

FREEDOM, WELL-BEING AND SCHOOLING:  
BEYOND DESIRE-SATISFACTION

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## ABSTRACT

Schools have an undeniably crucial role in influencing the ways in which well-being is perceived. They are also instrumental in promoting or frustrating opportunities whereby people may come to appreciate the significance of alternative courses of action as well as providing an understanding of ways in which these might be pursued. It is thus incumbent upon teachers to appreciate the nature of freedom and its place within an overall theory of personal well-being. This thesis is meant to contribute to a clarification of some of the complexities involved.

Its aim is twofold. Firstly, it attempts to refute accounts of freedom and personal well-being which rely on desire-satisfaction as a criterion of rational choice. Such accounts are shown to be defective in that they are ultimately subjective and result in consequences which are at once paradoxical and disturbing.

The value we attach to freedom - as something having as much to do with the capacity to choose from a range of significant alternatives as being unencumbered by constraints - is in virtue of its importance in the kind of life appropriate for persons, namely that which is compatible with flourishing or personal well-being. If there were no more to freedom than the removal of relevant constraints it is difficult to see why we should attach such importance to its promotion and preservation. Alternative possibilities are identified in a variety of ways but their criteria of significance are a function of something altogether less subjective than the fact that they are desired. Desire-satisfaction accounts of freedom and well-being derive their support from a familiar and widely held position within philosophical psychology in spite of the fact that it is based on little more than Humean dogma. It grants logical priority to desire over value and is thus unable to account for human interests and well-being in anything other than subjective terms.

It is the second principal task of the thesis to reverse this order of priority and thereby to account for well-being by reference to a conception of human nature based on real-interests, the absence of which are likely to result in persons being harmed.

If it succeeds in this it is possible to conceive of well-being in more objective terms while at the same time accommodating widely differing conceptions of flourishing in accordance with individual and freely chosen lives.

Compulsory schooling is seen to merit justification largely in terms of the extent to which it succeeds in promoting the freedom and well-being of those destined for citizenship in a democracy.

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## INTRODUCTION

A system of schooling may be designed for many reasons, not all of which are morally acceptable. Children have been forced to attend schools whose specific intentions included producing Christian gentlemen or committed communists where any reference to the potentially liberating possibilities afforded by schooling have met with incomprehension or hostility. Those who have wished to indoctrinate the young into particular conceptions of well-being have all too frequently found schools willing to accommodate them.

The reaction against such systems has been accompanied by an unwarranted scepticism concerning the role of teachers in assisting children with the task of determining where their well-being might lie. This is in no small part due to the contemporary moral and political climate which derives support from subjectivism and individualism. Those teachers who see their job as having something to do with helping pupils appreciate the implications of, and values associated with, certain forms of life (especially if this is seen in terms of something more than either merely equipping them with the capacity to decide for themselves the values by reference to which their decisions are determined, or with helping them to formulate strategies for satisfying their desires) may well leave themselves open to the charge of indoctrinating others with their own, subjectively chosen, *Weltanschauungen*. And even where it is acknowledged that education can and should make a substantial contribution to social freedom, this in turn is widely perceived as being no more than the removal of constraints on people's attempts to satisfy their desires. If true, the implications for the aims of education, the curriculum and classroom practice are profound.

Whatever it is that we are aiming to achieve through compulsory schooling and whatever curriculum is considered appropriate as a means to such achievement, we have to acknowledge that some conception or other of what is good for both individuals and society at large - what, in other words, it is to flourish as persons and as citizens - underpins all that we do. It is all too easy to despair of providing an

acceptable theoretical underpinning to educational practice with any claims to objectivity in terms of which charges of indoctrination or perfectionism may plausibly be rebutted, but it is the result of a long-standing deep dissatisfaction with the subjectivism on which so many accounts of freedom and well-being appear to rely which has provided the impetus behind the search for such an alternative.

Subjectivism accepts that values are self-chosen and ultimately a matter of individual preference. Accordingly, the significant alternatives by reference to which a person or society may be said to be free are themselves a function of such preferences and thus without objective foundation. Similarly, individual or collective flourishing on this view amounts to nothing more than success in providing coherence and a hierarchical structure to one's desires, it being an impertinence to suggest that one could both succeed in this enterprise and fail to achieve personal well-being. What is of importance to one is whatever it is to which one ascribes significance; all talk of error or misjudgement in this regard being so much clap-trap.

Associated with subjectivism is a variety of individualism the consequences of which have come to haunt us all. The more individuals there are for whom constraints to desire-satisfaction have been removed the greater will be the extent of freedom and well-being enjoyed. We live in an age where the very idea of human-nature is suspect and where reference to what people are supposed to need or have a genuine stake in promoting or securing is condemned as authoritarian; the possibility that people might fail to discover, as opposed to simply choosing the direction in which their well-being might lie being little more than incredible.

This essay exposes the shortcomings of both subjectivism and individualism in so far as they have a bearing on freedom and well-being. It does so by trying to make sense of the value we attribute to being able to live a free life and in so doing is not particularly concerned with free agency as such where actions are seen in isolation from the life of which they are a part. It is also concerned with the sorts of thing required of a life appropriate to persons by reference to which they may be said to live well or flourish. The fact that most of us are prepared to adopt a different stance



to the taking of animal life, or the lives of those in an incurably vegetative state, than we would towards killing those who are indisputably persons, bears witness to the value we attach to a life lived in accordance with hopes, memories, goals and the like. A person's life is made up of actions, beliefs and relationships, all of which cannot be reduced to a series of unrelated moments in time. A life lived without reference to a temporal perspective would not merit the same respect as that rightly accorded to persons. But a free life presupposes a range of alternative possibilities. Where these are non-existent - or, where if they do exist, our limitations in regard to knowledge, understanding, imagination and strength of will are such that we are incapable of recognising them for what they are, so that to all intents and purposes they are not genuine alternatives - it is not possible to live the kind of life that in significant respects distinguishes my life from yours. Without freedom I should be incapable of living my life and would be other-determined in that any self-referential concepts of the kind suggested would be part of a biography of which I was not the author and whose hopes and aspirations would be confined to an existence in which I was trapped or enslaved. The value we attach to individual lives is a function of their being lived in accordance with life-plans which are self-determined and not hopelessly attenuated or derivative versions of other people's.

There is more to a free life than not being subject to certain constraints, important as this undoubtedly is. The free person, it is argued, is free from relevant constraints to do, be or become something in particular. For some philosophers this amounts to no more than being able to satisfy one's desires. Such a view will be shown to be unacceptable and an alternative position relying on choices between alternatives which are rational to the extent that they do nothing to undermine one's future well-being will be defended after objections to so-called negative-freedom - a concept which relies on the removal of constraints and nothing more - have been rehearsed in Section 1. The appropriate candidates for constraint are considered in Section 2 and their number and variety shown to be greater than negative-libertarianism would allow.

Attempts to account for either freedom or well-being in terms of desire-satisfaction are shown to be no more than *prima facie*. They all too frequently take it for granted that authentic desires are easily identifiable and that these are the same as those desires with which one most readily identifies. However we go about identifying those things which we may be said to ‘really’ want, they will be seen to hinge on something over and above desires themselves. Desire-satisfaction accounts of both freedom and well-being are inclined to attach special status to ‘higher-order’ desires, but if any special status is to be granted to such desires it has nothing to do with their being ‘higher’, in the sense that they are at least one stage removed from what are generally referred to as ‘first-order’ desires, but rather it is in consequence of evaluating some things more favourably than others. A mere preference is one thing but the judgement that something is preferable to something else is quite different. Reasons may be provided for the latter in ways which would not make sense when applied to simple preferences and the nature of the reasoning involved relies on the idea of *self*-satisfaction as opposed to *desire*-satisfaction, which in turn presupposes some means or other for ordering desires according to their priority within one’s scheme of things that cannot themselves be reducible to desires. An explication of what this entails is provided in Section 3 but its significance, which cannot be over estimated, requires mention here. One’s freedom has more to do with the nature and value of the alternatives available than with the extent to which they are adopted on the basis of desire-satisfaction. If there were no more to freedom than this one would be forced into accepting unacceptable and counterintuitive conclusions such as according the status of ‘free’ to those with no alternatives whatsoever as long as they were doing what they really wanted, and reducing freedom to something as variable and subjective as desires themselves.

Recent accounts of well-being are bedeviled with a tenacious attachment to the importance of desire-satisfaction, albeit in a variety of guises. John White is a particularly distinguished philosopher of education in whose recent work the idea of well-being has been cashed out in this way. His *Aims of Education Restated* published a decade ago invokes the notion of what he calls ‘post-reflective-desire-satisfaction’ while his more recent *Education and the Good Life* relies on the more

familiar 'informed-desires'. Section 4 is an attempt to cast serious doubt on such an enterprise. It does so, firstly, by questioning his account of what is involved in serious reflection about the sort of person one is and the plans and projects to which one attaches importance; secondly, by showing how the culmination of such reflection is as likely to result in important *discoveries* about oneself and one's values as it is about the kinds of things one really wants, as well as how sensitivity to what is involved here provides hope for those of us who believe that practical knowledge is more than a pipe-dream; and thirdly, by questioning the assumed relationship between desire on the one hand and value on the other. This is a particularly contentious issue in moral philosophy but, after an all too brief critique of that account of rational agency whereby desire-satisfaction is seen as a necessary condition and concerned only with means (ends being illegitimate candidates for rational assessment), Section 5 provides some support for the idea of value having at least logical priority over desire. In doing so it seriously undermines moral non-cognitivism by providing some values with some kind of objective status. States of affairs are evaluated and characterized accordingly and it is in virtue of such that some are judged to be more valuable than others and in accordance with which we may be said to have a *prima-facie* reason for deciding in their favour. What first appears as an unnecessary digression into the status of value judgements is really a pre-requisite for the justification of the alternative model of rationality upheld.

The objectivity of value judgments is perfectly compatible with the fact that one's concern with one's own well-being entails acknowledging the necessity for individual and independent assessment of the implications for what we should do in the light of our evaluation of a specific set of circumstances; this being the direct consequence of the fact that people and their circumstances vary. Our interests do not necessarily coincide and for this reason there is no one *summum bonum* to which all rational agents should aspire. But unless we acknowledge the existence of those features of our lives the negligence of which undermines the capacity to function properly as persons, we shall find ourselves suffering serious harm. What these amount to is notoriously difficult to specify but in Section 6 it is suggested that an understanding of what is involved in harm and its avoidance goes some way towards overcoming

some of the difficulties involved. A person may be said to suffer harm if he fails to secure what he needs or, what amounts to the same thing, that in which he has a real-interest - not for merely instrumental purposes but in order to provide himself with the opportunity to live a recognisably human life.

It is doubtful that a definitive list of the jointly necessary and sufficient conditions for such a life could be compiled but there is some attempt in Section 6 to impose limitations beyond which it is senseless to presume that a person could flourish even from a subjective point of view. One condition which receives prominent attention is that of personal autonomy which, it is argued, has a special place within the conception of well-being developed in that without it a person may be said to lack dignity and justifiable self-respect. To paraphrase Mill, what is of importance is not only the things that people do but the kinds of people that do them.

Important as autonomy undoubtedly is within an acceptable theory of well-being it is not something that develops willy-nilly. *We learn*, in a variety of social contexts, how to become autonomous which in turn requires the existence of others who are themselves autonomous. Moreover, an autonomous life requires a measure of freedom which is to say that relevant constraints do not exist and that alternative possibilities are readily available. And this is quite compatible with the claim, to be defended in the seventh and final section, that constraints in the form of compulsory schooling may legitimately be imposed on children in order that their autonomy might be enhanced or secured. The age criterion will be shown to be less arbitrary than might at first appear and the case for non-voluntary attendance will be made by appealing to the importance of being able to live a free life the 'content' of which one is prepared autonomously to endorse. Some restrictions on children's freedom of choice - especially where such choices are at the expense of failure to acquire knowledge, skills and the general wherewithal to enable them to recognise and, where necessary, resist both the pressure to conform as well as those desires which all too frequently threaten to engulf them - is essential if they are to fare well in the formidably difficult task of discovering for themselves which freedoms are important

and in which direction their well-being might lie. The essay concludes with some brief remarks concerning the curriculum appropriate to such a task.

## 1. FREEDOM: ONE CONCEPT OR TWO?

### 1.1 Negative and Positive Freedom

If not the earliest, certainly one of the clearest statements to the effect that there are two distinct concepts of freedom is to be found in a lecture given by the nineteenth century Hegelian T.H. Green, entitled 'On the Different Senses of "Freedom" as Applied to Will and the Moral progress of Man'.<sup>1</sup> In this lecture, which is principally concerned with freedom of the will, he makes a distinction between what he calls 'negative' and 'positive' freedom, believing the latter to encapsulate something more noble and elevating than mere absence of constraint or compulsion. What he means by positive freedom is more clearly stated in another lecture entitled 'Liberal Legislation and Freedom of Contract'.

'We do not mean merely freedom from restraint or compulsion. We do not mean freedom to do as we like irrespectively of what it is that we like .... When we speak of freedom as something to be so highly prized we mean a positive power or capacity of doing or enjoying something worth doing or enjoying, and that, too, something that we do or enjoy in common with others. We mean by it a power which each man exercises through the help or security given him by his fellow-men, and which he in turn helps to secure for them ... there can be no freedom among men who act not willingly but under compulsion, yet on the other hand the mere removal of compulsion, the mere enabling a man to do as he likes, is in itself no contribution to true freedom ... the ideal of true freedom is the maximum of power for all members of human society alike to make the best of themselves ...'<sup>2</sup>

Needless to say there is more to Green's account than this short extract would indicate and there are parts of it with which one could easily take issue if this were a critical exegesis of Green's political philosophy.

My reason for quoting from this part of Green's lecture is because the spirit of Green's claims is something which I believe to be substantially correct and which I try to substantiate in much of this essay. I refer to the spirit of what is being claimed on freedom's behalf because there are a number of points which, if taken literally, are not strictly true. It is not quite true to say that enabling someone to do as he wishes is to contribute nothing towards his freedom. Whether it does or not depends

on a number of factors relating to the circumstances in which the desire was formulated and the alternatives available from which a course of action was selected. And of course, unless constraints of a relevant kind are removed, one's freedom to do one thing rather than another is necessarily restricted. But the point that Green is really making is that the removal of constraints is, in itself, insufficient as an entitlement claim to freedom. I may be completely unconstrained in so far as nobody is preventing me from doing as I wish, and yet in crucial respects I may well be unfree. While the absence of constraint is a condition of freedom (something that might be said to be a 'negative' requirement), it is far from being a sufficient condition. The very least additional requirement is, as Green says, 'a positive power or capacity' to exercise the freedom which I have hitherto been prevented from enjoying.<sup>3</sup> No doubt Green goes too far in suggesting that we are free only if we exercise such capacities for the purpose of doing something worthwhile, as though we could not legitimately complain of lack of freedom to engage in trivial pursuits. But as Benn and Weinstein remind us 'our concept of freedom is bounded by our notions of what might be worthwhile doing',<sup>4</sup> there being something paradoxical in saying of someone that he is free to starve, cut off his ears or to die. Whether or not Green had this in mind is not my principal concern, but the fact remains that the whole point of removing constraints as a condition of liberation is to enable people to find a measure of self-satisfaction in being able to live well. And as Green recognised there is more involved in this than the mere removal of constraints to the performance of any action whatsoever.

It goes without saying that there should be scope within the life of a free person to perform countless actions which are utterly inconsequential but unless he has the opportunity to do more than this, to pursue goals which are enriching and fulfilling and which provide his life with meaning and purpose, his freedom will not only count for very little it will also be significantly diminished. Any attempt to say what freedom is without at the same time providing some insight into why we should care about it is futile. Without an understanding of what it is to be a person, as well as an appreciation of the requirements for people to flourish *as* people, there would be no point in being concerned with any such principle. Indeed without a concept of

personhood and a recognition of what respect for such beings entails, it is difficult to see how any limitation could be imposed on the sort of thing that may legitimately be considered either a constraint, power or capacity. In delimiting the nature of constraints and opportunities we are, unavoidably, invoking a moral standpoint.

It is to Green's credit that he not only recognised this ('... the ideal of true freedom is the maximum power for all members of human society to make the best of themselves') but that unlike so many others within liberal political thought, he was aware of the social context within which individual freedom could be sustained. If freedom is something we care about and believe to be worth promoting in order that what Mill called 'the free development of individuals' as 'one of the leading essentials of well-being'<sup>5</sup> may flourish, then it is not something that can be understood in purely individualistic terms. Not only is there an intimate relationship between individual freedom and well-being but their cultivation and preservation is bound up with the social context in which we live our lives. Green was aware of the fact that we are, in a very deep sense, social beings and that human nature is rooted in society and a particular tradition. The significance of this truism for freedom and human flourishing is taken up in Section 6. What is apparent from this section of Green's lecture is that he was aware of the futility of restricting freedom to a species of desire-satisfaction. Why this is inadequate as an account of either freedom or the nature of human flourishing will become evident as the essay proceeds. Suffice it to say that Green conceived of freedom in non-individualistic terms by acknowledging that freedom cannot be secured by the mere removal of constraints but also requires the existence of a society committed to empowering people for the mutual benefit of all. Any evaluation of the notion of positive freedom is not something that can easily be done outside the context of an exposure of the weaknesses of negative freedom. But before addressing this we need to examine more recent claims that there are indeed two concepts of freedom.

The most celebrated and spirited recent defence of the view that there are two distinct concepts of freedom is to be found in the work of Sir Isaiah Berlin who argued in his Inaugural Lecture that the two concepts arose out of an attempt to answer different



questions. Negative freedom is supposed to be concerned with an answer to the question ‘What is the area within which the subject - a person or persons - is or should be left to do or be, without interference from other persons?’ Whereas positive freedom is construed as an attempt to answer the question ‘What or who is the source of control or interference that can determine someone to do, or be, this rather than that?’<sup>6</sup> It is Berlin’s purpose to explicate these ‘two concepts’ as well as to construct a defence of the former whilst hoping to show that the latter can and does lead to the worst acts of oppression. I intend to show that Berlin not only fails to distinguish two distinct concepts but that his critique of ‘positive’ freedom as rational self-mastery is misplaced and based on a false premise leading to groundless fears. Moreover, his analysis of freedom is not only faulty but if found to be socially acceptable could lead to just that kind of illiberal society which Berlin himself was so anxious to avoid.

Berlin is not a philosopher to whom the label ‘negative libertarian’ can be attached with certainty or fairness. To begin with, his position changed in the decade after the delivery of the Inaugural Lecture and his views are frequently at variance with a number of philosophers more readily locatable within the negative tradition. And yet the fact remains that his position is in many respects in accordance with negative freedom. (As we shall see there are overwhelming objections to construing free people or a free society in wholly ‘negative’ terms and although I concentrate on those features of negative freedom which are particularly suspect - its restrictive view of the nature of constraints (Section 2) and the view of freedom as essentially a matter of want or desire-satisfaction (Section 3), we shall see that there are numerous aspects of negative freedom which are not only philosophically suspect and counterintuitive but also dangerously illiberal).

Berlin is at one with negative libertarianism in (a) seeing freedom as an absence or lack (of obstacles to choice) in which nothing obstructs one,<sup>7</sup> (b) in his individualistic bias by reference to which freedom is seen as being primarily concerned with the removal of obstructions to individual choice,<sup>8</sup> (c) in assuming that rational deliberation is of means rather than ends and (d) that ultimate values or ends are self-

chosen.<sup>9</sup> He is also sceptical about there being any necessary connection between the degree of freedom enjoyed and the extent to which people are empowered - although once again he is hardly the model of consistency.<sup>10</sup> Again he adopts a curiously reactionary position on the nature of threats and the extent to which they affect our freedom - he seems to accept with equanimity the view that a worker whose behaviour was explicable in terms of fear of losing his job would be no less free than one who had no such fear.<sup>11</sup> Furthermore, he is so averse to what he takes to be the implications of positive freedom that he is inclined towards a greater degree of attachment to negative freedom than much of his thesis would warrant. His association of all references to a person's 'real will' with questionable metaphysical theories of selfhood lead him to the absurd position of finding nothing incompatible between freedom and autocracy - or at least with lack of democracy.<sup>12</sup> Finally, there is within negative libertarianism a naive conviction that freedom can only be understood by reference to lack of constraints. Questions relating to what people are free to do (when unconstrained) are seen to be unnecessary to a proper analysis of the expression 'X is free', it being sufficient to know what it is that X is free from. Much of what Berlin has to say is in accordance with this in that he sees nothing odd in the idea that a person may be quite clear about what it is from which he would rather be free without having any idea what he would like to do when rid of the constraint in question. No doubt the context in which the utterance 'I am free' is made is, as often as not, indicative of the kind of thing one is free to do, which may well make the question 'What are you free to do?' redundant even if it is not a logically redundant question. But even where the context does not clearly indicate the options available to one thus freed, the individual in question must have some idea (however minimal) of what he would like to do now that he is free even if his only desire is to distance himself as far as possible from his former constraints.

The central idea of negative freedom is encapsulated in Berlin's claim that:

'I am normally said to be free to the degree to which no man or body of men interfere with my activity. Political liberty in this sense is simply the area within which a man can act unobstructed by others.'<sup>13</sup>

In suggesting that freedom is no more than absence of obstacles to desire-satisfaction negative freedom certainly possesses the virtue of simplicity. Indeed, it is precisely this feature which other writers within the negative tradition have found so attractive.<sup>14</sup> Questions of the adequacy of this aside, it is a view with which Berlin became dissatisfied. As he was later to concede, if to be free is no more than not being prevented by others from doing whatever one wishes, then one way of attaining freedom is to extinguish one's wishes.

‘If degrees of freedom were a function of the satisfaction of desires, I could increase freedom as effectively by eliminating desires as by satisfying them; I could render men (including myself) free by conditioning them into losing the original desires which I have decided not to satisfy.’<sup>15</sup>

In the more recent essay he says that:

‘The sense of freedom in which I use this term, entails not simply the absence of frustration ... but the absence of obstacles to possible choices and activities.’<sup>16</sup>

And these obstacles are of a certain sort, namely those resulting from alterable human practices.<sup>17</sup> This is, quite properly, to reject the earlier insistence that lack of freedom involves the *deliberate* interference of others. Berlin accepts that all kinds of social practices, including economic and educational policies, can deny freedom as effectively as deliberate interference with people's goals and aspirations. What is important is the fact that those practices constitutive of unfreedom are alterable and not merely their having been deliberately devised with the intention of depriving sections of the community of particular freedoms.<sup>18</sup>

William Parent rejects Berlin's later view that freedom properly conceived is the absence of obstacles resulting from alterable human practices to possible choices and activities on the grounds that illness, ignorance, bias and hatred often constitute obstacles to a person's acting in various ways, and they often result from alterable human practices. Yet, he says, ‘we do not say that a person who is prevented from pursuing a given activity by illness, ignorance, bias or hatred resulting from alterable human practices has been rendered unfree in the political sense to do so.’<sup>19</sup> Parent tells us why not. ‘The terms "liberty" and "opportunity" have distinct meanings.

Depriving someone of the liberty to act is not the same thing as refusing him the opportunity to do so, and the problem of increasing and distributing freedom cannot be reduced to a question about the maximisation of opportunities.<sup>20</sup> Apart from the fact that Parent seems to be operating with a quaint and exceedingly restrictive notion of ‘political’, it is not at all self-evident that the distinction between ‘opportunity’ and ‘liberty’ is as easy to maintain as Parent would have us believe.

As to whether Berlin would distinguish between the two is not entirely clear. He says in one place that freedom ‘is the opportunity to act, not action itself’.<sup>21</sup> While on the very next page we are told that:

‘It is important to discriminate between liberty and the conditions of its exercise. If a man is too poor or too ignorant or too feeble to make use of his legal rights, the liberty that these rights confer upon him is nothing to him, but it is not thereby annihilated. The obligation to promote education, health, justice, to raise standards of living, to provide opportunity for the growth of the arts and the sciences, to prevent reactionary political or social or legal policies or arbitrary inequalities, is not made less stringent because it is not necessarily directed to the promotion of liberty itself, but to the conditions in which alone its possession is of value, or to values which may be independent of it. *And still liberty is one thing and the conditions for it are another.*’<sup>22</sup>

Whatever one concludes about Berlin’s apparent lack of consistency it is important to realise that opportunities do not exist out there, as it were, as something totally divorced from those who would make use of them. Unless I am in a position to take advantage of a set of circumstances, which presupposes possession of the requisite wherewithal, then it is idle to pretend that I enjoy any such opportunity. What sense does it make to tell a semi-literate or a child that countless educational or career opportunities are open to him if he lacks the basic requisites which such routes demand? One of the major difficulties with negative libertarianism is that it all too readily assumes that as long as there are no (external) constraints on a course of action then freedom of opportunity exists. In the next section I attempt to show what is wrong in this by indicating the shortcomings of that view of constraint which sees it as primarily external to people and why the mere removal of constraint is only one part of a proper and adequate account of what it is to be free.

In fairness to Berlin he is at least aware of many of the dangers implicit in the idea of negative freedom. He is swift to point out that advocacy of non-interference such as Social-Darwinism was, and indeed still is, used to support policies which benefit the strong at the expense of the weak, and he is quite aware of the evils of a totally unmanaged economy. And yet he insists that 'the case for social legislation or planning, for the welfare state and socialism, can be constructed with as much validity from consideration of the claims of negative liberty as those from its positive brother'<sup>23</sup> without saying how this is possible. It is unclear how the case for social legislation can be constructed by reference to negative freedom alone without allowing the distinction between it and positive freedom to collapse. The whole point of nineteenth and twentieth century legislation restricting *laissez-faire* capitalism was to provide people with greater opportunities whereby they could enjoy more freedom than before.

Before turning to Berlin's treatment of positive freedom I wish to take issue with his claim that freedom is compatible with autocracy, or at any rate with the absence of self-government.<sup>24</sup> That Berlin should believe this is quite extraordinary in view of his clear recognition of the importance of the existence of alternative (and not merely any old alternative) courses of action available to free agents. After all, a democratic form of institutional arrangements provides for ways and means of changing public policy lacking in any other system of decision-making procedure. When people are denied the means of voicing their objections and the means of translating this into a concerted policy for change it is not only democracy that is being denied to them; they are also rendered less free than they might otherwise be.

Needless to say there are numerous theories of democracy a full discussion of which is unnecessary. The form of democracy which I see as being particularly associated with freedom is not the Schumpeterian notion of a competitive struggle for the people's vote, the aim of which being the mere selection of an alternative leadership.<sup>25</sup> This form of democracy minimises the importance of participation for ordinary people at every level and in every organisation which affects their lives. Indeed it could be argued that a purely representative form of democracy actually

requires a degree of political apathy in so far as it requires long periods of relative quiescence on the part of the electorate in between elections. Participatory democracy on the other hand is a richer, more vibrant form of democracy which provides opportunities for minority views to be heard and, importantly, considered before policy decisions are reached. It allows for the airing of all kinds of views and opinions and thereby empowers people who might otherwise go unnoticed and unheard.

Of course, this is not to say that it is a requirement of participatory democracy that each and every view is legislated for. That would be absurd because it would be impossible to implement. In any case, as individuals we are members of a society and in significant respects achieve our identity through membership of groups of various kinds within it e.g. family, church and such like. Failure to recognise this results in a peculiarly individualistic and atomistic view of freedom and, as we shall see, is something which negative libertarians in particular have either ignored or misunderstood. Freedom is not something that can be either achieved or guaranteed outside institutional frameworks and it is idle to pretend otherwise. This is not to say that one is or should be bound by one's group membership which for some may well appear coercive and oppressive. Whatever institutions one is either born into or subsequently joins there must always remain appropriate mechanisms for allowing people to leave or opt out. Only when the social nature of persons is properly understood is it possible to appreciate that individual freedom is not necessarily threatened by a government's decision to legislate in opposition to what you or I might demand as long as certain conditions are embodied and respected within legislative procedures. If freedom within a state is to be upheld the authority of the state must, according to George Brenkert, fulfil three important conditions. They are:

- (i) the decisions and actions of the state must protect the self-determination of individuals compatible with a like self-determination of others ...

- (ii) that the state ensures that its citizens may pursue reasonable and important human interests (such as politics, art, theology and such like as opposed to more trivial or less significant goals such as gymnastics) ...
- (iii) a politically free state cannot be one which attempts by itself to decide which interests are important and which ones are to be supported. Political freedom requires that the state not determine simply by itself how society operates or individuals live ... *qua* free these determinations must flow from the participation of its citizens to the maximum extent feasible.<sup>26</sup>

If these conditions are met, the freedom of individuals and legitimate authority of democratic government are more compatible than might otherwise be supposed. Those subject to despotism are *ex-hypothesi* limited in their range of options by a will which they are powerless to moderate or modify. Liberty and democracy simply cannot be construed as having no bearing on one another such that answers to the questions 'What am I free to do or be?' and 'By whom am I ruled?' are logically distinct and presuppose different concepts of freedom. In fact Berlin believes that the desire for freedom and the desire for self-government are desires for different things. So different moreover 'as to have led in the end to the great clash of ideologies that dominates our world. For it is this - the "positive" conception of liberty: not freedom from, but freedom to - to lead one prescribed form of life - which the adherents of the "negative" notion represent as being, at times, no better than specious disguise for brutal tyranny.'<sup>27</sup>

In the decade between the Inaugural Lecture and the publication of *Four Essays on Liberty* Berlin's hostility towards positive freedom went unmodified. What *he* means by positive freedom is clearly expressed in the following passage:

'The positive sense of the word "liberty" derives from the wish on the part of the individual to be his own master .... I wish to be the instrument of my own, not of other men's acts of will. I wish to be a subject, not an object, to be moved by reasons not by causes which affect me, as it were from the outside. I wish to be ... self-directed and not acted upon by external nature or by other men as if I were a thing, or an animal, that is of conceiving goals and policies of my own and realising them.... I wish, above all, to be conscious of myself as a thinking, willing, active being, bearing responsibility for my choices

and being able to explain them by reference to my own ideas and purposes.<sup>28</sup>

He condemns those who take freedom to have anything to do with self-mastery, for two reasons. Firstly there is, he believes, implicit in this notion a bifurcation of the self which he sees as a metaphysical extravagance. Secondly, such a view has the unfortunate consequence of conceiving of the real self as something wider than the individual - something as wide as the tribe, race, church or state, which, by imposing its collective organic will upon its recalcitrant members, achieves its own and therefore their own 'higher' freedom. What begins with a harmless enough metaphor of self-mastery ends up as something more properly described as coercion or tyranny. Before we know where we are we find ourselves being told what a short step it is from an ethical doctrine of individual responsibility to an authoritarian state obedient to the directions of an elite of Platonic (or Stalinist) guardians. The laudable concept of self-mastery is denigrated as tantamount to despotism. And yet it is not clear from what he says that he believes the progression from the desire for self-mastery to the authoritarian excesses he so graphically describes is one of logical necessity or mere probability.

In fact there is no reason to suppose that it is either. Indeed without some reference to self-mastery we would be left with a merely negative conception in which there is no room for what Charles Taylor calls 'qualitative discrimination as to motive' without which talk of a person exercising his freedom would be empty. Taylor concludes: 'Even where we think of freedom as the absence of external obstacles, it is not the absence of obstacles *simpliciter*, for we make discriminations between obstacles in representing more or less serious infringements of freedom. And we do this because we deploy the concept against a background understanding that certain goals and actions are more significant than others.'<sup>29</sup> This is enough to show that degrees of freedom are to be determined not by reference to the *quantity* of restrictions removed; some reference to the qualitative significance attached to various options is unavoidable.



It is disingenuous of Berlin to assume that those of us wishing to emphasise the importance of being able to determine one's ends for oneself by reference to judgements relating to the relative significance of such ends should assume that we are committed to the outrageous premise that the ends of all rational beings must fit into a single universal harmonious pattern. No account of what it is to be fully human or truly free can dispense with the idea of rational self-direction, for a person who was incapable of so directing himself would, to all intents and purposes, be a victim of circumstance. Lacking the critical faculties essential to making the appropriate qualitative distinctions between his various desires he would be open to manipulation and control. To deny the requirement of self-determination in an account of freedom is to misunderstand what is involved in interfering with someone's *freedom*. For anyone interfering with actions which are not in part self-determined would not, strictly speaking, be interfering with a person's freedom at all. A full discussion of what is involved in self-determination must be deferred until Section 6.

Meanwhile we must terminate this all too brief account of the two concepts view because it is becoming all too evident that a satisfactory account of freedom has to face up to the question of what it is that the agent, freed from the relevant constraint, is free to do. There is sufficient reason to cast doubt on the validity of the claim that there is a conceptual distinction between two fundamentally opposed kinds of freedom. Furthermore the attempt to drive a wedge between two distinct concepts does nothing more than obscure the proper nature of the dispute about freedom. Rather than try and specify what freedom is, it is more profitable and more important to concentrate attention on the range and limits of what free people are free from and what they are free to do or become.

In a well-known paper Gerald MacCallum makes the following claim:

'Whenever the freedom of some agent or agents is in question, it is freedom from some constraint or restriction on, interference with, or barrier to doing, not doing, becoming or not becoming something. Such freedom is thus always of something (an agent or agents) *from* something to *do*, not do, become or not become something; it is a triadic relation. Taking the format "X is (is not) free from y to do (not do, become, not become) z". X ranges over agents, y ranges

over such "preventing conditions" as constraints, restrictions, interferences and barriers, and z ranges over actions or conditions of character or circumstance.'

And he adds:

'When reference to one of these terms is missing in such a discussion of freedom, it should be only because the reference is thought to be understood from the context of the discussion.'<sup>30</sup>

A very similar formulation is provided by Joel Feinberg as follows:

'--- is free from --- to do (or omit, or be, or have) ---'<sup>31</sup>

The respective blanks being filled in by naming the subject, specifying the constraint or compulsion as well as the action, omission or state of being actually or hypothetically desired.

Such a scheme at least provides us with a fruitful way in which to proceed. Section 2 will concentrate on the second of the term variables. Its limits will be made explicit and the range of what may legitimately count as a constraint will be extended beyond the narrow boundaries imposed upon it by some negative libertarians. Although it is probably a more straightforward variable than the final one in the triadic schema in that in many ways it is easier to specify the sorts of things *from* which people are free than their more positive requirements, it is far from a straightforwardly descriptive exercise. In fact it was largely because of the belief that a non-evaluative account of freedom could be provided by concentrating for the most part on external constraints that negative libertarians have been attracted by the prospect of providing an account of freedom in negative terms. Because all statements to the effect that 'X is free' are supposed to be understood without reference to disputable political theories, disagreements over whether 'X is free' or not are thought to be entirely factual in nature. The assumption is that a purely objective and neutral account of coercion can be provided without reference to what people care about or value, or the sorts of thing in which people have a genuine stake or interest. Freedom is seen as no more than the absence of coercion and is thus essentially negative in the sense (Hayek tells us) that peace, security, quiet or the absence of any impediment is negative. Freedom, on this view 'does not assure us

of any particular opportunities, but leaves us to decide what we shall make of the opportunities in which we find ourselves.’<sup>32</sup> While according to Steiner threats may well alter a person’s desires with regard to the performance of certain actions ‘but neither the making of threats nor that of offers constitute a diminution of personal liberty.’<sup>33</sup> Before exposing the shortcomings of negative libertarianism *vis a vis* the nature of constraints we need to evaluate some of the numerous attempts that have been made to restrict freedom to something purely negative.

## 1.2 What is Wrong with Negative Freedom?

Attempts to characterise freedom in terms of the mere absence of physical obstacles to action extend back to at least the time of Hobbes who claimed that:

‘Liberty is the absence of all the impediments to action that are not contained in the nature and intrinsic quality of the agent. As for example, the water is said to descend freely, or to have liberty to descend by the channel of a river, because there is no impediment that way, but not across because the banks are impediments. And though the water cannot ascend, yet men never say it wants the *liberty* to ascend, but the *faculty* or *power*, because the impediment is in the nature of the water and intrinsic.’<sup>34</sup>

The problem with this of course is that people, unlike flowing water, are purposeful beings acting in accordance with belief-systems and values and freedom has to do with actions rather than mere movement with clear implications for the first variable in the triadic schema. The presumption here is that *X* is a creature capable of acting (as opposed to simply moving). Even if there are reasons for supposing that other creatures than human beings are capable of agency the present discussion is specifically concerned with human freedom and side-steps issues relating to both the nature of action and the sufficient conditions of personhood. While disputes over the nature of freedom centre around all three variables, the second (*y*) and third (*z*) variables generate questions of such special significance and interest that this essay takes it for granted that the *X* variable refers to persons and that this is less problematic a notion than in reality it is. The ‘cause’ of human action lies in part in the circumstances in which it takes place as well as its being seen or understood in a certain light. As Benn says: although ‘we can give a causal account of trying and deciding, we can grasp the thrust of those concepts only by taking account of the

causal effectiveness upon action of a belief system, which supplies a kind of independence - a cause "intrinsic" - that neither waterfalls nor motors possess.<sup>35</sup> It is precisely because we discriminate between one obstacle and another by reference to our evaluation of a situation that freedom cannot be equated with the mere absence of obstacles.

The *prima facie* attractiveness of the Hobbesian view of freedom as the absence of external obstacles is its obvious simplicity. But the price of simplicity is an account of freedom which not only fails to recognise manifest instances of unfreedom as such but is willing to include amongst instances of unfreedom those constraints on actions which no sane person would wish to perform. I might be denied the opportunity to kill myself by being tied to a locomotive engine wheel but what would that have to do with loss of freedom? As Benn reminds us: 'It is just because the concept of freedom is most at home in formulating complaints and grievances in claiming rights and demanding consideration of one's interests, that the functional range of the notion of freedom of action is bounded, practically if not logically, by notions of what there can be a reason to form an intention to do.'<sup>36</sup> And it is an inadequate account in that it fails (because of its inability) to distinguish between one obstacle and another in terms of their contribution to lack of freedom. To borrow a familiar example of Charles Taylor's comparing life in Hoxa's Tirana with that of contemporary Londoners:

'We recognise that religion has been abolished in Albania, whereas it hasn't been in Britain. But on the other hand there are probably far fewer traffic lights per head in Tirana than London .... Suppose an apologist for Albanian socialism was nevertheless to claim that this country was freer than Britain, because the number of acts restricted was far smaller. After all, only a minority of Londoners practise some religion in public places, but all have to negotiate their way through traffic. Those who do practise a religion generally do so on one day of the week, while they are held up at traffic lights every day. In sheer quantitative terms, the number of acts restricted by traffic lights must be greater than that restricted by a ban on public religious practice. So if Britain is considered a free society, why not Albania?'<sup>37</sup>

The moral of this story is that even a negative conception of freedom cannot dispense with some sort of qualitative distinction between options which casts serious doubts on any attempt to portray freedom in entirely value-neutral terms. In an important footnote to *Four Essays on Liberty* Berlin recognised as much when he admitted that the extent of one's freedom depends *inter alia* on the value one ascribes to 'possibilities of action'.<sup>38</sup> As we shall see, this is an important concession and a radical departure from what one might call 'descriptive negative libertarianism' in that it recognises that there is more to the evaluative nature of judgements relating to freedom than mere subjective preference. Moreover, (something which I hope to demonstrate in due course) the extent of my freedom is partly dependent on the value of the alternatives available irrespective of my valuing them as such.

It is unfortunate that Berlin provides no hint of possible criteria by reference to which we are to make the necessary qualitative distinctions. 'Meaningful choice' cannot be accounted for in purely quantitative terms as if the extent of my freedom were solely a function of the number of options at my disposal, for the very idea of a 'range' of possible choices is itself dependent on evaluative judgements of various kinds and it becomes increasingly difficult to identify something *as* a genuine alternative without reference to a wide-ranging package of normative considerations relating to human nature, real interests, rationality, well-being and the like, the result of which is a profound scepticism for the whole enterprise of trying to disassociate the nature of freedom from its value or from reasons why anyone should be concerned with its promotion. In short, it is doubtful that freedom and the value of freedom are anything other than conceptually related. Recalling Benn and Weinstein's claim that 'it is appropriate to discuss whether (one) is free to do (something) only if it is a possible object of reasonable choice',<sup>39</sup> Connolly continues in the same vein by suggesting that 'Without the normative point of view from which the concept is formed we would have no basis for deciding what "descriptive terms" to include or exclude in the definition'.<sup>40</sup> It is, after all, perfectly legitimate to question the value of being free from external constraints.

We need look no further than Mill's *On Liberty* to find two possible explanations of why we value liberty so highly. The first, and broadly utilitarian account of freedom's value is that it is instrumental in exposing falsehood and enabling us to discover truths which would be denied to us if we were otherwise constrained. It would be mistaken to deny the unquestionable instrumental value of freedom in this respect. If the spirit of enquiry is not to die out completely we must be allowed to ask questions and be allowed the requisite means for answering them. But Mill's justification goes further than a strictly utilitarian value structure would warrant. Mill recognised that there was an intrinsic value in being free because of its connection with individuality or what we would refer to as personal autonomy. Without freedom and the opportunities upon which its meaningful exercise depends our autonomy, and all that this entails as far as our dignity and self-respect are concerned, will inevitably be circumscribed. For the most part we object to constraints on our chosen course of action because it is an interference with the exercise of autonomy the importance of which for personal well-being cannot be overstated. It is frequently suggested that freedom's worth is bound up with the importance we attach to attempts to satisfy our desires. Clearly freedom has *something* to do with this but the connection is not as self-evident as some negative libertarians would have us believe, and some of the difficulties associated with this view of freedom are outlined in subsequent sections.

If normative considerations are conceptually tied to any plausible characterisation of freedom in the way being suggested, then there are serious difficulties facing negative libertarians who dispute the conceptual connection between freedom and its exercise. We have seen how Parent tried to force a distinction between freedom and opportunity and how Berlin was not entirely consistent in what he had to say on this. What we are in need of is clarification of the extent to which freedom could be construed as an opportunity concept and if so in which sense.

We may interpret the idea of 'having an opportunity' in purely negative terms such that anyone not subject to constraints of a relevant kind may be said to possess an opportunity. Opportunities on this view are no more than lack of obvious obstacles.

