The argument started from what rational agents need, and while what it said about that was true, it was not enough to lead each agent into morality. Kant started from what in his view rational agents essentially were. He thought that the moral agent was, in a sense, a rational agent and no more, and he presented as essential to his account of morality a particular metaphysical conception of the agent, according to which the self of moral agency is what he called a "noumenal" self, outside time and causality, and thus distinct

from the concrete, empirically determined person that one usually takes oneself to be. This transcendental idea of the self, Kant believed, will be uncovered if we reflect on the requirements of freedom, requirements lying deeper than any that have been uncovered at the level of inquiry we have been pursuing up to now. He did not believe that we could fully understand this conception, but we could see that it was possible and could know that it was involved in both morality and rational action.

Kant's account presents great difficulties and obscurities. First, he believed that all actions except those of moral principle were to be explained not only deterministically but in terms of egoistic hedonism.<sup>15</sup> Only in acting from moral principle could we escape from being causally determined by the drive for pleasure, like animals; and sometimes he marked this by saying that only actions of principle counted as exercises of the will (which he equated with practical reason) and hence were truly free. Our other actions, according to this way of putting it, are the product merely of causality—of “blind” causality, as people tend to say, unhappily, since, as Kant himself recognized, such a causality can often enable agents, and certainly animals, to see very well where they are going.

I shall not go into the question of how far Kant's own theory can be rescued from these difficulties. Any theory that is going to provide foundations will certainly need to avoid them. We are interested in the idea that ethical considerations are presupposed by rational freedom, and this will have to mean a freedom to which the moral skeptic, among others, is *already* committed. It is open to Kant or another arguing like him to say that the moral skeptic is committed, in his desire for individual autonomy and rationality, to conceptions that are fully realized only in the moral law, but it will be useless to say that the moral skeptic must aspire to a kind of rational freedom quite different from anything manifested in non-moral practical intelligence or deliberation. The skeptic's commitment to freedom and rationality cannot be so detached from things he already experiences, such as the

difference between deciding clear-headedly and finding himself doing things he did not intend. Moreover, this is not simply a dialectical point, about the hold one can hope to get on the skeptic. It is also a question of what conception of rational freedom it is reasonable to hold.

What we are looking for, then, is an argument that will travel far enough into Kant's territory to bring back the essential conclusion that a rational agent's most basic interests must coincide with those given in a conception of himself as a citizen legislator of a notional republic; but does not bring back the more extravagant metaphysical luggage of the noumenal self. The argument might go something like this. We have already agreed that the rational agent is committed to being free, and we have said something about what is required for that freedom. But we have not yet reached a deep enough understanding of what that freedom must be. The idea of a rational agent is not simply the third-personal idea of a creature whose behavior is to be explained in terms of beliefs and desires. A rational agent acts on reasons, and this goes beyond his acting in accordance with some regularity or law, even one that refers to beliefs and desires. If he acts on reasons, then he must not only be an agent but reflect on himself as an agent, and this involves his seeing himself as one agent among others. So he stands back from his own desires and interests, and sees them from a standpoint that is not that of his desires and interests. Nor is it the standpoint of anyone else's desires and interests. That is the standpoint of impartiality. So it is appropriate for the rational agent, with his aspiration to be genuinely free and rational, to see himself as making rules that will harmonize the interests of all rational agents.

In assessing this line of argument, it is important to bear in mind that the kind of rational freedom introduced by it is manifested, according to Kant, not only in decisions to act but also in theoretical deliberation, thought about what is true. It is not merely freedom as an agent—the fact (roughly speaking) that

what I do depends on what I decide—that leads to the impartial position, but my reflective freedom as a thinker, and this applies also to the case of factual thought.<sup>16</sup> In both cases, Kant supposed, I am not merely caused to arrive at a conclusion: I can stand back from my thoughts and experiences, and what otherwise would merely have been a cause becomes a *consideration for me*. In the case of arriving by reflection at a belief, the sort of item that will be transmuted in this way will be a piece of evidence, or what I take to be evidence: it might for instance be a perception. In the case of practical deliberation, the item is likely to be a desire, a desire which I take into consideration in deciding what to do. In standing back from evidence, or from my desires, so that they become considerations in the light of which I arrive at a conclusion, I exercise in both cases my rational freedom. When, in the practical case, I adopt the stand-point outside my desires and projects, I may endorse my original desires, as in the factual case I may endorse my original disposition to believe. If I do this my original desire may in the outcome be my motive for action (though someone who uses this picture would naturally say that on some occasions what I eventually do will be motivated by none of the desires I originally had, but is radically produced by my reflection.)<sup>17</sup>

The fact that Kant's account of rational freedom is meant to apply to factual deliberation as much as to practical brings out what is wrong with the Kantian argument. What it says about reflection does indeed apply to factual deliberation, but it does so because factual deliberation is not essentially first-personal. It fails to apply to practical deliberation, and to impose a necessary impartiality on it, because practical deliberation is first-personal, radically so, and involves an I that must be more intimately the I of my desires than this account allows.