But if we are to go along with the view that our reason for valuing freedom so highly is largely concerned with our exercising some control over our lives, then it is an unnecessarily restrictive use of the term. An opportunity could just as easily and much more plausibly be construed as having something to do with possessing the relevant capacities, abilities and powers. Freedom is indeed valuable but for reasons related to its *exercise*; options available to me must be those of which I am able to take advantage. It is to mock the poor, the dispossessed and those who are ignorant of alternative possibilities to insist that opportunities are simply there for the taking. Because of his strong attachment to freedom as a descriptive concept, Oppenheim may be accused of exactly that. For he says that: 'Y makes X unfree to do x if Y prevents X from doing x, but not if Y merely fails to make it possible for X to do x.'<sup>41</sup> In other words if it were government policy to do nothing to alleviate poverty in spite of the available means, it would be improper to include those in the poverty trap along with others whom we might wish to describe as unfree.

As we shall see in the next section there are good reasons for doubting the plausibility of restricting what are to count as constraints on freedom to intentional as opposed to unintended and impersonal social factors preventing people from opting for particular courses of action. The distinction between constraint and failure to enable is not as sharp as Oppenheim would have us believe, and providing that we have criteria for identifying those who may legitimately be held responsible for failure to enable, we are not reduced to including almost everybody as constraining agents in the way that Oppenheim suggests.<sup>42</sup> People may not only be deprived of opportunities in the sense that they are denied the requisite facilities - money, education or whatever - they may also find that constraints are such that they are denied the opportunity of even conceiving of alternatives from which to choose. The greater the opportunity for acquiring an understanding of those factors which contributed to one's seeing the world in one way rather than another, the better one is placed to do something about it and, accordingly, enjoy greater freedom. As Brenkert remarks, opportunities do not exist independently of a person (and his or her abilities and powers) for whom the opportunity is said to exist.<sup>43</sup> While acknowledging the obvious difference between opportunity and ability in that one may

have the latter without the former, Brenkert reminds us that all too often 'bare' opportunities are the object of focus as in say job opportunities. But to the extent that we are concerned with real or genuine opportunities we are equally concerned with the abilities, means and *ipso facto* the motivation of individual people.<sup>44</sup> And this is why there is more to the provision of opportunities for freedom than the mere removal of constraints.

Negative libertarians from Hobbes onwards have been at pains to force a distinction between freedom and power and the associated means whereby people possess the appropriate abilities to exercise their freedom. Hayek is particularly clear on why the distinction should be upheld.

'The confusion of liberty as power with liberty in its original meaning inevitably leads to the identification of liberty with wealth; and this makes it possible to exploit all the appeal which the word liberty carries in support for a demand for the redistribution of wealth. Yet though freedom and wealth are both good things which most of us desire and though we often need both to obtain what we wish, they still remain different. Whether or not I am my own master and can follow my own choice and whether the possibilities from which I must choose are many or few are two entirely different questions.'<sup>45</sup>

While Partridge appeals to what he calls 'ordinary language'.

'If I ask "Am I free to walk into the Pentagon?" the question will be clearly understood; but if I ask, "Am I free to walk across the Atlantic Ocean?" the appropriate answer will be "You are free to, if you can." This suggests the main argument: the linking of "being free to" with "having the capacity or power" deprives the word "free" of its essential and unequivocal function, which is to refer to a situation or state of affairs in which a man's choice of how he acts is not deliberately forced or restrained by another man.'<sup>46</sup>

While the relationship between physical (in)ability and freedom is explored more thoroughly in the next section we can readily accept Partridge's claim that 'freedom' and 'power' are not synonymous but appeals to ordinary language have limited utility in this context. While they may not mean the same it may well be the case that any freedom worth having presupposes effective power. My freedom to run for President is effectively non-existent if I lack the necessary means, financial and otherwise, to campaign. The fact that I have no desire to become President has no



bearing at all on the value of that particular freedom. The distinction is particularly difficult to sustain where power and abilities are the very conditions of free action - something Benn refers to as 'objective choice conditions' - or states of the world independent of the agent's beliefs - and not merely conditions which render freedom valuable in the way suggested by John Rawls in *A Theory of Justice*.

'The inability to take advantage of one's rights and opportunities as a result of poverty and ignorance, and a lack of means generally, is sometimes counted among the constraints definitive of liberty. I shall not, however, say this, but rather I shall think of these things as affecting the worth of liberty ...'<sup>47</sup>

In fact possessing an ability or power has both an objective and subjective dimension in that it is partly a function of external circumstances and partly a function of personal characteristics. However before considering the relationship between freedom and power it is perhaps appropriate to take stock. So far we have found the distinction between two radically opposed conceptions of freedom to be found wanting and have seen how any expression of the form 'X is free' is incomplete without some reference to what it is that he is free to do or be. We have had reason to doubt the appropriateness of restricting the nature of the middle term variable (constraints) to factors intentionally imposed and external to the agent in question in spite of the obvious appeal of simplicity. Since qualitative distinctions between available options are unavoidable, freedom cannot be understood in purely descriptive terms. For this reason the simplistic view of equating freedom with absence of constraints to doing what one wants is equally unacceptable. And yet this view in one form or another continues to find a measure of support. Both freedom and well-being have been interpreted in terms of desire-satisfaction in one or more of its formulations and as the essay proceeds it is hoped that the attraction of such a view will be progressively undermined. Having seen that a positive dimension to freedom is indispensable we need to find the means whereby the third term variable in the triadic schema can be rendered intelligible and alternatives identified by reference to something other than merely being desired. As Berlin quite properly insists, freedom is concerned with 'the absence of obstacles to possible choices and activities.'<sup>48</sup> Any account of freedom which ignores the importance of alternatives is hopelessly attenuated. It is therefore incumbent upon us to provide an account of the nature and importance of

alternatives and in so doing be better placed to appreciate the conceptual connection between freedom and power. Such an account will take us some way towards a richer and altogether more positive account of freedom than that associated with liberal individualism.

Unfortunately it is far from easy to decide how to set about individuating alternatives in a given choice situation. An example, not altogether fanciful in this day and age, should enable us to pin-point the difficulties involved. Liam lives in Londonderry and has just left school with three GCSEs. On visiting the Job Centre he is told that he is one of several hundred men and women in pursuit of a handful of jobs most of which are out of the question in view of his meagre qualifications. In this sense they are not real or genuine alternatives at all. The picture is not all black however for there are a couple of possibilities which Liam might like to consider. A local greengrocer is looking for an assistant and a new American-based company requires casual labour for night work. Liam is willing to try anything in view of the job situation and has to rapidly make up his mind between the relatively pleasant shop work and the boring yet better paid night work in the factory. There is little doubt that those of us with stimulating and well paid jobs would accept either with equanimity, but what about Liam's freedom? Given the limited information we possess about his background we do not know if his poor exam results are due to lack of application on his part or to poor teaching, or, if the former, whether this was due to laziness or to the problems associated with parental neglect. But in this particular example I wish to consider not the constraint factor in Liam's overall freedom nor the extent to which he is autonomous and capable of taking into consideration all of the relevant factors involved in the choice of job (or for that matter to reject both and either return to full-time education or take up residence with his sister and look for work in England). Instead I want to try and show how meaningful choice between alternatives is not only a function of their number but is dependent on much else besides. Liam has at least got a choice and thus is free to some extent. On the other hand if he had a degree, together with all that went with it in terms of references, confidence and so on, he would have a much wider range of alternatives from which to choose. As such we would be justified in suggesting that he would be

freer to a much greater extent. It remains to be seen why this is so. I referred earlier to an important footnote of Berlin's in which he says:

'The extent of my freedom seems to depend on (a) how many possibilities are open to me (although the method of counting these can never be more than impressionistic. Possibilities of action are not discreet entities like apples, which can be exhaustively enumerated); (b) how easy or difficult each of these possibilities is to actualise; (c) how important in my plan of life, given my character and circumstances, these possibilities are when compared with each other; (d) how far they are closed and opened by deliberate human acts; (e) what value not merely to the agent, but the general sentiment of the society in which he lives, puts on the various possibilities. All these magnitudes must be "integrated", and a conclusion, necessarily never precise, or indisputable, drawn from this process.'<sup>49</sup>

There is much in this passage with which we can agree. Certainly choice without alternatives from which to choose is empty. And yet the notion of 'alternative choice' is very much underdescribed as well as being more problematic than the above quotation would suggest. However, with certain qualifications, Berlin is right to suggest that the extent of my freedom is related to the number of alternatives open to me. And yet it is notoriously difficult to individuate one from another. I am free to write this paragraph in a number of different ways but the question 'How many ways?' is impossible to answer. If on the other hand I am prevented from publishing my thoughts on the grounds that they are critical of the government, my freedom is diminished considerably. Censorship and its associated sanctions combine to constrain me in important respects. If my thoughts remain unpublished owing to technical difficulties to do with supply of materials or industrial action it is problematic as to whether or not my freedom is affected. And does performing an action with my left hand as opposed to my right, or doing it before or after lunch count as having more than one alternative? The decision is, perhaps, arbitrary and for the most part of no significance. It becomes important when we are deprived of something to which we may legitimately attach value and significance. Berlin is thus quite right to suggest that my overall freedom is affected by factors relating to value and importance as well as the difficulty and probability of actualising the alternative in question - to which might be added various subjective choice conditions such as the ability to conceive of it and to appreciate its value as well as the strength of will to

pursue it or whatever. But before considering these it is necessary to draw attention to some of the problems associated with identifying alternatives for what they are.

One thing which cannot be invoked in the individuation of options is the willingness with which someone chooses it. I may willingly choose to do that which failure so to do would result in such severe punishment that the possibility of doing otherwise with impunity is not a genuine alternative. If *A* is compulsory and failure to comply results in severe sanctions such that no reasonably prudent person would dream of not complying, one is not free with respect to *A*. Refusal to comply and to take the punishment instead is hardly an alternative if the sanction is severe. That prudence and rationality are indispensable to the very individuation of options is obvious where the sanctions imposed for refusal to comply result in being tortured. Indeed if the person who was about to inflict the torture was himself likely to be tortured if he refused to carry out his grisly orders it would be equally inappropriate to retort with confidence 'But you are still free to disobey.' The reason why his freedom to refuse is circumscribed is because of the import of the notion of a reasonably prudent person. So called alternatives which are inexorably associated with truly appalling sanctions are no longer alternatives. To be regarded as such they must be seen under the heading of 'possible objects of rational choice'. To those who would question the view that at least a minimum degree of rationality is necessary to freedom on the grounds that irrational choices however imprudent or harmful are choices nonetheless, the reply would be that while it is quite true that there is nothing incompatible with being a chooser and choosing that which is detrimental to one's long-term interests including one's capacity for future choice, we are here concerned with what is involved in the living of a *free life*. The extent to which a choice has a bearing on such a life depends on the extent to which it is based on self-knowledge and understanding as well as the nature of the objects of choice and probable consequences of so choosing. Ignorance or lack of concern in this regard may well render a choice irrational and where it is reasonable to suppose that such ignorance is the direct responsibility of a third party, may be said to render *X* as chooser unfree in crucial respects.

Rationality is thus an indispensable notion in characterising the third variable in the triadic schema. To dispense with it - to argue that *X* is free from constraint *y* to choose to *z* in spite of such threats - would be to side with those who refuse to acknowledge that threats or sanctions are constraints. Benn and Weinstein take this to be wilfully perverse. After all is it not the case that the incompatibility of freedom and coercion is what classical liberalism is all about? And they rightly conclude that 'the point of denying that a threatened penalty is sufficient to determine the agent's action is to challenge the usual prudential defence. The agent's counter-plea that in his circumstances only a saint or a fanatic would have disobeyed is a claim that the wrong standards are being applied to him, i.e. he could not be expected to disregard normal prudence.'<sup>50</sup> To dispense with the idea of rational choice is to give up a great deal. Witness the incomprehension involved in being told of two prisoners who are so tightly bound together that the slightest movement causes extreme pain, that they are still free to move their limbs. The most that could be said of the two captives is that they are still able to move their limbs and, one might add in view of their predicament, if they so wish.

To return to the question of significance in the enumeration of alternatives. If the alternatives open to one are all much of a muchness it is true to say that one is not as free as one would be if the range and variety were greater. I may have the choice of attending church or staying at home on Sundays, but if I were permitted to attend only Protestant churches I would be less free than someone who was allowed to attend Catholic Churches, Orthodox churches or Hari Krishna Temples. Pupils in the later stages of schooling are often presented with options from which to choose. But a pupil who may choose between social studies, classical studies and politics has less of a range of choice than one who has amongst a list of options subjects as different from one another as drama, design technology and psychology. As often as not what makes one alternative a different kind of thing to something else is subjective and impressionistic, but it is important not to accept an individual's assessment as always being the relevant and determining factor. After all, if a pupil had nothing with which to compare his range of options he might well believe that the options on offer were indeed wide-ranging. Having never heard of psychology

his judgement would be affected accordingly. This is why schools have a duty to introduce pupils to as wide a range of disciplines and ways of life as is compatible with the aim of producing educated people with some insight into human flourishing. A school which simply introduced its pupils to a wide variety of things just for the sake of it would be utterly counterproductive in terms of contributing to its pupils' overall freedom. It would take very little imagination to fill up a timetable with nothing more than one game or activity after another (such as tiddly-winks, billiards, badminton, ballroom dancing, clay-pigeon shooting, rounders and so on). Education is not just a matter of increasing the number and variety of alternatives but of equipping pupils with whatever is necessary to take advantage of alternatives, the significance and value of which are recognised and appreciated. The very least that is involved here is equipping them to become rational choosers.

If an increase in the number and variety of alternatives contributes to the overall freedom of someone, can we say with equal certainty that the absence of alternatives is always and necessarily a restriction on his freedom? The answer depends on the extent to which anyone can be held responsible for such a lack of choice. Lawrence Crocker believes that he is now free to eat breakfast in Paris and supper in Seattle on the same day, while nobody was free to do this a century ago: the reason being, of course, the availability of the jet aeroplane.<sup>51</sup> Crocker is indeed free to do this since (a) the physical means are available and (b) nobody can be held responsible if Crocker fails to avail himself of such an opportunity. Even so, he is wrong to suppose that his great-great grandfather was unfree so to do. Crocker senior simply lacked the available means of travelling at such high speeds and there is no reason to believe that anyone was responsible for this which is to say that he was neither free nor unfree to do this but merely unable. The unavailability of an alternative is therefore insufficient to justify an individual complaining of lack of freedom.

What is it then about certain options which makes them significant while others remain utterly inconsequential as far as freedom is concerned? Consider the difference between preventing people from playing hopscotch and forbidding the formation of political parties or forcibly sterilising large numbers of people in the

interests of reducing the rate of population increase. If hopscotch were banned then the sum total of individual freedom would indeed be reduced, albeit only very slightly and not significantly. If games in general were no longer permitted people would have a legitimate reason to complain of a gross infringement of their liberty. Games are, after all, a very important aspect of many people's lives. However the banning of political parties is of infinitely greater significance than the banning of a particular game such as hopscotch. Politics matters in a way that hopscotch does not. My political views stem, in large part, from my moral views and my moral views are dependent on those fundamental evaluations which help define me as the person I am. What of the law leading to my compulsory sterilisation? Suppose that instead of becoming a father I have decided to join a monastic community because I attach greater personal importance to a celibate life devoted to prayer than that of husband and father. Whatever the attractions of life as a monk I doubt whether any monk would deny the value of the role of fatherhood; valuable, moreover, in a sense much more profound than that of a life filled with numerous games of hopscotch. When all is said and done games have no ultimate significance. It does not really matter who wins or loses and one can satisfy one's need to play or to exercise in a variety of ways. On the other hand to be forcibly sterilised in advance of having fathered any children is a gross violation of a fundamental human right irrespective of whether or not I choose to exercise that right. The fact that I have chosen a plan of life which is incompatible with fatherhood is irrelevant. Criteria of significance are not reducible to what a person happens to want. To suggest as much is, as Taylor so clearly demonstrates, either vacuous or false.<sup>52</sup> It would be trivially true if we simply defined significance in terms of the strongly desired and false on the grounds that we simply do not always have a greater desire for that which we know to be of significance to our 'life-plan'; not only do we experience certain desires as intrinsically more significant than others, but we are all too painfully aware of the fact that many of our most strongly felt desires are incompatible with what we really want in the sense that the object of desire is the object of one's will.<sup>53</sup> Fatherhood is a significant alternative not because many men happen to want it very much but because parenthood is something to which most people attach ultimate significance

and find deeply fulfilling. As such it is seen under a very different aspect from that of winning a game.

The charge of authoritarianism is frequently levelled against those of us who would wish to retain a conceptual link between freedom and opting for alternatives of genuine value and significance. If all that was being maintained was the suggestion that were someone to pursue certain goals on the basis of their having been deemed as in his best interests by so called 'experts', then the charge might well have some punch. But nothing of the sort is being claimed. The very least that is involved in rational choice is that the reasons for doing something should be the agent's reasons. Unless one acknowledged or endorsed the rationality or desirability of a particular goal one would not be making a rational choice at all; one would simply be acting in accordance with some other-determined life-plan. (Even survival itself would cease to have any genuine value for me if I were totally indifferent towards living or, more plausibly, forced to live a life of endless pain, despair or hopelessness.) It is also important to recognise that we frequently attach significance to different aspects of our personalities and characters, not to mention the plethora of possibilities confronting us in varying degrees as we grow older and assume additional responsibilities or change our occupations and life-styles. What seemed to be relatively unimportant at one stage in our lives may take on a tremendous value at another. The fact that certain alternatives are available - alternatives which are not at least irrational or harmful - does therefore contribute to the degree of freedom one may be said to enjoy. The point is that they must be alternatives which are at least in accordance with rational agency. And there are many things which may well be in my interests and be of immense value to me in my life as a whole which, at any one time, may be either unwanted or unheard of. Young children may be totally unaware of the nature and value of personal autonomy, for example, and yet we have good reason to suppose that autonomy is something for which they have a need and right in that without it their chances of flourishing in a western industrialised society are seriously hampered. The free person must pursue goals which are in accordance with his real interests (or at least not incompatible with them) with a certain positive attitude. Indifference is incompatible with both rationality and self-determination



both of which are prerequisites of free agency. In so far as he could properly be said to be choosing anything with indifference he would, in all probability, be choosing in accordance with convention or the will of another.

There might also be thought to be an apparent authoritarianism associated with the idea of 'objectively valuable'. Who is to say what is valuable and what right does he have to insist that a valued alternative is of little or no value to someone else? This question is addressed in 5.4 but without embarking on a lengthy essay in moral theory I suggest that it is simply perverse to deny that what is of value to someone amounts to nothing more than his valuing it. There is at least no contradiction in the idea of my strongest desire being the desire to act in accordance with my real-interests but when we come to examine more closely what is involved in having a real-interest in something we shall see that they all too frequently fail to coincide. Certainly unless one were to find room for many of one's strongly felt desires and natural proclivities one would, in all probability, find oneself living a frustrating existence with its associated tensions and nervous disorders. But the fact remains that some kind of regulation of one's desires is essential if one is to stand any chance of living one's life in accordance with one's judgements about the most suitable kind of life to live.

Our judgements on these matters are something for which we may be held largely responsible. But responsibility for such evaluations presupposes the existence of appropriate opportunities such as having access to alternative points of view which in turn requires contact with free agents who, by their own evaluations and re-evaluations, frequently provide us with the incentive to look at things afresh. If the only people we ever came across were themselves uncritical and passively obedient it would be infinitely more difficult to develop the capacity for critical evaluative judgements which are so essential to free agency. It is the challenge and criticism provided by other (autonomous) people that help us distinguish error from truth and self-delusion from enlightenment. This is why it is irrational to deny others the freedom and opportunities which we demand for ourselves. We must be forever alert to the fact that we may not have judged correctly where our real-interests lie and

the direction in which self-fulfilment and personal well-being is to be found. And this is the reason why a shared life with public norms and shared evaluative concepts in a common language is all-important. It provides the background against which not only the very idea of doing something for a reason gains purchase but which is presupposed in choosing or deciding anything at all. Berlin's reference to the value placed on alternatives by 'the general sentiment of the society in which one lives' underlines the fact we formulate our values in society; they do not arise afresh, *ex nihilo*, in each generation. What is in our interests as individuals is bound up with the sentiment of the society of which we are a part. Recognition of the importance of society in helping us formulate life-plans does not commit us to crude majoritarianism. Important as societal values are, they are not mere generalisations about what most people happen to want; instead they refer to the shared evaluative concepts in our language and it is by reference to these that we may begin to understand what it is for something to count as a 'reason for action'.

Berlin's claim that freedom depends on the ease or difficulty with which alternatives may be actualised is a salutary reminder that we have yet to address the connection between freedom and power. The availability of an alternative is largely theoretical if I am either denied the requisite means or have to make superhuman efforts to take advantage of them. Brenkert is persuasive in linking freedom with what he calls 'effective self-determination' - something which presupposes having the abilities and powers whereby (one) may take advantage of certain opportunities, or real alternatives. He is at one with Richard Norman in his conviction that real alternatives presuppose being in possession of the means by reference to which alternatives become genuine or real. The means identified as crucial in this respect and the possession of which enhances one's power and thereby one's freedom are both material (Brenkert and Norman) and cognitive (Brenkert) or cultural (Norman). Material means include things like health care, adequate housing and resources for participating in the political process, all of which require wealth of various kinds including money. Poverty is not a natural phenomenon - indeed there is a case for saying that poverty in Britain exists because we as a society find it acceptable. It is because we do not protest more vehemently against it that we share the collective

responsibility for its existence and continuation. For this reason I believe that Brenkert is quite correct in alerting us to the ideological function of negative freedom's emphasis on the mere absence of physical coercion. If this was all there was to being free, those suffering from poverty would themselves be free and whatever else they may complain about they could not justifiably complain of lack of freedom.

Information and knowledge as well as the ability to understand it are indispensable in being able to recognise a choice as a choice - and this is especially true if the choice has a significant bearing on one's identity and one's life-plan. Free access to information via media which are themselves free is vital. An equally essential prerequisite is the existence of a free and adequately resourced education system. It is pointless simply to fill up children's minds with a vast amount of propositional knowledge which in itself contributes little to the development of their capacity for self-determination. They must be given the opportunity to think and to reflect not only about the subject or topic about which they are learning but also about who they are, their values, their needs and interests as purposive beings with lives and projects of their own. They need to be able to appreciate the socialisation forces that have affected all this and to be able (and willing) to re-evaluate their fundamental evaluations. Their education should attempt to equip them with the capacities required for self-determination and a life of active participation as citizens in a democracy. It should concentrate on such matters because without these capacities they are less likely to be able to withstand the force of so many external pressures and influences where so much of what motivates is vicarious. Education, and in particular a system of schooling, should address the question of what it can do to ensure a measure of resilience and courage in pupils in order that they might develop the wherewithal to resist the pull of inauthentic desires with which we are all too familiar. An education system is uniquely placed to help youngsters in this way and in the final section a form of compulsory schooling is advocated as being essential for the sake of both freedom and human flourishing.

Brenkert is perfectly in order in castigating Parent for refusing to concede that failure to provide educational opportunities for thinking and reflecting in the way suggested is a violation of society's freedom on the grounds that all that is being denied is the opportunity to receive an education. As he says, 'a government can reduce or undercut political freedom in more ways than one.... (Parent's) approach is representative of an erroneous reductionism that seeks to define all of political freedom in terms of coercion or constraint. This monomania interferes with our understanding of political freedom.'<sup>54</sup> After all it may not be entirely implausible to suppose that right-wing ideologues who have dominated the education agenda in Britain for over a decade do not despair of the fact that so many people leave school with an enthusiasm for reading *The Sun* and appear to be indifferent to the fact that the mass media are, for the most part, organs for a powerful non-elected and unrepresentative section of society. Self-determination is more than being able to think for oneself; it requires effective means for its exercise. Once again a free society requires a democratisation of the media, a much wider and more imaginative access to education for people of all ages and stages and a teaching profession that is sufficiently astute to be aware of the social and political implications of what they are being asked to do by politicians more concerned with rhetoric and their public image than the well-being of a genuinely empowered citizenry.

My concern in most of what follows is with the nature and value of living a free life to which there is a great deal more than can possibly be captured in the idea of a free action - something with which negative libertarians appear to be stubbornly obsessed. It is only when debates about freedom are located in a social context, as opposed to the individualist straightjacket into which negative libertarians seem to confine it, that we may comfortably part company with those who believe with Mill that all restraint *qua* restraint is an evil. It is precisely because we are more concerned with the life of a free person than that of free actions as such - intrinsic value having more to do with being the kind of creature that is capable of choosing than with choice as such - that we are forced to accept that not all constraints are evil. As we shall see, our legitimate concern with making choices which are authentically ours necessitates interventions restricting our choices which are paternalistic in nature.

Paternalism will be seen to have a special legitimacy when dealing with children and forcing them to attend school whether they want to or not. We are indeed social beings (see Sections 4 and 6) and it is a consequence that our freedom is not something that can be secured outside society. Custom and tradition are not as easily dispensed with as people like Mill would have us believe. To appreciate the social nature of man is to appreciate the fact that other people are not an obvious threat to individual liberty. The laws by which we are restrained are the guarantees of our freedom in protecting us from molestation and attack from other people. Yet in spite of Berlin's claim that conceptions of freedom directly derive from views of what constitutes a self there is in the writings of negative libertarians little to indicate that they conceive of persons as anything other than unique and private centres of consciousness primarily concerned with satisfying subjective desires.

## 2. FREEDOM AND CONSTRAINT

### 2.1 Constraints and Inability

Although I have chosen to sit down and write, there are many other things that I could be doing. I could be washing up, weeding the garden, having a bath, campaigning for CND and much more besides. There are also many things I could not do - certainly not at the moment. I am unable to prevent my College authorities from taking what I consider to be a particularly foolish decision, and I am unable to jump out of the bedroom window without hurting myself. None of this, however, is particularly interesting or significant. What is interesting and important are the circumstances in which it is true to say that my inability is due to lack of freedom, i.e. to the fact that I am constrained from doing  $z$  as opposed to those circumstances where the preventing condition is one of mere inability. If freedom is not to lose all possible content the distinction is vital and, in so far as we are able to provide for it, we have gone a long way towards providing criteria for the second variable in the triadic schema referred to in the previous section.

The present section is an attempt (a) to extend the range of obstacles to human endeavour which may properly be subsumed under the notion of constraint; (b) to question the relevance of the distinction between *preventing A* from  $\Phi$ -ing and *failing to enable A* to  $\Phi$ ; (c) to question the plausibility of restricting the notion to either (i) that which renders action impossible, or (ii) that which is deliberately imposed, or (iii) that which renders action punishable.

In *Four Essays on Liberty* Berlin quotes Helvetius with approval:

‘The free man is the man who is not in irons, nor imprisoned in a jail, nor terrorized like a slave by the fear of punishment ... it is not lack of freedom not to fly like an eagle or swim like a whale.’<sup>1</sup>

Unqualified approval, however is not the most appropriate response. The first part of the claim is questionable. While enslavement and imprisonment are paradigmatic cases of constraint, it will be argued that when such obvious preventing conditions are removed, it is not necessarily the case that questions of individual freedom no

longer arise. As far as the second part of Helvetius's assertion is concerned, it is no doubt true to suggest that talk of freedom is out of place in circumstances where the impossibility in question arises out of a person's physical make-up. This much would seem indisputable. What is interesting is the reason why we should discount such preventing conditions as instances of unfreedom. In so doing we are refusing to admit that 'X is constrained by y from doing z' and 'Because X finds z impossible he is unfree' are necessarily saying the same thing. Whether or not X is made unfree by the impossibility of doing z depends on the nature of the impossibility in question. Indeed, as we shall see, 'impossibility' turns out to have rather less importance to discussions of freedom than might at first appear.

Before examining this suggestion more closely it is worth drawing attention to different kinds of impossibility which, in their different ways, prevent someone from doing something. Six different kinds of impossibility have been distinguished by White.<sup>2</sup> They include: (i) logical impossibility (e.g. squaring the circle), (ii) impossibility due to 'normal human limitations' (e.g. flying like an eagle), (iii) impossibility due to 'more or less distinctive personal limitation' (e.g. listening to the radio when stone-deaf), (iv) impossibility due to a natural state of affairs (e.g. walking from England to Canada), (v) impossibility due to 'a natural occurrence' (e.g. fire or flood), (vi) impossibility due to 'human activity or intervention (including forebearances)' (e.g. imprisoned in jail or terrorized like a slave).

Not all of these different kinds of impossibility are relevant to discussions of freedom; the first most obviously so. It would be absurd to invoke the idea of unfreedom to cases where the impossibility was due to the logic of the case. The second case is so different from the sixth that it serves to go some way towards answering the question posed earlier, i.e. why should we accept that impossibility of the sixth kind is a constraint on freedom whereas impossibility of the second be disallowed? The answer, surely, has something to do with the fact that we are prepared to attribute responsibility of some kind to someone for limiting the possible options available to somebody imprisoned whereas such responsibility is altogether absent where the impossibility is of the kind described by Helvetius. In other words, such an

attribution is a demand for justification. Given the value and importance of freedom in human life the onus of justification is on those who would deprive us of our freedom to make their case. Of those who eliminate or in any way diminish our capacity or opportunity for choice, we are always entitled to an account of their reasons. This is not to say that every case of responsibility due to human activity or intervention is a case of unfreedom. As White himself suggests, *X* is not made unfree because he cannot park his car in a place which is already occupied. He may protest that he is as unfree to park his car as if he had been forcibly prevented from stopping there by a policeman. But it would be correct to insist that the issue of freedom does not arise here. In spite of the fact that someone is responsible for the parked car, the responsibility is not of the relevant kind. Unless someone is morally responsible for *X*'s predicament it is pointless to complain of a diminution of *freedom*. In this particular situation nobody is responsible in any other than a causal sense. Whether or not *Y* is culpable depends on the circumstances. If *X* were disabled and *Y* had parked in a space reserved for disabled drivers, then we would want to say that *X*'s freedom had been diminished and, if this were the only possible parking space, eliminated with respect to the action he had in mind. The significance of the difference between both kinds of responsibility cannot be overemphasised. To collapse the distinction would make each and every hindrance to human action for which someone was causally responsible a constraint upon freedom, and the result would be that we should be unfree for most of the time. In order to prevent the idea of constraints becoming all-inclusive there is obviously a need to hold onto the idea that moral responsibility has special significance. The reason being that freedom is at stake only when obstacles to action stand in need of justification. Benn and Weinstein express the idea succinctly. 'Since freedom is a principle, whatever interferes with it demands to be justified; consequently, only those determining conditions for which rational agents (God or Man) can be held responsible can qualify as interfering with it.'<sup>3</sup>

As far as cases (iii) - (v) are concerned, more needs to be said. White ignores 'internal' constraints in his discussion of (iii) but how and why such constraints are relevant is a question which is taken up below. White's comments on this kind of



impossibility are deficient in that they fail to draw attention to the fact that personal limitations are not always the sort of thing which must be forever endured like growing old. It may well be the case that the limitation in question could be eliminated if more resources were devoted to dealing with it and this raises a host of complicated questions to do with the nature of the limitation, the significance to the individual and/or society in removing it, the cost and effort involved and so on. More needs to be said about obstacles to freedom in general before taking the point any further. White is broadly correct in what he has to say about impossibility due to natural states of affairs such as the Atlantic ocean, but what counts as natural states of affairs does change from time to time. It is now no longer impossible to travel to the moon and back though even now, for reasons to do with responsibility outlined above, I should want to deny that because I am unable to go there someone is necessarily constraining me. I am neither free nor unfree to go to the moon; I am merely unable to go at the moment. The question of natural occurrence, White's fifth kind of impossibility, is not quite so easy. When the occurrence is purely accidental and there is no prospect of the disaster being averted it is reasonable to agree with White that those affected should not be deemed unfree. Where the disaster and resulting impossibility could have been prevented those affected may legitimately impute responsibility to others and to that extent acknowledged to be unfree. Impossibility resulting from flood or earthquake is a different kind from that arising from an accident due to negligence at a nuclear reactor. Whether or not we are entitled to impute responsibility is a matter for debate. The fact remains that it is moral responsibility which is the crucial factor.<sup>4</sup>

## **2.2 Intentionality and Responsibility**

In view of the fact that some philosophers within the negative tradition have made the notion of intentionality play such an important role within their accounts of what it is about an obstacle that turns it into a constraint, it is right that we should try and assess its significance. Oppenheim, for example, would like to make the deliberate or intentional imposition of an obstacle a criterion of moral responsibility. According to him, 'Y makes X unfree to do  $x$  if Y prevents X from doing  $x$ , but not if Y merely fails to make it possible for X to do  $x$ ',<sup>5</sup> and 'With regard to  $P$ ,  $R$  is



unfree to do  $x$  if  $P$  prevents  $R$  from doing  $x$  or would punish him if he did .<sup>6</sup> At one point in *Four Essays on Liberty* Berlin says something very similar. ‘Coercion implies the deliberate interference of other human beings within the area in which I could otherwise act,’<sup>7</sup> although his position is hardly a model of consistency. On the very next page he is more flexible. ‘The criterion of oppression is the part that I believe to be played by other human beings, directly or indirectly, *with or without the intention of doing so*, in frustrating my wishes.’<sup>8</sup> Oppenheim is at least consistent and unambiguous. The implications he is prepared to draw are also consistent with his initial proposition. Considering the plight of the unemployed after 1929 he refuses to concede that they were unfree to find employment on the grounds that the Depression was not deliberately caused. True, one could argue that the U.S. government before the New Deal might be accused of failing to enable workers to find work, but Oppenheim is insistent that ‘by not enabling  $R$  to do  $x$ ,  $P$  does not necessarily make  $R$  unable to do so. Only when  $P$  makes it impossible for  $R$  to do  $x$  is there ... unfreedom.’<sup>9</sup> The acceptability of this position depends on (a) there being a clear and meaningful way of distinguishing between constraining and failing to enable, and (b) the truth of the assumption that social forces are best excluded from restraining conditions. The onus is with Oppenheim and those who agree with him to present a sufficiently convincing argument to the effect that there are no cases of failure to enable which are at the same time constraints upon someone’s freedom.

Failure to enable will render a person unfree if (i) someone is in a position to take precautionary or remedial action in order to eliminate or significantly diminish the impact of the obstacle in question but fails to do so, and (ii) the obstacle itself must be such that it is capable of being removed if sufficient resources are devoted to its removal. There are limits, however, to the means it is reasonable to devote to the removal of any obstacle.<sup>10</sup> What counts as ‘reasonable cost’ must of necessity vary from case to case, but it is governed to a very large extent by (iii) where those subject to the obstacle in question are prevented from doing what they could normally expect to perform were the obstacle removed. If there were a drug which could prolong normal human life expectancy to 120 years, yet the production costs were exceedingly high and scarce medical resources were being sacrificed to produce it,

it would be inappropriate to complain of lack of access to such a drug as a restriction of one's freedom. The reason of course is that living to 120 years of age is not something that one can normally expect. As Blackstone puts it, 'the scope of what we consider to be a constraint is delimited by what we consider to be a human being's normal capacities and by the alterability of capacities and dispositions and the circumstances in which he exists.'<sup>11</sup> Of course, what people can normally expect is something which also varies according to time and place which serves to reinforce our opposition to the view so favoured by those like Oppenheim who would try and account for freedom in accordance with a purely descriptive set of criteria. Circumstances change and, as in the case of economic freedom, there is room for extending the range of restricting conditions which may reasonably be tackled.

Although there are difficulties associated with the attribution of moral responsibility for failing to enable, there are circumstances when it is reasonable to expect a person to foresee the likely consequences of failing to take the appropriate action. It is on occasions like this when accusations of failure in moral responsibility are perfectly in order. Accusations of this kind may be levelled against both specific individuals as well as groups of people. Thus, in the days when working class children were denied access to education, we may legitimately equate someone's failure to enable them to read and write with actual (deliberate or otherwise) prevention.

Oppenheim's second assumption, that social forces are best excluded from restraining conditions, is once again something that should not be taken for granted. Its appeal very much depends on the validity of that view of constraint which sees it as something deliberately imposed. Once this has been shown to be suspect we have less reason to suppose that impersonal social forces which conspire to prevent someone from pursuing a chosen course of action are mere obstacles rather than constraints.

All of this goes to show that the range of features attributable to the notion of constraint will vary in accordance with the range attached to the other two variables in the triadic schema. If the model of man presupposed is that of an autonomous

chooser, constraints will include anything for which others may be held responsible in frustrating his capacity in this respect. This is why we are entitled to include such things as ignorance as a constraint upon freedom and why education can and should be a liberating force. Similarly, we are allowed to include such preventing conditions as poverty and oppression amongst a possible list of constraints. If I lack the opportunity to act in accordance with my chosen course of action I am to that extent unfree.<sup>12</sup> Poverty and oppression are obvious examples of the kind of thing which may frustrate one's interests. The social conditions under which we operate are neither God-given nor are they necessarily something deliberately and consciously imposed by others. They are alterable and if the cost of this removal is not unbearably high, together with the possibility of identifying a person or body of persons to whom responsibility for doing whatever needs to be done may be attributed, then we can say that such obstacles are of the kind to render people unfree. Thus, whenever a system of education stultifies or stunts a child's capacity for choice, or a society condemns its work force to a machine-like existence on dreary production lines or where little or nothing is done to eliminate poverty, we are justified in complaining of lack of opportunity to choose between competing alternatives and are constrained as much as if our choices had been deliberately restricted. Opportunities are to all intents and purposes non-existent for those whose capacities for critical reflection, understanding, decision-making and such like - all of which are necessary conditions for meaningful choice - are underdeveloped or stunted. There is thus no reason to suppose that intentionally imposed constraints have greater moral significance than negligence and acts of omission. If the consequences of failure to provide the necessary resources to meet certain basic and fundamental human needs are foreseeable and where the 'costs' of such a failure are not prohibitive, it is as legitimate to complain of constraints on freedom as if the failure were intentional and deliberate.

### **2.3 Internal and External Constraints**

Although we have had cause to criticise negative libertarians for restricting constraints to factors external to the individual, the idea of internal constraint is more problematic than might at first appear. Joel Feinberg attempts a systematic

classification of constraints in accordance with the following four-fold distinctions: (i) *external positive constraints* such as barred windows, locked doors and pointed bayonets (the examples here and in the following three categories are all Feinberg's); (ii) *external negative constraints* such as lack of money, lack of transportation, lack of weapons; (iii) *internal positive constraints* such as headaches, obsessive thoughts, compulsive desires; (iv) *internal negative constraints* such as ignorance, weakness and deficiencies in talent or skill. Feinberg's comment to the effect that not every absent condition whose presence would constitute an opportunity or ability qualifies for the category of negative constraint is consistent with the argument so far. As he continues: 'Only those whose absence constitutes a striking deviation from a norm of expectancy or propriety, or whose absence is in some way an especially important consideration for some practical interest either of the subject or of some later commentators can qualify as constraints.'<sup>13</sup>

The advantages of this classification is that it at least acknowledges the fact that in restricting constraint to external factors we are prevented from saying all that we would want to say about important causes of unfreedom. Ignorance, for example, is an obvious constraint on one's freedom in that it prevents one from embarking on all sorts of projects one might otherwise choose. However, it is doubtful that such a neat and simple distinction between 'internal' and 'external' can be consistently upheld. As is so often the case, factors external to the individual are instrumental in affecting his internal abilities and capacities and these in turn will have a profound effect on the kind of society he finds himself living in. So once again we have reason to believe that social forces cannot be excluded from a possible list of restraining conditions but are themselves governed by so-called internal factors such as attitudes, beliefs, qualities of character and so on. Clearly some constraints are more external than others, but at the end of the day it would be wrong to minimise the complex way in which internal and external interrelate. How often do we find in cases of mental illness that the conditions in which the patient has been living are a contributory factor. There may well be limits to what schooling can do for people whose environment is one of multi-faceted deprivation. The extent to which any particular constraint, internal or external to the individual, needs emphasis will vary

from one circumstance to another, but there are many examples of constraint where the utility of such a distinction is less than obvious and where an element of arbitrariness is unavoidable.

Advantageous as the distinction may be, there are a number of problems to which it gives rise. In particular the notion of internal constraint in general is problematic. After all, one is usually constrained by others, and if what has been said about the significance of moral responsibility is correct, it is not so easy to appreciate the relevance of this in the context of internal constraints. We must at least be selective about the sorts of thing we are entitled to subsume under the heading of internal constraint. Obsessive thoughts and compulsive desires such as those felt by the kleptomaniac may well act as constraints upon freedom, but what about headaches? Perhaps much depends on the kind of headaches - whether or not it is caused by someone drilling the road or too much alcohol at lunchtime. Headaches associated with hangovers or backaches resulting from heavy gardening are brought about by lack of prudence. If the headache is due to some pathological disorder for which there is no known cure there is no reason for describing it as a constraint. Contrary to what Feinberg may say, a constraint is not *anything* that prevents one from doing something. As far as kleptomania is concerned, it is very hard to generalise in advance of a great deal of information relevant to particular cases. Where *A* may have been subject to various pressures at an impressionable age, receiving little or no parental support or guidance, *B* may have become hooked on shoplifting through the malevolent influence of a Fagin. *C* may be lonely and depressed and steal for compensation or comfort while *D* may have been subject to none of these pressures; he is simply weak-willed or over impulsive - perhaps his parents and teachers have done their best but to no avail. *D* is simply spineless and the responsibility for his predicament is largely his own. Although he does not respect himself and finds his behaviour repugnant, his attempts to do something about it are fruitless. As far as *A*, *B* and *C* are concerned other people may well have the relevant degree of responsibility for what is a fairly clear-cut case of internal constraint. Much has been written about internal positive constraints in relation to the concept of mental health. But we do not have to be experts on mental illness in order to appreciate that

the psychotic or severely neurotic are, in important respects, lacking in freedom and to withhold treatment where the means are available is as much a constraint as if the complaint had been deliberately caused by someone else.<sup>14</sup>

When it comes to internal negative constraints Feinberg somewhat uncritically brackets together ignorance with weakness and deficiencies in talent and skill and I am not sure that this is justified. Where physical weakness is due to vitamin deficiency or lack of food we might well be justified in invoking the concept of constraint. As far as deficiencies in talent and skill are concerned it depends on the extent to which the talent is a necessary prerequisite of choice in general such as being able to predict the likely consequences of actions and decisions. Those lacking this ability may well be entitled to help and assistance. Others, like myself, who have no knowledge of how to play the violin can hardly be said to lack the freedom to play.