When I think about the world and try to decide the truth about it, I think *about the world*, and I make statements, or ask questions, which are about it and not about me. I ask, for instance,

Is strontium a metal?

or confidently say to myself

Wagner never met Verdi.

Those questions and assertions have first-personal shadows, such as

I wonder whether strontium is a metal,

or

I believe that Wagner never met Verdi.

But these are derivative, merely reflexive counterparts to the thoughts that do not mention me. I occur in them, so to speak, only in the role of one who has this thought.<sup>18</sup>

Of course, I can occur in my own thoughts in a more substantive and individual way. My thoughts may be specifically about myself, as in

Am I ill?

Thoughts of that kind are about myself in a sense in which other thoughts I have are not about myself, but about someone or something else. More interestingly, I may occur in my thought as a locus of evidence, as in

It looks blue to me.

In such a case I occur as specifically myself, and my actual psychological properties are relevant (thus, given my eyesight, the thing's looking blue to me may be a reliable indicator of its being green). If I ask

What do I think about this question?

in one sense it also involves a specific reference to myself, with my actual psychological properties; it can be an invitation to me to find out about my beliefs, as I might find out about someone else's (if not in exactly the same ways). But

What should I think about this question?

where that has the same effect as

What is the truth about this question?

is again a case in which I occurs only derivatively: the last question is the primary one.

Because of this, the I of this kind is also impersonal. The question,

What should I think about this question?

could as well be

What should anyone think about this question?

This is so, even when it means

What should I think about this on the evidence I have?

This must ask what anyone should think about it on that evidence. Equally, what anyone truly believes must be consistent with what others truly believe, and anyone deliberating about the truth is committed, by the nature of the process, to the aim of a consistent set of beliefs, one's own and others'.<sup>19</sup>

It is different with deliberation for action. Practical deliberation is in every case first-personal, and the first person is not

derivative or naturally replaced by *anyone*. The action I decide on will be mine, and (on the lines of what was said earlier about the aims of action) its being mine means not just that it will be arrived at by this deliberation, but that it will involve changes in the world of which I shall be empirically the cause, and of which these desires and this deliberation itself will be, in some part, the cause. It is true that I can stand back from my desires and reflect on them, and this possibility can indeed be seen as part of the rational freedom at which any rational agent aims. This goes somewhat beyond the considerations about freedom and intentionality acknowledged earlier in the discussion, but it still does not give the required result in relation to morality. The I of the reflective practical deliberation is not required to take the result of anyone else's properly conducted deliberation as a datum, nor be committed from the outset to a harmony of everyone's deliberations—that is to say, to making a rule from a standpoint of equality. Reflective deliberation about the truth indeed brings in a standpoint that is impartial and seeks harmony, but this is because it seeks truth, not because it is reflective deliberation, and those features will not be shared by deliberation about what to do simply because it too is reflective. The I that stands back in rational reflection from my desires is still the I that has those desires and will, empirically and concretely, act; and it is not, simply by standing back in reflection, converted into a being whose fundamental interest lies in the harmony of all interests. It cannot, just by taking this step, acquire the motivations of justice.

Indeed, it is rather hard to explain why the reflective self, if it is conceived as uncommitted to all particular desires, should have a concern that any of them be satisfied. The reflective self of theoretical or factual deliberation has a unity of interest with prereflective belief: each in its way aims at truth, and this is why the prereflective disposition to believe yields so easily, in the standard case, to corrective reflection. But on the model we are considering there is not an identity of interest between the reflective

practical self and any particular desires, my own or others'. It is unclear, then, why the reflective self should try to provide for the satisfaction of those desires. This is just another aspect of the mistake that lies in equating, as this argument does, reflection and detachment.

Some deep questions remain about what it is to take the impartial perspective if one *does* possess the motivations of justice. How can an I that has taken on the perspective of impartiality be left with enough identity to live a life that respects its own interests? If morality is possible at all, does it leave anyone in particular for me to be? These are important questions about both morality and life: about morality because, as a particular view of the ethical, it raises that question in a particularly acute form, and about life because there are, on any view of ethical questions, real issues about the relations between impartiality and personal satisfactions and aims—or, indeed, personal commitments that are not necessarily egoistic but are narrower than those imposed by a universal concern or respect for rights. Some of these questions will arise later. They concern what happens to personal desire and deliberation under the influence of the impartial standpoint, to the extent that one achieves it. What has been shown in this chapter, I believe, is that there is no route to the impartial standpoint from rational deliberation alone.