#### **2.4 Threats and Constraints**

In an attempt to show why it is that threats are not the kind of thing which either eliminate or diminish liberty, Hillel Steiner begins an article with the following statement:

‘An individual is unfree if and only if his doing any action is rendered impossible by the act of another individual. That is, the unfree individual is so because the particular action in question is *prevented* by another.’<sup>15</sup>

A threat does not render an action or decision of mine impossible and my freedom is therefore unaffected. But this is counterintuitive. As we shall see, there is more to being free than simply being in a position to do that which is possible. If someone forcibly prevents me from going on holiday or to a concert I am rendered unfree because these are the kinds of thing which are possible objects of rational choice. Although ability is a necessary condition of freedom, unless what is chosen possesses desirability characteristics of a fairly specific sort reference to freedom is out of place. To ascribe freedom to someone is to make an evaluative judgement and not something that can be reduced to mere description in the value-free terminology

so much favoured by people like Oppenheim.<sup>16</sup> The point is clearly made by Connolly as follows:

‘In the ordinary language of political inquiry the normative dimensions in the idea of freedom are not attached to it as "connotations" that can be eliminated; without the normative point of view from which the concept is formed we would have no basis for deciding what "descriptive terms" to include or exclude in the definition. Debates about the criteria properly governing the concept of freedom are in part debates about the extent to which the proposed criteria fulfil the normative point of the concept and in part about exactly what that point is. To refuse to bring these considerations into one’s deliberations about "freedom" is either to deny oneself access to the very considerations that can inform judgement about the concept or to delude oneself by faintly invoking the very considerations formally eschewed... the positive normative import of "free" ... is not attached to it accidentally but flows from its identification of factors pertinent to human well-being in situations where something is absent. And that normative import in turn sets general limits to the sort of situation to which the idea of freedom can be applied.’<sup>17</sup>

Steiner, however, would wish to repudiate most of this:

‘... it is mistaken to imagine that our conception of freedom is bounded by our notions of what might be worthwhile doing .... Statements to the effect that "X is free to A" do not imply or presuppose statements ... about what X really wants or about what is in his real interests to do or have done to him.’<sup>18</sup>

But when a threat is hanging over someone it is absurd to deny that he is forced to reconsider what actions are in accordance with his best interests. A threat may or may not affect my desire for something or other but it certainly does affect what Steiner calls ‘the evaluative status assigned to ... doing certain activities.’<sup>19</sup> The *desirability* of a course of action is profoundly affected by threats of various kinds but Steiner’s reluctance to concede this point stems from his fear that once threats are allowed to count as constraints each and every intervention must be, and we should find ourselves in the absurd position of finding our freedom curtailed each time requests were made of us, advice tendered, or when we were persuaded to change our minds. But such fears are groundless. Requests, persuasions and such like may affect my desires but they do not necessarily affect the desirability of a particular action. And it is this feature of threats - the fact that they render actions less eligible



or desirable for the rational agent who, other things being equal, prefers not to suffer the unpleasant consequences usually associated with them - which entitles us to include them on a list of constraints upon freedom.

Unlike Steiner, Day argues that threats do indeed qualify as constraints on freedom, although his discussion is designed to show how they fall under this category in virtue of their making something impossible.<sup>20</sup> It is instructive to follow Day's reasoning in order to see how he reaches this conclusion because in the course of his argument he has some illuminating things to say about the nature of threats which lend support to the view that they are a major constraint to freedom. Consider the following situation: *A* says to *B* 'Hand over your money or I will kill you.' Such a threat curtails *B*'s freedom because he is prevented from doing what he would otherwise do, namely, go off to spend his own money. Steiner would argue, of course, that *B* is perfectly free to ignore the threat and carry on his way, *even if it means getting killed*. Steiner's failure to understand why and how threats curtail freedom, according to Day, is due to putting all the weight on *B*'s simple action, i.e. keeping his money rather than the complex (or conjunctive) action, i.e. keeping his money *and* walking safely away with it. As Day says, threats *deprive* by making one unable to do that which he can *unconditionally* now do; whereas offers do not do this and this explains why offers, unlike threats, do not diminish liberty.<sup>21</sup>

It would appear then that being subject to threats affects one's liberty in important respects. As to whether they render certain (conjunctive) actions impossible or not is a different matter. Strictly speaking, they do not. It is the threat which is actually carried out that makes conjunctive actions impossible; a threat by itself leaves open the possibility of either complying with it or calling its bluff. So we can go along with Miller at least to the extent of admitting that we are unable to say all that we want to say about freedom entirely in terms of impossibility.<sup>22</sup> Threats curtail liberty, not because they make certain actions impossible but because they are instrumental in reducing the number of, and value associated with, possible alternatives. In other words the presence of threat *T* to alternative *A* affects the desirability of doing *A* and, given the importance of *A* in my overall scheme of

things, together with its being the kind of thing a rational being might choose, so reduces my freedom of choice. In this respect threats are similar to penal sanctions; they make certain actions ineligible to a rational chooser.

## 2.5 Punishability and Constraints

Punishability is something Oppenheim wishes to include amongst a list of preventing conditions ('With regard to *P*, *R* is unfree to do *x* not only to the extent that *P* makes it impossible for *R* to do *x*, but also to the extent that *P* would carry out an explicit or implied threat of punishment if he found *R* guilty of having done *x*.'<sup>23</sup>) Where a legal sanction is associated with a particular action I might otherwise perform, that action has not been rendered impossible but it is less eligible than it otherwise would be. To deny this is, as Benn and Weinstein say, nothing short of wilful perversity.<sup>24</sup> Yet people do (willingly and knowingly) break the law. Is it entirely absurd to suggest that in so doing they are unfree? An example (Oppenheim's own) will perhaps serve to show that this is not as unreasonable as it sounds. Consider a motorist who, in spite of the speed limit and in spite of his awareness of the likely punishment awaiting him if caught, nevertheless ignores all this and refuses to slow down. Was he free or unfree to speed at the time he ignored the warning sign to reduce speed? The answer is that it depends on the circumstances. If he had very good reason to believe that there was little chance of being caught (perhaps he had inside information to the effect that only 2 in every 10 motorists apprehended are actually prosecuted) we might well be prepared to acknowledge that he is indeed free *to a certain degree*; the degree of freedom being a factor of the probability of being caught and punished, although I am not sure how one could begin to quantify the degree of freedom any particular individual may be said to enjoy in view of the vast array of assumptions about individual attitudes to risk-taking.

Even when one tries to quantify the degree of probability of doing something *and* getting away with it, there is still an element of uncertainty as to whether or not we would be entitled to call someone free or unfree in any particular situation. Where the probability is extremely high (approaching 1.0) we would have little hesitation in saying that we are free to do it; where it is approaching zero we would deny this.

When setting out to break the law a person makes certain calculations relating to the probability of being reprimanded and these calculations affect the extent to which he feels free. Nevertheless, while his assessment of his chances affects the extent to which he feels free, this is something that may turn out to be very far removed from the actual degree of probability of being caught. In any case if, for want of a better term, ‘subjective probability assessment’ was the crucial factor in determining an agent’s overall freedom, we should find ourselves having to accept that where *A* estimates the probability of his being caught at 0.2 and *B* estimates his at 0.9, *A* is freer than *B* and this is a very uncomfortable conclusion to arrive at. How an individual rates the desirability of doing something is governed by this probability assessment, but the degree to which he is *actually* free is surely a factor of the objective probability assessment (assuming there to be such a thing). Objective probability assessments are *too* objective for our purposes in that an individual’s assessment is of fundamental importance in determining the extent of his freedom. In the speeding example, it may just happen to be the day of a nationwide police strike of which *A* is ignorant. He believes he may be reprimanded and so sticks to the speed limit. His belief is thus a vital factor in computing the degree to which he is free or unfree to speed. As Crocker puts it:

‘... one is never made freer by virtue of mistakenly thinking that the probabilities of one’s actions are higher than they would be on a more objective standard, (and), one may be made less free by virtue of thinking that the probabilities of one’s actions are lower than they would be on a more objective standard, insofar as so thinking tends to affect one’s decisions negatively.’<sup>25</sup>

Punishability is only one factor in quantifying individual freedom; others include the severity of the sanction as well as the number and variety of the alternatives ruled out by its imposition. If I am a millionaire and the standard fine permitted by law is £100, I am much freer with respect to this particular law than a school teacher. Having to pay £100 is much less of a blow to me than it is to him. Severity of punishment is a relevant factor in assessing the degree to which a person is free to disobey a particular law. Oppenheim, for some reason, in *Political Concepts* is anxious to force a distinction (which in *Dimensions of Freedom* he refused to accept) between the degree of unfreedom and its disvalue to the individual. (‘The degree to

which an actor is unfree to act in a certain way is a function of the extent of punishment, but depends neither on the positive utility to him of acting that way nor on the negative utility to him of being punished.<sup>26)</sup> This is to ignore the vital role which prudence performs in considerations of eligibility. Where the negative utility of being punished is very small or insignificant, the individual is no less eligible to perform an action than if there was no punishment at all attached to his doing so. Conversely, where this is very high the action is ineligible to the prudent (i.e. rational) man. In other words, eligibility is a function of the values and desires a person happens to have. Where the consequences of a course of action include others imposing sanctions which any reasonable person would rather do without, the agent's freedom is in this respect diminished and perhaps, depending on the unpleasantness of the sanctions, altogether eliminated.

### 3. FREEDOM AND DESIRE-SATISFACTION

#### 3.1 Simple and Refined Versions

My aim in this section is to discredit a view of freedom which surprisingly, if the objections raised here are valid, continues to be widely held and enjoys much support in liberal political thought. There is a simple (or crude) version which can be stated thus: 'A person is free to the extent that he is able to do what he wants to do.'<sup>1</sup> A more refined version would go something like this: 'A person is free to the extent that he is able to do what he *really* wants to do - where 'really' is understood as referring to what he desires 'on balance' or 'all things considered' or 'having reflected carefully on the merits of the proposed course of action and decided that this is what he wants most.' The simple version was held by Mill, Russell, and at one time, Berlin, while the more refined version has more recently been defended by Harry Frankfurt and Charles Taylor.

According to Hobbes, freedom 'consisteth in this, that he finds no stop, in doing what he has the will, desire or inclination to do.'<sup>2</sup> Mill, in discussing the permissibility of forcibly preventing someone from crossing an unsafe bridge, maintained that 'liberty consists in doing what one desires, and (the man) does not desire to fall into the river.'<sup>3</sup> Bertrand Russell continuing in this vein suggests that 'freedom in general may be defined as the absence of obstacles to the realisation of desires.'<sup>4</sup> At the time of the Inaugural Lecture, Berlin was of the opinion that 'If I am prevented by other persons from doing what I want, I am to that degree unfree...'<sup>5</sup>.

Frankfurt's thesis depends on a distinction between what he calls 'first order desires' and 'second order desires'. The former are desires to do or not to do one thing or another while the latter are desires that the agent wants to motivate him in what he actually does. 'Someone has a desire of the second order either when he wants simply to have a certain desire or when he wants a certain desire to be his will.'<sup>6</sup> It is in this sense that the agent can be said to *really* desire something or other as opposed to *simply* or unreflectingly desire it.

Taylor's position is sophisticated and, like Frankfurt's, will be the subject of careful consideration in due course. Taylor makes a number of illuminating and valuable distinctions between different kinds of desire which are relevant to the enhancement or diminution of freedom and there is much in his notion of 'strong evaluation' which I find appealing and useful. What is unacceptable without modification are statements to the effect that '(Freedom is) ... being able to act on one's important purposes.'<sup>7</sup> or 'If the conflict is between two desires with which I have no trouble identifying, there can be no talk of lesser freedom no matter how painful or fateful.'<sup>8</sup> Freedom may well be 'at stake when we find ourselves carried away by a less significant goal to override a highly significant one'<sup>9</sup> but the point I wish to dispute is that there is no more to being free than simply identifying significant goals.

To account for freedom in terms of desire-satisfaction one would have to meet such a welter of objections that it is scarcely credible that so many people continue to subscribe to such an account. Its only attraction as far as I can see is that it dispenses with the difficulty of dealing with the totalitarian implications that some would wish to suggest necessarily followed from its denial. But this problem pales in comparison with the difficulties involved in making the account remotely plausible, the most obvious of which centre around the notion of 'desire' itself.

Consider first of all the not infrequent difficulty we have in identifying many of our desires. Hampshire expresses it thus:

'We may on occasion painfully discover and identify desires to act in a specific way on a specific occasion that we had previously excluded, as we now recognise, from our consciousness; and we may even discover that the desires which we had professed, were the exact opposite of the desires, which, after painful investigation, we now say we actually had .... We discover that our desires are often confused, and that it is often difficult to find the truth when we make statements about what we want to do, and lastly, we discover that the truth about the objects of desire is often complex, and that we have motives for concealing this complexity from ourselves and from others.'<sup>10</sup>

In itself that is, of course, no objection to the idea of freedom as desire-satisfaction, but it does serve to indicate that on its own terms the theory does presuppose that we

are readily able to determine exactly what it is that we claim to desire. As will become apparent, were we to settle this question to our own satisfaction we would still have to be able to give reasons why we wanted that particular desire or set of desires satisfied; we would view the state of affairs in question which led us to desire it in the first place in a certain light. This in turn raises complex and significant questions to do with the *desirability* of the 'object' of the desire and whether or not the desire arose out of some kind of conditioning or socialisation. Are we simply habituated to satisfying it? Is it because of the pleasure to be obtained? Have we come to desire something because on reflection we are convinced of its desirability? And so on. I shall return to such questions presently. Meanwhile, the above quotation from Hampshire reminds us of the difficulties associated with coming to know what it is that I really do want, especially when my desires are in conflict.

The predicament of having to reconcile conflicting desires is all too familiar. The only rational solution open to someone in such circumstances is one which does not merely permit the satisfaction of the most strongly felt desire, but one where the agent acts in such a way that his real-interests are not frustrated. This is, of course, a highly problematic notion and is addressed at length in 6.2. When I find it impossibly difficult to reconcile my conflicting desires and end up merely postponing making a decision or even surrendering to the desire which happens to have the strongest pull, I am less free than I might be. It is a characteristic feature of childhood that, having little or no 'life-plan', children are less given to speculating on the desirability of conflicting desires in terms of their propensity to contribute to the realisation of such a plan.

I intend to return to the problem of conflicting desires in a discussion of how we go about deciding what it is that we really want. This question arises not only in situations of desire conflict but is one with which we are all too frequently faced. Before saying more about it however, I wish to raise a number of objections to the idea of reducing freedom to desire-satisfaction. Because my main concern is with the relationship between desire-satisfaction and freedom I shall ignore much of what could be said about the concept of desire as such - its relationship to feeling, whether

or not it is dependent on belief and if so what this might imply for desires which animals might be said to experience and so on. And I shall not attempt to classify desires systematically; it is far from clear what such a classification would amount to. What is crucial are questions relating to the authenticity of a desire. Is it truly yours or is it something you just happen to have due to a variety of causal circumstances of which you may or may not be aware? Do you identify with the desire in that you are content in being motivated by it? Do you regret having it either because you regard it as unworthy or because you believe it to be foreign to the kind of person you take yourself to be? Is the desire irrational in that it occurs in spite of the fact that the consequences of satisfying it are either unknown or harmful? Is it transitory and fleeting or is it more deeply held and altogether more essential to your whole conception of yourself? Have you given due consideration to the consequences of satisfying the desire, and so on? All these questions have an important bearing on a person's freedom and, as we shall see, a satisfactory construal of the third variable in our triadic schema requires a different conceptual framework to that of desire-satisfaction.

### **3.2 Authentic Desires and External Desires**

It is essential at the outset to realise just how often we are passive with respect to what we claim to want. The most obvious case, even if it is an infrequent occurrence, is that of someone who 'wants' to do something (drink vinegar, slash his wrists or something equally bizarre) because he has been told that this is what he wants while under hypnosis. We confidently say of such a person that he does not *really* want any such thing. Now although our confidence is easily justified in the case of post-hypnotic suggestion, there are many more everyday examples of wants which are inauthentic yet still not demonstrably so - at least not without considerable difficulty. Consider the case of Angela, an adolescent girl who wants more than anything else to become a housewife and mother. For as long as she can remember this is all she has ever really wanted. There was a time when she vaguely entertained the idea of becoming a nurse, and, although she would not confess it, had a secret desire to become a fashion model. If nursing was no more than a childish fantasy, modelling is a non-starter given her present shape. All in all, she reflects, she would



be much happier at home looking after children and the creature comforts of her husband. Notice that she has at least considered alternatives however vaguely and briefly. Interestingly enough the alternatives in question were both few in number and the kinds of thing which, traditionally, have been women's work. There was certainly no vocational education at school and her parents never encouraged her to do anything other than a little typing between leaving school and getting married. She has also reflected upon the pleasures that housewifery has to offer and concluded that they really would bring contentment. At least in this respect Angela is different from so many other girls in her school who simply drifted into that kind of life or were pressurised into it. What then are we to make of these desires of hers and how do they relate to her freedom?

The first thing which requires emphasis is the fact that desires or wants do not arise *ex nihilo*. Our socialisation plays a major part in the formation of so many of our desires, and factors associated with it are not infrequently responsible for our failure to form and articulate wants, ambitions and life-plans of various kinds. Angela's whole background was a constraint on the formation of possible desires. There was just no question, in that the opportunity was altogether absent, of her coming to want to be a firefighter, an engineer or a Member of Parliament. Moreover, this is not solely due to her school and home circumstances, limiting as they were, but to the general prejudice against women occupying these particular roles. In spite of recent legislation to do with equal opportunities, women whose abiding passion it is to do these jobs are frequently discriminated against. We can say that Angela and countless others like her lack a sufficient measure of critical reflectiveness in relation to such desires and that they are largely heteronomous as far as their 'life-plans' are concerned because the desires which they take to be significant are lacking the requisite degree of authenticity.

Girls are not the only ones who are denied the opportunity of real and meaningful choice between a variety of alternatives. Tens of thousands of children of both sexes are expected to perform badly at school in this country and to be fit for nothing more than a life of drudgery in dead-end jobs with little or no job-satisfaction. The

self-fulfilling prophecy continues to deprive countless numbers of a life anything approaching personal fulfilment. It is important therefore, in considering the extent to which people are free, to take cognizance of the source of their desires. It is not clear from what has been said so far that Angela's desires have been foisted on her but her situation does illustrate the fact that we need to be satisfied that when someone has a desire for something it is in fact his desire and not one with respect to which he is, if not entirely passive, sufficiently inactive to prevent us from describing his desire as his and his entirely. Even if freedom were to be understood in terms of desire-satisfaction there has to be assurance that the source of the desire is in fact the agent himself. As far as his desires are concerned he must not simply be responding to a causal sequence such that if  $c_1 \dots c_n$  then he desires to  $\Phi$ ; this is the very least that is required for the attribution of (free) agency.

Many of our desires, like those of the children just mentioned, are not the kind of thing which we adopt after due and careful consideration concerning their intrinsic value or the consequences involved in satisfying them. As often as not we are unsure of how we came to have them or why we continue with them. Indeed, they have probably been part of us for such a long time that they have become inseparable from what we (and others) take ourselves to be. We may welcome them, even embrace them and totally identify with them. Approval of a desire may well be thought to be sufficient for it to be considered authentic but this would be to acknowledge that the attitude one adopts towards a particular desire is the mark of its authenticity. A readiness to identify with a desire, or at least to feel no actual disapproval of it, is no doubt a necessary condition of its authenticity but it is certainly not sufficient. Unless we can be sure that the desire in question is not the mere product of our socialisation we have reason to deny its authentic status.

There may well be a whole host of factors preventing a person from realizing that his desires are not truly his - he may be suffering from self-deception, inability or unwillingness to reflect on the extent to which it is consistent with his other desires, he might fail to take due cognizance of its priority over other desires he might have within his particular life-plan, or he might lack any such plan, merely drifting from

day to day. Children in particular are likely to be subject to inauthentic desires and for this reason it will not do to suggest that a child is free in so far as he is doing as he pleases. The same goes for the adult who identifies with certain desires. A woman who identifies with her position as a servile and obedient wife or the semi-imprisoned state of a full-time carer to a demanding and selfish aged parent is, in important respects, unfree and if she insists that such roles are in accordance with her real-interests she is in all probability suffering from self-deception.

Many liberals will find this conclusion quite unpalatable. If freedom is not a matter of doing what one wants and one is not even the final authority on that, are not the floodgates open to all manner of totalitarian forces? Surely the alternative is a very odd kind of freedom indeed. Such an objection does not have the force it might at this stage appear to possess. If freedom must indeed include some reference to the idea of a person's 'real-interest' this in turn is something that could not begin to make sense without reference to a first-person perspective. For it is part of my real-interest that I acknowledge the value of those decisions and choices which are in my interests. To deny this most certainly is authoritarian but one is not committed to anything so preposterous as a result of refusing to accept an account of freedom in terms of desire-satisfaction.

In denying that some of my desires are truly mine I might be thought guilty of self-contradiction. If a desire is experienced by me then surely it is mine however inauthentic it might be. After all, it is not part of the mental life of someone else. As it stands, this is of course quite true. However, I do believe that the claim can be seriously upheld without appeal to a metaphysical account of selves within selves. The line between an authentic and an inauthentic desire may be impossibly difficult to draw with precision. When exactly does a desire which is artificially induced become so much part of me that my personal identity would be in jeopardy if I were forced to repudiate it? The question is probably unanswerable. And yet the fact remains that there is a line to be drawn.

Frankfurt attempts to express the distinction in terms of an analogy with certain kinds of behaviour.<sup>11</sup> He suggests that when mindlessly drumming one's fingers on the table, although the movements are those of someone in particular - someone's fingers are actually doing the drumming - it is nevertheless perfectly legitimate to deny that drumming one's fingers is what one is actually doing. The drumming is more properly accounted for in terms of an event occurring in one's body. The movements in question are, strictly speaking, attributable only to one's body. Similarly, according to Frankfurt, a person may be passive with respect to certain events within his mind. The kind of thing he has in mind are obsessional thoughts and thoughts that run through our head willy-nilly. Such thoughts are not the result of our own actual doing. Despite the paradoxical nature of the claim it seems to be perfectly coherent to say of such thoughts that they are not the thoughts that I *think*, just as certain bodily movements of mine are not necessarily actions that I perform. As Frankfurt says:

‘To insist unequivocally that every passion must be attributable to someone is ... as gratuitous as it would be to insist that a spasmodic movement of a person's body must be a movement that person makes ... There is in fact a legitimate and interesting sense in which a person may experience a passion that is external to him and that is strictly attributable neither to him nor to anyone else.’<sup>12</sup>

He then proceeds to consider which of the passions in a person's history are external and to examine the conditions of externality.

Frankfurt's first and obvious example of a desire which is external is one which is artificially induced by such means as hypnosis or the result of drug-taking. The fact that desires are caused by something (physically) external to the agent does not in itself provide the defining characteristic of external desires. Rather, it is the fact that ‘they present themselves in a manner ‘discontinuous’ with one's understanding of one's situation and with one's conception of oneself ... (although) the person often appears by a kind of instinct to circumvent these discontinuities with rationalization: he instantaneously provides the passion with meaning, or somehow construes it as having a natural place in his experience. Then, despite its origin, the passion becomes attached to a moving principle within the person; and the person is thus no

more a passive bystander with respect to it than if it had arisen in a more integral response to his perceptions.’<sup>13</sup> Frankfurt goes on to consider the view that the criterion of externality is the desire to be rid of them or to prefer not to be moved by them. In other words it takes the crucial factor to be the attitude adopted towards the desires in question.

If we find the desire acceptable, at least to the extent that it is not incompatible with our preferred conception of ourselves, then the desire is internal.<sup>14</sup> But as Frankfurt observes, this is to equate the real with the ideal and one can become resigned to the fact that a desire is attributable to oneself as well as to being someone of whom one does not entirely approve. If disapproval is not a sufficient condition of externality what of the suggestion that it is at least a necessary condition? It is difficult to think of a convincing example in which a person to whom a passion is external nonetheless approves of its occurrence. And the difficulty in finding an example of this kind also tends to support the conjecture that a person’s approval of a passion that occurs in his history is a sufficient condition of the passion’s being internal to him.<sup>15</sup> But even if this is correct, and we shall have reason to dispute it presently, Frankfurt has not yet presented us with a *criterion* of externality and he turns to this in the last section of his paper in the context of a discussion of incompatible desires - his example is that of someone who wishes to compliment an acquaintance on some recent success but finds that his jealousy and the associated desire to injure the man is an obstacle to his giving expression to his friendly gesture. The conflict here stands in need of resolution but it is not a matter of simply deciding as one might between going to the cinema or the concert hall. In the latter case the resolution is possible in terms of degree of preference; one simply decides what it is that one would rather do. The jealous man on the other hand can only resolve his conflict by rejecting one of the desires altogether and in so doing withdraws himself from it. ‘He places the rejected desire outside the scope of his preferences, so that it is not a candidate for satisfaction at all.’<sup>16</sup> This is not to say that the rejected desire (say the desire to be spiteful) is eliminated; the man might well continue to experience the rejected desire. Unlike the choice between the concert and the cinema the difference between the two desires here is that the difference is not one of mere strength. Whenever the man continues

to experience the rejected desire to be spiteful he has, Frankfurt believes, shown himself to be 'stronger than the desire to injure him that he finds within himself.'<sup>17</sup> In rejecting the less worthy desire he is 'identifying' himself with the desire to be kind. In short, it is in making decisions of this sort that the relation of the person to his desires is established.

Ingenious as this account might be, there are a number of things which do not ring true. Firstly, it is all too readily assumed that approval and disapproval are neatly associated with internality and externality. I see no reason why a desire cannot be such an integral part of me that I would be an entirely different personality without it and yet remain something of which I disapproved. Is it not often the case that we recognize our unpleasant character traits either as a result of introspection or, often more disconcertingly, when someone points out to us that we have a disposition to say and do things which annoy or hurt others. It may be something as trivial as sulking or something more serious like persistent sarcasm or a tendency to over-organize one's family. One may admit to the fact that one has a desire to behave thus and yet thoroughly disapprove of this aspect of one's personality. Similarly, I might admit that certain characteristics such as the desire to be generous-spirited are admirable. I might want very much to compliment my acquaintance but acknowledge that it is out of character to do that kind of thing. Approval of such a desire and recognition that it is foreign to who I am are not incompatible. I experience the desire to hurt someone in such a way that I judge it to be reprehensible; the desire presents itself to consciousness *as* unworthy or shameful. And yet I know it to be a desire that is genuinely part of me; I *am* a spiteful person and any amount of disapproval and repudiation does not render such desires external. I might be more or less reconciled to this fact about myself.

Moreover, Frankfurt puts far more weight on the idea of 'identification' than I believe it can carry. For one thing, it means that internality or externality of a particular desire is going to rest entirely on one's relationship to that desire. In other words it discounts the possibility of more objective criteria. It is entirely feasible to suppose that a person can identify with a particular desire - say the desire to be

public-spirited or charitable - and for others to know that this is just not him. A person may well identify with the desire for security and peace of mind to be found in a monastic community while just not possessing what it takes to live that kind of life. In spite of countless protestations and actions to the contrary which leave no one in doubt that he has every intention of joining the order, it is still possible to maintain that such desires are alien and external in so far as they run contrary to his entire personality. To borrow an example of Terence Penelhum's, a man might follow a career with the intention of becoming wealthy or powerful or because of the prestige associated with it or because it has traditionally been the career adopted by members of his family in spite of the fact that he has neither the drive nor the flair required. He shows no obvious distress and admits to identifying with the job and yet it is still possible for others legitimately to maintain that he has mistakenly identified with something external to himself. In adopting such a career he may well have given careful consideration to various alternatives and rejected them accordingly. In this respect his choice of career is authentic while at the same time the desire to pursue it is external in virtue of being incompatible with his personality.<sup>18</sup> In this respect he differs from Angela whose adopted life-style was something into which she simply drifted. She is the product of her circumstances and we are able to say of her desire for marriage and motherhood that they are internal and inauthentic.

To return to our truncated discussion of passivity with respect to desires. We can think of much more serious cases than those already mentioned; so serious in fact that one can be said to be a victim of a desire. Some desires are so powerful that no matter how hard one tries one is unable to resist their pull. I have in mind the difficulty experienced by the heroin addict who complains that he cannot resist it. There is a world of difference between this and the utterance of a Martin Luther to the effect that he 'kann nicht anders'. We have no reason to believe that Luther's commitment to his deeply held beliefs was irresistible in the sense that I am trying to pinpoint. His beliefs did not possess him in the way that a heroin addict is left utterly incapable of resisting the pull of his desire for the drug. We can follow Neely in adopting as a criterion of resistibility, the following: 'a desire is irresistible if and

only if it is the case that if the agent had been presented with what *he took to be* good and sufficient reasons for not acting upon it, he would still have acted on it.’<sup>19</sup>

A heroin addict who develops the strength of will required to overcome his addiction raises a number of interesting questions for the theory of freedom under discussion. In the first place, the considerable effort involved in fighting such an addiction indicates that the addict is far from content with his undiminished desire for the stuff. He sees it as something alien and an intrusion into the kind of life he would prefer to live and the kind of person he would like to be. Realizing that the drug is an interference and a constraint on his long-term interests he is anxious to rid himself of the desire which has hitherto been irresistible. Anyone who experiences his desire for something as an encumbrance experiences the desire in question on different levels. On one level he has a desire for something which he knows from experience will bring relief and perhaps pleasure. On another level he realizes that the satisfaction of the desire is no longer what will satisfy him. It is the distinction between satisfaction of *desire* and satisfaction of *self* that justifies talk of ‘lower’ and ‘higher’ levels of desire. In so far as one is concerned with self-satisfaction one is also concerned with achieving a measure of self-control whereby one’s desires no longer dominate or overpower one. The desire may be as strong as ever but one is oneself in a position of strength with respect to it.

The adoption of a specific attitude towards one’s desires is a characteristic feature of persons. Only self-conscious beings are capable of reflecting on the relationship between their desires on the one hand and their needs and real-interests on the other. Following David Gauthier we may distinguish between ‘impelling wants’ and ‘reflective wants’,<sup>20</sup> a distinction which is sometimes expressed in terms of desires of the moment on the one hand and what one ‘really wants’ on the other. The drug addict who realizes what he is doing to himself even while experiencing the all too real pull of the desire for the drug does not really want it any longer. What he ‘really wants’ is something altogether different.



### 3.3 Real Desires and Orders of Desire

It remains to be seen whether or not a person who acts in accordance with what he really wants is any more free, in any meaningful sense of that term, than one who does what he wants *simpliciter*. Before pursuing this further it is worth considering what is supposed to be involved in the idea of doing what one 'really wants'.

Frankfurt prefers the expression 'second order desire' to that of 'real want'<sup>21</sup> and regards the capacity to form such desires to be a peculiarly human characteristic. Many animals have the capacity for what Frankfurt calls 'first-order desires' - desires to do such and such - but only human beings want to have (or not to have) certain desires and motives. A person is said to have a second-order desire either (a) when he wants simply to have a certain desire or (b) when he wants a certain desire to be his will. In order to see what is meant by the former, Frankfurt invites us to consider the case of a psychotherapist who feels that he would be of greater benefit to his patients if he too knew what it was really like to be addicted to heroin and accordingly develops a desire for the drug. It is nevertheless perfectly acceptable to acknowledge that the therapist has a desire to desire heroin whilst at the same time not desiring his desire for the drug to be effective. In other words, he does not want the desire to move him all the way to action. 'His second-order desire to be moved to take the drug does not entail that he has a first-order desire to take it'.<sup>22</sup> A person who wants a desire to be his will has what Frankfurt calls a 'second-order volition' - something which he sees as an essential characteristic of personhood. An agent who cared nothing about that which moves him to action is referred to by Frankfurt as a 'wanton'. A heroin addict who was indifferent to the fact that his desire for the drug moves him to action - indifferent in that he simply does not consider whether the desires that move him to act are desires by which he wants to be moved to act - is a wanton addict in virtue of his wanton lack of concern one way or the other.

Frankfurt's reason for introducing the idea of orders of desire is to provide some means of distinguishing desires that are truly my own from those which are not. The unwilling addict 'identifies himself ... through the formation of a second-order

volition, with one rather than with the other of his conflicting first-order desires. He makes one of them more truly his own and in so doing he withdraws himself from the other.<sup>23</sup> And it is in virtue of his identification and withdrawal, accomplished through the formation of a second-order volition that the unwilling addict can be subject to a force other than his own the result of which is his taking the drug against his will. 'It is in securing the conformity of his will to his second-order volition ... that a person exercises freedom of the will.'<sup>24</sup> It is impossible to do justice to Frankfurt's subtle and complex argument but the whole thesis is fraught with difficulties.

Firstly there are problems relating to what is involved in identifying with a particular desire. Is it no more than mere recognition or acknowledgement, or is it necessarily accompanied by an evaluation of some kind? Secondly, and more importantly, someone may well identify with first-order desires, in the sense that it is acknowledged and approved of and yet, as in the case of Angela, remain in important respects non-autonomous with respect to the formation of the desires in question. Thirdly, there is the problem of why someone confronted with the task of resolving two conflicting second-order desires should care about which one wins out in the end -second-order volitions are, after all, merely desires : Frankfurt seems to admit as much in a footnote, '... a person may be capricious and irresponsible in forming his second-order volitions and give no serious consideration to what is at stake. Second-order volitions express essential restrictions on the kind of basis, if any, upon which they are formed.'<sup>25</sup> If this is true we can ask why one cannot be a wanton with respect to one's second-order volitions. But even if a plausible story could be told whereby it could be firmly established that higher (and possibly higher still) orders of desire were not the result of wanton indifference, not to mention the problem of ensuring that one's identification with higher orders of desire is not itself a result of socialisation or other manipulative forces of which one is unaware, problems relating to identification still remain.

Seemingly aware of the difficulties Frankfurt says that it is possible to terminate a series of desires of higher and higher orders without cutting it off arbitrarily. The

possibility rests on a person identifying himself *decisively* with one of his first-order desires. 'When a person identifies ... *decisively* with a first-order desire this commitment "responds" throughout the potentially endless array of higher orders.'<sup>26</sup> We are asked to consider a person who, without reservation or conflict, wants to be motivated by the desire to concentrate on his work. According to Frankfurt the fact that his second-order volition to be moved by this desire is a decisive one means that there is no room for questions concerning the pertinence of desires or volitions of higher orders. Frankfurt also tries to dispense with the necessity for higher levels of endorsement of the initial act of identification or with lower-orders of desire as long as the initial endorsement has been made decisively. 'An (endorsement) is decisive if and only if it is made without reservation .... (that is, it is made) in the belief that no further accurate inquiry would require (the person) to change his mind.'<sup>27</sup>

And yet the problem remains: how are we to ensure the autonomy of acts of identification? One attempted solution has been provided by Gerald Dworkin. For an act of identification to merit the status of 'autonomous' it must, according to Dworkin, be 'procedurally independent' in that it must not have been influenced 'in ways that make the process of identification in some ways alien to the individual.'<sup>28</sup> I confess to having some sympathy with this way of dealing with a seemingly intractable problem even if it does account for appropriate acts of identification in negative terms. The fact remains that external influences of the kind which are likely to frustrate, inhibit or corrupt the normal process of thinking and reflection essential to autonomy are absent. In this way we might avoid the problem of infinite regress or the arbitrariness that might well be associated with commitments of this kind however decisively arrived at. Where one's commitments are unduly influenced by others, Dworkin describes such cases as failures of procedural independence.

Whatever the correct position on this may be it seems to me that Frankfurt's account of identifying with and committing oneself to one's desire (of whatever order) is a misrepresentation of what actually happens in a case of conflict between one course of action and another. When confronted with a decision between alternatives we do

not ask ourselves (i) what do I desire? (ii) what desire do I wish to be effective or what desire do I wish to be my will? A course of action does not (at least not usually) present itself to consciousness in a neutral or value-free way; in so far as we identify it *as* a course of action (among many) we attach some value or other to it as a possible means of satisfying oneself. Seeing things *as* worth having or doing, as beneficial, agreeable or novel as opposed to worthless, injurious or base and so on - constitutes what Bond calls a 'system of valuation'<sup>29</sup> and accounts for many of our second-order desires. In practical judgement I assess the merits of courses of action which in turn gives rise to desires of various kinds. As Watson puts it: 'In general, evaluations are prior and of the first-order. The first-order desires that result from practical judgements generate second-order volitions because they have this specific status; they do not have the special status that Frankfurt wants them to have because there is a higher-order desire concerning them.'<sup>30</sup>

It would seem then, that the idea of something's being 'really wanted' must draw on the language of value as opposed to higher levels of desire, but we are still far from getting a purchase on what is involved in the idea of really wanting something let alone being in a position of arriving at any significant conclusions concerning the relationship between freedom and doing what one really wants to do. It may help if we take up a point mentioned more than once already in this discussion, and that is the distinction between satisfaction of desire and satisfaction of self. As we have seen, it is possible to satisfy a particular desire such as spending money on luxuries of various kinds, only to find that something more is required if I am to feel satisfied. I may want to be elected to a particular office, succeed in getting elected and find that the reality of the position has more drawbacks than I envisaged resulting in the desire to be rid of it as soon as possible. Again, it is quite conceivable that I should desire something knowing full well that the object of my desire has distinct negative value and that I shall be profoundly unhappy if I satisfy it. Daniel, in Sartre's *Les Chemins de la Liberté* experienced his desire for homosexual relationships as repugnant and disgusting yet his desire for such liaisons was in no way diminished. Furthermore, this is not something confined to those desires which reduce us to the status of passive and unwilling victims; a reluctant homosexual may well be able to

control his desire. Talk of self-satisfaction however, presupposes a being with capacities and characteristics altogether absent in the animal kingdom and in very young children; I refer to the capacity for self-consciousness. A self-conscious being is necessarily aware of itself as having an identity over time; it is aware of itself as having a past and a future and there is more to his personal identity than that of which he is presently conscious.<sup>31</sup> Where there is a sense of personal continuity there exists the possibility of reflective desires the satisfaction of which contributes to self-satisfaction and self-fulfilment. And yet it is right to insist that it is not in virtue of the existence of such desires that we can be said to have a reason for doing one thing rather than another but the fact that we assign a value to the desired act in question.<sup>32</sup>

Self-conscious beings capable of formulating intentions with the idea of satisfying themselves do not flit, as it were, from one conscious experience to another with nothing more to aim at than desire-satisfaction. Instead, they choose between the demands of competing desires, satisfying some at the expense of others in the light of some 'life-plan' of their own. It would be a mistake to read too much into this; after all it is not meant to suggest a plan in the sense of a blueprint with a high degree of specificity. Some kind of 'plan' or 'project', however hazy and inarticulate, is pursued by all self-conscious beings. To be aware of oneself as a temporally extended agent is to be in the not always comfortable position of having to choose and decide between courses of action on the basis of some kind of evaluation of their merits and with reference to the kind of person I take myself to be or aspire to become. My freedom is diminished to the extent that my capacity for such choice is frustrated.

### **3.4 Desires and Evaluations**

A choice of life-plan is very different from choosing between marmalade and honey or between a trip to Bognor or Brighton. The difference is well illustrated by Taylor in terms of what he calls 'weak' and 'strong evaluation'. To return to a previous example, that of refraining from spitefully hurting someone in spite of a strong desire

to the contrary. My reason for refraining has to do with my belief that such behaviour is unbecoming or mean.

‘In this kind of case our desires are classified in such categories as higher and lower, virtuous or vicious, more and less fulfilling, more and less refined, profound and superficial, noble and base. They are judged as belonging to qualitatively different modes of life: fragmented or integrated, alienated or free, saintly or merely human, courageous or pusillanimous and so on ... Intuitively, the difference might be put in this way. In the first case, let us call it weak evaluation, we are concerned with outcomes, in the second, strong evaluation, with the quality of our motivation ... what is important is that strong evaluation is concerned with the qualitative *worth* of different desires.’<sup>33</sup>

A desire for marmalade is one of mere preference where the question of value does not arise.

For something to be judged good in weak evaluation it is sufficient that it be desired; this is not so with strong evaluation. We have reasons for repudiating certain desires not on the basis of mere incompatibility with other more strongly felt desires, but on the grounds of their being judged undesirable in so far as they are recognized as being unworthy or incompatible with a fulfilling and satisfying life. Taylor’s point in distinguishing between strong and weak evaluation is to contrast the different kinds of self that each involves. Unlike the strong evaluator who makes use of a language of evaluative contrasts, the weak evaluator is no more than a simple weigher or calculator, his calculations being largely hedonistic in kind. It is important to emphasize that strength of desire is irrelevant as a mark of what one most values. One can desire something so much that one is determined to get it in spite of one’s evaluative judgement that it is the very last thing one should be doing. In other words, one’s strongest desire may well be for something one least values. Anyone so motivated is considerably less free than one whose motivational and valuational system are in accord. It is in reflecting about our desires in terms of the kind of being we are that the idea of ‘true self’ begins to get a purchase.

In making a strong evaluation we are reflective about the kind of life we wish to live and the kind of person we take ourselves to be and would like to become. At this

level of evaluation we are made aware of the sheer plethora of possibilities facing us as human beings. It is not so much what the individual desires but what he might come to desire should circumstances change that is important. There is no guarantee that what I now identify as that which is really wanted will be viewed in the same light in five years or even five days time. It is important then that one should do one's best to minimize frustration as a result of acting in accordance with false beliefs or on the basis of inadequate information. There is no implication in any of this that identification with any particular course of action is vital to the account of freedom being developed; what is necessary for that account is that the individual be in a position of being able to take a different stance with respect to the object of identification in accordance with the developing self. Hence the importance of strong evaluation. There will be many occasions in the course of self-development when I need to suppress or radically alter the kind of thing with which I readily identify - not only for my own self-interest but in the interests of the community of which I am a part and in which the opportunities and possibilities for self-development arise.

What I take myself to be - my self-conception - is not something I suddenly discover, something that is there all along waiting to be identified. On the contrary, it is something with a permanently elusive quality. It is something about which I can have a more or less clear idea depending on the extent to which I am in a position to take advantage of the opportunities which present themselves from day to day. The self crystallizes as it were in accordance with one's commitments, convictions and values. Animals and infants are deficient in this respect. They are also indifferent to the quality of their motivations and their desires are to be distinguished, if at all, in virtue of their strength or intensity only. The same goes for obstacles; we identify an obstacle for what it is as a result of being able to make certain qualitative distinctions between our many and varied goals and it is because we are rational beings possessing criteria of significance with respect to goals and purposes that we value freedom so highly. All of this seems to reinforce the importance of strong evaluation.

In so far as we do have the capacity for strong evaluation we are not doomed to live the extraordinarily impoverished existence of the weak evaluator. We have other bases for choice than that of 'most pleasurable'. And yet if we really are concerned about leading fulfilled and satisfying lives the notion of doing what we really want is both insufficient and misleading. Self-satisfaction is something very different from desire-satisfaction in that it presupposes a criterion for so ordering our desires and preferences that is not itself reducible to desires and preferences.<sup>34</sup> Freedom cannot be reduced to doing what one wants. The expression 'what I really want' quite properly suggests that the individual has reflected on the pros and cons of various alternatives and if freedom means anything at all it is very much a matter of being in a position to do just this and to act in accordance with one's evaluation. But reducing freedom to action in accordance with what one really wants begs an important question, namely the extent to which wanting something is reason enough for action. In subsequent sections I hope to show that there is more to rational action than mere pursuit of desire-satisfaction and the free person is one who is in a position to act in accordance with something other than that which he most wants.

In typical cases of constraint we feel frustrated when forcibly prevented from giving free rein to our desires or wants. This goes some way towards explaining why freedom is so highly valued; we feel frustrated when we are prevented from acting in accordance with our choices. Not all instances of unfreedom result in frustration of this kind. When forced to do something by another which I would have done anyway, I am not frustrated. Nevertheless, I am unfree in a most important respect. Although I am not prevented from obtaining whatever it is that I want, my capacity for choice is altogether circumscribed; had I chosen an alternative course of action I would have been prevented from carrying it out. To those who would take issue with our refusal to allow those actions one is forced to perform (when the action in question is what one would have done in any case) as being compatible with free agency, there is a simple reply. In such cases the choice between possible actions is non-existent; lack of frustration has nothing to do with it. It is conceivable that I might change my mind and choose something quite different from the course of action permitted. Unless there is the possibility of choice between alternatives it is



unreasonable to suppose that the conditions of freedom obtain. One is free only if one has the opportunity to do more than whatever it is one actually does at a particular time. Consider the case of someone who is so conditioned that he accepts with equanimity the servile conditions under which he is forced to live; he is not in the least frustrated and his desires and opportunities coincide perfectly. Whatever else we are permitted to conclude, we are not justified in calling him free. Again, he might well desire those things which are incompatible with the life of a free person such as being in a state of permanent inebriation or addiction. To refuse to concede that freedom is something other than desire-satisfaction is to remain blind to an important distinction which as well as reducing freedom to a purely mentalistic concept has, if ignored, paradoxical and dangerous consequences. I refer, of course, to the difference between being free and feeling free. If freedom were to collapse into a mere subjective feeling we would be forced to concede that the inhabitants of *Brave New World*, whose desires are manipulated to coincide with whatever is required of them, are as free as anyone else. Berlin recognised this when he wrote: 'If degrees of freedom were a function of the satisfaction of desires, I could increase my freedom as effectively by eliminating desires as by satisfying them.'<sup>35</sup> If, on the other hand, one's freedom is a function of the degree to which one's actions are in accordance with one's self-conception by reference to which one's significant purposes gain application, it behoves us to provide a convincing argument to show what is wrong with criteria of significance resting on no more than subjective preference. This is not a straightforward task but is something which is dealt with at length in the second part of this essay.

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It is not only within certain theories of freedom that the satisfaction of desire is considered to be important, it is a prominent feature in most recent accounts of well-being and human flourishing. Although it appears in different guises, sometimes as 'post-reflective-desire-satisfaction' (as in John White's *The Aims Of Education Restated*) or the satisfaction of 'informed-desires' (as in his *Education and the Good Life: Beyond the National Curriculum* and James Griffin's *Well Being: Its Meaning*,

*Measurement and Moral Importance*) it is because writers such as these are sceptical of the possibility of providing objective criteria by reference to which people may be said to flourish that they fall back on desire-satisfaction and accordingly rest content with accounts of well-being which are ultimately subjective.

So far we have had reason to doubt that the measure of freedom people may be said to enjoy rests entirely on evaluations that are entirely subjective. No amount of satisfaction with a particular set of circumstances will suffice, for unless people have access to a variety of significant alternatives other than those which they happen to want they are certainly not free. And we have seen that criteria of significance do not themselves rest on subjective preferences. The charge of authoritarianism is easily levelled against those who would adopt a more objectivist stance with respect to rational choice than that associated with desire-satisfaction, and the charge is clearly in need of rebuttal. The next three sections of this essay attempt to defend objectivism against such criticisms.

Section 4 is largely an attempt to cast doubt on the assumption that desire-satisfaction and self-satisfaction are as closely associated as subjectivists would have us believe, and to suggest that although the opportunity for choice between alternatives is crucial to both freedom and well-being, the basis upon which choices are made is only partially explicable by reference to our wants. Choices are no less governed by our knowledge and understanding of both ourselves and what is judged to be of value and significant in human life on the one hand and with what is thought to be appropriate and in accordance with our real-interests on the other. Rational choice cannot rest entirely on desire-satisfaction however well-informed and in Section 5 I not only refute the claim that desires are sufficient reasons for action but dispute that Humean theory of motivation (to the effect that desires are the key to rendering motivation coherent) upon which so many subjectivists rely. If our scepticism concerning what is little more than dogma in philosophical psychology is justified and that coherence attaches to some form of moral realism, we shall be strengthened in our conviction, to be sustained in Section 6, that we do indeed possess interests which are genuine and whose failure to meet would result in our being seriously harmed. What these

amount to, as well as how actions based on their due recognition are more rational than those attempting to satisfy desires, is there made explicit. It will be argued that criteria for rational choice may satisfy both the demands of objectivity as well as the non-violation of a person's individuality. The fact that there is no single *summum bonum* does nothing to diminish the conviction that whether we flourish or not depends largely on the extent to which our interests are met. While these vary to some extent from one person to another there are limits beyond which the rational person cannot go and such limits are capable of objective determination.

## 4. DESIRE SATISFACTION AND WELL-BEING

### 4.1 Post-Reflective-Desire-Satisfaction and Well-Being

Until the publication of *The Aims of Education Restated* philosophers of education seem to have been reluctant to face up to the question posed by John White in the third chapter of that book namely, 'What is the "well-being" of the pupil?'<sup>1</sup>. In spite of the fact that the nature of human flourishing has exercised the imagination of philosophers since Socrates it refuses to lend itself to a schematic account. Like so much else in philosophy we are better able to understand it as a result of critically evaluating the attempts of others to flesh it out.

In spite of more recent thoughts on the matter presented in his *Education and The Good Life: Beyond the National Curriculum* I remain unconvinced by White's continued insistence on accounting for personal well-being in terms of desire-satisfaction. In the earlier book he explains well-being in terms of what he calls 'post-reflective-desire-satisfaction' (PRDS) whereas his latest account is in terms of 'informed-desires'(ID). Rather than present summaries of either the third chapter of the earlier book ('The Good of the Pupil') or the second chapter of the later book ('Personal Well-Being') I prefer to draw attention to those features of his argument to which I am fundamentally opposed and in so doing construct an alternative and less subjective account of well-being. The problems with which I should like to take issue to begin with include: (i) his conception of rationality and his neutrality with respect to possible ends of rational choice; (ii) his failure to distinguish between satisfaction of *desire* and satisfaction of *self*; (iii) his account of reflection in PRDS; (iv) his emphasis on choice as opposed to *discovery* of values; (v) his scepticism concerning the possibility of objective values and his reliance on the polarisation of 'ethical experts' on the one hand and individual choice on the other; (vi) his individualistic account of human nature and his less than adequate account of the 'social nature of man' which, in *The Aims of Education Restated* leads him to characterise individual well-being as something over and above the well-being of the society of which one is a part.

One of the most troublesome aspects of White's account of well-being is the concept of rationality employed. In actual fact it is a combination of a theory of rationality and a theory of what is good for individuals. Briefly stated it is that if upon reflection a person prefers the satisfaction of desire *d* to the satisfaction of other desires, he is rational to the extent that he sets about satisfying that desire. 'Educationally', according to White, 'this generates the aim of equipping the pupil to work out what he most prefers to do e.g. by providing him with an understanding of different ends-in-themselves and seeing that he develops the disposition to make reflective and, therefore, autonomous choices.' And he believes that an attractive feature of this view 'is that it seems to make the individual himself the final arbiter of his own good, not a blind follower of the authority of others, whether God or men. It underpins an education which avoids the imposition of value judgements on the pupil: he is not to be indoctrinated with others' pictures of the good, but freely chooses his own.'<sup>2</sup> Almost all the reservations mentioned in (i) - (vi) above arise out of this small section of White's book. However, it is with his conception of rationality that I am concerned at the moment, a conception which, apart from relying on desire satisfaction to provide the grounds for choice, is neutral as far as choice of ends is concerned. Moreover this conception of rational choice makes it difficult to know how one might bring a 'coherent ordering' to the alternatives open to one.

It would seem that for both White and Rawls only the choice of means is open to criticism; choice of ends (assuming there to be no fear of harming others) being a matter of individual choice, it being an impertinence for one person to call the reflective choices of another irrational. But suppose someone were to decide that he wanted to spend his time doing something quite ridiculous such as counting blades of grass in a field. (The example is that of Rawls and is taken up by White as a possible criticism of the PRDS theory of well-being.<sup>3</sup>) Both take it as absurd that anyone should choose to waste his time in anything so devoid of interest or purpose yet they differ in the reasons they provide for the absurdity of such an activity. Rawls is anxious to demonstrate the truth of what he takes to be a 'basic principle of motivation' which he refers to as the 'Aristotelian Principle'<sup>4</sup> according to which 'other things being equal, human beings enjoy the exercise of their realized capacities

... (they) take more pleasure in doing something as they become more proficient at it, and of two activities they do equally well, they prefer the one calling for a larger repertoire of more intricate and subtle discriminations.’<sup>5</sup> This is why, according to Rawls, those of us who can play both draughts and chess generally prefer the latter.<sup>6</sup> Unfortunately this so called principle is open to a number of objections, the most obvious of which are referred to by Brian Barry.<sup>7</sup> Either Rawls’s principle is meant to be taken as an empirical generalisation, in which case it would seem to lack all foundation, or it is meant to serve as something constitutive of rationality as such, the price of which being the neutral account of rationality which Rawls is at pains to defend. In the end Rawls has no choice but to defend the principle as an empirical generalisation about people, as his grass-counting example would indicate. At least in so doing he is not open to the double-edged charge of inconsistency and perfectionism. Rawls tries to persuade us that anyone with a disposition towards counting blades of grass all day would, in all probability, be suffering from some kind of neurosis. The fact remains, however, that a person who chose such a bizarre pastime may or may not be neurotic; he may have considered the pros and cons of spending his time in this way and be able to tell a very convincing tale as to why it merits his attention. Admittedly for such an example to be remotely convincing it would be a very strange tale indeed. Where someone opted for draughts at the expense of cultivating his talent for chess, we would surely not dismiss him as neurotic. For this reason it will not do to invoke the Aristotelian Principle in order to demonstrate the abnormality of such behaviour; to do so would involve one in the circular argument of presupposing its truth in order to defend it against counter examples.<sup>8</sup> But Rawls cannot be accused of circular reasoning. In the end he is forced to admit that if we allow that a person’s nature is to enjoy grass-counting - or for that matter anything else equally futile - ‘then surely a rational plan for him will centre around this activity. It will be the end that regulates the schedule of his actions, and this establishes that is good for him.’<sup>9</sup> In other words, not even for Rawls does the rationality of a chosen end depend upon the truth of the Aristotelian Principle; the point of assuming it to be true is that it is supposed to account for those things recognised as good for human beings as they are.<sup>10</sup>

White also invokes a theory of 'what we implicitly know men are naturally like'.<sup>11</sup> Human beings are such that they seek to satisfy a huge variety of desires and for this reason a man who chose to count grass and nothing else would indeed be absurd in maintaining that his well-being lay in this direction and in this direction alone. But White provides us with a totally unsatisfactory account of *why* such a theory is absurd. As long as the grass-counter has *other* desires (the desire for friendship, art, relaxation and curiosity, to name but a few which are appropriate to man as part of his nature) it is obvious that his well-being cannot 'consist in the satisfaction of what he most desires on reflection.'<sup>12</sup> As long as 'what he most desires' is understood as a 'graded pattern of different desires' as opposed to one dominant desire, White is committed to exactly the same subjective account of rational choice in order to avoid the 'danger of embracing a perfectionist view that accords higher status to some ends than to others (and, educationally, leads us back into the familiar problem of imposition and indoctrination)'.<sup>13</sup> No matter how stultifying, trivial or pointless something might be, as long as I am convinced that it is worthwhile and rewarding, as long as I find it agreeable and satisfying, as long as I remain of the opinion that it is the very essence of personal fulfilment, there is nothing anyone can say which is reason enough to demonstrate that I am mistaken.

Can we really rest content with a view of human well-being which is restricted to the mere satisfaction of desires chosen on reflection? And is there no more to rationality than the maximisation of such satisfaction? Surely any account of well-being and the choice of ends which are essential to it must accommodate the fact that we are not mere bundles of desires confronted with the task of getting them into some sort of order of priority. Desires are not things that descend upon us from nowhere; they have a certain rationale. We come to desire *x* rather than *y* for reasons to do with the aspect under which we see them. We recognise *x* as possessing certain desirability-characteristics which are absent in *y*. And it is in virtue of such characteristics that we come to acknowledge the worth or value of *x* because we believe that the pursuit of *x* will satisfy us. We do not choose *x* because we already have a desire for it; we choose it because we recognise it as possessing some inherent worth. Now White of course will have no truck with all of this. While

he is quite prepared to accept that reasons for choosing  $x$  are reasons in virtue of the benefit accruing, he (like Rawls) believes that there is no more to this than mere desire-satisfaction. It is part of my thesis that while the reasons offered for choosing  $x$  as opposed to  $y$  may be subjective in the sense that certain activities (reading poetry say) are not necessarily a feature of everyone's well-being, there are nonetheless very good reasons for wanting some things (such as friendship or a free press) which are objective in the sense that there are reasons why anyone should assign a positive value to such things. In other words whilst the notion of well-being is not a unitary concept in that there is only one such state which is common to us all - a life devoted to scholarship, community service, the theatre or whatever, may not meet with universal approval - there are limits to what it may coherently encompass and such limits are delineated by reference to something other than PRDS as we shall see when returning to this issue in Section 6. To confine the reasons for action to mere desire-satisfaction is to assume that desire-satisfaction entails self-satisfaction. Yet it is quite conceivable that my satisfied desire for  $x$  may leave *me* thoroughly unsatisfied. I may end up feeling ashamed or guilty or simply indifferent; I may not actually mind, in retrospect, if my desire had been frustrated altogether.

For the grass-counter, or anyone engaged in a similarly worthless exercise, to merit the status of someone in pursuit of a rational enterprise he would have to be able to explain what there was about the answer that was so important. If all he can say is that his desire to know the total number is overriding, or that he is not really interested in knowing the answer, it's the activity itself which is fun, I see no reason for concluding that his choice is in the least bit rational if it occupies him to the exclusion of so much else. The very least we should require of him would be that he could say *something* about the importance of having this particular desire satisfied; what is there in it for him? If desire-satisfaction is to be *post-reflective* there must have occurred some sort of judgement as to the relative merits of grass-counting. But this involves a conscious attempt to work out what reasons there are for wanting a particular desire satisfied. The rational person reflects upon the degree to which a satisfied desire is likely to satisfy him and does not stop short in the way suggested by White to the effect that 'reflectiveness ... subserves desire-satisfaction.'<sup>14</sup> A



person may well achieve PRDS to the maximum degree and still lead a debilitating and stultifying existence which is both harmful to him and the society of which he is a member. Any account of rational choice which ignores the relationship between it and a person's *good* or real-interest, concentrating exclusively on his chosen goals, is radically misconceived.

There is a good deal more to life-planning than doing the things we want most and those concerned with the education of the young must recognise that in broadening their pupils' horizons by introducing them to the possibilities inherent in various life-styles they are starting them off on a voyage of discovery, not on a shopping spree. They are concerned with equipping children with the skills and capacities which are necessary in order to discover what is of lasting value and not simply with enabling them to satisfy present and future desires. Children need to be taught how to reflect and to be provided with the relevant criteria and it is White's failure to provide a satisfactory account of what is involved here that prompts much of the following discussion.<sup>15</sup>

The younger the child the more difficult is he likely to find the task of coherently ordering desires into some sort of hierarchy. If he is to leave school with anything resembling a 'life-plan' he needs to be able to evaluate his wants in some way or other. As an adolescent he may want all kinds of things which are either incompatible or unrealistic. The older we get the more likely it is that a combination of circumstances and worldly wisdom enable us to recognise our own limitations and we are better placed to accept that some of the things we wanted, or still want, cannot be accommodated with many other things which we have chosen to do with our lives. It is no easy task to forge the bewildering variety of competing desires into some sort of order. Success in this is as much as anything a mark of our maturity. The fact remains however that working out a hierarchy of desires in accordance with the degree to which they are wanted is no more the mark of a rational agent than is rendering them consistent within such a hierarchy. If teachers are to be of assistance to youngsters engaged in the struggle towards such a maturity they need to provide a more reliable criterion than something as subjective as desire-satisfaction.

If it is true that deliberation is of ends as well as means then any ordering of desires must take place in the context of some understanding of the kind of life that is likely to result in personal well-being. Given the plethora of possibilities, the only way of determining which desires to satisfy is by reference to our convictions about the respective merits of particular life-plans. Children must therefore be brought to consider the desirability or otherwise of a whole range of activities and ways of life<sup>16</sup> and teachers must not allow themselves to lose sight of the importance of this under the deluge of decisions required of them on a daily basis all of which should, ideally, subserve the objective of rational life-planning. They must guard against the danger of allowing means to become inflated into ends and, in particular, against falling into the trap of our contemporary malaise which is one of value-neutrality with regard to the kinds of life that are compatible with human well-being.

Now it is undeniable that a normal (adult) human being is not indifferent to his fate. It is man's capacity for reason that not only distinguishes him from the animal kingdom but elevates him to the status of 'chooser'. Unlike animals, and for that matter the very young, a normal adult is not only capable of working out what it is that he really wants, he also has certain views as to their desirability. In so far as the animal or infant may be said to feel anything at all when they get what they want this state is little more than one of equilibrium between desire and its satisfaction (or non-frustration). In no way can the satisfied desire be equated with self-satisfaction; for this to be possible an individual must adopt some stance or attitude towards the desire in question. He must see it as worthwhile or desirable and the satisfaction which is consequent upon achieving or obtaining that which one *values* is altogether different from mere contentment. All kinds of things can result in someone feeling contented; he may simply wake up content or find contentment in sitting in the sun. Although the feeling of satisfaction one enjoys as a result of obtaining or pursuing that which one believes to be worthwhile may be phenomenologically indistinct from mere contentment, only in the latter case is it appropriate to speak of someone being satisfied *with* something. One feels content *because* of something but one can feel satisfied *with* something only if the feeling is a result of some particular *judgement* that the thing in question conforms to one's ambitions, hopes or ideals. The theory

under discussion clearly provides no room for such a distinction. Well-being, on this view, is a species of contentedness.<sup>17</sup> The capacity to evaluate is therefore crucial in any coherent account of *being* satisfied with something and, accordingly, in any coherent account of well-being.

The comparison with emotions and their 'objects' is obvious. Emotions do not descend on us out of the blue; they presuppose judgements and evaluations to the effect that something is shameful (in the case of remorse) or dangerous (in the case of fear) or whatever. In feeling satisfied *with* something one necessarily evaluates the object of one's satisfaction. And just as it makes sense to question the appropriateness of one's emotion, talk of the justification of a particular evaluation in cases of what one finds satisfying is equally in order, which is to say that a person must be able to provide reasons why particular states of affairs are seen as desirable or otherwise. Once again this is a mark of maturity and young children are defective in this respect lacking, as they do, a strong sense of the future and the capacity to formulate life-plans of their own. It may or may not make sense to attribute anything peculiar to man in terms of what Mill called a 'distinctive human endowment'<sup>18</sup> or what Aristotle referred to as a 'characteristic ergon'<sup>19</sup> but an adult human being who had no room for friendship, who was never bored but found everything of equal interest, who was indifferent to the aesthetic qualities of his environment, who had no ambition of any kind, who was unconcerned about the truth or otherwise of various propositions or was never moved by moral considerations would scarcely qualify as living the kind of life appropriate to persons.

In what follows I propose to consider what is involved in reflecting upon one's well-being and the nature of the good life, and in so doing hope to show not only the limitations of that view so readily adopted by White whereby values are simply chosen, but also to spell out an alternative model of how values and commitments are more properly understood as something to be discovered rather than chosen. Such an account, if correct, offers a significant pointer towards providing value judgements with a more objective status than can possibly be allowed on White's account. We shall then be in a position to appreciate the real value of autonomy and freedom as

essential ingredients in human well-being and as something possessing intrinsic value of a very special kind. In the process it is hoped that the nature of the third variable in our triadic schema will be brought into sharper focus, as indeed will the relationship between well-being and rational choice.

The importance of reflection in determining the value of things has long been recognised by White. In his book, *Towards a Compulsory Curriculum*, he argued that 'What is intrinsically valuable is identifiable with what a person would on reflection want for its own sake'<sup>20</sup> and it is reflection which enables a person to determine which of all possible options he prefers and which is essential in the weighing of relative importance of various ways of life.<sup>21</sup> The problem, of course, is one of adjudicating between those considerations which are relevant to the formulation of priorities, and those which are hindrances to such decision making. White, however, is adamant: 'The individual himself must make the ultimate decisions,' but the basis on which decisions are made is the result of a very special kind of reflection. 'He has to dig beneath his surface inclinations, steel himself against unthinking acceptance of ideals of life which he has picked up from others, *penetrate to more fundamental levels of his being, to his "deepest needs"*.'<sup>22</sup> The italicised phrase fits uneasily with mere desire-satisfaction. After all, the satisfaction of desires and acting in accordance with my needs are frequently impossible to reconcile, and in what follows White seems altogether too vague about the nature of the reflection in question. 'Suppose,' he says, 'there is nothing at the bottom of the barrel. Can we *discover* our deepest selves? Or is *self-creation* ... a more appropriate description? It is nonsense to say that we create ourselves *ex nihilo* .... But ours are still the ultimate choices ... . Ultimately, perhaps, we cannot adjudicate between man as self-creator and man as self-discoverer. We may do worse than to revert to the old notion of human life as a process of self-realisation, relying on the Janus-faced character of this concept, with its suggestions both of coming to know oneself and of working out a self-determined plan.'<sup>23</sup>

As it stands, this is both confusing and misleading. The confusion arises from the juxtaposition of the language of desire-satisfaction with that of needs. Do I reflect

in order to find out what I *want* or what I *need*? To see how widely different these notions are, one has only to point to the fact that one can be mistaken about the latter in ways which do not make sense in cases of what is merely wanted. I may not always *know* what it is that I want, but when I do the question of error does not arise. White's insistence (which is at least consistent with his overall thesis) that 'reflectiveness subserves desire-satisfaction' and that 'we should do the things we most want to: that is what life-planning is all about,'<sup>24</sup> is simply unacceptable and, as the argument proceeds, we shall see how reference to interests are crucial in determining where one's well-being might lie. Until more has been said about *what* it is that one discovers through reflection it is difficult to indicate in what respects the statement misleads. In reflecting about what to do with my life I am trying to do something more than acquire self-knowledge, important as this undoubtedly is. I am also trying to arrive at certain conclusions about what is worthwhile. I am concerned with not merely *believing* that I am flourishing but with actual flourishing. White gives up too soon. His supposition that 'one cannot, finally, say what one's well being *is* as distinct from what one *thinks* it is'<sup>25</sup> would, if it were true, mean that there would be no reason why I should care about being misled over the issues involved. What would it matter to me, as long as I had a worked out hierarchy of desires, all of which were integrated and consistent together with the possibility of seeing them satisfied if my chosen life is stultifying and worthless? On White's account the only room for *mistaken* evaluation is an evaluation that is unreflectively arrived at. Given the subjectivist premise with which he begins there is no distinction in reality. It is this premise which needs refuting if we are to provide for the possibility of genuine human flourishing.

Not the least worrying aspect of subjectivism is the possibilities it affords for the manipulation of people and their beliefs. The subjectivist cannot even fall back on the value of autonomy. White tries, but his subjectivism prevents him. All he can really say in defence of autonomy in the *Aims of Education Restated* is that it is useful in helping one formulate a 'settled, integrated system of preferences,'<sup>26</sup> thus avoiding a life of either permanent conflict or blind reliance on the authority of others. Autonomy is indeed a necessary ingredient of personal well-being but for different

reasons to those offered by White. As we shall see, it is valuable in itself in that human beings who are heteronomous lack the dignity associated with personhood. It has an intrinsic value in not being a mere means to something else.<sup>27</sup>

If we were to ask White what he thought the point of all this reflection amounted to he would say that it is to enable pupils to make choices with respect to possible ways of life. And there is more to this than mere plumping. 'One chooses against a background of wants which one already has ... . Choosing is weighing relative importances.'<sup>28</sup> The importance of this in White's account cannot be overestimated. Having gone through a period of compulsory schooling the ideal pupil to emerge is the autonomous, reflective chooser and it is an ideal which, in my view, is in need of considerable modification before it is acceptable as an aim of education. It assumes a model of man which is deficient in many respects; a model which fits uneasily with something White says immediately afterwards. In all this reflecting about the life I am to choose, 'I can only think this through in the full knowledge of what kind of creature I am ...'<sup>29</sup> Now, either I am capable of choosing this or I am not. If I am, then 'what I am' is hardly a constraint upon my reflective choices; if I am not, there are limits to choice of which the free and autonomous person needs to be aware. The picture that emerges from White's book is not of a person constrained in this way. Nature and human culture only assist in helping pupils to establish their priorities; in the end '*the individual must make the ultimate decisions*.'<sup>30</sup> There is a tension here which is troublesome, the significance of which seems to go unrecognised by White, yet an exploration of this tension will prove not only illuminating as far as a proper understanding of the limits to individual choice is concerned but will also be helpful in providing a basis from which to construct an alternative picture of human well-being.

Sometime during the middle of the twentieth century epistemology managed to escape from the individualistic bias which had been its stranglehold from Descartes to Russell. No doubt the solipsistic conclusions resulting from attempts to ground knowledge in sense-data and kindred concepts provided the necessary impetus. Unfortunately, progress in practical reasoning has been less obvious. Part of the

problem has been the insistence of those philosophers who have tried to provide some objective basis for moral reasoning to restrict the debate to the question of how moral judgements may be shown to have truth values, whereas the aim of practical reasoning is less concerned with arriving at the truth (less concerned with what to believe) than with the determination of right action (with the aim of knowing what to do or be). In so far as practical knowledge is possible it presupposes the possibility of being mistaken. Not the least difficulty with subjectivism is that standards of correct judgement in such matters originate within the individual. But as Wittgenstein succinctly observes, if 'whatever is going to seem right to me is right ... that only means that here we can't talk about "right".'<sup>31</sup> Judgement, in other words, presupposes certain public (objective) standards of correctness which is why it won't do to reduce practical reasoning to a species of choice-making or commitment as we find in so much recent moral philosophy influenced in large part by people like Hare and resulting in statements to the effect that choices are made against a background of wants one already has,<sup>32</sup> and that 'we eventually reach a point (in rationally deciding between competing life-plans) ... where we just have to decide which plan we most prefer without further guidance from principle.'<sup>33</sup> The view of freedom underpinning all this is one which relies on the self as a subject of an independent and 'self-determined' will, the tenability of which is open to question.

The defects in Hare's account of moral reasoning, as well as the serious implications for moral education, have been ably demonstrated by Grenville Wall.<sup>34</sup> The antinomy or paradox in moral reasoning which Hare endeavours to solve in his *Freedom and Reason* arises, according to Wall, out of his conviction that (a) 'one of the most important constituents of our freedom, as moral agents, is the freedom to form our own opinions about moral questions', and (b) 'the answering of moral questions is, or ought to be, a rational activity.'<sup>35</sup> It is the apparent contradiction between freedom and reason that gives rise to the paradox. And yet, Wall argues, such a paradox is incapable of resolution if its first term is taken to mean that the source of correct practical reasoning lies within the individual will. If this is indeed the case it would necessitate abandoning the second term of the paradox - at least if by 'rational activity' Hare means that public standards of correctness are applied to

moral reasoning. But it is clear that Hare means nothing of the sort because reason, for him, is subservient to the will in moral judgement.<sup>36</sup> It is, therefore, what the individual himself desires that is important and which, in the end, provides the final authority for any particular moral judgement. The consequences for education of reducing moral judgement to no more than personal commitment or a function of individual inclination are wide-ranging and serious. It is hardly surprising that the ethic of individualism is such a pervasive feature of contemporary society when pupils leave school with values premised on something so subjective.

Wall tries to show that Hare's ethical individualism must be incorrect for a number of reasons. Firstly, following Wittgenstein, he maintains that where there are no rules or public criteria of correctness in making judgements the notion ceases to have application.<sup>37</sup> Secondly, it presupposes a Humean scepticism with regard to the power of reason in human action. This dualism between reason and passion, Wall argues, implies that rational criticism of action is possible only when it can be shown that people have chosen means which are empirically appropriate to the achievement of the ends they have set for themselves, and, as we shall see in the next section, there is reason to believe that this is a very misleading and highly restrictive account of rationality. As Wall says, 'Wants are not, for the most part, "brute facts", for the very language in which they are described and made intelligible to us contain the seeds of the possibility of rational appraisal.' Which means that 'choosing is only possible in contexts where choices can be rationally evaluated.'<sup>38</sup> And again, the principles which form the major premise in moral reasoning in Hare's theory, are not freely chosen in the way Hare would have us believe. They are, Wall properly reminds us, *presupposed* by the possibility of choice, for how else could we distinguish between choosing and mere organic or bodily movements towards something. In other words, *X* cannot be said to have *chosen* to  $\Phi$  simply in virtue of his  $\Phi$ -ing. Likewise, there is more to subscribing to a principle or set of values than merely announcing the fact. This would amount to what Charles Taylor calls 'radical choice' - or choice which is not grounded in reason. As he reminds us, the dilemma confronting the young man in *L'Existentialisme est un Humanisme*, between staying with his mother and joining the Resistance, is indeed something we should



normally characterise as a dilemma. But what makes it such is that he faces two moral claims upon his allegiance, claims which are not themselves created by radical choice. If they were, all that would be required for the solution to moral dilemmas would be a simple declaration to the effect that one had decided to do one thing rather than another. But the resolution of moral dilemmas is much more complicated. At the very least it requires a capacity to employ an evaluative contrastive vocabulary by reference to which 'choice' becomes intelligible. If it is the case that we can make radical choices without regard to evaluation such a choice becomes, as Taylor says, a simple expression of preference (as opposed to a choice made by a strong evaluator).<sup>39</sup> Indeed, it is possible to go further and say that it is by reference to our capacity for strong evaluation that our identity as persons is circumscribed. Deprived of this we would, in Taylor's words, 'cease to be ourselves, by which we do not mean trivially that we would be different in the sense of having some properties other than those we now have ... but that we would lose the very possibility of being an agent who evaluates; that our existence as persons, and hence our ability to adhere as persons to certain evaluations, would be impossible outside the horizon of these essential evaluations that we would break down as persons, be incapable of being persons in the full sense.'<sup>40</sup>

Practical knowledge may well be possible but only where there is a measure of self-knowledge whereby particular courses of action are imbued with significance within a particular scheme of things. The truth of this becomes apparent when we consider what it would be like to commit oneself to values on the basis of desire-satisfaction alone. Such a policy would leave one totally devoid of personal integrity. The satisfied desire is (trivially) my desire, but for that desire to be part of me in the sense that it is *me* that is satisfied and not merely the desire, a view of the self is required which is defined by reference to something other than that which is in endless pursuit of desire-satisfaction however reflectively arrived at. The idea is not easy to spell out, but I believe it receives careful and elegant articulation in a book by Michael Sandel.

'In so far as I possess something, I am at once related to it and distanced from it. To say that I possess a certain trait or desire or

ambition, is to say that I am related to it in a certain way - it is *mine* rather than *yours* - and also that I am distanced from it in a certain way - it is *mine* rather than *me*. The latter point means that if I lose a thing I possess, I am still the same 'I' who had it; this is the sense, paradoxical at first, but unavoidable on reflection, in which the notion of possession is a distancing notion. This distancing aspect is essential to the continuity of the self. It preserves for the self a certain dignity and integrity by saving it from transformation in the face of the slightest contingency. Preserving this distance, and the integrity it implies, typically requires a certain kind of self-knowledge.

To preserve the distinction between what is *me* and what is (merely) *mine*, I must know, or be able to sort out when the occasion demands, something about who I am.<sup>41</sup>

One is reminded of an essay by Iris Murdoch in which she is critical of reducing individuality to an abstract and lonely will.<sup>42</sup> Such an analysis, she believes, 'makes no sense of (a person) as continually active, as making progress, or of her inner acts as belonging to her or forming part of a continuous fabric of being'. And it is such metaphors as 'fabric of being' and 'vision' which are indispensable. What we desire is a function of what we can see, which means that we are not free to choose in the way that Hare and Sartre would have us believe, because what we *see* is not entirely within our control. 'Man is not a combination of an impersonal rational thinker and a personal will. He is a confined being who sees, and who desires in accordance with what he sees, and who has some slight control over the direction and focus of his vision.'<sup>43</sup>

Although White appears not to recognise the distinction between desire-satisfaction and self-satisfaction its force becomes apparent in his example of a pupil who is asked to reflect upon the merits or otherwise of a career in the civil service. White wants him to ask questions like 'Is the secure life of a civil servant found to prove satisfying to me in the long term?' and would caution him to think this through in the full knowledge of *what he is*.<sup>44</sup> But looked at within the context of well-being as PRDS, it is impossible to grant that there is any more to all this than making a choice of career in the light of those desires he would like satisfied, or, which is more or less the same thing, which desires left unsatisfied will cause him most frustration. But

in reflecting on the kind of person one is, one is engaged in an altogether different enterprise from reflecting on what it is one most desires together with the best means of realising it. As Sandel puts it:

‘Where the subject is regarded as prior to ends, self-knowledge is not a possibility .... The bounds of the self are fixed and within them all is transparent. The relevant moral question is not "Who am I?" (for the answer to this question is given in advance) but rather "What ends shall I choose?" and this is a question that is addressed to the will.

For the self whose identity is constituted in the light of ends already before it, agency consists less in summoning the will than in seeking self-understanding. The relevant question is not what ends to choose, for my problem is precisely that the answer to this question is already given, but rather who I am, and how I am to discern in this cluster of possible ends what is me from what is mine. Here the bounds of the self are not fixtures but possibilities, their contours no longer self-evident but at least partly informed. Rendering them clear and defining my identity are one and the same.’<sup>45</sup>

It is all very well for White to invoke the metaphor of ‘depth’ and the necessity of penetrating to the ‘fundamental layers of one’s being’<sup>46</sup> but in the context of his overall thesis it is not clear what this could possibly mean.

Iris Murdoch believes that when proper attention is given to the moral context in which action is required, there is little or no scope for choice as such. If this is correct, the implications for a theory of freedom and for bringing up children to understand something of their own well-being are profound. This emphasis on one’s status as a moral being is crucial if we are properly to understand what is involved in reflecting, not only about moral dilemmas, but upon the numerous possibilities open to one. Not only must children be brought up to have some understanding of who they are and what it is that really matters to them but, importantly, they must learn to appreciate the significance of the broader social context in which decisions are made and actions are performed. Decisions made in ignorance of this are not those of the free man but of one who is, to varying degrees, blinkered or constrained in his appreciation of the full significance of what he might be doing. For there to be any possibility of practical knowledge the scope for individual choice must of

necessity be restricted.<sup>47</sup> This claim, together with its implications for individual freedom and well-being, merits careful examination.

From his earliest days, the child chooses within the context of a particular culture with a language, concepts and traditions of its own. These are inherited and are as much a part of his self-identity as any desires he might have or choices he might make. Indeed, it is impossible to see how he could come to want anything at all without reference to this shared and common framework. Not only does it determine his whole conception of himself, it provides him with the wherewithal for the adoption of those ideals in accordance with which he is able to conclude that it is better to do one thing rather than another. A child who was denied access to such a tradition, and all that it implies, would be denied the very possibility of choice and his actions would not be those of a free agent but of one imprisoned in a solipsistic world. Supposing reflection to be possible in such a world, it would amount to little more than something geared to the satisfaction of contingent desires; he would be unfree to deliberate upon the value of ends or upon the extent to which their pursuit might contribute to his self-fulfilment. To appreciate this is to begin to appreciate what is involved in the social nature of man.

It seems that the significance of this has only recently been appreciated. In order to appreciate the shortcomings of individualism and subjectivism, both of which in some form or other seem to be presupposed by White, it is worth considering the arguments advanced by people like Alasdair MacIntyre in his *After Virtue*,<sup>48</sup> and by John Kekes in an article entitled 'Moral Sensitivity'.<sup>49</sup> As a result, I hope to be in a stronger position to be able to substantiate the claim that the language of 'discovery' is more appropriate in characterising the nature of the teacher's task in enabling pupils to appreciate the direction in which their well-being might lie, than is the language of 'choice' so favoured by White.

It is a characteristic feature of modernity, MacIntyre believes, that conceptions of selfhood have become divorced not only from the roles which people adopt but also from what he calls a 'narrative' linking the various stages of human life. Just as it

is impossible to understand what someone is doing apart from a particular context or setting involving intentions, institutions and practices, such 'settings' have a narrative history of their own. 'We identify a particular action only by invoking, at least implicitly, two kinds of context ... we place the agent's intentions ... in causal and temporal order with reference to their role in his history, and we also place them with reference to their roles in the history of the setting(s) to which they belong.'<sup>50</sup> One notable characteristic of all lived narratives is their teleological nature. 'We live out our lives ... in the light of certain conceptions of a possible shared future ... There is no present which is not informed by some image of some future ... which always presents itself in the form of a *telos* - or a variety of ends or goals - towards which we are either moving or failing to move in the present.'<sup>51</sup> The implications for selfhood are twofold: (i) my personal identity depends not merely on my own psychological states, as Locke amongst others would have it, but on what I am justifiably taken by others to be during my lifetime; (ii) I am essentially part of others' narratives just as they are of mine. To ignore the 'social' aspects of one's existence is to misrepresent what is involved in the notion of the unity of one's life, and without a proper understanding of what such a unity consists in, the answers to questions concerning one's well-being will inevitably be deficient. The self of individualism is whatever it chooses to be, but it is a self with no moral identity at all. It is a self without a tradition (or at least one that may ignore such traditions at will). Such a self cannot really be characterised as being in search of his well-being - this being merely chosen; the search for one's good 'is generally and characteristically constructed within a context defined by those traditions of which the individual's life is a part, and this is true both of those goods which are internal to practices and of the goods of a single life.'<sup>52</sup> As MacIntyre concludes, the presupposition of any objective conclusion about what is 'good for *X*' is a conception of the unity of *X*'s life. 'What is better or worse for *X* depends upon the character of that intelligible narrative which provides *X*'s life with unity. Unsurprisingly it is the lack of any such unifying conception of human life which underlies modern denials of the rational character of moral judgements ....'<sup>53</sup> 'Right' and 'wrong' presuppose the possibility of being mistaken, yet, *ex hypothesi*, this is something for which, in the example from Sartre referred to earlier, there is no room. And yet the

young man was confronted with a moral dilemma and he knew it. But the reason why this is so is because he was sufficiently unclear about his ideals and priorities; he was unsure as to what really mattered at the time, seeing himself under the description of a son or a French citizen, or some combination of these. When one is forced to choose between descriptions of this kind one is better positioned to clarify who one really is. Such clarification may, alternatively, be characterised as a process of discovery. One's ideals and identity are not created in such situations; it is more a case of discovering those things which are of ultimate significance in one's life.

John Kekes also draws our attention to the fact that a setting or tradition is required in order to provide human actions with any intelligibility. Just as a composer is able to write down any note he decides, for these notes to add up to anything remotely meaningful he is restricted by the tradition of which he is but a small part, such as that involved in the creation of a string quartet. Intelligibility is not a function of his will but something that depends on a familiarity with the language of music. If he is fortunate there will be a certain inevitability in his notation. But it is not only within the confines of art that reference to choice is misleading. Within the bounds of logical and physical possibility I can do almost anything I choose, but the significance of what is done is outside my control, for this is something requiring a shared conceptual framework. This is especially true, according to Kekes, in morality. 'Choosing an action is rarely, and only exceptionally, a conscious active process of deliberation. An agent acts as a matter of course given the past, his ideals, his perception of the situation, and the practical exigencies. This is why concentration on choice obscures the real texture of moral life. To appreciate that texture one must start with how a person sees the situation in which he is to act. *Sensitive perception is the crux of the matter.*'<sup>54</sup>

If we take friendship as an example we will, I think, appreciate the truth of this. If my friend is in difficulty and I am in a position to help, I do so; I do not first construct a practical syllogism and *conclude* that I ought to help - nor can the assistance be construed as something I choose to give - there may be occasions when

my loyalties to my family outweigh those due to my friend but it is these very loyalties which prevent me from giving her the help she requires; I don't *choose* not to help her, nor *choose* to put my family first. It is the circumstances which, given my perceptions and ideals, determine my actions; I perceive the situation in the way I do as a result of coming to acknowledge that certain things have a particular value and importance in my life. The values in accordance with which I decide what to do are instantiated in my particular circumstances and relationships. There is a sense in which I know what is called for or what is appropriate. But practical knowledge of this kind would be impossible if it were not for this shared public world of ways of seeing and coming to value relationships and activities of various kinds. The situation not only determines what one does, it is the spur to the appropriate feeling or emotion which occasions the appropriate action. Thus I can be said to know what to feel and be held accountable if I fail to act in accordance with the appropriate emotion. A moral education is necessarily incomplete if it fails to attempt to engage children's emotions. A child should learn to feel remorse, grief or whatever, because the occasion demands it, and not because he is led to conclude as much by a process of deductive reasoning.

According to Kekes, one's sensitivity to a moral situation depends on what he calls the 'moral idioms' available. These are provided by the language, tradition and culture and they include such descriptive appraisals as considerate, honest, courageous, conscientious, cruel, selfish, obsequious and arrogant. Their significance is only partly culturally dependent; significance is also a function of the breadth and depth of understanding a moral agent brings with him to a situation.<sup>55</sup> Thus it is that Kekes believes that one's sensitivity to a moral situation is dependent on the significance one attaches to the moral idioms at one's disposal. Where one is able to employ moral idioms successfully in the characterisation of a situation, the requisite course of action is generally straightforward. This is why the choice of action is far less problematic than the selection of idioms and thus where reflection is particularly important. Its function is to give breadth and depth to the employment of moral idioms: 'to see both that our moral idioms are the conventional products of the social context we happen to live in, and that underlying the various conventions

there is an abiding concern with benefit and harm and with living a good life.<sup>56</sup> Reflection enables one to make important discoveries; it is necessary if we are to develop a greater moral sensitivity whereby we are able to recognise that what we had hitherto taken to be a correct understanding of a situation was superficial and incomplete. The deeper comprehension, which is the outcome of reflection, is not itself a matter for individual choice. Discoveries of this kind, Kekes maintains, are not like those of a tone-deaf man suddenly acquiring musical appreciation, it is more akin to a musical person coming to appreciate a particularly difficult work.

Expressed in this way it may look as though one is advocating an account of the way in which values come to be assigned which is excessively deterministic. If one were entirely passive with respect to discoveries of this kind the characterisation of a situation in terms of one moral idiom rather than another would rest on a purely causal relation between the experiences to which one was subject and the language in which one's evaluations were formulated. The result would be an individual who was no more than a passive register of competing evaluative characterisations and, as such, totally bereft of that requisite degree of personal autonomy for any life-plan to count as authentically his own. He would be no more than what Martin Hollis refers to as 'Plastic Man' whose identity is socially created and whose behaviour is to be explained in terms of a programme he did not write.<sup>57</sup> Such a man will lack responsibility not only for the language in terms of which any moral judgement or decision on his part is rendered significant or intelligible, he will also bear no responsibility for his self-identity in that the answer to the question 'Who am I?' is in no small part a function of the answers one gives to questions like 'What matters to me?', 'How should I characterise a particular state of affairs?', 'Why do I identify this particular state of affairs as one of moral conflict?' and so on.

In reaction to such a passive conception it is all too easy to express the alternative in terms of individual choice. A system of values is not something which is simply adopted or chosen at will. In his article 'On Seeing Things Differently',<sup>58</sup> Richard Norman ably demonstrates that although the figure in Leeper's *Ambiguous Lady Illusion* 'can be seen as a picture of a young woman or an old woman, the fact



remains that in spite of there being more than one way of seeing the figure it does not follow that this is entirely subjective; we cannot see the figure in any old way.

What is there imposes limitations on what is seen. As Norman says:

‘The possibilities are made available by the concepts in our language; what is possible for us to see depends upon how it is possible for us to conceptualize our experience. (However we do see the figure) it cannot correctly be seen as a man.’

And he draws a parallel between ways of seeing such pictures and *Weltanschauungen*.

‘... the possible ways of seeing man’s nature and his place in the universe are made available by the moral and intellectual traditions within one’s culture. Thus there are limits to what can be said. And what is said can be more or less accurate. The available traditions do not confine us once and for all; new ways of seeing can be developed and extended - *but not arbitrarily*.’<sup>59</sup>

Just as I cannot choose to see the figure in one way rather than another (at least not initially), I can no more be said to choose a particular *Weltanschauung*. The appropriate vocabulary, Norman argues, is akin to that of ‘discovery’ in that one’s position vis-a-vis the underlying values which affect one’s whole outlook towards social institutions are in some sense forced on one. How and why this is so is a complex matter and not easy to elucidate; so much depends on particular circumstances. Social interaction often leads to fresh insight concerning that which is of ultimate significance. One is frequently forced to take stock and reassess any such new insight resulting either from long and careful reflection or from sudden inspiration. There is a sense in which nothing has altered, yet one sees things in a different light. As far as the figure of the old/young woman is concerned, nothing in the sketch has changed but I may come to see it differently. Having seen it as an old woman and subsequently as a young woman I can no doubt choose to see it in one of two ways, but I am not at all sure that this is so easy when it comes to moral points of view. The language and conceptual vocabulary at one’s disposal provide the limits in terms of which a moral standpoint is adopted or characterised. This is why I have italicised the last part of the quotation from Norman. Seeing things differently in morality is indeed possible - if it were not there would be no such thing as moral development - but what one sees is far from arbitrary. If one could choose

to see a situation in any old way the arbitrariness involved would deprive the notion of choice of any meaning whatsoever. If Sartre's student opted to stay with his aged mother without any reason whatever he could scarcely be said to have chosen anything at all, for choices presuppose reasons and moral dilemmas present themselves as such because of the ways in which alternative courses of action are recognised as legitimate claims on our allegiance. Without reasons the distinction between choosing to  $\Phi$  and simply finding oneself  $\Phi$ -ing would collapse.

While I am denying that one is simply forced to see a situation in a particular moral light, the sense in which one is free to adopt an alternative moral point of view needs to be made explicit. There are two equally valid ways of seeing the sketch under discussion but it begs some very important questions concerning objectivity in moral judgement to assume that each and every moral point of view is of equal validity or merit.<sup>60</sup> The kind of choice involved in seeing a figure as either an old or young woman is very different from that in the formation of a world view. World views are formed on the basis of our evaluations which rest on our ability to articulate and characterise situations in terms of moral idioms. In characterising something as ignoble, base or unworthy, I am providing reasons why a course of action should be avoided. But in characterising a situation thus I am not merely choosing so to do, nor is my decision not to perform an unworthy action simply a matter of choice.<sup>61</sup>

Moral idioms are selected not on the basis of a some Kantian-like lonely will but on the basis of deeper and more fundamental evaluations which are bound up with my entire self-identity. Who I am is intimately bound up with what I take to be of fundamental importance. I am not a mere product of my upbringing with a particular culture and language. Certainly I did not choose to grow within a particular cultural tradition, but having acquired a conceptual vocabulary with which to make sense of the world I am in a position to render articulate my most fundamental evaluations and in so doing take on some responsibility for my failure to re-evaluate my decision. In this way I am not a 'Plastic Man' to be explained as the end product of a complex causal chain. If this is so, we can begin to see how it is that we are not entirely passive with regard to what we acknowledge to be of

value or the desirable thing to do, be or become. But there is a difference between being responsible for a world view and simply choosing it. A world view is adopted because certain things matter in our lives; we are no more capable of repudiating them (by a simple act of will) than we are of becoming someone else. As Taylor argues,

‘Our (evaluations) are articulations of what is worthy, or higher, or more integrated, or more fulfilling, and so on. But as *articulations* they offer a purchase for the concept of responsibility. Much of our motivation - our decisions, aspirations, evaluations - is not simply given. We give it formulation in words or images ... these articulations are not simply descriptions - (in the way that my characterisation of a table as brown is a simple description). On the contrary, articulations are attempts to formulate what is initially inchoate, or confused, or badly formulated (which) does not leave its object unchanged. To give a certain articulation is to shape our sense of what we desire or what we hold important in a certain way .... We can say therefore that our self-interpretations are partly constitutive of our experience. (In other words) certain modes of experience are not possible without certain self-descriptions .... That description and experience are bound together in this constitutive relation admits of causal influence in both directions: it can sometimes allow us to alter experience by coming to fresh insight; but more fundamentally it circumscribes insight through the deeply embedded shape of experience for us .... Our articulations, just because they partly shape their objects, engage our responsibility in a way that simple descriptions do not. This happens in two related ways which correspond to the two directions of causal influence mentioned above ...’<sup>62</sup>

Taylor goes on to suggest that our insight into what we value depends upon, and to a large extent is limited by, the nature of our experience and yet we often pass judgement on a man’s character for his limited insight due to insensitivity or fanaticism. The other sense in which we hold people responsible for their evaluations is the way in which it is always open to us to re-evaluate. As I have suggested, at least this much is required if talk of moral development is to make sense.

Re-evaluating one’s most fundamental evaluations is a salutary and sometimes painful experience. It is at this level of attention to what is really important in one’s life that one is most deeply engaged in self-definition. It must of necessity be a gradual

process for one cannot question all of one's values at once. It need not take place in the security of one's study; social intercourse and the decisions confronting one in daily life not only provide the stimulus but the context whereby one's use of moral idioms gains a particular significance. I respond as I do because I am, amongst other things, a father and a teacher. Even though roles cannot determine my evaluations, those things to which I attach value and significance which go towards defining me as I am are discovered in activity. Actions, of course, are context-dependent and much of what I do as a father and teacher is the result of standing in a particular relationship to my children and students. It is by relating to them and countless others as I do do that I come to be the person that I am. And yet I am more than the mere occupant of particular roles. If, in explaining my actions, I were to invoke nothing more than my role as such and such I would be evading my responsibility as a person and moral agent. As Cohen has argued, the citation of a role is never a sufficient reason for  $\Phi$ -ing.<sup>63</sup> It is because I am more than just a father and a teacher that I can be held responsible for what I do and care about *qua* father and teacher. At the end of the day I am a man with particular convictions and my actions must be explained and assessed by reference to something more than the roles I occupy. What is quite compatible with the fact that I belong to a vast and complex network of relationships and roles is that I do not choose a particular world-view and then set about acting in accordance with it. I come to endorse or repudiate world-views in activity. It is activity which provides the basis for any self-knowledge I might have. In activity I make discoveries about myself; discoveries about past actions and the ways in which in future they must be characterised. Richard Norman reminds us of how well aware Tolstoy was of what is involved here.

Before Austerlitz in *War and Peace* Prince Andrew Bolkonski makes such a discovery. Norman puts it thus:

'The way in which experience ... serves to "confirm" a world-view is not a matter of matching a hypothesis against the corresponding observation(s). Rather, one finds that a certain perspective enables one to *make sense of* and to *render intelligible* the experience which one has lived through. Thus Prince Andrew's vision of the sky enables him to look back at his previous experiences and see them for what they were - the empty gestures of military heroism, the feverish

and impassioned activity for the sake of trivial rewards, his own deliberate refusal to face certain aspects of his life.’<sup>64</sup>

In this example the discovery is dramatic and sudden but further reflection may be said to confirm such ‘flashes of insight’ one way or the other. It is this, the more profound understanding that one has of a situation, that is not a matter of individual choice. It is a recognition and an acknowledgement that one has no choice in what one now takes to be of supreme importance, and when it is the result of careful reflection it is reflection on something worlds removed from that which will satisfy a coherently ordered set of desires. Any discussion of the relationship between ‘choice’ and ‘discovery’ of values must guard against the temptation to become too schematic. There is an interplay between the two which is both subtle and complex.

Nowhere is the complexity of the relationship between the notions of ‘choice’ and ‘discovery’ more clearly demonstrated than in a stimulating paper by Alan Montefiore.<sup>65</sup> Choosing a set of values or embarking on a course of action is, according to Montefiore, irresponsible if not made on the basis of an understanding of context and circumstances. By circumstances he is referring to both external and internal factors in that both are part of one’s fundamental nature. They are not to be thought of as fully and determinately ‘given’ in that one is powerless to do anything about them ‘... neither are they necessarily open to immediately evident recognition by simple introspection nor to modification in whatever direction one might consciously wish to impose on them.’<sup>66</sup> He quotes Laurie Taylor who wrote in *The Observer* on 13th February 1977: ‘When I think of all the time that I could have saved over the years by not wondering where my true self was or about the amount of progress I had made - if I had only realised that it was all a myth, then I think that I would have enjoyed myself a lot more’ and points to the significant mixture of truth and confusion in all this. While it is true that:

‘myself, as I find it within myself at any given moment is formed in part out of my own past choices, had I chosen otherwise at such and such a turning in my road I should not be where and what I am today, but my past choices were once my present choices, just as the choices I face and have to make today will tomorrow belong to my past: my choices face me not as facts to be discovered but as decisions to be taken ... but this is not, very evidently, to say that the extent to which

my own nature lies within the power of my own self-determination is boundless. There are many things which I can neither do nor be, no matter how much I may try, or which I could only do or be at some morally unacceptable price; the concept of a morally unacceptable price is itself tied up with that of one's own self-reality or truth.<sup>67</sup>

Montefiore is at pains to emphasise the fact that one's own reality, while depending in part on one's choices and present and future decisions, requires us 'to accept as our own at each particular moment of our lives a reality which for all that it may not be wholly determinate, is nevertheless at that moment given to us.'<sup>68</sup> Invoking Charles Taylor's notion of strong evaluation he insists that 'our choices and evaluations remain, whether weakly or strongly, superficial if they are not rooted in the inner and outer reality out of which we are choosing. And this must include the recognition that there must always be more to these roots than whatever we may believe ourselves to have discovered so far.'<sup>69</sup> One's 'self-reality' then, is something to be discovered and recognised on the one hand and determined on the other. In his discussion of what is involved in strong evaluation, Montefiore makes what is a very profound point concerning the connection between the self's concern with itself as it were, and its concern with the community of which it is a part. He quotes from an unpublished paper by Thomas Wren to the effect that 'strong evaluation is not the auto-erotic activity of a purely inward-looking entelechy, but rather the reflecting phase or aspect of the self's commerce with the world.'<sup>70</sup> As Montefiore says:

'To decide what values to espouse is to determine not only some small part of the network of the world .... But to make such values my own is at once to make them part of myself, as I project myself towards the future, and to contribute to the constitution of that world of which they will become a part .... Strong evaluation conceived in this way involves a double movement, towards the disappearance of clear distinctions between concern with self and concern with others and towards loss of the distinction embodied in the language of different orders of desires.'<sup>71</sup>

All this is profoundly relevant to the teacher's task. As we shall see, children learn how to want. As our understanding of and familiarity with moral idioms grows, our ability to characterise and accurately evaluate the plethora of possibilities before us is deepened. In the very young there will inevitably be an element of hit and miss in all of this. Learning how to use the appropriate moral idiom is a complex matter.

What is essential however is that a young child should be presented with fairly clear cut exemplars or ideals. As he grows older he will, in all probability, rely on such ideals on which to base his own beliefs and actions and these will necessarily have a measure of inauthenticity about them. It is a mark of maturity however that a person is able to dispense with models of this kind and to take on a greater measure of responsibility for what kind of person he shall be henceforward. But the reasons underpinning commitment to a set of values are not themselves self-chosen. They are in part due to choices made in the past by me as a member of a community where reasons are public and non-arbitrary.<sup>72</sup> In so doing their autonomy is strengthened and within the security of the classroom they are engaged in that all-important process of self-discovery and self-affirmation. Opportunities should be granted to children within certain prudential and moral boundaries to make their own decisions about what to do and what to believe, for it would be absurd to expect them to make important discoveries relating to their well-being without such opportunities, just as it would be equally absurd to expect them to recognise where their well-being might lie without reference to genuine and important discoveries relating to matters which are, for them, of ultimate significance and by reference to which their choices derive substance and meaning.

If we consider the teacher's task and the responsibility he has for helping children, particularly adolescents, to re-evaluate their commitments and values, there is obviously much to be done throughout the curriculum but in particular in those sessions devoted specifically to personal and social education. If personal education is to amount to anything at all it must address itself to exactly this. Pupils must be provided with the opportunity to discuss their most deeply held convictions and expose them to critical assessment. They need this if they are to be helped in the difficult process of re-evaluating those things which really matter to them and which appear to provide point and purpose to their lives. It is absurd to expect very young children critically to evaluate the values in accordance with which they live. At this stage their values are being formed by parents, teachers and others. These values in turn affect desires and decisions. Teachers have a particularly important responsibility to ensure that children are provided with every opportunity to subject

values to critical scrutiny. Unless such dispositions are formed early on in life a person is likely to become habituated to ways of thinking and behaving which are only in small part his own. Quite simply teachers have to ask pupils a lot of awkward questions, many of which may well result in discomfort; the amount of discomfort experienced will in part depend on the rigidity with which such assumptions have been held and the degree to which parents and others have been effective in discouraging doubt. Where a child has had a particularly blinkered or bigoted upbringing teachers have to tread very carefully if their attempts to foster the child's capacity to think for himself are not to be rendered counterproductive. Teachers must also draw their pupils' attention to ways in which circumstances (external to themselves and not always under their control) affect and shape the values in terms of which the process of re-evaluation is to get a purchase. In re-evaluating his basic and most fundamental evaluations an adolescent needs to be made aware of the complex web of interrelationships between his own past choices as well as the decisions made on his behalf, all of which have contributed to making him the person he is. He ignores this at his peril; any decisions or commitments made without due reference to this are both futile and incoherent in that they are no longer the gestures of a being with a self-identity.

It is my contention that both freedom and well-being have as much to do with the making of rational choices as being free from constraints, and I have insisted that desire-satisfaction is inadequate as a basis for rational choice. I have also maintained that rational choice presupposes some account of an individual's real-interests or well-being and it will be my concern in Section 6 to articulate an account of what is at least necessary in all this. I hope to be able to demonstrate that being a chooser presupposes a measure of personal autonomy and that this is both an essential ingredient of well-being as well as providing the grounding, as it were, in terms of which freedom acquires its value.

#### **4.2 Informed-Desires and Well-Being**

In his most recent book, *Education and The Good Life*, White has moved from construing well-being as post-reflective-desire-satisfaction to well-being as the



satisfaction of informed-desires or those desires one would have were one in possession of information enabling one to appreciate the implications of satisfying a particular desire.<sup>73</sup> In so doing he acknowledges the fact that desires are not all on one level in that we may have desires to have nor not to have any particular desire. Recognising that desires have a hierarchical structure - which for Griffin provides the criterion for informed-desire (ID)<sup>74</sup> - does not, White quite rightly maintains, imply a neat and tidy desire structure 'with one or two master desires at the top and everything else subordinate to them'. We are all too familiar with desires all of which we are intent upon satisfying but which, for a variety of reasons, largely to do with the brevity of life, we are unable to fulfil. Unfortunately White moves too speedily from his rejection of a PRDS account of well-being to what appears to him as the only alternative. Before examining what informed desires are supposed to be and why their satisfaction might be thought to be synonymous with personal well-being it is worth reminding ourselves of what it is about the satisfaction of *actual* (as opposed to informed) desires which makes it so unsatisfactory as an account of well-being.

Firstly, and most obviously, many of our desires however authentic they may be are for things which are either harmful or trivial. The satisfaction obtained may be altogether incompatible with our well-being or have so little consequence as to contribute nothing whatsoever. Secondly, and of particular significance for teachers, people may well desire all kinds of things on the basis of inadequate or totally false information. As they become more informed about the object of desire and, importantly, about themselves and the relationship between the two, they may well find that they no longer desire any such thing. Education has an indispensable role in helping children to formulate and reformulate their desires in accordance with increasing self-knowledge and understanding. As such it is instrumental in creating desires we never had and never would have in a state of ignorance. A person's desires (or lack of desires) may not only be due to lack of relevant information, they may be due to lack of appropriate concepts in terms of which desires are formulated. Without the appropriate conceptual apparatus one cannot even imagine that certain things are suitable 'objects' of desire. Again, teachers have a crucial part to play

here, not only to open children's eyes to the number and variety of desirable things and actions from which to choose but, as White himself insists, to help children organise their burgeoning desires by imposing some sort of hierarchical structure on them by reference to which conflict between them may be minimised.

In contrast to an actual-desire account of well-being the *prima facie* attraction of the ID account is obvious. Assuming that one is aware of the implications of satisfying certain desires whereby one has a clear understanding of the objects of one's desire, one is less likely to be confronted with unresolved conflict and certainly less likely to fall victim to one's desires.<sup>75</sup> The ID account would also appear to accord very nicely with the view that there is no universally applicable *summum bonum* to which we should all aspire. People vary in their interests and enthusiasms, their characters and dispositions, tastes and convictions. Personal well-being varies accordingly. Recognition of individual differences would thus appear to sit quite comfortably with an account of well-being in terms of informed-desires and preferences. In reality, however, the whole idea of informed-desire is more problematic than people like White and Griffin would have us believe.

First of all there is the problem of rendering the account of well-being in terms of ID intelligible. How, for example, are we supposed to decide between two incompatible courses of action which one would lead to most desire-satisfaction. Our desires are far from constant whether they be for careers, partners or specific pleasures. To the suggestion that it is desires at the time of satisfaction which count, Richard Brandt has doubts raised by the following example:

'a convinced sceptic who has rebelled against a religious background wants, most of his life, no priest to be called when he is about to die. But he weakens on his deathbed, and asks for a priest. Do we maximise his welfare by summoning a priest? Some would say not, in view of his past desires. The programme also ignores future regrets.'<sup>76</sup>

Griffin is at least aware of the problem:

'... preferences change, and not always in a way that allows us totally to discount earlier ones. Suppose that for much of his life a person

wanted his friends to keep him from vegetating when he retired but, now that he has retired, wants to be left to vegetate. Is there any intelligible programme for weighing desires that change with time and hence for maximising fulfilment? If not we may be driven back to a happiness or mental state account.'<sup>77</sup>

I admit to sharing Brandt's scepticism about the intelligibility of such a programme in spite of what Griffin has to say later in the book. However the issues are complex in the extreme and I do not want to become bogged down with this problem when there are other problems for the ID account which are particularly difficult to overcome.

There are numerous occasions when one's ID is for something that is manifestly incompatible with well-being. I may be fully informed about the harmful effects of smoking tobacco while continuing to smoke the stuff. Here my ID is to smoke tobacco in the full knowledge that my capacity to flourish is likely to be damaged thereby. In other words the informed-desires in accordance with which one acts are not coincidental with those actions which serve one's long-term interests and which are necessary for the avoidance of permanent disability and premature death. And the ID theorist cannot escape by pretending to restrict ID to only those desires a person *would have* were he properly to appreciate the information unless he can provide us with an account of what it is to 'appreciate' such information that is not circular. As Garrett Thomson puts it:

'It is circular to define "appreciation" in terms of our informed preferences matching what is valuable, e.g. a person appreciates what he prefers if and only if he prefers *Y* to *X* only when *Y* is more valuable than *X* .... Without an independent grip on the ... notion of appreciation in the phrase "what a person would prefer if he appreciated what it is like to have what he prefers", it advances us no further to define prudential value in terms of this phrase.'<sup>78</sup>

And again:

'However much we juggle with the notion of an informed preference, it seems to be merely a general contingent truth subject to counter-instances that people's informed desires are for the prudentially good. Because this is a contingent truth subject to exceptions, we cannot define the primary value relevant to harm in terms of informed desire: the latter cannot constitute the former.'<sup>79</sup>

Griffin himself more or less concedes as much in his ‘appeal to our rough notion of well-being in deciding which informed-desires to exclude from (his) account of well-being’<sup>80</sup> but I confess to finding his account of how such circular reasoning might be avoided both unclear and unconvincing. If something is in accordance with my well-being it is in virtue of something other than the fact that I have an informed preference for it. Even if it were the case that my desire to smoke tobacco ceased after witnessing a particularly vivid health education video on its harmful effects, the fact remains that the reason why quitting the habit is better for me is because of the advantages of not smoking and not because I have an informed desire to quit.<sup>81</sup> In other words the reason why the consumption of harmful substances and well-being are incompatible has to do with the harmful effects of the substance in question and not simply a function of my having an ID to abstain. Informed desires are the result of our coming to appreciate the nature or characteristics of that for which we have the desire. It is precisely because we see things in a certain light - as something *worth* obtaining or avoiding that we end up having some informed preferences rather than others.

But this is to anticipate. It assumes that the correct relationship between something having value and its being desired is in the direction from value to desire; things are wanted because of the desirability-characteristics which may legitimately be attributed to them rather than being valued in virtue of a pre-existing desire. There is an abundance of literature in contemporary moral philosophy in support of both sides of the argument and the debate raises deeply complex issues concerning the existence of objective values. Although I cannot possibly do justice to the complexity of the question, it is my contention that the subjectivism implicit in all forms of desire-satisfaction accounts of well-being (and freedom) is reason enough to lead us to search for a more objective alternative.

White is sceptical of the success of any such enterprise. He asks: ‘What kind of thing can a desire-independent value be? Where does it exist? How does one know that it exists? If *X* is said to be valuable for any individual, but someone does not desire *X* at all and would be deeply distressed if he had *X*, then how could it be

shown that *X* was really good for him or her? .... How could (acquaintance with a value move someone in its favour) unless she already had a desire of some sort which caused her to be moved in this way?'<sup>82</sup> According to White, the claim that 'perception of values' is sufficient to generate desires within us demands an account of both the metaphysical status of values and the causal mechanism whereby our perception of the former generates the latter within us. There are two quite separate issues here. One has to do with what a value might be (its ontological status), the other is concerned with its motivating force. If we are to establish the case for a more objective account of rational choice and well-being than any form of the desire-satisfaction account permits, it is incumbent upon us to meet the sceptical challenge that sense be attached to the idea of objective value, the recognition of which being sufficient to explain and justify a moral stance without recourse to desire as an inescapable motivational feature. In order to refute the subjectivism associated with a desire-satisfaction account of well-being and the model of reasons for action on which it relies we have to demonstrate the plausibility of there being 'real' values existing, in some sense of that expression yet to be determined, 'in the world'. However I intend to defer this discussion until the second part of the next section where the relationship between value and desire will be explained more fully. Before then I wish to expose the shortcomings of that view of rational choice which is predicated on desires already held.

## 5. DESIRE-SATISFACTION, RATIONALITY AND VALUE

### 5.1 The means-end view of rationality<sup>1</sup>

There is a familiar and widely held view concerning the rationality of actions which may be summarised as follows: an agent is rational if he adopts the requisite means towards optimally satisfying his desires overall. There are many variations and qualifications, the details of which need not detain us.<sup>2</sup> However, the account is nowhere more clearly presented than in Rawls's *Theory of Justice* '... the concept of rationality must be interpreted as far as possible in the narrow sense, standard in economic theory, of taking the most effective means to given ends.'<sup>3</sup> I shall refer to this theory in what follows as the standard account. A rational person according to this 'is thought to have a coherent set of preferences between options open to him. He rates the options according to how well they further his purpose; he follows the plan which will satisfy more of his desires rather than less, and which has the greater chance of being successfully executed.'<sup>4</sup>

The features which serve to distinguish the standard account of rational action are thus (i) the adoption of the most efficacious means to the achievement of a given end; (ii) the pursuit of ends which are not inconsistent or mutually incompatible; and (iii) the maximisation of goal achievement.

The standard account of rationality is open to a number of objections. First of all, the adoption of appropriate means to the attainment of a particular end is not altogether unambiguous.<sup>5</sup> Secondly, there are reasons for doubting that no more is required of a rational chooser than the adoption of the requisite means to a self-chosen end. Even if defenders of the standard account were to maintain something to the effect that  $\Phi$ -ing is the necessary means to the achievement of some end ( $E$ ) which the individual ( $X$ ) desires, there remains the possibility that in actual fact  $E$  is not in  $X$ 's real or long-term interests. If so we have a very good reason for denying the rationality of  $\Phi$ -ing. This is true whether or not  $X$  recognises the harm involved in  $\Phi$ -ing. If, in due course, he concedes that he was foolish in having  $\Phi$ -ed

he would be forced to acknowledge that his claim to the rationality of  $\Phi$ -ing is not necessarily incorrigible.

While actions may certainly be explained by reference to the *agent's reasons*, such as the satisfaction of a particular desire, deliberation is as much concerned in answering the question 'What are the reasons for doing/avoiding such and such?' And this is another way of asking for *good* reasons for doing/avoiding something. An explanatory reason is thus very different from a justifying reason. To ask of *X* why it was that he  $\Phi$ -ed is not necessarily to ask whether or not it was rational for him to do so. It is to ask for an explanation and not (at least not necessarily) a justification. Those considerations which contribute towards a given action meriting the status of *rational* are not reducible to that subjective level which may be appropriate in explanatory reasons such as 'I wanted to  $\Phi$ '.

Of course this is not to deny that the adoption of means to ends is a part of what is involved in rational agency; it just will not suffice as a description of the whole of what is involved in that it ignores the nature and value of the end in question.<sup>6</sup> Deliberation stops short of being entirely rational in so far as it is unconcerned with the extent to which preferences are capable of being accommodated within one's previously endorsed commitments and values. It is not that reflection necessarily results in self-satisfaction but the very least that is required is that it should try to ensure the avoidance of self-contempt or self-disapproval as a result of failure in coherence between one's chosen ends and one's whole view of oneself. It is a direct result of achieving a modicum of success as a strong-evaluator that one's subsequent desires are coloured, as it were, by the complex interplay between past choices and (assuming that ends themselves are not entirely self-chosen) discoveries, which means that the rationality of satisfying a particular desire cannot be determined without reference to this aspect of one's biography. In this and subsequent sections a view of rational choice begins to emerge which is ineluctably tied to the idea of what it is to be a person with a biography having genuine or real-interests amongst which is that of self-respect. Any account of rational choice which ignores this is therefore less than adequate. I have already argued that well-being has got more to do with the

satisfaction of self than satisfaction of mere desires and in view of the fact that the self is something with a past and a future, no account of rational self-interest can ignore this. A necessary condition of rational choice must include reference to that plan of life which is (at least) not incompatible with our real-interests. The assumption that this is no more than, or always coincides with, whatever it is that we desire, is bizarre as well as untrue. If it were true, man would indeed be born free and there would be no problem. The fact that it is untrue is sufficient reason for refusing to accept that account of rational action which ignores the value of the ends in question.

Thirdly, the standard account provides no means of assessing the rationality of ends or desires other than that of mutual incompatibility or failure to maximise goal achievement. Even Rawls's grass-counter is rational if counting grass is for him a matter of utmost priority; there is certainly nothing essentially contradictory in this practice however odd it might seem. With respect to the value or worth of ends the standard account is neutral as well as taking no account of the source of desires – something which was seen to be vital in determining the degree to which desires are properly attributable to the agent. According to Hare 'knowing that he will like it most and knowing that it is most in his interest to choose it, are the same piece of knowledge ...'<sup>7</sup> But an account of rational choice which emphasises the importance of goal achievement at the expense of rational self-interest will not hold up. Where goal achievement leads to a fundamental warping or distortion of human nature (one need not invoke anything so dramatic as *Brave New World*, there being thousands of instances of people stunted and harmed in our own society - poverty, ignorance, exploitation, lack of meaningful choice, or social institutions which give rise to irresolvable conflicting interests, all of which are instrumental in distorting people's understanding of where their real-interests lie), it is incompatible with rational agency.

The value-neutral account of rationality will not hold up because it is neutral with respect to real-interests. Rational choice is a normative notion in that its explication is impossible without reference to what is beneficial and harmful.



## 5.2 Wants as Reasons for Action

The main difficulty with the standard account is the assumption upon which it rests, namely that desires or wants provide the basis for rational choice - rational in that they provide justificatory reasons for action. Such a view has a long and distinguished ancestry. We find it clearly stated in Hume's ethical writings and much twentieth century moral philosophy has witnessed its defence. One of the most notable and clearest defences is to be found in Nowell-Smith's *Ethics*: '... it seems senseless to ask anyone why he is doing something when he has told you that he enjoys it, likes doing it, or wants to do it ... Pro-words ... all have this in common, that they provide logically impeccable reasons for deciding to do or not to do something. The "reason for doing" ... is expressed by such a phrase as "because I want ..." or "because I enjoy ..."'.<sup>8</sup> In a paper critical of such views, Michael Woods presents a more schematic account of this position. 'R is a reason for A's Xing if R specifies, or when fully expanded would specify, some desire which A has, which will be satisfied by A's Xing or whose satisfaction will be promoted by A's Xing.'<sup>9</sup> While acknowledging that reasons must be capable of motivating, we shall find cause to question the assumption that all motivation has desire at its source.<sup>10</sup>

While doubts concerning the view that desires provide reasons for action are not without foundation, we are a long way from demonstrating that desires are *not* reasons for action and have not yet begun to provide an alternative. The question of whether or not wants do provide reasons for action will be the principal concern of the remainder of this section while an alternative model will be sketched in Section 6.

The question 'Why are you doing that?' is ambiguous in that it is not immediately apparent what kind of answer would be deemed appropriate - appropriate, that is, in the sense of satisfying the questioner. Its ambiguity lies in the fact that it is not evident from the question whether an explanation or a justification is called for. Does the answer require an account of what it was that motivated me to do what I did - perhaps the action was so odd or out of character or place that my interlocutor is merely puzzled as to what it was that possessed me, or am I expected to provide

some sort of justification - perhaps the action was offensive, outrageous or immoral? No doubt the context as often as not provides some indication as to the sort of answer that is required and no problem arises concerning what I should say in response. But what concerns me is the status of one particular answer which I might provide. Suppose that in reply to the question 'Why did you do that?' I were to say 'Because I wanted to' - what are we to make of such a reply in terms of the distinction between explanation and justification? Does the fact that I want do to something explain my action or justify it? Can it fulfil the requirements of both equally well and does it rely on the context for being one or the other? Are wants ever reasons?

According to Amelie Rorty the expression 'Because I want to' (BIWT) sometimes provides a justification, sometimes gives an explanation and sometimes is used to deny the right of the questioner to demand a justification; so much depends on the context and the beliefs and attitudes of the questioner and agent.<sup>11</sup> Consider the following example: we are sitting having a conversation and suddenly I jump up and clap my hands together. Puzzled, you ask, 'Why did you do that?' If I retorted 'Because I wanted to' it is unlikely that you will be satisfied. Indeed, it is highly likely that you will wonder whether or not I am cracking up and, if I repeat myself, might tactfully suggest that I see a doctor. If pressed and I continue to insist in all seriousness that I could not possibly tell you why I did such a thing, I simply had an overwhelming desire to clap my hands in this way, your suspicions would be vindicated. If, on the other hand, in answer to your question I reply that there was a mosquito which had been irritating me all evening and that at last I had managed to kill it, you would have an explanation of my behaviour as well as a justification. I had a reason for doing what I did which is perfectly intelligible. Again, take the case of throwing wine in somebody's face at supper; if asked to account for his behaviour the assailant were to reply 'BIWT' we should not only refuse to concede that this was a *reason* in the sense of justifying his action, we should, short of an immediate apology, conclude that he was not suffering from some nervous disorder but was gratuitously offensive. Moreover his rudeness is compounded by the answer 'BIWT'. Reference to what he wanted or enjoyed doing does nothing

whatever to provide the necessary justification. 'BIWT' could never be a reason for this kind of action.

Context does therefore go some considerable way towards enabling us to classify the expression 'BIWT' as one of explanation or justification. And if in the two examples above 'BIWT' had been prefaced with 'No reason ...' we should have to acknowledge that the expression 'BIWT' was being used as a reason-terminator. The person uttering it intended it to be a question stopper in that he did not wish to provide any further explanation or justification for his behaviour. Although the expression 'BIWT' may well serve as an explanation or a reason terminator the case for it providing a justification or reason for action has yet to be made. As far as the killing of the mosquito is concerned it is not the fact that I want to kill it which provides me with a reason, but the fact that it has been getting on my nerves for some time and is now within easy reach and I have a good opportunity to swat it. Given these features of the situation I would have to have a reason for *not* swatting it. Circumstances might have been such that given my present heart condition, it would have been dangerous to exert myself in this way, in which case I should have had a very good reason for not trying to kill the mosquito and might well have asked you to do so instead.<sup>12</sup>

Rorty suggests two justificatory uses of 'BIWT' (i) when the questioner and the agent accept the same principles allocating priorities to relevant considerations, 'BIWT' is used to place a factor already having an assigned priority rating into consideration in justifying a particular action. Her example is that of a woman who selects a décolleté dress for a dinner party given by her husband's stuffy superior. Perhaps she wishes to sabotage his chances of promotion or dislikes the idea of having to eat there again. Her reply 'BIWT' to his request for a reason for choosing such a daring outfit is, as far as she is concerned, Rorty says, a reason. As to whether it is a good one or not we cannot say, at least without taking sides in a matrimonial quarrel. (ii) 'When the questioner and the agent do not agree about the priority ratings of various considerations, "BIWT" is used by an agent to suggest that his wants be assigned a place on the scale of considerations.' In deliberately choosing

to dress in this way, knowing that her husband is likely to object on this occasion, she may not be defying a standard of priorities she usually accepts but may in fact be arguing for the priority of her wants over those of her husband's career. In this case, Rorty says, 'BIWT' is used neither as an explanation nor as a straightforward justification within an accepted and shared system of priorities, but is used to suggest a revision in the scale of priorities. 'This is a justification on a different level from the one given by an agent who simply challenges a particular question.' To support this she gives an additional example of an old man with a heart disease whom doctors have assured that any exertion will result in death three hours later. Undeterred, the old man goes out to vote and returns home to die. Just before the end of the third hour he responds to his family's questions with the answer 'BIWT'. Amongst the various functions served by this utterance Rorty includes that of justification.<sup>13</sup>

In contrast to this, James Rachels has argued that something cannot be one's reasons for acting unless *thought of it* can make a difference to one's decision about what to do, and this is enough to show why wants do not qualify as reasons. 'I want to do *A*' is not a reason for me to do *A* since it is not a fact the thought of which sets one to doing it. It is not the *thought* of my wants that gets me going; it is the wants themselves. This is the important difference between doing something 'because I want to ... and doing it because Aunt Hilda's feelings will be hurt if I don't.' As Rachels says, thought need not intervene between the want and the act done because of it, in the way that thought must mediate the reason and the act done for it. Rachels goes on to conclude that 'BIWT', far from providing a reason for  $\Phi$ -ing is as often as not an abbreviation for 'No reason, I just wanted to' - 'Why were you singing in the bath?' 'No reason, I just felt like it.'<sup>14</sup> 'BIWT' also serves to explain a person's behaviour: it indicates the kind of person he is, what his values are, what his likes and preferences are and so on, and it may indicate that his desires are out of control in that he just cannot help doing whatever he fancies. Once again it is the context which provides the clue as to what is meant by the somewhat unhelpful reply 'BIWT'.

We are not entitled to conclude however that every utterance of 'BIWT' may be appropriately prefaced with the expression 'No reason ....' Very frequently people give the answer 'BIWT' because they believe, however mistakenly, that wants and desires constitute reasons for action. We therefore need a more general argument to see why this belief is incorrect. Before dealing with this, let us deal with the much easier question of whether the fact that one wants something can ever justify one acting in a certain way.

Returning to Rorty's example of the sick and aged voter, if his going out to vote in his condition is justifiable it is justified not in virtue of his desire to cast a vote but in virtue of the fact that he is at death's door and that he is entitled to one last defiant gesture as a free and rational agent.<sup>15</sup> It is also worth stating the obvious that we only take the question 'Why did you do that?' to be a demand for a justification when there are thought to be reasons for *not* doing it; it may or not explain what was done in the sense of providing some intelligible context, but in itself it says nothing with respect to justification.

The case that rational choice has little if anything to do with the satisfaction of desire is only partially complete. The argument so far has done no more than show how desires or wants are not in themselves sufficient for rational action; it remains to be seen if they are in any way necessary requirements. In order to show that wants are not even necessary for a choice or action to be deemed rational it is incumbent upon us to provide instances of good reasons for doing one thing rather than another which are not dependent on the desires or wants of the agent. To show how this might be done we need look no further than prudential reasoning.

Prudence presupposes a self having temporal extension. The prudent man does not merely consider how he is to satisfy his desires. A self-conscious being is aware of having a past, a present and a future and his interest in his own future is not something which rests on some antecedent desire.<sup>16</sup> If this is true, prudential reasoning does not have to rely on desires of any kind we happen to feel at the present moment. I might want to do something at time *t* and given my future plans

have no reason whatsoever for doing it and, conversely, I might have very good reason to  $\Phi$  at time  $t$  even though no desire so to do is present. On the other hand, it might be asked, what if I have every reason to believe that at time  $t_1$  I shall have a desire to  $\Phi$ , would not this provide a reason for ensuring that I take the necessary steps to ensure the possibility of  $\Phi$ -ing at that time? If desires are reasons for action and if at time  $t$  I have no desire to make the necessary arrangements so as to prevent my predicted future desires from being frustrated, I should find myself in the crazy position of having a reason for not doing that which is necessary to the performance of which I anticipate having good reason to do. Again, if it is in my interests to  $\Phi$  at  $t_1$  (where failure to  $\Phi$  would be harmful or damaging) I now have a reason to ensure that the possibility of  $\Phi$ -ing is not frustrated (irrespective of what I desire at  $t$ ). What is in my interests and thereby what is rational for me to do is quite independent of what I desire to do at either time and what provides me with a reason for  $\Phi$ -ing is the fact that it is in my interests. A rational man cannot be indifferent to his future interests which means that what counts as a reason cannot rely on something as contingent as a desire. We have already seen how we can be the victim of our desires in a way which we cannot be with respect to choices or intentions. In deliberating between possible actions and deciding upon one particular outcome I am active rather than passive with respect to my desires.

I wish to conclude this discussion by drawing attention to some important features of wanting which I believe provide reason enough for denying that the presence of a desire is a necessary feature of rational choice. According to Elizabeth Anscombe<sup>17</sup> whenever anyone says that he wants something the question 'Why?' is always appropriate. If the answer is to be remotely intelligible he would have to say more about the object of his want other than 'I don't know, I just want it.' If this were all he could say we should, quite rightly, refuse to accept his claim as a genuine instance of wanting something. To want something is to be able to say something about it in terms of which it can be classified as the kind of thing that possesses what Anscombe calls 'desirability-characterizations'. The point being that there are limits to the kind of thing one can intelligibly be said to want. If someone were to erect a step-ladder in Trafalgar Square every Tuesday at noon, climb it and say 'Oh dear

me', descended, folded it and went back home, he would have to provide a more complex answer to the puzzled spectator whose request for an explanation met with a mere 'I just want to'. If in reply to further probing such as 'Do you feel that the exercise does you good?', 'Is there something you are anxious to see which can't be seen from ground level?' he were truthfully to answer 'No', and insisted that he just wanted to do this kind of thing we should be justifiably baffled. As Griffiths and Peters remind us, 'What counts as evidence for wanting something is more than the actual behaviour involved ... (it) depends on what we are prepared to count as a possible end without special explanation; and what we assign to this class of possible ends will depend on considerations which go beyond our observation of the individual concerned. It will depend in part on the way we think that human nature limits the things a man could reasonably be said to want.'<sup>18</sup>

The point they are making is the same as that defended by Richard Norman in his *Reasons for Actions*<sup>19</sup> which is that the intelligibility of a want is determined by its relation to *public* standards and norms. *Intelligibility* or meaning is not, after all, a private affair but depends on certain public standards and norms which are themselves established by something more fundamental than choice or decision.<sup>20</sup> To want something is more than just being able to say 'I want to  $\Phi$ '; it is to be able to see  $\Phi$ -ing in a certain light and it is to want to  $\Phi$  because  $\Phi$ -ing is describable in a certain way. Norman puts it as follows: 'Not just any assertion of the form "I just want" can provide an ultimate reason for acting. If it does so, this will be because the description "X" characterises the thing in such a way that no further reason is necessary. And in that case it is the fact that the thing is describable as "X" not the fact that the thing is wanted that constitutes the reason for acting. The notion of "wanting" can be allowed to fall out altogether.'<sup>21</sup> For a want to be intelligible others must be capable in principle of seeing what there is about the object or activity in question which anyone might have for wanting it. The important thing is that its intelligibility is in virtue of its being the kind of thing that it is; its being that kind of thing providing at least *prima facie* reasons for wanting it.

According to Norman an appeal to public norms and standards is not an appeal to generalizations about how people act or what people in our society want, but an appeal to the shared ethical and evaluative *concepts* in our common language. The fact that reasons refer to public norms does not entail that a person's reasons for  $\Phi$ -ing are, at the end of the day, based upon what most people in his society happen to want. And he is surely correct to insist that public norms of rational action are prior to the notion of "wanting".<sup>22</sup>

### 5.3 Desire and Value

Any opponent of value subjectivism is immediately confronted with the problem of presenting a coherent and convincing account of what might be involved in the idea of something possessing objective value. Moreover, an acceptable alternative to the subjectivism associated with desire-satisfaction theories of well-being and freedom has to meet the charge that it must, of necessity, be authoritarian. Rational discussion of whether or not values are subjective or objective are all too frequently plagued by the readiness of the disputants to assume that their opponents are advocating one of a number of possible theses about the nature of values and valuation. It is all too easy to assume, for example, that those who believe in the 'existence' of values are advocating the existence of peculiar items of furniture in the world which are, as it were, brutally there in the way that the primary qualities of things are said to exist and in a way that is quite independent of human sensibility. A defender of the 'reality' of values is not necessarily operating with the restrictive model assumed by people like John Mackie which led him to protest that if values were to exist in the world they would be 'entities or qualities or relations of a very strange sort, utterly different from anything else in the universe'.<sup>23</sup>

For Mackie, only that which is 'in the world' as part of the very fabric of physical reality is objectively 'real'. But, this is a quite unnecessarily restrictive account of our moral phenomenology. There really is no reason to insist that for things, such as values, to be 'real' and not entirely dependent on subjective preferences, they must be *in* objects outside of the mind in exactly the same way that size and shape are. Physical objects are causally responsible for whatever perceptual experiences result



in our believing in their existence and our attribution of various qualities to them. But simply because values are not causally efficacious in the way that phenomenal qualities are, Mackie all too readily concludes that they are not genuinely real. Apart from the fact that the assumption that this sort of explanatory necessity is the appropriate test of the reality of values is question begging,<sup>24</sup> it presupposes that a perceptual model of values, whereby we develop a moral sensitivity to features of the world, is based on the model of awareness of primary qualities.

Before we explore the limitations which such a model imposes, it is important to consider some of the problems associated with that view of objectivity to which Mackie subscribes, which confines the objectively real to those features of properties of the world which can be understood without any reference whatsoever to the effect they have on sentient beings such as ourselves. To the extent that something could only be conceived by reference to how in normal or appropriate circumstances it would affect a sentient being it would, according to Mackie, be a subjective property of something and not part of the fabric of the universe. Colours, on this account, are therefore subjective properties and not part of reality as such; they belong instead to the world of appearance. The immediate question is whether we are forced to equate that which is 'real' with what is objective in Mackie's sense of that term. Closely associated with this is the status of properties not conceivable independently of sentient responses to them.

The way the world appears to sentient beings is in virtue of their occupying a specific (or parochial) point of view. Because beings such as ourselves with our peculiar organs of perception describe objects as coloured, it might be thought plausible to suggest that colour is not a feature of objects as they are, so to speak, 'in themselves'. But for this to be credible there must be some coherence in the idea of an absolute conception of reality which is characterisable independently of any particular point of view and by reference to which appearances in all their variety are explicable. There are several grounds for scepticism concerning any such notion the first of which relates to the difficulties involved in trying to render coherent the idea of an 'Archimedean point of view' in terms of which the world could be described

as it is really supposed to be without reference to any particular representation of it. An Archimedean point of view would have to be described in exceedingly abstract terms and would, of necessity, exclude much of what we would wish to claim as objectively true, albeit from standpoints occupied by beings such as ourselves. There is also a mistaken assumption implicit in any such conception that an absolute conception of reality is somehow better and altogether more accurate as a description of the world than any less austere and inclusive a conception such as that provided by sensory perception. But as David McNaughton says: 'It is only from within some particular perspective that we can ask what is really there and the answer will be determined by the frame of reference which that particular perspective provides.'<sup>25</sup> It is not as if we even require an Archimedean point of view in order to make sense of the idea of scientific progress or, for that matter, the scientifically objective. The fact that such objectivity presupposes a particular *Weltanschauung* does nothing to undermine its objectivity. Scientific theories are retained or dismissed by reference to, amongst other things, the extent to which the beliefs which they presuppose accord with other beliefs. Our conclusions relating to propositions relating to those features of the universe which provide knowledge of it are themselves part of a conceptual system and set of beliefs about the sort of place it is. Any supposition that a scientific theory is superior to any other occurs within the context of beliefs which are no less parochial in virtue of being scientific beliefs. A measure of parochialism in the formation of whatever scientific theories to which we choose to subscribe is simply unavoidable.

In the context of a discussion of behaviour Strawson contrasts two possible standpoints from which human behaviour may be viewed which he calls 'participant' (or 'involved') on the one hand and 'objective' (or 'detached') on the other. If we ask: 'Which is the correct standpoint?' or 'From which standpoint do we see things as they really are?' it is natural to suggest that the answer cannot be from both.

‘Viewed from one standpoint, the standpoint that we naturally occupy as social beings, human behaviour appears as the proper object of all those personal and moral reactions, judgements and attitudes to which, as social beings, we are naturally prone; or, to put the same point differently, human actions and human agents appear as the bearers of objective moral properties. But if anyone consistently succeeded in viewing such behaviour in which I have called the "purely objective" ... light, then to him such reactions, judgements, and attitudes would be alien; the notion of "proper objects" of such reactions and attitudes, the notion of "objective moral properties", would for him lack significance ....

If it is the standpoint of participation and involvement to which we are so strongly committed by nature and society, which is correct, then some human actions really are morally blameworthy or praiseworthy, hateful or admirable, proper objects of gratitude or resentment; and those who have contended for the objectivity of morals are fundamentally in the right of it, even if the particular judgements we make in this area are even more liable to error or distortion than those we make in others; and to refuse to recognise this is deliberately to blind oneself to a whole dimension of reality.’<sup>26</sup>

Once we dispense with the idea of a wholly unnecessary Archimedean point of view - after all whatever such a conception could be it would be quite unintelligible for it expects us to form a conception of the world in concepts that are not our own - we can, says Strawson, ‘recognise, in our conception of the real, a reasonable relativity to standpoints that we do know and can occupy. Relative to the standpoint which we normally occupy as social beings, prone to moral and personal reactive attitudes, human actions, or some of them, are morally toned and propertied in the diverse ways signified in our rich vocabulary of moral appraisal.’<sup>27</sup>

Questions relating to the intelligibility of an absolute conception of reality apart, there are serious doubts concerning whether or not reliance on such a conception could deliver the goods. Quite simply it would, on its own terms, have to explain and embrace rival conceptions. Competing conceptions would have to be shown to be defective in so far as they are misleading or parochial. The failure of the absolute conception of reality to demonstrate any such thing becomes apparent when trying to account for the way in which we experience things like colours and other states of consciousness. Clearly, within an absolute conception of reality there is no room for

the idea of something being really coloured; within such a conception secondary qualities such as colours being no more than mere 'appearances' and thus not part of 'reality'. But for this to be acceptable the absolutist must provide an explanation of how it is that we see coloured objects in the way we do - why we see grass as green and not red or blue. An absolutist wishing to explain how grass appeared green to an observer would be faced with the unavoidable concession that it depended on a particular point of view while at the same time having to provide some means or other by which that point of view might be transcended. The problem is just how this could be done. If properties such as colours are in some sense 'projections' on to a description of the world<sup>28</sup> and not, as it were, part of the furniture of that world, the absolutist has a problem. As McDowell puts it:

'To achieve the overarching objective account, one needs to transcend the point of view from which a given range of subjective concepts appears to be required in order to describe how things are, while nevertheless retaining as objectively factual the use of those concepts, or something close enough to them to serve as a basis for the supposed projection, in describing the context of the experience characteristic of that point of view.'<sup>29</sup>

Bernard Williams admits to a degree of scepticism in this regard when it comes to colour, a scepticism which according to McDowell is not only justified but should not be restricted to colour. The problem of accounting for colour is, as Williams admits, 'part of a larger question, how the partial views and local experiences are themselves to be related to the world as conceived in independence of them.'<sup>30</sup> We have only to think of states of consciousness such as pains or other sensations to appreciate the difficulties encountered by the absolutist attempt to account for our subjective responses to such sensations. The difficulties are admirably illustrated by Williams in the following passage:

'If I ... try to form a conception ... of just what is in the world when *A* is in pain, the temptation is to try to write into the world, in some hazy way, the appropriate context of *A*'s experience ... the pain. But in taking the context of *A*'s experience, and putting it into the world as a thing we can conceive of as there, we are in effect trying to abstract from *how it is for A*, the *how it is* and leave it as a fact on its own. (But) when *it is so for A* (e.g. *it hurts for A*), the only way of one's conceiving the appropriate *it is so* at all is that of adopting ... *A*'s point of view and putting oneself imaginatively in a state which

one expresses (if it can be verbally expressed) by saying, as *A*, *it is so* (e.g. *it hurts*).<sup>31</sup>

Our scepticism concerning the absolutist attempt to incorporate states of consciousness into an account of reality which is quite independent of any particular point of view would thus appear to be perfectly justified. There are, quite simply, limits to the extent to which we are able to ignore those features of the world whose very existence requires those specific modes of perception peculiar to ourselves. The problems associated with an absolute conception of reality are, then, manifold and if we are successfully to defend the idea of something possessing objective *value* we need an altogether less stringent account of reality.

In a densely argued critique of Mackie's position McDowell asks why it is supposed that the model of reality he adopts excludes secondary qualities.

'Secondary quality experience presents itself as perceptual awareness of properties genuinely possessed by the objects that confront one. And there is no general obstacle to taking that appearance at face value. An object's being such and such as to look red is independent of its actually looking red to anyone on any particular occasion; so notwithstanding the conceptual connection between being red and being experienced as red, an experience of something as red can count as a case of being presented with a property that is there anyway - there independently of the experience itself.'<sup>32</sup>

And he goes on to contrast different senses of 'subjectivity' according to which secondary qualities may be both subjective and objective.

'Secondary qualities are qualities not adequately conceivable except in terms of certain subjective states, and thus subjective themselves in a sense that that characterization defines. In the natural contrast, a primary quality would be objective in the sense that what it is for something to have it can be adequately understood otherwise than in terms of dispositions to give rise to subjective states. Now this contrast between objective and subjective is not a contrast between veridical and illusory experience. But it is easily confused with a different contrast, in which to call a putative object of awareness "objective" is to say that it is there to be experienced, as opposed to being a mere figment of the subjective state that purports to be an experience of it .... What is acceptable ... is only that secondary qualities are subjective in the first sense, and it would be simply wrong

to suppose that this gives any support to the idea that they are subjective in the second.'<sup>33</sup>

If we grant that it is in virtue of our having a particular perceptual awareness which enables us to distinguish objects in respect of their colour we can, I believe, go along with McDowell in acknowledging some kind of analogy between colour perception on the one hand and our ability to discern moral properties on the other. The fact that an object looks red to beings like us does nothing to undermine our confidence that it is a red object. From our (anthropocentric) viewpoint certain things are red but it does not mean that their redness has been created by us. Similarly, we may go along with McDowell and admit that evaluative attitudes are analogous to the experience of colours in being unintelligible except as modifications of a sensitivity such as our own. If we did not possess a whole range of emotional responses which we share with our own kind, moral experience of any kind would be unintelligible. To the extent that we are able to admit to a sensitivity to a world containing red objects we are in the equally comfortable position of being able to concede that as we grow towards maturity we become increasingly sensitive to moral reality. Such a reality is no more created by the affective side of our natures any more than colours are subjective 'projections' onto a description of the world as it really is - the mere by-products of a mode of perception peculiar to beings like us.

The analogy between colours and values is not perfect however as McDowell concedes - 'a virtue (say) is conceived to be not merely such as to elicit the appropriate 'attitude' (as colour is merely such as to cause the appropriate experiences) but rather such as to merit it.'<sup>34</sup> This reinforces doubts raised earlier concerning the relevance of causal explanations of value. But just as we can see something as red without inference from its underlying physical properties, so too may we directly observe a situation as cruel or courageous even if such recognition requires knowledge of other features of the situation which are themselves non-moral, such as the associated pain in the case of cruelty and the dangers or degree of risk involved in the case of courage. But if there is a non-contingent relationship between the various non-moral facts (upon which moral properties may be said to be

a function) and moral facts or truths, the moral realist has to explain how the relationship is yet supposed to be one of non-entailment.

The problem for the moral realist is to explain the connection between our knowing (or recognising) something to be intentionally cruel (and thus wrong) and knowing something of the natural features of cruelty in virtue of which it is seen as wrong if, as opponents such as Mackie would have it, the connection is not one of entailment. Mackie expresses it as follows:

‘... it is not merely that the two features occur together. The wrongness must somehow be "consequential" or "supervenient"; it is wrong because it is a piece of deliberate cruelty. But just what *in the world* is signified by this "because"? And how do we know the relation that it signifies, if this is something more than such actions being socially condemned .... It is not even sufficient to postulate a faculty which "sees" the wrongness; something must be postulated which can see at once the natural features that constitute the cruelty, and the wrongness, and the mysterious consequential link between the two.’<sup>35</sup>

If observation reveals only contingent connections, how are we to know that the gratuitous infliction of pain on someone else is wrong? It would seem that there is neither empirical basis nor logically necessary connection between the two. It is the supervenience of moral properties which leads Mackie to the conclusion that they are ‘queer’ in being ‘utterly different from anything else in the universe’.

Attempted solutions to the problem of supervenience may be found in the work of John McDowell and Mark Platts. In order to retain the autonomy of moral judgements (which is to say that they are neither inferences from non-moral judgements nor reducible to non-moral claims) Platts invites us to note a certain parallel between the arrangement of black dots on a white card which ‘fix’ a face there pictured to be seen. In seeing the face we do not *attend* to the dot arrangement and *infer* that there is a head to be seen; we observe the face directly. Similarly, according to Platts, once all the non-moral facts about a situation are fixed, so are all the moral facts:

‘We could know everything about those non-moral facts while being in utter ignorance of the moral facts. If we now go on to make moral judgements about the case we do not do so by attending to the non-moral facts, the facts described in vocabulary free of moral import; we do not *infer* the moral facts from the non-moral facts.’<sup>36</sup>

In observing someone behave courageously we do not firstly attend to his mental state, evaluate the probability of his overcoming the attendant dangers and on the basis of these and other non-moral factors subsequently infer that he is a courageous person. And yet the problem remains in accounting for the role of non-moral reasons in justifying differences in moral judgement, for this role would appear to be incompatible with the autonomy claimed for moral judgements or with the denial of the claim that moral judgements are inferences from factual claims. Platts attempts to overcome the problem in two ways. He first questions the assumption that the distinction between the moral and the non-moral is as clear as some would have it. When someone performs a courageous action how are we to characterise those features relating to his state of mind for example (which may be said to *fix* his courage) in morally neutral terms. Until we have a defensible means of explicating the contrast between moral and non-moral facts it is, Platts says, ‘open to the realist to reply to the argument from moral reason in a simple way: if the giving of a reason intelligibly accounts for a difference in moral judgement, it is itself a *moral* reason.’<sup>37</sup> Such ‘lower level, more concrete considerations’ certainly do not *entail* that someone is courageous, rather they *merit* our attribution of courage.

Platts’s second way of addressing the issue is shared, amongst others, by McDowell and has, in my view, considerable persuasive force. Various expressed as moral particularism or the uncodifiability of moral judgements, it is sceptical of the role of moral principles in moral reasoning. The very idea of a set of subvenient properties entailing the moral features of a situation presupposes the possibility of identifying the respects in which such a set are sufficiently similar to force some sort of logical connection between moral features and such similarities. When we attend to specific moral situations in all their complexities we are doing more than applying a principle whereby present moral judgements are in accordance with previous judgements. ‘In ordering moral life, determining our moral judgements about a particular case by



means of some rules seizing upon non-moral aspects of that case will simply mean that we neglect the full complexity of that particular case.<sup>38</sup> Each case has unique and specific features careful and sensitive attention to which enables us to make a moral judgement which may well differ according to circumstances. 'In ordinary life, moral situations do not repeat themselves; only insensitivity can suggest that they do.'<sup>39</sup> If true, it follows that one cannot know what is cruel or courageous in advance of a state of affairs which is situationally specific. As McDowell says, invoking Aristotle, 'the best generalisations about how one should behave hold only for the most part. If one attempted to reduce one's conception of what virtue requires to a set of rules, then, however subtle and thoughtful one was in drawing up the code, cases would inevitably turn up in which a mechanical application of the rules would strike one as wrong.'<sup>40</sup>

All of this raises immensely complex issues concerning the nature of moral reasoning which cannot be explored here but it does, I believe, serve to explain why the subvenient features of a situation do not entail moral judgements. It is precisely because moral judgements are situationally specific that the existence of the necessary universal propositions required if the connection between the non-moral and moral features of a particular set of circumstances is to be one of entailment, is ruled out. Moral realism can accept that the connection between non-moral and moral features of a situation while being one of non-entailment is equally non-contingent. As Robert Arrington says, in a particular case, 'the moral quality is identical with the base characteristics - they are not two things only contingently related.'<sup>41</sup> Arrington reminds us of the complexity of moral perception:

'A moral agent confronting a moral situation may perceive (a) various demands or values embodied in it; (b) the salient demand or value; and (c) the other dimensions as silenced by the salient one. Her knowledge of all these things is particular and specific, incapable of being guided by or articulated in a general formula. She is able to see things and have this knowledge because ... she is the kind of person she is, because she has a certain conception of how to live.'<sup>42</sup>

And McDowell is surely correct in supposing that we identify moral features for what they are by a kind of perceptive capacity which he calls 'sensitivity'<sup>43</sup> without

recourse to the questionable and specific faculty of moral intuition. One has only to remember those occasions in one's life when an initial encounter with a new work of art in an unfamiliar genre left one baffled and unmoved only to find, perhaps as a result of greater familiarity with it or after discussing it with people whose reactions and responses were quite different, that one comes to see it in an altogether new and much more meaningful light.

One's moral responses are similarly subject to re-appraisal and re-evaluation, so much so that it is not inappropriate to talk of misperception or myopia where failure to see in the appropriate light is possibly due to one's appreciation being 'clouded, or unfocused, by the impact of a desire to do otherwise.'<sup>44</sup> In coming to see a moral situation in a new light we may be said to *discover* something about a state of affairs (including ourselves) which results in the adoption of a new and altogether different evaluative stance. Any such re-evaluation requires a measure of openness and sensitivity as well as a willingness to accept that prejudices of various kinds may well hinder our seeing things in the way that others do. Moral (and aesthetic) education must therefore equip children not only with the appropriate conceptual apparatus or vocabulary with which to articulate their perceptions but also instil a degree of humility and sensitivity whereby they become disposed to listen to the views of others and reassess their own position in the light of coming to see things afresh. It is worth reiterating once again that the re-evaluation and reflection involved is not solely about trying to find what it is that one really wants or cares about - although it is undeniably partly concerned with this. As it stands, such a model is incomplete in ignoring the importance of coming to see things as they really are by reference to which our emotional responses, amongst other things, may be deemed appropriate. There are obvious cases where reluctance to agree that certain actions are kind or courageous are either disingenuous or due to a kind of moral blindness analogous to the way in which some people are colour blind. (Psychopaths are fairly obvious candidates.)

Given that moral judgements are said to provide at least *prima facie* reasons for action the question to which this inevitably gives rise is as follows: how, if reason

for action is supposed to be a reason for a specific person, can it possibly avoid reference to what that person actually desires? Reference to a moral agent's desires are, it is widely believed, unavoidable in any specification of a reason for action if it is to be complete in the sense of possessing motivational efficacy.

Moral realism, while conceding that moral judgements do indeed provide reasons for action and that a reason for action must indeed have motivational efficacy, is not prepared to accept the Humean conclusion that reason is the slave of the passions. After all it is far from being obviously true. As Platts asks: 'Why should it not just be a brute fact about moral facts that, without any such further element entering, their clear perception does provide sufficient grounding for action?'<sup>45</sup> And as Arrington reminds us, quite often in response to requests for reasons for action 'one often responds by stating independent, objective facts: *Question* - Why did you run out of the building? *Answer* - Because my room was on fire. *Question* - Why did you withdraw from the race? *Answer* - Because the polls showed I had no chance of winning.'<sup>46</sup> In reply to the objection that this is misleading in that the desires to avoid being incinerated or humiliated are both obvious and universal, we may respond by asking why we should assume that such desires are prior causal conditions. Why not simply view them 'as identifying what the agent intentionally did, as opposed to conditions giving rise to what he did'?'<sup>47</sup> Their obviousness is such that in leaving the building or conceding defeat the agent in question intentionally did what he did.

Defenders of moral non-cognitivism are deeply wedded to the idea of there being at least two quite different mental states. These are (a) *cognitive*, in that they are concerned with what is believed and (b) *appetitive*, in being concerned with what is desired. They are held to be jointly necessary and sufficient conditions of the intelligibility of any action we care to perform. Without appropriate beliefs and desires an agent is thought to have no reason to act. On their own, beliefs are assumed to be motivationally inert while desire is the essential spur to motivation. As cognitive states, beliefs are no more than representations of what we accept as truths about the world. According to non-cognitivists, desires are an entirely different kind of mental state. The contrast can be expressed as follows: if beliefs

are said to 'aim' at what is true, that is to say aim at being in accordance with how the world is, desires aim at changing the world. The contrast is in terms of the passivity of beliefs and the active state of mind associated with desires.

Moral realism on the other hand finds much of this profoundly suspect. Realism questions the premise in terms of which non-cognitivism is led to the conclusion which is, after all, not entirely consistent with our moral phenomenology, to the effect that our awareness of certain (moral) facts provides insufficient reason for action. In other words why should we accept the necessity for two fundamentally different *kinds* of mental state in the first place? Is it so obviously the case that desires are devoid of beliefs and that beliefs are always morally neutral? Is the view of the mind as something containing states which are either wholly passive on the one hand or active (and motivating) on the other, acceptable? Again, while it is, of course, absurd to deny (contra Kant) that a virtuous action is the sort of thing that may well be the object of a person's desire, this is not to be committed to the view that our seeing an action in a favourable light, such that we may be said to have a reason for performing it, necessitates the inclusion of a desire in the motivating power of such reasons. Some beliefs are themselves motivational in the sense that their very existence commits one to action of some kind. Seeing a situation in a particular light (which is another way of saying that we believe certain things about it) may be sufficient to motivate, and beliefs of this kind are no less cognitive if they are in association with desires. As McDowell says:

'Suppose ... that we explain a person's performance of a certain action by crediting him with awareness of some fact which makes it likely (in his view) that acting in that way will be conducive to his interest. Adverting to his view of the facts may suffice, on its own, to show us the favourable light in which his action appeared to him. No doubt we credit him with an appropriate desire, perhaps for his own future happiness. But the commitment to ascribe such a desire is simply consequential on our taking him to act as he does for the reason we cite; the desire does not function as an independent extra component in a full specification of his reason ...'

And he quotes Nagel with approval.

‘That I have the appropriate desire simply *follows* from the fact that these considerations motivate me; if the likelihood that an act will promote my future happiness motivates me to perform it now, then it is appropriate to ascribe to me a desire for my own future happiness. But nothing follows about the role of the desire as a condition contributing to the motivational efficacy of those considerations.’

and asks:

‘Why should the reasons which move people to virtuous behaviour not be similar to the reasons which move them to prudent behaviour? To explain an action we regard as virtuous, we typically formulate a more or less complex characterisation of the action’s circumstances as we take the agent to have conceived them. Why should it not be the case, here too, that the agent’s conception of the situation, properly understood, suffices to show us the favourable light in which his action appeared to him?’<sup>48</sup>

While I believe that McDowell’s thesis has considerable persuasive force it is important to emphasise that the citation of a particular desirability-feature as a reason for doing or valuing something is not to suggest that a person would be irrational in failing to pursue whatever it was that possessed that particular feature - its beauty, or capacity to amuse, stimulate, or whatever. Given the limitations on what it is plausible for a human being intelligibly to be said to want (such limits being a function of the light in which the object of desire is seen), the notion of desirability-feature not only renders actions intelligible, it goes a very long way towards providing a rational basis for choice. The reason why desirability-features do not provide a complete justification for a course of action is that people and circumstances vary. What may be appropriate for me at a particular juncture may not be the best thing for someone else.

Consider the case of Freud who, towards the end of his life, (according to Griffin) preferred to think clearly rather than take pain-relieving drugs. Explaining the state of thinking clearly as a desirability-feature, Griffin says, ‘needs both perception and desire, without priority to either. To see this feature as desirable and to desire it on seeing it are the same. There is no plausible explanation of one in terms of the other.’<sup>49</sup> If someone is confronted with alternative courses of action both of which are rational (such as reducing pain and continuing to work) although not necessarily

compatible, it is impossible to legislate for what other people should do. Freud's decision may well have differed from yours or mine but it was at least a decision based on the perceived value to him of work at the expense of suffering.

Griffin is quite willing to concede that we sometimes discover values, as when we come to appreciate what is involved in a life of accomplishment. He is even willing to admit that when you see what accomplishment is you form a desire. There being no need for 'any pre-existent background desire (except those of vacuous generality) of which your new desire is merely another instance.'<sup>50</sup> Indeed it might well seem as if all reference to desire is redundant given the universal value of not frittering one's life away. In what he has to say about the life of accomplishment Griffin is reminiscent of Kekes in suggesting that 'the language we use in reporting our perceptions already organises our experience and selects what we see as important; it is designed to show that we view certain things in a favourable light. Desire here does not blindly fix on an object; it is obviously pointed in certain directions by what we perceive favourably.'<sup>51</sup> What is so problematic about Griffin's position however, is that he insists that there is still a strong case for saying that the order of explanation is from *desire* to *value*. And even though he parts company with Hume in seeing understanding (cognition) and desire (appetite) as distinct existences, he denies that 'one can explain our fixing on desirability-features purely in terms of understanding.'<sup>52</sup> Desire is, after all, an essential component of our perceiving things in a favourable light. For there is no adequate explanation of something being a desirability-feature, he insists, without appeal to what he calls 'a kind of movement', which is another way of saying that desire is part of what it is to see something in a favourable light. For what it is worth, Griffin's conclusion is that neither desire nor value have priority over one another. I am not so sure and am loathe to part company with Norman whose conclusion on this is worth reiterating.

'... in that majority of cases where the possibility of wanting something is dependent upon already having learnt to see the thing in the relevant ways, the norm is both logically *and* chronologically prior to the existence of the corresponding want.'<sup>53</sup>

Unfortunately it would require more space than this essay permits to explore the issue further. Sufficient has already been said to enable us to conclude with McDowell and McNaughton that desire *as an independent element* in the explanation of actions is altogether redundant. If it is the case that desire is not always to be thought of as a non-cognitive state the distinction between beliefs and attitudes is seriously undermined and with it the case for non-cognitivism.

## 6. INTERESTS AND WELL-BEING

### 6.1 Interests and Preferences

In the attempt to refute that view of freedom which sees it, and by extension human well-being, as being unconstrained in pursuit of desire-satisfaction, we have seen how both notions are very much bound up with the ability to make rational choices between significant alternatives and have had cause to doubt both the means-end view of rationality with its undue concentration on means while assuming that ends themselves are not candidates for rational assessment as well as being unable to accept that criteria of significance have much, if anything, to do with desire-satisfaction. It is the purpose of this section to argue for a view of rational agency which ties it very tightly to that of interests; the extent to which our actions are in accordance with what may genuinely be said to be in our interests being a measure not only of our rationality but also providing a means whereby we can flesh out the third variable in our triadic schema. Interests also serve to identify, in ways which any desire account of well-being would disallow, criteria of well-being and human flourishing.

We have already seen how anyone faced with trying to construct an objective account of what is of genuine value and in our real-interests is confronted with the ugly spectre of authoritarianism which would appear to be embedded in any such attempt. After all, isn't the whole point of 'real' in 'real-interests' designed to show that a particular policy or course of action may well be contrary to a person's interests even if he has an expressed interest in it. And what if those things in which he is interested are not actually *in* his interests; does it not follow that others may act against his will while still acting in accordance with his real-interests? I hope to show how such a charge may be successfully rebutted.

Firstly, the fact that something is seen in either a favourable or unfavourable light is, in itself, insufficient to enable us to decide what we ought to do on a particular occasion. While such features provide a rational basis for choice they have to be independently appraised by people in the light of their particular circumstances. As



we have seen, it makes no sense to postulate a totally detached viewpoint from which such evaluations could be made. For this reason the citation of any such features is not necessarily a reason-terminator. (Even cruelty may be warranted in exceptional circumstances, such as those associated with the training of athletes.) Whether or not one should act in accordance with a particular characterization or state of affairs depends, in part, on its significance within the context of the unity of one's life. As we saw in Section 4 one is not entirely passive with respect to how situations are conceived and evaluated; there being no obvious causal relationship between the experience to which one is subject and the language in which one's evaluation is formulated. And yet it would be mistaken to assume that the only alternative to a passive conception is one couched in the language of choice. Given that genuine discoveries relating to one's values and character are possible, it is reasonable to suppose that one may appreciate wherein one's interests lie and how one's well-being is dependent on their recognition and non-frustration by reference to such discoveries.

Another way in which we might avoid the charge of authoritarianism is by reference to a proper understanding of what it is to have a real-interest in something. My interests are subjective in at least one sense and that is in virtue of being my interests and not (at least not necessarily) yours. And yet they are not, and could not be, subjective to the point of being entirely idiosyncratic. If, however a desire-satisfaction account of well-being were acceptable, we should have no reason to doubt that, as with desires themselves, I could have a legitimate interest in just about anything whatsoever. An objectivist has strategies for repudiating this which rely on being able to demonstrate that there are features of human nature which entail that whatever form of life we adopt we will be harmed (which is another way of saying that we cannot flourish) unless we find room for certain fundamental requirements which may be subsumed under the heading of 'real-interests'. And there is nothing incompatible in this with a respect for individuality and the acceptance of an irremediable plurality of values, which is to say that one good life may well differ in significant respects from other good lives.

A third way of dealing with the charge of authoritarianism while insisting on an objective account of real-interests is by trying to establish the respects in which a person would suffer serious harm if his interests were not met. According to Feinberg harm should be conceived as 'the violation of one of a person's interests, an injury to something in which he has a *genuine* stake'.<sup>1</sup> It would be counterintuitive to say that a person is harmed when he is prevented from doing anything whatever in which he has an interest. A millionaire may have an interest in not being short-changed by a waiter, but it is absurd to suggest that he has been seriously harmed by such dishonesty. The serious harm with which I am concerned is that harm to a person which seriously damages his ability to function normally. For this reason a person is harmed when deprived of those conditions necessary for a reasonable standard of living. No doubt there is an element of cultural relativity surrounding the idea of what is 'reasonable', but there are basic requirements the absence of which prevents anyone from engaging in anything whatsoever. Everyone needs food, sleep and exercise as well as contact with others and the sustenance that goes with this. Whatever is required in order to function properly as a person are often referred to as basic human needs. Garrett Thomson argues that harm consists primarily in the absence of certain primary goods - such as privacy, friendship, fun, beauty and such like - and an account of harm must explain why these primary goals are desirable. He maintains that: 'If *X* is a primary good for *P*, then this is because of both the nature of *P* and the characteristics of *X*'.<sup>2</sup> My thesis is entirely consistent with this statement but my conclusion is rather different to Thomson's. Although he goes to great lengths to refute the desire account of well-being, he is unwilling to conclude that the criteria of harm possess objective status on the grounds that 'harm' and 'well-being' are sensitive to variations in individual natures. I admit to the truth of this but am not prepared to concede that it is sufficient to cast doubt on the form of objectivism I wish to sustain which is that there are objectively determined limits to what may legitimately count as human well-being and, by parity of reasoning, to what may count as harm or serious damage to persons and their development. In spite of the difficulties associated with specifying an uncontested account of human flourishing (witness Brentano's alleged claim to the effect that his blindness was a blessing or the Catholic mother whose conception of harm does not include the idea

that she will be harmed by having yet more children<sup>3</sup>). In spite of such difficulties we can, I believe, demonstrate how things like health and autonomy are fundamental prerequisites of a good life. While there are reasons to suppose that autonomy is in a person's interests whether he wants it or not and, as such, may necessitate some form of paternalism in order to ensure its development, it does not follow that there is no more to well-being than acting in accordance with such interests unthinkingly. Part of what is involved in their being my real-interests is that I have sound reasons to care about them in order to ensure that I am neither denied the means to their securement nor suffer as a result of their atrophying. While real-interests are to be identified by reference to something far removed from personal preference we need to appreciate what it is about them that merits concern. While there may well be whole categories of people for whom we may deem certain things to be in their interests whether they want them or not, it is important that wherever possible they pursue them autonomously and with some real concern. For, as Elizabeth Telfer says, in so doing a person's well-being 'might be said to be his good and not merely a good life led by him'.<sup>4</sup>

Before proceeding with an account of what such interests might amount to it is important to dispel any lingering attraction there might be towards an account of interests in terms of desire-satisfaction or any other form of subjective preference. Informed desires have been found wanting in this respect. If we were to equate interests with actual desires we should find ourselves in the absurd position of having a real-interest in securing everything that we happened to desire however harmful or trivial. Our interests would not only vary in accordance with our desires but also be of equally variable duration. We would be unable to say that education, for example, was in a child's interests (or anyone else's for that matter) prior to his actually desiring it and any attempt to persist with projects in the light of what one believed would contribute to self-satisfaction or fulfilment would collapse into nothing more than an attempt to satisfy desires.

Attempts to reduce interests or well-being to states of mind are equally implausible. 'Pleasurable feelings' may well be a mark of a thing's value but such a value cannot

be reduced to any such state. Robert Nozick's attempt to refute a subjective or mental states account of well-being is by now justifiably familiar. He invites us to consider the following thought experiment:

‘Suppose there were an experience machine that would give you any experience you desired. Superduper new neuropsychologists could stimulate your brain so that you would think and feel you were writing a great novel, or making a friend, or reading an interesting book. All the time you would be floating in a tank.’<sup>5</sup>

According to Nozick there are three considerations that make the decision to plug in to such a machine overwhelmingly objectionable. (i) ‘We want to *do* certain things, and not just have the experience of doing them.’ (The value of activity to well-being was clearly recognised by Aristotle. A life without the ability consciously to affect our circumstances by our own actions is a life so bereft of quality that it scarcely counts as a life worth living.) (ii) ‘We want to *be* a certain way, to be a certain sort of person.’ Nozick quite rightly compares the decision to plug into such a machine as a kind of suicide in that answers to questions relating to a person's character in such a state cease to have application. (The irrationality of sacrificing one's whole identity for the sake of mere experiences was again recognised by both Aristotle and Mill.<sup>6</sup>) Plugging into Nozick's machine would be a truly dreadful state of loss of self on which any coherent account of well-being must be predicated. (iii) ‘Plugging into an experience machine limits us to a man-made reality ... something matters in addition to one's experiences *and* what one is like.’ What matters to us is to live ‘*in contact with reality*’.<sup>7</sup> Life on such a machine would provide no room for the distinction between believing such and such to be the case and its being the case. Such a life would be the negation of a free life in that the individual would be denied the very conditions which distinguish ignorance from knowledge - and ignorance, as we saw, is a profound constraint upon someone's freedom. Again, to be in a position to verify or falsify one's beliefs is a necessary condition of being able to choose between alternative possibilities. Where knowledge of reality is unobtainable then it is a nonsense to talk of choice as something different from arbitrary whim and fiat. The value of retaining contact with reality may be seen without recourse to Nozick's example. As Nathanson has shown, if we compare the lives of two people, one of whom is both loved and admired by his family and

friends, and the other who although despised is ignorant of this because of the tactics employed in concealing it from him, the love and admiration enjoyed by the latter is an illusion and as such is devoid of the value attributed to true love and friendship. Most of us would surely be appalled to discover that what we had taken to be the gestures of the beloved were empty and devoid of genuine feeling.<sup>8</sup>

The result of a justified discontent with subjective accounts of interests led William Connolly to propose criteria against which his own definition of interests are to be assessed. These are twofold: (a) the intimate connection between interest and choice, albeit of a peculiarly privileged kind and (b) the fact that a person's claims regarding his interests are not necessarily incorrigible.

Connolly's own definition is not without problems of its own but it is one of the clearest attempts to save the notion from a subjectivist fate. Connolly deplores the identification of interests with what he calls people's 'policy preferences' for a variety of reasons which need not detain us. One such reason, however, is sufficient in itself to invalidate policy preferences as a criterion of a person's interests. As Connolly quite rightly says '... given that definition of interest, there simply cannot be "unarticulated interests"; those without particular policy preferences in certain areas must be viewed as not having an interest in a given policy result.'<sup>9</sup> In an important chapter on 'Power and Responsibility' he explains how powerful sections within a community are able to manipulate the desires in accordance with which certain elements of the population conceive of their interests. I have already drawn attention to the fact that many of our desires may well be inauthentic. If true, there is every possibility that people may profess to having interests in that which is incompatible with their overall benefit or advantage. It is not unreasonable to suppose that there are groups in society with vested interests in manipulating the means by which wants are created and interests articulated. As Benton says:

'Suppose that powerful groups and individuals are able to affect the processes whereby the pattern of felt and articulated wants of the underlying population is formed in such a way that these wants are generally satisfiable within the framework of the prevailing social, economic and political institutions, and in such a way as not to

obstruct the want-satisfaction of the power-holders. In such a society, research which is conceptually and methodologically restricted to the analysis of conflicts over the satisfaction of articulated wants within that institutionalised framework will contribute to the legitimation of such a situation in at least two respects. First, it will fail to register unarticulated wants, potential aspirations, possible preferences, which *might* have been formed, articulated, etc., were it not for the persistent relationships and practices which socially shape wants and preferences in that society. Secondly, in taking as "given" the wants, preferences etc. which *are* articulated, the power relations implicated in the processes of social production of those 'given' wants are rendered "invisible".<sup>10</sup>

But as he is at pains to remind us, it has to be clearly demonstrated that any alternative set of wants are both possible and preferable, which in turn gives rise to deeply troublesome questions relating to how their ethical preferability might be established. An alternative (perhaps the only alternative) to admitting to the 'essential contestability' of the relevant concepts whereby no resolution is thought to be possible is, as Benton suggests (albeit with what seems to me undue scepticism), to invoke a theory of universal human needs which incorporates certain values as 'characteristically human'. Such a possibility is similar in vein to something Connolly has to say in leaving us in no doubt that he recognises the normative force possessed by the concept of interest.

'The idea of real interests ... is bounded by a set of core ideals we share ... about those characteristics particularly distinctive of persons ... (and) any current choice whose import undermines one's capacity to make future choices or seriously restricts opportunities to act upon a range of possible future choices weighs heavily against the real interests of the person or class of persons involved.'<sup>11</sup>

In this passage Connolly is clearly invoking the notion of autonomous agency, by reference to which choices are deemed genuine and wants acknowledged as authentic, as having special significance for persons.

As far as teachers are concerned, if they are to be sure that they are acting in accordance with the real-interests of their pupils they must have some means of distinguishing these from their own, frequently arbitrarily formed, set of values and preferences. Connolly's definition of 'real interest' is as follows:

‘Policy *X* is more in *A*’s real interest than policy *Y* if *A*, were he to experience the *results* of both *X* and *Y*, would *choose X* as the result he would rather have for himself.’<sup>12</sup>

For Connolly any definition of ‘interest’ must satisfy his choice criterion of adequacy where ‘choice’ refers to what an agent would choose retrospectively. But, as it stands, the phrase ‘the result he would rather have’ is unclear. We need to know the *kind* of choices made that are relevant to ascriptions of real interest. The appropriate question here, Connolly says, is not ‘what does he now want?’ but ‘what would he choose if, knowing what he now knows, he could freely make that choice again?’. However, reference to counterfactual conditions here is more problematic than Connolly would have us believe.

In his excellent critique of Connolly’s position, Grenville Wall highlights the problem. If judgements concerning interests are used to *justify* a course of action then the concept of interest cannot be defined in terms of what someone’s choices *would* be in certain counterfactual conditions.

‘Judgements of interest are not a species of *prediction* about merely *contingent* states of affairs. If they were no more than this it is difficult to see how they could have the normative or evaluative significance which they must have if they are to serve in the justification and criticism of policies or courses of action .... It is not that an informed choice in counterfactual conditions is a *condition* of what a person’s best interest is, but rather that judgements about what his interest (good, advantage) consists in furnish us with grounds for deciding what his choices ought to be.’<sup>13</sup>

What then of Connolly’s second criterion of adequacy - that of allowing for the possibility of *mistaken* choice? What if someone, after experiencing the results of a policy that legalises heroin, chooses that state of affairs as a result he would rather have? Is this apparent counter-example sufficient to undermine the proposed definition? If Connolly were to ask of someone who was, but is no longer a heroin addict whether or not he would willingly revert to his previous state of dependency and were told that all things considered such a state was indeed preferable and something to which he intended to revert, Connolly would (given the importance he attaches to choosing that which does not undermine one’s capacity to make subsequent

choices) have to deny that such choices were compatible with anyone's real interests. However, given the agent's 'privileged choice' in the relevant counterfactual conditions which is, after all, Connolly's criterion of something's being in one's real interest, it is difficult to see how the choices under discussion could possibly be *mistaken*. The only 'mistake' allowed for here is in misidentifying what one wants and it is a characteristic of wanting something that the individual is in the best position to know what that it.

If we are to take seriously the possibility of the objectivity of human interests we have to restrict the choices an actor relies upon to something other than those he would rather have for himself under certain counterfactual conditions. If an actor is to have made genuine mistakes relating to his real-interests he has to concede that other people may be in a better position to judge correctly, or, which is to concede as much, that the reasons for concluding that heroin is incompatible with anyone's real-interests are independent of what his (albeit fully informed) choice would be. And yet there are problems for what Benton calls the 'radical critic of the dominant tradition of power research'. Assuming that he is egalitarian and democratic he is caught in an unavoidable paradox of emancipation:

'If they are to remain true to their political values they may implement no changes without the consent of those who are affected by them, and if they seek to implement no such changes, then they acquiesce in the persistence of a social system radically at odds with their political values.'<sup>14</sup>

Benton quite rightly dismisses attempts to solve this so-called paradox by revising the concept of interests such that people are the sole arbiters of their own interests. Any such solution would preclude the possibility of being genuinely mistaken about one's interests in so far as others might be better placed to adjudicate. However, merely because of the weaknesses implicit in such a strategy as well as those associated with Connolly's reduction of real-interests to those chosen under certain counterfactual conditions, there is no reason to despair of real-interests having *something* to do with choices made under optimal conditions. It goes without saying that there are obvious difficulties with this. According to Lear, 'they (optimal conditions) cannot be discriminated by the choices the agent would make in those conditions, for they are



symmetrical in that respect.<sup>15</sup> But I do not see why we should be put out by the dilemma to which this is said to give rise:

‘If the *raison d’être* for invoking optimal conditions is that it is believed that the agent’s current choices are distorted by the conditions in which he lives, then presumably his current choice of optimal conditions may also be distorted. If, on the other hand, *we* specify the optimal conditions - subject perhaps to the proviso that the agent endorses these conditions as optimal once he has realised them then we have presupposed what constitutes human flourishing.’<sup>16</sup>

The whole point about optimal conditions is that they are not distorted. To be optimal they must be conditions in which an individual is not the victim of coercion or manipulation in identifying certain interests to be his *real-interests*. Real-interests are those which an agent endorses when there is no mistake concerning either his desires or what it is that he really needs in order to flourish. Optimal conditions presuppose a deep understanding and knowledge of the issues involved including the circumstances in which one finds oneself, the circumstances one is likely to find oneself in in the foreseeable future, one’s preferences and likely preferences, one’s nature and predispositions and the nexus of significant personal, social and political relationships, as well as one’s moral convictions all of which contribute to the form and shape of one’s self-identity.

If there is any truth in this it should serve to cast doubt on the first part of Benton’s paradox ‘... to remain true to their political values they may implement no changes without the consent of those who are affected by them.’ As he himself so ably demonstrates, we use all kinds of persuasive (not coercive or tyrannical) techniques to get people to recognise that particular courses of action are in their real-interests. He is quite right to emphasise the fact that attempts at persuasion ‘play a part in the social constitution and/or reconstitution of (a person’s) social and personal identity. Ideological struggles are, in general, struggles over the constitution and incorporation of individuals into opposed patterns of social identity, loyalty and commitment, together with the interests that these carry.’ And he reminds us that ‘such struggles are not exhaustively or exclusively "discursive" in content’. Should we really wait for the consent of what may well be the majority of a population - women for

example - before legislating in their favour?. If women profess to rest content with a position in society which reduces them to little more than chattels, legislation may well function to change a whole climate of thought about how they are perceived and about how they perceive themselves and in so doing extend opportunities for autonomous choice which does not undermine their ability to make subsequent choices. Legislation is itself frequently persuasive and, although I cannot argue for this here, I would suggest that if and where it succeeds in promoting autonomous decision-making, which means that it is genuinely emancipatory, paternalistic legislation has a place in a democratic society. In due course I provide arguments to show why autonomy has a special and particularly significant role in a satisfactory account of human flourishing. Before turning to this I try to develop a more objective account of real-interests and human well-being than that associated with personal preference.

## **6.2 Towards an Objective Account of Well-Being**

The history of philosophy is littered with accounts of human flourishing in terms of a single *summum bonum* for us all without exception; the closer one's life approximates towards such an ideal being the measure, as it were, of one's well-being. We see this in countless religious groups and utopian visionaries most of whom invoke ingenious and often tortuous metaphysical assumptions about the nature of the universe and our place within it. Now it is easy to assume that if we are unable to rely on any form of desire-satisfaction account of well-being we are forced into some form of perfectionism. My answer to this is that it depends on what we mean by perfectionism. If it means that there is indeed only one *summum bonum* to which we should all aspire - the content of which being specifiable in advance of any particular life - there are reasons for maintaining a deep scepticism about any such possibility. If, on the other hand, it means that there are limits to what can possibly count as human flourishing, that there are conditions for such flourishing which, if not sufficient, are at least necessary in that they are required to some degree in any recognisably human life especially if such a life is to be lived in accordance with any intelligible notion of real-interests and, what is in effect the other side of the coin, harm avoidance, then I believe such a form of perfectionism is both sustainable and

unavoidable. If it is to be sustained it must rely on an acceptable account of human nature even if there is no simple or unitary account in the way envisaged by Aristotle with its reliance on the idea of a specific *ergon* (or function) for human beings.<sup>17</sup> A proper appreciation of what it is to be a person will provide us with the means of developing an account of well-being which is objective in so far as it is concerned with something other than mere desire-satisfaction while at the same time allowing for a diversity of goods within any one good life in particular. Whether or not the accusation of perfectionism has any legitimate foundation causes me no undue concern.

According to Kekes the identification of natural requirements of human welfare is, in part, an empirical question but there are certain universal human characteristics relating to what he calls (i) 'facts of the body' which include the capacity to feel pain and pleasure, sickness, health and death, the capacity to think, will, imagine, use language, etc.; (ii) 'facts of the self' involving the capacity to learn from the past and to plan for the future, together with the fact that we want our lives to reflect our attitudes to friends and relations, sexual partners and those in authority etc.; and (iii) 'facts of social life' which include scarce resources, the necessity for adjudication in cases of conflict and rules relating to social intercourse. Facts such as these

'establish what must be the minimum conditions for human welfare ... To cause death, dismemberment, lasting physical pain, prolonged hunger and thirst is normally evil ... (Similarly) it is obviously good for us to have the opportunity to exercise our faculties, direct our lives, assess what we regard as important .... The facts of social life provide the social conditions in which physiological and psychological wants can be satisfied. Thus, having a stable society, guaranteeing security and some freedom, providing an authority and known rules for settling disputes and adjudicating conflicts are good, and their opposites evil.'<sup>18</sup>

Not only is this indisputable, it is very much in accordance with the fact that it is impossible to compile a list of all the necessary and sufficient conditions of the good life or what it is to flourish as a human being with any degree of specificity. If we experience much that is disagreeable and frustrating it simply won't do to be told that from some so-called objective perspective our lives are perfectly satisfactory

irrespective of what we might think. As Raz argues, well-being is firstly and most importantly a matter of how good one's life is from one's own point of view; in so far as one is concerned with furthering anyone's well-being one cannot avoid reference to his goals, projects, ambitions or plans. They contribute to his well-being because they *matter* to him. A person's well-being is affected by the extent to which he is successful in the pursuit of such goals.<sup>19</sup> And yet if it is the case that there are conditions to be met by any life believed to be good even from a subjective point of view such conditions are objective in being both universally applicable and independent of any particular set of beliefs.

In order to appreciate how one's judgements concerning the goodness of one's own life may well be erroneous we must, according to Kekes, distinguish the belief that I take satisfaction in something from the belief that such satisfactions are part of what it is to live a good life. Once again Kekes is most persuasive in his claim that it is not our beliefs about our own experiences that are open to question but our judgements concerning the significance of those experiences. And this is sufficient to cast doubt on the plausibility of any wholly subjective account of well-being. 'Whether our many satisfactions add up to good lives depends on the place these satisfactions have in our moral perspective ... (which) may prove inadequate on their own terms.'<sup>20</sup> The idea of a 'moral perspective' is crucial to Kekes's thesis. We may be said to possess one when we have formulated a coherent set of commitments within some sort of hierarchical structure.<sup>21</sup>

Kekes suggests four respects in which a moral perspective may be inadequate.<sup>22</sup> It may be incoherent in that it contains incompatible commitments in the way that a life committed to scholarship with all that this entails in relation to respect for evidence, the cognizance of others' work in the same field and so on, may well be incompatible with the demands of one's religious sect. (Witness the pain suffered by Philip Gosse as a result of his commitment to Christian fundamentalism combined with his awareness of evidence to the contrary provided by geologists and the Darwinians). Secondly, there may well exist what Kekes calls an 'unrecognised impoverishment in moral perspectives'; where there is no place for love, playfulness, imagination and

the appreciation of beauty there is little likelihood of a satisfactory life. A stoical Robinson Crusoe may well be able to live without personal relationships or love of any kind and no doubt accept his fate with equanimity. But such satisfaction as he may find 'would not come from the presence of many good things in his life but from having succeeded in making the most of what misfortune left him'.<sup>23</sup> If, on the other hand, we deprive ourselves of such valuable ingredients of a good life through lack of reflection or reflection that is misguided, the effect is a diminution of the goods moral perspectives may yield. Kekes also shows how a realistic appraisal of ourselves and our situation is essential if a life is not to become futile. A person lacking compassion is hardly likely to find the nursing profession rewarding and an adventurer would feel immensely frustrated working at a supermarket checkout. The fourth respect in which a moral perspective may be said to be inadequate is if it is temporarily specific. Failure to adjust to the ageing process and the demands to which it gives rise is incompatible with a satisfactory life. However satisfied we may feel with our particular lot we may well be mistaken in our assumption that we are living well.

Kekes then tries to show how the goodness of our lives can be judged by standards that exist independently of what we think or do and proposes three criteria for adequate moral perspectives which are supposed to be universal, socially invariant and independent of psychological differences between people. Firstly, the wants created by the facts of body, self and social life must be minimally satisfied in that failure to do so leads to death or irreparable harm. Secondly, they must observe the *prima facie* case for conforming to the prevailing 'social morality'. We are social beings in virtue of inheriting a tradition, part of which is the social morality to which Kekes refers. It has to do with a whole series of conventions relating to common decency such as attempts to conduct one's affairs honestly and the avoidance of cruelty. It is the everyday morality we engage in without thinking. In growing up within a community we learn to 'see' what is required of us in specific situations and for the most part act accordingly - without reference to principles or utilitarian calculation. We are not private centres of consciousness who form values and convictions in isolation. Our values are largely provided by our tradition and we re-

evaluate them in terms of other values and so grow towards moral autonomy. Our personal morality (how to vote, whether or not to be a pacifist etc.) is a product of the values embodied in our social morality.

Social morality and its concern with 'simple' moral situations where there are clear unambiguous answers to what counts as decent conduct - grieving, paying bills, considering others' feelings - is, according to Kekes, a necessary condition of well-being because it protects the conditions in which we can make good lives for ourselves. Just as language provides the forms in which whatever we want to say can be said, so social morality provides the forms among which members of a society can freely choose and thereby develop their individuality. 'The relevant conventions of social morality guarantee the possibility of good lives partly by establishing the many forms good lives can take and partly by setting limits to these forms and to what is morally permissible to do in order to achieve them.'<sup>24</sup>

Kekes's third condition for the adequacy of moral perspectives is that we must be subjectively justified in our belief that our lives are indeed good. Subjective justification is not in itself sufficient justification for the veracity of such beliefs. My lover may be guilty of systematic deception in that while her behaviour leads me to believe that she loves me, in reality she regards me with contempt and is using me for her own purposes. The fact that I am oblivious to her real feelings towards me means that my beliefs have no objective basis and that however much I feel satisfied with this relationship it lacks real value. A good life is one where our beliefs in the goodness of our lives is not illusory.

Acceptance of such facts would seem to imply that there are features common to any minimally satisfactory life whatsoever even though as individuals, within specific contexts and circumstances, we may well differ in the significance we need to attach to particular aspects of our common nature. Just as the principal aim of autonomous moral reflection is to achieve as tight a 'fit' as possible between individual lives and the moral tradition of which they are a part, so might well-being be explained in terms of the fit between the direction in which our individual lives are given shape

and purpose (in accordance with our characters and evaluations) and the presence of those values which are not merely self-chosen but which are objective in being determined by our common humanity and by reference to which we may be said to have a genuine stake in ensuring that they are not undermined.

Given the physical, psychological and social characteristics of human nature there would appear to be very strong reasons in support of the view that there are necessary conditions for personal well-being and the avoidance of harm even if, in particular circumstances, certain conditions are no longer applicable. Suffering or even death may in exceptional circumstances be appropriate and their avoidance no longer necessary within the context of what makes a particular life good. Again, the pluralist alternative to a single *summum bonum*, whereby well-being and lives of genuine diversity are perfectly compatible is the only view worthy of support. It is the only view which allows for the significance of self-determination in bestowing any particular life with dignity. What, then, are the implications of the facts relating to our physical, psychological and social selves for individual well-being?

In spite of several recent attempts to compile lists of prudential values, basic needs or criterial goods, I believe that neither a complete or even a moderately neat listing is possible.<sup>25</sup> Such attempts are bound to have a certain messiness attached to them. But this is not to say that we can avoid embarking on such a compilation if we are to complete the task of trying to specify those genuine interests in which we have a stake as human beings, given our limited resources, generosity and goodwill. We need look no further than our television screens to be reminded of the precarious nature of human existence in the face of too much or too little water for example; floods and drought prevent people from eating. Their energies are sapped and their capacity to shelter themselves is reduced. The turmoil resulting from both natural disasters as well as those for which people are more directly responsible such as war and human strife destroys the means whereby people can pursue many of the more 'elevated' activities which contribute to their flourishing. Again, health and freedom from disease are vital for any sense of physical well-being on which so much else depends. Health has more than instrumental value however, for it is a crucial

component of that *joie de vivre* which comes from feeling well. Important and fundamental as physical needs are, we require a great deal more if our lives are to be thought of as good from even a subjective point of view. While we share the need for food, water and health with the animal kingdom, we differ from them in having a much richer psychological and social life which demands satisfaction. And here the scope for controversy and conflict is much greater. In the final analysis the social and psychological aspects of human nature are so intimately related that I am not convinced of the desirability of trying to separate them other than for classificatory purposes.

What is undeniable is that as language users we are able to think for ourselves in a way denied to non-language users. This means that we are able to envisage alternatives to the *status quo*. We are able to adopt a standpoint in accordance with which alternatives may be assessed and evaluated. We have opinions on what is right and wrong, good and bad, achievable, to be avoided etc. We can formulate ambitions by reference to which our actions and choices cohere. We take delight in a wide variety of activities - in art, natural beauty, in our relationships, in exploration and in work. We find certain things uninteresting, dull and boring. We have a natural curiosity and seek to understand the world and our place within it. We can laugh and cry and are able to experience events as comical, tragic and absurd. For this reason we seek variety and stimulation and form conceptions of ourselves in terms of which we develop our self-esteem and self-respect. These in turn affect what we do and what we take to be important and essential. Such conceptions are, in large part, the result of our relations with other people. And it is to our relationships with others that we attach particular significance. We seek affection and conviviality, friendship and love. We seek them, for the most part, not in a ruthlessly egoistical and grasping way but with a view to reciprocity. We want to be loved but we also have a need to express our love and affection for others. Other people provide much of that which infuses our lives with meaning and significance as indeed does our work and our sense of achievement. Our sexuality is a source of endless concern and we are not infrequently overwhelmed by its power. Perceiving the world as we do, our lives are governed by a whole catalogue of



emotions many of which conflict, forcing us to find the means whereby we can avoid being dominated by them and, instead, acknowledge their rightful place within our rational orderings.

All of this requires systematic analysis if we are fully to understand human nature. But there is an aspect of human nature which underlies much of what is little more than a hopelessly untidy list and that is our desire to shape our lives in accordance with our beliefs and values, fears, hopes and dispositions. We demand the freedom, which is to say the means and opportunities, to exercise control over what we do and where we are going and to do this we require a degree of personal autonomy without which our lives would lack dignity and coherence. Autonomy has such a special value and is so important a feature of well-being that it merits a separate and rather longer discussion than the all too brief attention I am able to devote to the numerous and separate items on the above list. Meanwhile I would like to suggest at least two other candidates for inclusion on a list of values contributing to well-being. Regrettably my comments will be all too brief but I believe it is essential to highlight the importance of knowledge and understanding both of oneself and of the world. People are discontent, and rightly so, with mere belief and surmise; they need to discover answers to the questions that puzzle them. Answers to specific questions give rise to further speculation and wonder and the result is a whole world of learning enshrined in libraries, schools and universities. There is something paradoxical in doubting the value of truth over error. But of course, this is not to say that everything is a worthy subject of investigation or that children should be brought to understand as much as possible about anything at all. Some things are worth knowing both for their own sake and for obvious utilitarian reasons. What exactly children should be brought to understand is a major issue which cannot be pursued here, but it is simply perverse to deny that well-being is intelligible without a commitment to understanding a great deal as well as a concern for what is true.<sup>26</sup>

Again, the fact that we possess the capacity to derive enjoyment from what we do lends support to the Marxian view that some form of meaningful work is indispensable to personal well-being. His various accounts of those systems of

production which leave a person 'alienated' from his work are an inspiring affirmation of the value of freedom. Secondary education must provide some form of vocational education which ought to provide time and opportunity for pupils to reflect on what counts as meaningful work - whether or not it is fulfilling, is compatible with self-esteem or whether or not it has any social benefit and such like. There is no doubt a limit to what school can do to counteract the alienation experienced by so many of the workforce but it is an abdication of responsibility if it does no more than introduce adolescents to a variety of work experiences. Ventures into the world of commerce and industry afford a splendid opportunity for critical evaluation of a host of issues relating to work such as the nature of the product and its distribution, its effects on society and the global environment, who has power and control within the organisation, how profits are distributed and much else. This is all part of the wider programme of economic and political education essential for future citizens of a democracy.

As important as meaningful work undoubtedly is, (so much so that teachers must never become complacent and resigned to the fact that not only will many of their pupils end up in dead-end jobs from which many of them will be alienated, but that much of what is expected of them in the classroom may well be equally alienating in so far as it seems to lack point or application) a life without the opportunity to play, to do things just for the fun involved would lack a particularly significant dimension. Childhood in particular would be bleak and likely to have damaging results.<sup>27</sup>

Suffice it to say that enough has been said to show that if one has a real-interest in becoming autonomous then an education system concerned with the promotion of individual well-being cannot specify in advance the sufficient conditions of each and every good life. Given the diversity of goods within possible good lives it is up to each and every one of us to shape our lives in accordance with our values and aspirations. But these again are not wholly self-chosen as the subjectivist would have us believe. Because talk of discovery, and self-discovery in particular, is entirely appropriate in this context and although it is unquestionably the case that people differ in the work they enjoy, the relationships in which they find succour and sustenance,

the things they seek to understand and the achievements in which they take pride - in short their *interests* vary - it does not follow that they could have a real-interest in anything whatsoever. There are limits beyond which it makes no sense to call a life good even from a subjective point of view and these limits are set by physical, psychological and social facets of human nature. In view of the plethora of possibilities open to us, combined with the wide range of circumstances in which we live with our diverse characters and backgrounds, it is ludicrous to pretend that there is a 'best life' to live. Nonetheless there may well be grounds for supposing that any life in particular could be better or worse. As Laurence Becker concludes:

'Forms of life can be ranked according to the inclusiveness, that is, in terms of the quantity and quality of goods of diverse sorts that they can coexist with, make possible, create or sustain.'

The sort of goods highlighted in our unavoidably disparate and untidy account of human nature and

'the way in which most of them show up (in one guise or another) in all candidate descriptions of the good life suggests that the best life will be replete with diverse goods.'<sup>28</sup>

To repeat, well-being requires as comfortable a fit as possible between an autonomous and authentic life plan and those fundamental and inescapable interests we all possess in virtue of our common humanity.

Before proceeding further, I wish to attend to an important omission, albeit an omission of emphasis, concerning the social nature of man, in order to avoid the errors associated with individualism whereby individual well-being is considered in total isolation from that of others. This will enable us to begin to see how the challenge thrown down by so-called 'rational egoists' to the effect that well-being requires no reference to altruism might be met. Unfortunately this discussion can be little more than prefatorial but it does suggest a way in which one might embark on the process of undermining such a depressing conclusion. The educational implications will become evident as we proceed and will be given particular prominence in the next and final section.

In denying that individual well-being may be construed in entirely individualistic terms, as though individual lives and the societies in which they are lived are somehow entirely separable, I am not committed to the opposite and equally implausible extreme whereby a person is seen as no more than a product of the social relations in which he finds himself which would deny him any autonomy. With customary clarity Stanley Benn expresses the idea in the following way:

‘... the fulfilment of an individual’s intellectual and spiritual nature requires participation in activities that no man can originate and sustain on his own. We are species-beings in the sense that our enterprises are necessarily embedded in some continuing tradition, in terms of which we discover what is worth doing ...’<sup>29</sup>

And in another essay in the same volume:

‘One’s reasons for engaging in an activity as worthwhile, for accepting the principles and standards that refute it as constraining one’s own performances, must already be built into one’s conception of the world, which one must have received initially from those about one, as conceptual resources made available by the cluster of subcultures that combine to make one what one is - or rather provide the materials for what one can become .... Unlike the heteronomous person (the autonomous person) is not merely an instantiation of a cultural mould or form. The difference between them lies in their manner of dealing with their cultural inheritance, not in whether they possess one ...’<sup>30</sup>

It is now easy to see why it is absurd to suppose that individual well-being can be considered in total isolation from other people. Who the ‘others’ are will depend on the context of what is at issue. It may involve my immediate family, my friends, my local community or nation state or something as global as the ecological fate of the planet. My relationship to all of these has important bearings on my goals and subsequent well-being.

Our social nature is bound up with our ability and need to form and cultivate relationships with our fellows. We are social beings in that the complex series of relationships and roles in which we live in part define us as particular individuals. Not only am I a member of a particular family, a College community, a country, a political party, I am a friend to a number of people. These relationships go towards defining me as someone who is unique. Without such relationships I would, as

Sandel reminds us, lack moral depth.<sup>31</sup> In discovering what is significant about these commitments I do not engage in a solitary exercise of self-reflection. Instead, I am deeply involved in a *mutual* exercise of appraisal and discovery.<sup>32</sup> I care about my commitments and relationships not for what pleasure they can provide but because without them I should cease to be me; my self-identity would collapse.

If true, the consequences are pretty powerful. The first and obvious of which is the fact that my interest in my own well-being is not something that can be articulated as something independent of any *mutual* interests I may have. A proper understanding of what is involved here should go some way towards softening the not altogether useful boundary between actions done for altruistic reasons and those done for egoistic ones. If part of my definition involves reference to my constitutive attachments and relationships, then self-interested action is not obviously reducible to either pure egoism or pure altruism. The self is not something that stands isolated and opposed to others as individualism would have us believe.

Richard Norman has suggested that where specific loyalties are concerned, especially those involving intimate personal relationships such as friendship or family, one is able to 'identify' with the fate of one's child and one's friend in a way such that their interests are part of one's own. This is not merely to assimilate the interests of others to one's own - Norman locates the notion of identification involved within a wide conceptual milieu which includes those to which I have already alluded, namely those of commitment and loyalty. Norman expresses this somewhat complicated issue in the following way:

'... "identifying" with others is part of the process of creating one's own "identity" (rather than presupposing a pre-given self to which others are then related) ...

... when we say that a person who sacrifices something for her friend is not sacrificing herself to something external, part of what we are saying is that the sacrifice is an expression of a relationship, a commitment, built into the very meaning of her life ...

... to act out of friendship, or out of loyalty to one's class, or whatever, may be to act in a way which is neither egoistic nor yet straightforwardly altruistic.<sup>33</sup>

For these reasons a person's interests are not always purely self-interested; they may, and frequently are, more accurately described as being 'extended'.<sup>34</sup> Friendship is a particularly valuable feature in a good life. It is deeply satisfying to those who are fortunate enough to enjoy it. It cannot thrive on the basis of a purely self-interested motive. Indeed, if my relationship towards someone were motivated by what I could get out of it, the relationship would not be one of friendship. Friends act, at least in part, *for the sake of* each other; there is a mutuality and reciprocity between them.<sup>35</sup> As someone's friend, my well-being is not something that can exclude the well-being of my friend. Our mutual well-being is something we share; the well-being of each is dependent on that of the other. I doubt whether young children are capable of friendship in this full-blown sense of the term. It goes without saying that they rely heavily on their peers for fun and the exchange of mutual confidences. But this is far removed from action done for the sake of another. This is an ideal which is intrinsically valuable and no doubt relies on a level of maturity not required by more juvenile and to some extent instrumental relationships.<sup>36</sup> But this is simply to accept that there are different kinds of friendship between people.

I have suggested that individual well-being is not to be understood individualistically. Some element of co-operation is an essential pre-requisite of this planet's remaining habitable. I have also tried to defend the view that relationships between people need a more generous means of classification than the limitations imposed by appealing solely to the language of altruism and egoism. The value of relationships such as those of family and friends is radically misconceived in terms of either categorisation. This should at least give us heart in our efforts to confound the rational egoist who denies that well-being requires either friendship or concern for the well-being of others. True, the egoist is rational to the extent that he prefers to live in a society where others are *minimally* altruistic, but he is insistent that his own well-being requires no reciprocal altruism on his part.

It behoves us to remain sceptical of attempts to dismiss rational egoism as *incoherent* as some philosophers would have us believe.<sup>37</sup> I see no reason why the egoist should not understand what it is to act on principle or why he should remain debarred from understanding the moral concepts on which he pretends to act. Why shouldn't he have grown up as a perfectly normal member of the moral community with all the relevant understanding that this implies and in due course have decided to reject morality as so much humbug? This is hardly incoherent. True, he would, were he consistent, be only pretending to bestow respect and friendship on others who may not realise that he was not really their friend but was using them for his own egoistic purposes. But it is this that would render their 'friendship' a sham. The only way one could demonstrate to the egoist what he was missing out on would be, as Jonathan Lear has so ably demonstrated, by proving *a posteriori* that a significant form of human flourishing consists, partly, in promoting flourishing generally.

'That there are forms of flourishing that partially consist in promoting flourishing is the truth that underlies the common belief that moral behaviour is in one's enlightened self-interest .... In flourishing, one is motivated to promote flourishing generally not because it promotes one's own flourishing but simply because it promotes flourishing generally. It is not something done in order to flourish; it is, in part, what one's flourishing is. It is from this perspective that such dicta as "Morality provides its own motivation" makes sense .... An *a posteriori* proof that there are actual cases of human flourishing which partially consists in promoting flourishing generally has certain distinctive features. It does not establish more than an actuality, so it does not eliminate the *possibility* of forms of flourishing. Thus the proof will not necessarily be reflectively undermining to those who genuinely believe that they should live their lives in some alternative way .... The proof is intended reflectively to reinforce those who are tempted to live this form of flourishing life - to render them less vulnerable to sceptical undressing.'<sup>38</sup>

We must remember that there is, after all, nothing 'natural' in egoism. There may well be occasions when the conflict between egoism and altruism (or morality and well-being for that matter) is real enough. But the conflict is not a conceptual one and in view of the fact that our well-being is bound up with the fate of those we have never met and never will meet, we must conclude that altruism is itself an essential component of the good life.

In *Education and the Good Life* John White has gone to considerable lengths to illustrate the difficulties facing those educators who, concerned as they are with their pupils' well-being, believe in hiving off the promotion of altruistic dispositions as somehow separate and unconnected with this central task. They might, for example, conceive of altruism as something exclusively concerned with the promotion of other people's well-being. As White suggests, one of the consequences of such an education would be that children may well grow up believing that their own interests are independent of their friends, neighbours and community. He is quick to point out that it would be difficult, if not impossible, to conceive of shared goals in which children so frequently have to engage in an entirely individualistic way. As he says, people 'like being with other people and doing things with them. Even if the shared goal is not achieved, the fact that they are able to satisfy these social desires contributes to their well-being'.<sup>39</sup> Treating well-being as if it were something totally discrete and quite separate from altruism would be to reduce co-operative endeavour to a mere means to something else. And it is indeed difficult to see how children could be brought up to see every shared enterprise in this way given the natural enjoyment and delight we find in doing things with others. Indeed, as White reminds us, it is in an individual's interests to be altruistic and not merely for instrumental purposes. 'If I fail to recognise others, to reinforce their perception of themselves as valuable members of the group, then I, too, will fail to achieve recognition.'<sup>40</sup>

Secondary education has much to learn from the primary sector. Group work is not a prominent feature in the former and one cannot help being afraid that increased pressures on schools to attract pupils on the basis of test results will result in more competitiveness between children and parents. Although it would be a travesty to suggest that the demands of national tests in primary schools would necessarily result in strongly individualistic attitudes in young children, anything which reinforces such tendencies makes it more difficult for educators to ensure that altruistic dispositions develop and to avoid their pupils growing up with a cramped and mean-spirited view of personal well-being. As White concludes: 'the attempt to pare away altruism from one's own self-interested desires leaves the latter so impoverished - denuded as



they are of any trace of intimate attachments or co-operative activity - as to be scarcely recognisable as constituting human good at all'.<sup>41</sup> It is all the more regrettable that where there is a conflict between self-interested and other-regarding desires he remains convinced that a resolution of the conflict amounts to no more than weighing them against each other '... depressing one desire so that the other can have further scope ...'.<sup>42</sup> While reflectiveness for White continues to subserve desire-satisfaction it is nonetheless gratifying to find an educational theorist of his standing willing to concede that the dichotomy between personal well-being and altruism is artificial and that an education which reinforces the connection is to be preferred.

### **6.3 Autonomy and Well-Being**

The truth of the claim that children have a real-interest in becoming autonomous is not self-evident; its justification depends on the value of that state. Once we appreciate the kinds of thing that the autonomous person is able to achieve and the respects in which he differs from the heteronomous person, we can begin to see how his opportunities for flourishing are that much greater. We shall see that the autonomous life has a value which is both intrinsic and to which attaches a deeper significance in ways which are completely absent in any version of the desire-satisfaction account of well-being.

Unlike being six feet tall, being autonomous is a matter of degree; one is autonomous to some extent or other. The infant who prefers his trains to his playdoh is exercising at least minimal autonomy in deciding for himself what he will play with. Although he is capable of formulating intentions and successfully translating these into action he is, in important respects, incapable of self-direction or self-determination. An infant's life is largely episodic and non-directional. The autonomous adult on the other hand has the ability to relate what he now chooses to his past and his future and in so doing is capable of providing some kind of shape or direction to his goals and projects. It is this, the capacity to give a sense of direction to one's life in which one's choices and decisions, one's aspirations and life-style, one's values and opinions are in large part one's own in the sense that they are

authentic and neither adopted uncritically nor alien in origin, which captures the essence of what it is to live autonomously. Children are for the most part deficient in these respects; their choices and decisions lack the requisite degree of deliberation to merit the label 'autonomous'. Suffice it to say here that it is not a requirement of an autonomous life that each and every action should be preceded by lengthy and careful deliberation. The extent to which particular actions are autonomously executed has more to do with the extent to which they are in harmony with an authentic 'life plan' and one, moreover, that is not incoherent or lacking in some form of integration. The transition from heteronomy to autonomy is not always smooth nor does it correspond straightforwardly with a person's age. Moreover, there are numerous difficulties in identifying the autonomous person with confidence not to mention the problems associated with paternalistic legislation for those who are. There are many adolescents who, though compelled to remain at school as well as having to perform specific tasks while in attendance, are in relevant respects more autonomous than a lot of adults who are free to go about their daily lives unencumbered by this particular constraint. The justification of this state of affairs is something which will be addressed in the next section.

What is it to determine one's life for oneself? An answer to this question would clearly require some means or other for distinguishing a life which was other-directed from one where the individual will was sovereign. A very great deal is required of someone before this can be said of him. At the very least he will need a great deal of knowledge both of himself and of the world. Self-knowledge is particularly important if he is to understand the respects in which the agencies of socialisation have contributed towards shaping him in the way they have.

The suggestion that the autonomous life is one lived in accordance with a conception expressive of one's own will, where manipulation, coercion and influence of others are, if present, recognised and resisted, appears to sit uncomfortably with the socialising influences familiar to us all. We formulate our values, convictions, preferences and objectives as a result of exposure to parents, schools and the media. I went to some length in 5.2 to show that the formation of values relies on a shared

public world in which people learn to attach significance to actions of various kinds. While the importance of tradition cannot be minimised, there is a world of difference between someone whose beliefs and values are accepted merely *because* they are part of the social fabric with which he identifies, and someone who has made those beliefs and values his own - as a result of careful reflection on their merits. In this respect the growing child may increasingly take responsibility for the shaping of his values and beliefs upon which the course of his future life depends. The importance of an education which encourages the child to reflect on the extent to which a proposed course of action is in line with his personality, temperament and beliefs at any one time, as well as affording every opportunity to give some thought to those influences which have made him the person he is, cannot be overemphasised. The more opportunities that are presented to the child the more likely it is that he will develop confidence and strength of character to shape his own future. All this is quite compatible with the fact that values do not arise *ex nihilo*.<sup>43</sup> A child is socialised into a world of values and what he takes to be in his interests is not, at least in his early life, entirely within his control. Even so, a child is not a piece of plasticine to be moulded by others into a particular way of viewing the world. From his earliest years he is instrumental in giving his life some direction or other and, as Feinberg reminds us, it is an exaggeration to suggest that there can be no self-determination unless the self that does the determining is already fully formed.<sup>44</sup>

Having said this however, what is required of a person who is supposed to be in possession of the relevant degree of self-knowledge and whose life is said to be lived in accordance with values and desires which are authentic and not other-determined, is not immediately obvious. Diana Meyers is persuasive in arguing that there is a common error underlying a number of recent accounts of autonomy, all of which attempt to distinguish the autonomous life from one inescapably bound up with the forces of socialisation.<sup>45</sup> Robert Young, Stanley Benn and Harry Frankfurt all, in different ways, reduce personal autonomy to a special kind of free-will.

Meyers concludes that while there is more to Young's account of personal autonomy than simply gaining information about one's past as a result of retrospective reflection

whereby knowledge of hitherto unconscious forces operating on one transforms their coerciveness thereby rendering one less heteronomous, he fails to make clear how one can escape the epistemological regress on the grounds that such self-knowledge may well itself be a product of socialisation. This is not to deny the importance of self-knowledge for personal autonomy, it is just that it will not suffice as a sufficient condition.

Benn is similarly disposed to accounting for autonomy as moving beyond socialisation, not in the sense that socialising forces can ever be completely transcended (for Benn acknowledges that our critical faculties, concepts and values by reference to which belief systems are assessed are themselves located within a social nexus) but in the sense that people come to disavow those amongst their beliefs that no longer cohere with other beliefs that are essential to their whole system of thought. The ability to formulate a belief system which is coherent is, for Benn, a crucial feature distinguishing autonomous people from the non-autonomous. Again Meyers concedes that coherence has an undeniable role to play in a proper characterisation of autonomy; where our projects and goals are manifestly incompatible our autonomy is diminished accordingly. An autonomous person must achieve a modicum of success in his efforts to bring some sort of order or coherence not only into his 'life-plan' but into those everyday actions which, if inconsistent, will inevitably frustrate him in his efforts to bring projects to fruition. We may frequently appear to be doing what we want while at the same time frustrating those goals and projects which concern us most deeply. A self-determined life requires the ability to discern, as well as the capacity to take appropriate action to avoid, beliefs and actions of one's own which fail to cohere. Schools have a particular responsibility not only to ensure that the opportunities for the necessary critical appraisal arise but that the rules and procedures by which they are governed are themselves consistent and do not rely on conflicting belief systems or ideals. As he grows towards maturity, a child will inevitably be faced with powerful tensions between beliefs and perceived interests, but in his attempts to resolve these he is, in part, engaged in a process of self-definition and self-discovery. He is becoming

more deeply committed to one 'life-plan' rather than another in that his beliefs and actions bear some relation to each other (both in the past and in the future).

It goes without saying, however, that there is more to living a coherent and meaningful life than consistency between belief and action. To focus exclusively on the coherence of a system of *beliefs* is to ignore the importance of a coherent *personality* which includes emotional responses and commitments and Benn says little to indicate what importance he would attach to this.<sup>46</sup> A coherent belief system is quite compatible with little or no autonomy, the beliefs being simply adopted without thought or concern for their veracity. Autonomous people in contrast are concerned about whether or not their beliefs 'fit' with the world and are prepared to discard those which experience dictates as no longer sustainable. Coherence of belief and action is only a necessary condition of autonomy, there being numerous cultures and sub-cultures where the lives of their members are quite coherent yet far from autonomous.

There are, of course, dangers in pressing too hard for coherence so that the demand for coherence becomes a demand for a totally unified plan of life. That people's interests and aptitudes change over time is a truism and it would be absurd so to constrain oneself that one clung tenaciously to goals which ceased to have the significance they once did. An autonomous life is perfectly compatible with a diversity of goals and projects. Furthermore, a rigid adherence to any sort of blueprint would stand in the way of spontaneous action. Most of us, deprived of the opportunity to express ourselves spontaneously would feel that something of great importance was missing from our lives. Clearly, spontaneity that bore no relation at all to one's values and commitments might well be both inappropriate and dangerous; such behaviour would smack of lack of self-control. And yet it is probably true to say that someone who found spontaneous gestures impossible would be so (internally) constrained that, depending on his inability, we might wish to label him as mentally ill. The demand for coherence must guard against a too rigid and abstract pattern of living which, as with Young's demand that we know more about our past than anyone could ever know, would make it virtually impossible for all but

a few ever to attain autonomy. The sense in which coherence is important for autonomy is the way in which a personality is in harmony not only with itself as it happens to be at any one time but with the developing self, directed from within in accordance with values, goals, desires and the like which are authentic. Where these are in conflict one is subject to confusion and unease.

The autonomous person is not thrown into a state of disarray or paralysed by indecision. Instead he is able to resolve such conflicts in a fairly structured way whereby his adoption of a particular value or spontaneous decision is at least in accord with some broadly-based conception with which he is able to identify. Someone who is incapable of identifying with his motivational set may well be self-deceived in that his actions bear little relation to what he takes to be of ultimate significance. Self-deception is a complex and deeply troublesome issue for philosophers but it involves a living contradiction between one's knowledge, values and commitments and one's actions. There is a kind of hypocrisy involved. Now to act contrary to one's evaluations is to lack integrity. Integrity requires a measure of honesty with oneself as well as with others. It also presupposes no mismatch between those evaluations which motivate and those with which one identifies. As Gabrielle Taylor so clearly puts it:

‘To be a candidate for possession of integrity the person's choices and evaluations must be her own: her identifications with her desires must neither be subject to unconsidered change nor distorted and confused. Her reasons for action must be genuine .... In publicly acknowledging her evaluations she accepts responsibility for what she does. For to explain away her actions or find excuses for them, is to disown what she sets store by.’<sup>47</sup>

It is not surprising that Taylor goes on to suggest that where there is a mutual undermining of sets of identifications the prospects for flourishing are non-existent. There is a lack of self-control involved in that the person lacking the ability to identify with his motivational set is propelled, as it were, by forces over which he is powerless. To fail to identify with what motivates one is a serious threat to one's autonomy not, as Raz shows, in the sense that one merely failed to remain consistent to a life-plan once embarked upon; there is no reason at all why one should not

change one's mind about the things that matter in life. The kind of failure Raz has in mind is not failure of fidelity to an initial commitment - this is perfectly consistent with autonomy. He is concerned with the

'... failure to make choices through lack of initial commitment disguised under the flurry of an initial infatuation, (which) does diminish the autonomy of the agent's life. It resembles self-deception. It is a case where the opportunity to choose is missed by the agent thinking that he has made a choice and that he has committed himself whereas in fact he failed to do so.'<sup>48</sup>

Such a life is a failure in that it lacks meaning or significance which is the mark of an autonomous life.<sup>49</sup>

Frankfurt, it will be recalled, distinguished autonomous people by reference to the ways in which they are able to identify with their motivational set; they identify with whatever it is which prompts specific actions be they character-traits, values, emotional responses or whatever. Difficulties in specifying what is involved in acts of identification notwithstanding, Meyers rehearses some of the problems associated with Frankfurt's thesis already encountered in 3.3. Apart from the question of assurance with respect to autonomous identification Meyers is right to draw attention to what she calls the problems of persistent identification and implicit identification. Mere identification would not suffice on its own as a mark of autonomy for, as she says:

'People commonly vacillate in identifying with their desires. But if autonomy requires that people be capable of experiencing regret but that they not be plagued by chronic regret, and if the persistence of people's identification with their desires is necessary to account for these relations between autonomy and regret, a convincing account of autonomy must guarantee the stability of the autonomous individual's identification with his or her desires. Although Frankfurt attempts to address this problem by affirming that the decisions he is talking about are "resounding" commitments, there is nothing to distinguish a decision or an approving attitude that will issue in long-lived identification from one that will not.'<sup>50</sup>

An agent whose identification proved ephemeral and fleeting would lack a sufficiently distinctive personality which is so essential to autonomy.

The problem of implicit identification arises because of the all too familiar fact that we rarely pause to consider whether or not we identify with a particular desire unless we have reason to question its appropriateness. Where desires cause no special concern our identifications may be said to be implicit. But as Meyers points out, it is difficult to see how Frankfurt could accommodate such implicit identification within his schema:

‘... either people are only autonomous with respect to those parts of their lives in which they have overcome perceived deficiencies, resolved conflicts, or faced difficult choices, or people only manage to live autonomous lives by becoming obsessively self-conscious. Neither of these conclusions is acceptable. If autonomy is not to be a sporadic or undesirable phenomenon, implicit autonomy must be possible. But, on Frankfurt’s theory, implicit identification is not possible.’<sup>51</sup>

The error common to the three mentioned philosophers with whom Meyers is in dispute is that they are united in resisting the conclusion that there is no more to the authentic self than that which transcends the impact of social causes. As Meyers concludes, given the view that autonomy is a species of free will, the self or rather the true or authentic self ‘is like a sunken treasure - a pre-existing, hidden entity ... The true self may elude a well-equipped seeker of autonomy, yet it remains intact awaiting the day when its secrets will be brought to light’.<sup>52</sup> The absurdity of the idea of pre-social or a-social self has already been referred to; any cogency it might once have been thought to enjoy having been thoroughly undermined by writers like Michael Sandel.<sup>53</sup>

In contrast, the authentic self that emerges in Meyers’s account of autonomy is one which interacts. There is no reason why self-direction and a due recognition of the socialising influences to which we are all exposed are necessarily incompatible. Education itself is one of the most powerful socialising agencies but, as will be argued in Section 7, there are reasons for believing that education in general and schooling in particular are both necessary and desirable if as a citizenry we are to become more than minimally autonomous. What has to be guarded against is an education system which is unmindful of the ways in which certain forms of socialisation occur such as racial and sexual stereotypification, for example, whereby



certain occupations and their attendant benefits are accepted as appropriate for some and not others on grounds as irrelevant as race or gender.

If it is the case that there is more to autonomy than free-will, what is it that an autonomous person can do that a non-autonomous or minimally autonomous person cannot? He must, at the very least, be capable of choosing between a variety of non-trivial alternatives which not only presupposes the ability to recognise available choices for what they are, as well as to be able to take advantage of them, it also requires the ability to imagine other possibilities. This is why those aspects of a child's education - fiction, drama, history, philosophy, political theory and so much more - which provide opportunities for the powers of imagination to develop - are so valuable as an aid to the development of autonomy. An autonomous agent has a whole repertoire of mental capacities which include the ability to think for oneself, to assess the merits of competing alternatives in accordance with one's convictions and to be in possession of sufficient courage and determination not only to resist the pressures to conform for conforming's sake but also to be able to act in accordance with one's judgements especially where the consequences of action or failure to act have a particular significance for the agent. Autonomy, then, has a great deal to do with being in a position to make choices which have a significant bearing on the direction one's life takes. The conditions of choice are both objective and subjective. They are objective in that whether or not a person is able to choose between alternatives depends on their availability, and subjective in that they presuppose some appreciation of the existence of the alternatives available as well as knowing how the adoption of one or other will affect one's future. It is all very well for a fourteen year old to be told that he has a wide variety of important choices available to him in terms of the subjects available at GCSE, but if he has no understanding of what it is about them that makes them genuine options and how they are likely to affect his future, then he simply does not merit the status of 'autonomous chooser'.

It would be interesting to speculate on the extent to which autonomy is either enhanced or restricted by different political and economic systems; governments are profoundly important when it comes to creating opportunities or indeed frustrating

them. But it would of necessity require a more thorough investigation than space permits. Instead, I intend to restrict the discussion by concentrating on the duties of parents and schools to actively promote the autonomy of children on the grounds that failure to do so is likely to result in children being harmed. The truth of this claim rests on being able to demonstrate that children have a real-interest in becoming autonomous which requires some explanation of the value of autonomy as a character ideal.

I shall return to this important question again in due course but before doing so I want to indicate why children in particular have a legitimate interest in becoming autonomous. It seems to me that the ability autonomously to conceive of and to act in accordance with goals of one's own is partly constitutive of normal human functioning and this might well be seen as something to which everyone, including children, has rights and in virtue of which our actions and decisions in relation to them should be determined.<sup>54</sup> Admittedly the child may have no particular interest in becoming autonomous but this is no reason to conclude that it is not in his interest so to become. Because there is an inseparable connection between something's being in someone's interest and what is good for that person I find it impossible to go along with Feinberg in his article on 'Harm and Self-Interest' when he appears to be happy with the idea of vulgarity, greed, vanity and cold-heartedness being in a person's interests: '... if he is clever enough to make a "good thing" in material terms out of dishonesty and unscrupulousness ... then it can hardly be in his interest to become warm, sensitive, cultured and generous; much less witty, perceptive, tactful, disinterested and wise'.<sup>55</sup> This is because Feinberg emphasises an account of rational action which is based on mere desire-satisfaction whereby it is in virtue of our not *wanting* to rest content with dullness, vulgarity and stupidity that we think it in our *interest* not to be defective. 'Without those antecedent wants, it would not be in our interest to be excellent at all...'<sup>56</sup> This is very difficult to reconcile with another article by Feinberg with which I have great sympathy. I refer to 'The Child's Right to an Open Future' where he is at pains to demonstrate the right of a child to secure his interest (albeit his future interest) in self-determination.<sup>57</sup> As Benn would have it, we are promoting a child's interest in educating him to be a person of a certain

sort.<sup>58</sup> If, as Feinberg suggests in the earlier article, good character is something directly in a person's interests only when the person has a want-based interest in it, it is puzzling to say the least, how he can subscribe to the view that children have future interests in being persons of a certain sort - namely autonomous persons - at a time in their lives when they have no desire for any such thing.

A child's right to an open future is, according to Feinberg, a 'right in trust'. A child is a potential adult and it is that adult's autonomy which must be safeguarded. Given the obvious interest a child has in not having his future options foreclosed, it is clear that anything which frustrates this interest of his harms him very seriously. Children are not merely extensions of their parents; they are certainly not the property of parents. This is why parents, and anyone else with responsibility for children, whose actions or omissions are either likely to fail to ensure or are instrumental in frustrating the growth of a child's capacity for making choices based on critical reflection which are so crucial to normal functioning, may be said to have harmed that child's future.<sup>59</sup>

Although failure to create the right 'climate' for the development of autonomy may well leave the child incapable of self-determination in important aspects of his life, the parents who fail in this respect are not necessarily culpable. It may be that they are hopelessly inadequate at child-rearing due to their own parents' incompetence. It is still fair to say, however, that they have (albeit unwittingly) harmed their children. There is precious little that legislation can do about this although teachers have a special responsibility to try and compensate by providing opportunities for children to think for themselves. What is essential is that parents are mindful of the need not to foreclose the range of options available.

Feinberg examines at great lengths the 'rights' of parents to bring up their children with a narrow and blinkered outlook based on religious dogma. The Old Order Amish, for example, were successful in 1972 in being granted by the Supreme Court of the USA the 'right' to withdraw their children after the eighth grade. The Court concluded that the parents' right to determine the religious upbringing of their

children outweighed the claim of the state in its role as *parens patriae* to extend the benefit of secondary education to children regardless of the wishes of their parents.

If Feinberg is correct, as he undoubtedly is in his belief that a child has a right to an open future, then the member of the Court who said that 'no amount of harm to the parents' interest in the religious upbringing of their children could overturn the children's "rights-in-trust" to an open future' was also correct.<sup>60</sup> It is because there are limits to the ways in which parents may bring up their children that the state has duties to enforce those limits.

The implementation of such a policy is not to deny parents the normal right to act paternalistically in promoting their children's interests; it is to deny them the right to act in accordance with beliefs, however sincerely held, which are likely to result in children being harmed. Depriving a child of a substantial amount of secondary schooling is, of course, likely to harm him only if what goes on there is in his real-interests. The example of the Amish raises specific questions relating to the denial of a child's right to an open future in that they not only withdraw their children from school at a relatively early age but confine them to a particularly restricting and narrow way of life. When it comes to a straightforward conflict between the religious beliefs of parents, or for that matter a theocratic state, and the child's right to an open future, the child should always take precedence.

If children are denied access to alternative belief systems and life-styles which are afforded amongst other things by history, literature and TV, they will find it that much harder to evaluate their own beliefs in ways which are essential if those beliefs are to be authentically theirs. Mere exposure to alternatives does not guarantee a person's ability to act in accordance with any critical assessment made as the result of such exposure. 'Weakness of will' is a phenomenon that has troubled philosophers since Socrates and it would be an unnecessary digression to rehearse the issue here but it is obvious that the autonomous person must possess the requisite strength of will to act in accordance with his convictions. One might grant the right of self-determination to someone and afford him every opportunity but this is different

from ensuring that he possesses the necessary wherewithal. What is important is that teachers and parents help children develop the ability to control themselves in the face of desires and emotions which are inclined to divert them from acting in accordance with their own judgements. What is involved here is not as simple as it sounds. Benson illustrates the complexity as follows:

‘Courage and self-control enter into the *forming* of judgements as well as into the acting upon them. That is one complication. A second is that certain emotions, e.g. fear or impatience may prevent one from acting as judgement would dictate. But there is a more insidious and intimate way in which emotions may subvert thought. The fear of getting the wrong answer, of being thought unorthodox, may actually prevent a person from trusting himself to accept the truth of his own observations or the safety of his own inferences. There is a more fundamental relation between thought and emotion because whereas intense emotions may temporarily make thinking ineffective, the fear of being wrong corrupts the faculty itself .... Intellectual skills cannot exist without qualities of character. The fear and anxiety that subvert the mind in forming judgements also subvert the will in standing by them and translating them into action.’<sup>61</sup>

Anyone who is a slave to his passions is what Lindley calls ‘conatively heteronomous’<sup>62</sup>. In this respect he is distinguishable from someone who is ‘cognitively heteronomous’ whose beliefs are merely adopted without due regard to reasons. When confronted by pressures (either internal or external) to surrender one’s judgement, a certain amount of courage is essential if one is to retain one’s autonomy.

In spite of the feminist movement there are many parents and teachers who, for whatever reason, fail to combat the forces which condemn so many females to adopt stereotypical roles. The problem is not one of ‘failing to understand the situation they are in, and the persistence of deeply entrenched habits which may get in the way of what they want to do’,<sup>63</sup> important as this is in the curtailment of autonomy. It would seem an unlikely prospect that a girl who had been immersed in a system in which women were thought to be fit only for a life of domesticity should, by the end of her schooling, be able to conceive of alternative possibilities in life let alone be in a position to make rational choices between them. What is even more insidious is where girls are only too aware of their ‘situation’ and may, perhaps even desperately,

wish to do something about it but are prevented because of pressures operating on them which have affected their strength of will to act. A girl's self-confidence may have been so undermined by the attitudes and prejudices of her overpowering elders that she simply lacks what it takes to reject her stereotypical attitudes, beliefs and responses. If we are to take seriously the right of children to an autonomous life we must educate them so as to afford them every opportunity to develop the necessary courage and self-confidence to stand firm in the face of certain pressures which threaten to undermine their ability to forge a life of their own making based on sound knowledge of their traits and abilities, to discover for themselves what is satisfying and fulfilling and how these combine to form a life that is something in which they have a genuine stake or interest.

A further multiplication of examples is unnecessary although cases of parents and teachers harming children's futures could easily be cited. Children are frequently stunted in their artistic development, their vocational orientations as well as their attitudes to different races, their own bodies, and interpersonal relations. As Robert Young says:

‘Rather than giving detailed consideration to the harm which this ignorance may occasion, it is more needful to stress that such authority as parents legitimately have where children do lack knowledge or lack the physical and psychological responses necessary for full autonomy is surely out of place when their own beliefs interfere seriously with the development in others of an exploratory attitude towards talents and aptitudes and an associated awareness of the options so critical for the achievement of rational self-determination. We can and should be critical of the morality of such "authority".’<sup>64</sup>

Now although he does not use the term ‘autonomy’ it is clear that Mill's idea of ‘the full development of individuality’ is, to all intents and purposes, an ideal of what we have characterised as ‘personal autonomy’. But there is some dispute as to whether Mill conceived of this as being of intrinsic value or whether his justification for autonomy as a character ideal rests on more instrumental foundations. He is, in my view, correct in attributing both intrinsic and extrinsic value to autonomy. He finds its intrinsic value to be bound up with the notion of human dignity. Anyone who is a slave to custom is a lesser person in that he fails to develop within himself ‘any of

the distinctive endowments of a human being'. And yet he goes to great lengths to argue for the value of autonomy in terms of the beneficial consequences that its cultivation and development are likely to promote. And of course this is all perfectly consistent. However, Mill did feel that many people would remain unconvinced about autonomy's intrinsic value and therefore felt the need to provide a more utilitarian justification.

'... what more or better can be said of any condition of human affairs than that it brings human beings nearer to the best thing they can be? ... (yet) it is necessary further to show, that these developed human beings are of some use to the undeveloped ...'<sup>65</sup>

In order to refute any (mere) utilitarian justification of autonomy's value, however, all we need to do is to point to the all too obvious fact that autonomy does not necessarily ensure the greatest happiness of the greatest number. Happiness, however conceived, is not guaranteed by the promotion of autonomy. And we need look no further than many tribal societies, where opportunities for the exercise of personal autonomy are minimal, to witness the lack of neuroses and anxieties related to mental illness and other maladies associated with autonomy-conducive cultures. This is not to deny that there are all kinds of plausible arguments to show the obvious instrumental justification for autonomy, especially in a society such as our own. Such arguments need no rehearsal here however, for it is incumbent upon us to provide credence to the claim that autonomy has intrinsic value and there are a number of powerful considerations in support of this.

Firstly, without at least a minimal capacity to select from the bewildering array of alternatives confronting us whereby we are able to resist the force of certain desires as well as remaining not entirely determined by external causal factors, our moral vocabulary would be rendered incoherent. The ways in which we treat others and react to them is in very large part determined by the extent to which they are held responsible for what they do.

Secondly, and crucially, an autonomous life and the kind of life appropriate to persons are so intimately related that to question the value of the former is to cast

serious doubt on those very features which provide human life with the value and significance it rightfully enjoys. Part of our 'distinctive endowments as human beings' is the capacity for self-determination - to be able to formulate 'life-plans' in the light of our own past actions, values and predispositions and those future states of affairs, including our likely choices, which may be envisaged. This at least, combined with the capacity to modify such plans in the light of experience and a proper understanding of how and why we attach significance to some things and not to others, is entailed in the very idea of human-being (or at least 'person'). It is part of our human nature and as such indispensable to the flourishing of creatures in possession of such capacities. A human being who was denied the opportunities for self-determination could no more flourish *as a person* than a bee deprived of its wings could flourish *as a bee*.

While few would wish to deny the opportunity for choice - especially in regard to spouse, career, political and religious affiliation and the like - there is, amongst philosophers at least, disagreement over the importance attached to the ability to reflect critically on the merits of marriage, paid employment or religion. Why, it may be asked, should the capacity for critical reflection at that altogether deeper level be necessary in order to flourish? It is tempting, but too easy, to dismiss the challenge as disingenuous (although anyone seriously asking the question is already committed to the value of critical enquiry). There are however a number of possible, albeit related, responses.

The first is that if it is the case that people, including children, have real-interests in not having their future options foreclosed by being denied the opportunity for critical reflection at this deeper level, then it is absurdly arbitrary to stop short in refusing to equip them with the capacity to live a life of their own choosing and to deny them the wherewithal for living such a life to the fullest extent which of necessity requires a sensitivity and a readiness to submit one's values, commitments and decisions to critical scrutiny which in turn presupposes the cultivation, particularly within children, of a healthy scepticism.



More importantly however, there is a certain dishonesty attached to the refusal to at least attempt to provide people with as full an understanding of their 'situation' as possible, for although one might be capable of exercising choice between alternatives, full autonomy - or what is sometimes referred to as strong autonomy - requires of one the ability to envisage alternatives not readily available. And this is a fundamental requirement if one is able to withstand those manipulative forces which are all too manifest and to which we are all, to some extent or other, occasionally subject. Power, after all, accompanies knowledge and information and whenever we are denied access to such knowledge the opportunities for genuine self-determination are diminished accordingly. This is why the deliberate deprivation of access to relevant knowledge and information essential to the formation of life-plans which are truly one's own is so unacceptable and why members of religious groups who deny their children access to an education which, in terms of the knowledge and skills transmitted, is indifferent to the religion or gender of the students may legitimately be accused of a serious violation of human rights. There is then a certain hypocrisy associated with the professed aim of promoting self-determination and stopping short of developing it as fully as possible.

It is often suggested that while full autonomy is a necessary feature of well-being in an advanced industrial society, such as our own, where a genuine concern for one's real-interests presupposes a great deal of knowledge and understanding of those forces (political, social and environmental) which threaten to undermine them, it is quite unnecessary for those societies which are less developed. I admit to finding this very difficult to accept. After all we all inhabit the same planet and however the notion of 'environment' is interpreted, are subject to changes therein. No society is so remote or so 'primitive' as to be unaffected by environmental change, much of which is a direct consequence of the greed and imprudence of those of us in the industrialised world. Many societies are being forced to the edge of destruction as a result of plunder and conquest. Surely it is naive to assume that if their conception of their well-being excludes the spirit of criticism associated with full autonomy we must accept their account with equanimity. Just as it is wrong to pretend that a person, or group of people, is never in an optimal position to judge where their real-

interests lie it is equally wrong to suppose, as does Mill, that people are always the best judges of what is in their own interests. Although there is a *prima facie* case for suggesting that forcibly preventing someone from doing something against his will is a violation of his autonomy, even if the reasons for so interfering are supposed to be in his best interests - this has been the force of classical liberalism's principal objection to paternalism - the case is only *prima facie*. Autonomy is such an important and indispensable factor in a recognisably human life that anyone preventing a child from acquiring it and, having once acquired it, from exercising it to the full, may be said to have harmed the child. It follows that in certain circumstances the imposition of constraints may well be justified if it is reasonable to believe that autonomy might be enhanced. This does of course raise the troublesome question of the justification of paternalism towards sane adults, hence the important reference to circumstances. There are no doubt numerous occasions when paternalism is in order but it is not possible to pursue the issue here. As far as adults are concerned there are ways and means of promoting their autonomy without paternalistic legislation. The existence of a free press as well as opportunities for adult education both contribute towards people being able to live more autonomously and anything with such potential must be welcomed even if these very same people have no desire to become, or once having so become to remain, autonomous. In the next and final section I shall show that paternalistic interference with a child's liberty in the form of compulsory schooling is justified. A child has a real-interest in not having his future options foreclosed by being denied the opportunity to become a self-determining adult.

One final point concerning the intrinsic value of autonomy (which goes deeper than merely alerting one, as White suggests, 'to possible ways in which one's flourishing may be frustrated ...'<sup>66</sup> for there is no more to such frustration in this account than the non-satisfaction of informed desires), and this is the relationship of autonomy to self-respect. We have already seen how serious reflection about issues which are of ultimate significance to one is itself part of the educative process of self-definition. Discovering who I am and what matters to me as well as having the courage to act in accordance with such knowledge and convictions are bound up with self-respect

such that failure to achieve a degree of self-knowledge or a disposition for living one's life in line with what one acknowledges to be of supreme importance will inevitably affect one's self-respect and, accordingly, one's well-being. One's failure in this regard affects one's self-respect as the following example of Thomas Hill's bears witness.<sup>67</sup> He invites us to consider an artist of outstanding merit whose work goes unappreciated. Cynically, he alters his paintings for money and social acclaim but at the price of increasing self-disgust. It requires little in the way of argument to persuade us that self-contempt and personal well-being are mutually incompatible for self-respect, like personal autonomy, is so inextricably linked to the idea of human dignity that without it any sense of genuine well-being is totally without foundation. This is why life as a sybaritic lump attached to one of Nozick's machines is so horrifying. Surrendering oneself to the experiences produced would be to surrender one's rightful concern with oneself.

Someone might protest that he would be rendered so insecure and fearful by the opportunities afforded by living autonomously that he would rather forgo the alleged benefits in order to retain peace of mind. But just because we would be reluctant to set about forcing him to be autonomous (assuming that to be possible) this in no way casts doubt on the claim that autonomy is intrinsically valuable. It would be absurd to conclude that autonomy was alright for those who had the stomach for it but had positive disvalue for the faint-hearted. What we ought to do, I suggest, is to set about helping those who felt that they could not cope with the demands of an autonomous life to develop the courage and strength of will required. It would depend on the degree of fear involved whether or not we classified such people as mentally ill. No doubt there are things we could do to force some pathetic, overtimidorous person to face up to the demands entailed by the autonomous life, but unless he himself *experiences* such a life as worthwhile there is something very important still missing, namely the apprehension of a life worth living as valuable. All I am saying is that fear of anxiety *in itself* is no reason for avoiding an autonomous life.<sup>68</sup>

## **7. FREEDOM, WELL-BEING AND COMPULSORY SCHOOLING**

### **7.1 Introduction**

While there is obvious value in not being subject to the will of others it is quite wrong to assume that this is the only freedom worth guarding or promoting. Indeed, it is the excessive value attached to mere absence of constraints that leaves negative freedom falling short of a satisfactory explanation of why freedom is justifiably rated so highly. Those in a position to exercise their freedom must not only identify with their choices but have the opportunity to operate within a framework of objective choice conditions. And as we have seen, the value we attach to the freedom of choice between alternatives is bound up with the respect we have for persons and their rights to self-determination. It is not so much the value of choice as such which is of present concern but rather those features of personhood in virtue of which we identify a particular choice as a manifestation of personal autonomy. Individual choices merit respect to the extent that they cohere with other decisions and actions within a self-determined life-plan and any plausible justification of paternalism must recognise this. I shall return to this important point in due course but for the moment I wish to direct my attention to some familiar attempts at justifying paternalism, especially towards children.

Compulsory schooling is clearly paternalistic in intent in that it is widely assumed that both children and society at large would be seriously harmed in some way if school attendance were entirely voluntary. There is of course a great deal of truth in this assumption but the nature of this harm is not always made explicit. Behind the insistence that children between the ages of five and sixteen should be compelled to attend school in the interests of harm-avoidance there is an equally widely held belief that schooling is instrumental in contributing to the well-being of children and to the society of which they are members even if it is not entirely clear in the minds of those who would go along with compulsion what this might involve.

It goes without saying that whether these are necessary or jointly sufficient for the justification of paternalistic legislation of this kind is widely disputed. It is hoped that

this section goes some way towards a satisfactory answer by concentrating on a number of familiar attempts to justify paternalism and by exploring those respects in which children are supposedly sufficiently different from adults to merit attendance at school on a non-voluntary basis. The outcome of such an investigation should leave us in a much better position to construct a coherent and feasible curriculum with the aim of promoting individual freedom on the one hand and that wider conception of personal well-being which it has been the purpose of this essay to establish and defend and in relation to which freedom is credited with such importance.

## 7.2 Paternalism and its Justification

According to Rosemary Carter

‘a paternalistic act will be justified only if either: (i) prior to interference the subject explicitly consents to the paternalistic intervention; or (ii) subsequent to the interference the subject (a) explicitly consents to the action, or (b) is disposed to consent either upon request, or upon the receipt of a relevant piece of information.’<sup>1</sup>

The advantages of appeals to consent are obvious in that they accord with the importance we attach to individual decision as well as avoiding all the difficulties associated with trying to specify a set of real or objective interests an individual might be said to possess irrespective of his subjective preferences.

While it is not difficult to conjure up persuasive examples of consent to paternalism prior to any particular intervention (Dworkin’s is that of Odysseus’s instructions to be tied to his ship’s mast in order to prevent his falling victim to the song of the Sirens) the fact remains that instances of this kind are atypical and hopeless as a sole justification in that they exclude those cases where intervention seems most appropriate such as in the lives of the very young, the senile and the insane.<sup>2</sup> Perhaps there is more mileage in the idea of subsequent consent. Dworkin would certainly think so as he suggests that a child coming to acknowledge the correctness of his parents’ intervention is an important moral limitation on the exercise of parental power: ‘parental paternalism may be thought of as a wager by the parent on the child’s subsequent recognition of the wisdom of the restrictions’<sup>3</sup>. But apart from the objection that such an attempted justification has no bearing on how the insane or

senile should be treated, such a defence is seriously flawed in a number of important respects.

Where young children are concerned, the wise parent insists on a fairly strict regimen relating to hygiene and health such as teeth-cleaning, bed-times and the like. No doubt parents may wager that a child will, in due course, appreciate the wisdom of being treated in this way but if he dies in infancy what then of the paternalistic treatment? Are we supposed to conclude that his parents were unjustified in implementing that particular routine? On a literal interpretation of the argument from subsequent consent the argument would appear to be definitely not. But surely the child's death is irrelevant to the justification of parental decisions. Appeals to what it is reasonable to believe a child would have consented to (had he lived) are remarkably unhelpful in determining the way children should be treated. A person is, after all, likely to consent only to what he believes is a reasonable curtailment of his liberty, and that is a separate question for which the argument from subsequent consent can provide no guidance. In any case, if a child were to grow up refusing to concede that his parents had been justified in their treatment of him - perhaps he is wilfully perverse or stupid - it does not follow that his parents behaved unreasonably.

Another very serious difficulty for the argument from subsequent consent is that it would seem to allow for all sorts of manipulative possibilities. Without invoking anything so extreme as brainwashing or hypnotizing, the phenomenon of the parent intent upon instilling a rigid and inflexible set of dispositions and beliefs is all too familiar. Given certain child-rearing practices there is almost a guarantee that the requisite consent will be forthcoming. In other words we are faced with the problem of having to determine what is to count as genuine consent.

Rosemary Carter tries to overcome this difficulty by suggesting three classes of cases in which consent is not sufficient to justify a paternalistic act. These include: (i) cases of brainwashing someone to conscientiously accept a new set of beliefs and as a result approve of the brainwashing that brought them about; (ii) those in which consent results from a distortion in the subject's values, beliefs or desires (as a result

of religious indoctrination a child may come to approve of the way in which he has been brought up and as often as not all too willingly inflict the same on his own children or his pupils); (iii) those cases 'where the subject's consent would have been withheld or would be withdrawn upon the receipt of a piece of relevant information.'<sup>4</sup> All this is less helpful than it might at first appear, for she nowhere provides us with a criterion of 'distortion' of values apparently oblivious of the fact that the very idea of distortion of values is itself a normative judgement.

Appeals to subsequent consent are quite useless as a means of distinguishing between justified and unjustified paternalism, and where such consent is not forthcoming our conviction that paternalism is appropriate is not necessarily dented. The form of consent on which Dworkin relies is 'hypothetical' in that it refers to that to which a person would consent if he were rational. Dworkin is suggesting that the justification of paternalism requires more than acting in accordance with what it is reasonable to believe someone would consent to, that is to say it goes beyond his empirical will even if that will is 'unencumbered'. He is more concerned with what it is reasonable to believe someone would consent to if he were rational or fully informed or both. As we have seen there are different senses in which an action may be judged rational but the form of rational agency with which Dworkin is operating is akin to that defended in the previous section in relying on the idea of real-interest. According to this view an agent is irrational if what he does is incompatible with his interests in, amongst other things, continued survival and flourishing.

As an example of such irrationality Dworkin singles out those who would rather die than be subjected to a blood transfusion on religious grounds. Refusals of this kind are not taken lightly and no doubt accord with what the agent takes to be a coherent set of beliefs. But presumably those who embark on what some of us might consider to be foolhardy pursuits such as climbing the north face of the Eiger or crossing the arctic alone, do so with due consideration of the dangers involved. They might protest that being prevented from stretching themselves in this way would threaten all that gave their lives significance and purpose. The difficulty lies in determining where exactly paternalistic impositions are authoritarian and out of order and where

they are morally defensible. Circumstances differ and we have to rely on the rationality of the beliefs in question. Clearly a 'bird man' equipped with nothing more than a pair of condor wings who attempted to fly to the ground from the top of the Eiffel Tower would be doomed to fail because his beliefs are manifestly erroneous. The adventurer is more difficult to deal with because while there are no doubt circumstances in which such feats are almost certain to end in death, there is nothing self-evidently absurd in wishing to stretch oneself to the limit when there is some chance of success. When it comes to respecting people's religious beliefs however, we have a choice. We can either go along with them simply because they are religious however daft and dangerous they might appear (it might well be in accordance with a particular religion that one should subject oneself to the will of another), or we can assess the rationality of the beliefs in question and act accordingly. I have no hesitation in commending the latter as the only defensible premise on which to proceed.

The significance of Dworkin's appeal to hypothetical consent is that he relies on the idea of human well-being in determining the justifiability of paternalistic interventions which of course renders the whole idea of consent utterly redundant. If paternalism is acceptable only in those circumstances when it is reasonable to believe that a rational agent would consent then, as Lively says, 'the legitimating consent necessarily follows from the rationality of the intervention and the burden of justification for intervention rests on the claim that it will prevent self-harm. (Thus) it is difficult to see what force the secondary appeal to consent adds to the justification.'<sup>5</sup>

It is because we attach such importance to being able to act in accordance with our choices and preferences that we have a natural reluctance to intervene in the decision-making of others where the associated harm is relatively minor. But when it is of an indisputably serious nature it is counterintuitive to deny the appropriateness of intervention. Hobson argues that a necessary condition for justified paternalism is its prevention of serious harm where the harm avoided outweighs any other harm, such as loss of liberty brought about by the interference.'<sup>6</sup> Even though the prediction



required to determine the circumstances in which someone is likely to suffer serious harm is rarely straightforward it is, I believe, an indispensable starting point.

There are, as we have seen, a variety of ways of classifying basic needs by reference to which the notion of harm gains application. Hobson himself operates with a threefold distinction between physical needs (including things like food, air, freedom from fatal injury), psychological needs (such as security and contact with other people) and what he calls personal needs (things like religious convictions, career aspirations and the need for education). Whether we accept this classification or not we have to concede that where fundamental human needs are not met, serious harm will result. There is thus a very strong case for preventing someone from embarking on something which is manifestly in direct contravention of his real-interests.

While harm avoidance for Hobson is a necessary condition of justified paternalism it is not sufficient. The additional condition is the inability to make a rational decision about one's own best interests in virtue of some special feature which prevents rational deliberation about the case in question or due to general ignorance of relevant facts.<sup>7</sup> While he is correct to point out that none of this requires us to make a judgement concerning the rationality or otherwise of the subject's behaviour in a particular case, but only one concerning whether he is incapable of rational choice, he operates solely with a means-end view of rational choice which renders his criteria less helpful than it might be.

I shall return to the relevance of harm-avoidance and the absence of rationality as justifying conditions in what follows as they are particularly relevant to how we may treat children. Before this however it is incumbent upon us to be as clear as possible about what distinguishes children from other categories of human beings. Only then shall we be in a position to decide whether or not they should be compelled to go to school.

### 7.3 Children and Paternalism

Mill is quite clear that his opposition to paternalism does not extend to certain categories of people including those who are not 'in the maturity of their faculties' and 'children ... or young persons below the ages which the law may fix as that of manhood or womanhood.'<sup>8</sup> Unfortunately he is remarkably unhelpful in indicating how the 'mature' are to be distinguished from the 'immature' and fails to differentiate a legal/institutionalized conception of childhood (where age is the distinguishing criterion) from a normative characterization (where *maturity* is the criterion). No doubt there are dangers in placing too much emphasis on either one or the other in demarcating childhood but it is reasonable to assume as Kleinig suggests that a normative concept has conceptual priority in that there would be no justifiable point to the institutionalized contrast were there not thought to be differences of some normative significance.<sup>9</sup>

My principal concern is not so much with the conditions of childhood but with the justification of compulsory schooling. Why should anyone be made to go to school? How do we distinguish those who should be made to go from those for whom schooling should be optional? What, if anything, is the basis for the convention of compulsory schooling for those below a certain age? Satisfactory answers to such questions must not only address issues relating to what is harmful and beneficial to both individual children and to the society of which they are members, they also rely on the utility of the inescapably normative notion of 'maturity' because of the intimate connection between the ageing process and intellectual and emotional maturity. References to schooling should not be taken too literally. I am not concerned here with the wider debate about whether or not institutionalised schooling is appropriate for all children. It will suffice for our purposes if the expression 'schooling' is interpreted quite broadly. I am happy to refer to the practice of intentionally bringing about learning - especially where this is concerned with essential skills such as the ability to read - as schooling. The point to emphasise is that if allowed to remain illiterate in our society children would, in all probability, suffer adversely in being unable to benefit from alternative viewpoints which the printed word in its various manifestations efficiently conveys.

Although the correlation between age and maturity is not perfect there are many respects in which young people below a certain age must, for practical purposes, be regarded as immature. Any justifiable paternalistic legislation relating to compulsory schooling for children must rest on the validity of the connection between age and maturity and it is therefore with an exploration of this relationship that I have decided to begin this section. While there may well be reason to deny that the three features of maturity singled out for consideration are the only respects in which a person may be considered mature, they are particularly important for our purposes. Although not in themselves sufficient to distinguish children from adults the fact remains that children are for the most part less intellectually, emotionally and sexually mature than adults. What this means however is not self-evident and so in order to clarify what it means it is necessary to invoke the more determinate and objective notion of 'competence'.

With regard to a decision of a particular kind a person may be incompetent, according to Murphy, in three important respects; he may be ignorant, compulsive, or devoid of reason.<sup>10</sup> Now it is a fair generalization to maintain that the younger a person is the less knowledgeable he is and, accordingly, less competent in arriving at relevant conclusions derivable from particular facts and circumstances. The younger a child is the less likely is he to be aware of those facts and circumstances which, if ignored, are likely to result in injury to himself and others and it is in exactly those circumstances when we feel that paternalism is most appropriate. We intervene to stop a child from playing behind a parked vehicle and we would not think twice about preventing someone from drinking what we know to be lethal or noxious. Although there is more to intellectual maturity than mere knowledge, the possession of both propositional knowledge and skills of various kinds is a prerequisite of informed judgement and the ability to make such judgements is the mark of a person's intellectual maturity and overall competence. Again, this is not something which correlates perfectly with age but the younger a person is the likelihood of his being less competent at making informed judgements in accordance with which his decisions are made is that much greater.

Children are, in general, less emotionally mature than adults in the sense that they lack the wherewithal to understand and control their emotions. This is hardly surprising given their limited experience of life. Emotions, as far as they are concerned, are experienced with a peculiar freshness and intensity. This is not to deny that adults are not capable of experiencing them with equal intensity but they have, in virtue of their age, had greater opportunity to recognise them for what they are and to be able to keep them in some sort of perspective.

The second respect in which Murphy believes a person may be deemed incompetent is where his action is the result of compulsion, where the compulsion is some form of external duress or internal neurosis. It is precisely because children are frequently driven by their emotions that their actions may be thought of as in some sense compelled and not entirely free. An emotional education worthy of the name must address the question of how best to equip the young to recognise emotions for what they are and to appreciate the circumstances in which they are appropriate or misplaced in order that they might avoid being dominated by them.

I have suggested that the connection between the ageing process and intellectual and emotional maturity is not entirely tenuous. The connection between physical growth and sexual maturity is obvious on the one hand while presenting problems for the would be paternalist on the other. While adolescents may be physically capable of reproducing it may well be unwise to lower the age for legal intercourse to correlate with physical maturity. This is partly because of the emotional stresses and strains associated with sex and partly because childrearing in an advanced industrial society presents problems with which most adolescents under the age of sixteen would find it difficult to cope.

According to Murphy people are also incompetent if they are either non-rational or irrational. In the case of the former it would make no sense at all to attribute choice or the ability to make decisions. If someone were in a catatonic state for example it would make no sense to suggest that he could choose or decide between alternative courses of action. Irrational behaviour on the other hand is either rooted in a belief

system which is either manifestly absurd or systematically mistaken or it arises out of the agent's failure to appreciate the significance of the relevant factors. While incompetence of this kind is likely to result in major and not easily reversible harm to the agent some form of paternalistic intervention is, according to Murphy, justified provided that it is controlled, carefully specified, limited and explicitly tailored to the kinds of incompetence manifested. Mill, of course, would not have found this acceptable. For him the only circumstances in which interference with an individual 'in the maturity of his faculties' has any legitimacy are when other people are likely to be harmed. However, he would have had no qualms about classifying children, without exception, as incompetent and accepting this as a sufficient condition of paternalistic treatment in order to combat their natural tendency to behave in ways which would endanger them.

At this stage we are confronted with a positive torrent of questions. Are children more likely than adults to harm themselves? If so is this a sufficient condition for paternalistic intervention? Are children less rational than adults? How are irrational choices to be identified? Is there a difference between harming oneself and failing to promote one's own good? Is paternalism justified if it avoids harm but not if it is designed to ensure the promotion of a person's well-being or is it equally justifiable in both cases? Do our answers to such questions vary in accordance with the age of those subject to paternalism?

Before discussing some of the complex issues involved let us return to the question of children's supposed lack of rationality by reference to which we are invited to consider them incompetent. Consider the case of a child who decides that he will go to a particular school and while there opts for one course of study rather than another because his friend has chosen likewise. How would we decide whether or not his choices were rational? There is no doubt that his decisions were *reasoned* in that when asked why he chose as he did he is able to provide an explanation of his actions by reference to non-arbitrary criteria. But this is not to say that his choices were necessarily *reasonable* in the sense that they were sound or sensible. The sorts of thing that would count against a choice being considered reasonable would be the

extent of the ensuing harm or the loss of a particular benefit, advantage or good. These are objective in being unlike one's inability to defer gratification for any length of time. We could say, therefore, that a choice is unreasonable to the extent that it either (a) results in some harm befalling the agent or that it is counterproductive when it comes to securing his overall good or well-being on the one hand or (b) is a mark of a definite lack of strength of will or character where the desire for instant gratification takes precedence over considerations relating to harm-avoidance or good-promotion. Our schoolboy may well be making an unreasonable choice in spite of the fact that his choice is a reasoned one. Indeed it is in matters relating to education, where a person may well be a poor judge of his real-interests, that Mill is willing to countenance a degree of paternalism.<sup>11</sup> It goes without saying that pre-school children are likely to find it difficult and frequently impossible to make even reasoned choices.

In spite of the fact that it is possible to identify very young children who are able to defer gratification, who possess relevant knowledge as well as the ability to grasp complex issues, and in spite of the difficulties associated with identifying with precision a specific age when most children may be expected to possess such capacities, not to mention the problems associated with distinguishing the mature from the immature and the competent from the incompetent, there are good reasons for sticking with age as an acceptable criterion for distinguishing between children and adults. The alternative of introducing 'maturity tests' the passing of which would be a mark of one's competence to vote, marry and such like is morally unacceptable. Not only is the idea of distinguishing between children and adults by a process of certification intrinsically objectionable, the whole thing is open to all kinds of manipulative possibilities. In any case the decision to identify children by reference to age is not as arbitrary as it might first appear and it is perfectly compatible with maintaining a variety of ages at which people should be allowed to do certain things - drive cars, marry, serve on a jury, undergo voluntary sterilization or whatever.

Recognizing that the developmental stages through which children are said to pass do not correlate perfectly with age, it would be an exaggeration to suggest that a child

who possessed the necessary competence in a particular area had been harmed in being discriminated against on grounds of age. However insulting he might find such discrimination there is little or no fear of any long-lasting damage to self-esteem. The child knows that the discrimination will cease upon reaching a specific age and that the prohibition on his performing certain tasks applies to everyone else in that society below that age. If maturity tests were to become a standard means for the allocation of rights and privileges they would no doubt be accompanied by a variety of manipulative and controlling techniques. If adolescents had to pass such tests before being allowed to marry or vote it is more than likely that the pass rate of those from working class and ethnic minority backgrounds would be lower than for those who are wealthy, educated and articulate. Questions relating to who would set the questions and what they should be notwithstanding, it is plausible to assume that some would never pass however low the standard and the resulting humiliation would significantly damage self-esteem.

If the age criterion is more acceptable than any form of maturity test (and it is difficult to envisage any other alternative) the problem arises of determining the age or ages at which children cease to be minors. There are certainly no *a priori* reasons why one age in particular should be all-embracing but as Schrag has argued it is important that an age be set which does not diverge too much from the range reflected in the prevailing beliefs of the population.<sup>12</sup> Beliefs of this kind alter from time to time and legislation should recognise this; it is incongruous that an adolescent may be allowed to marry at sixteen but be refused the purchase of alcohol in pubs. If political education were given its rightful place in the curriculum it is possible that public perception of the political competence of the young might change and the age at which one may vote be lowered accordingly. After all there is something to be said for trying to identify one particular age - say sixteen or seventeen - where adolescents are permitted to take on most of the rights and privileges enjoyed by adults especially where these are associated with respect for personal autonomy. This still leaves room for tests of competence such as those involved in driving lorries or flying fighter planes.

Meanwhile, it is important to remember that there are features of childhood relating to ignorance, immaturity and inability to make rational choices which, if unrecognised, would result in children causing untold misery to themselves and others. For this reason I am sceptical of the claim by Rosemary Chamberlin that 'paternalism for children is justified...on the same grounds as for adults.'<sup>13</sup> She is naive in her optimism that children possess the requisite strength of character and foresight to form life-plans. Of course children decide that they want to follow certain careers, become parents, develop particular talents and aptitudes and so on, but their relative lack of experience in what Scarre calls 'the ways of the world'<sup>14</sup> means that such plans do not attach the same weight to them as those people aged thirty-five. It is in virtue of his lack of relevant experience that a child's decision to act in certain ways must be treated with more circumspection than that of a mature and sane adult. It is simply disingenuous of Chamberlin to suggest that inexperience counts for nothing on the grounds that 'a person of twenty-five is likely to be relatively inexperienced compared with a person of sixty' and that paternalism would otherwise be justified 'for all but the elderly'.<sup>15</sup> There is a world of difference between a five year old and a twenty-five year old that does not exist between most adults of whatever age.

Of course the justification of paternalism towards children depends in part on the rationality of the desire or decision in question, the extent to which it is 'informed', whether or not it will frustrate the possibility of future options, whether or not it is part of a coherent system of values or is likely to result in the child suffering serious harm. All this is indisputable but at the same time it is easy to forget that if we take seriously the respect to which children are rightly entitled we have to satisfy ourselves that children are not always able to 'locate' their choices and decisions within a life-plan of their own. In one sense of course Chamberlin's comment to the effect that children are 'unique persons with purposes and plans of their own and whose individuality we value...' is indisputable but there is an equally important sense in which their life-plans are in significant respects uncoordinated, of limited duration and based on a limited knowledge of themselves and their real interests. Although there is no neat and convenient line distinguishing adult from child, the greater our



assurance to the effect that such autonomy possessed by the latter is dispositional as opposed to merely occurrent in nature the more cautious must our approach be concerning paternalistic actions towards them.

No doubt some form of compulsory schooling for sane adults would increase their overall freedom by providing them with the knowledge and wherewithal for wider choice, but respect for their (presumed) autonomy requires other means of making education attractive. Only when their personal integrity is at stake, when their actions manifestly jeopardise their prospects and life-plans, do we feel justified in acting paternalistically towards them. It is easy to forget that there is little value in choice as such. As Kleinig says: 'It is not to voluntary choice as such that liberalism is committed, but to the persons who express themselves in their choices. Where choices having marginal significance to a persons settled life-plan and values threaten serious disruption to their realization, we do not violate their integrity in interfering with them.'<sup>16</sup>

Choices made without reference to a background of values and commitments with a measure of integration and coherence are largely capricious and arbitrary. And as I have been at pains to argue, our values and commitments are only partly chosen; we identify them for what they are as much by a process of discovery of who and what we are and wish to become and we do this by appreciating the significance that certain values possess by reference to an evaluative contrastive vocabulary. As Kleinig reminds us:

'Not only do we have a diversity of aims, preferences, wants and so on, but they vary in the status we accord them as far as our core identity and life-plans are concerned. We can differentiate passing and settled desires, peripheral concerns, valued and disvalued habits and dispositions. Our conduct and choices may reflect any of these, though not necessarily in a way that matches their ranking in our hierarchy of values and concerns .... Where a course of conduct would, in response to some peripheral or lowly ranked tendency, threaten disproportionate disruption to highly ranked concerns, paternalistic grounds for intervention have a legitimate place.'<sup>17</sup>

Given the absurdity of regarding personhood as entirely episodic and unconnected, respect for persons cannot stop with concern for them as they are here and now; respect demands that we consider what they might well become. For this reason the obvious retort to Kleinig's argument from personal integrity, in the form of 'Who do you think you are?' has little force where the intervention in question is not in conflict with a person's life-plan or projects. The paternalist is not trying to impose his own conception of the good if he is doing his best to stop someone from embarking on a self-defeating course.<sup>18</sup>

#### **7.4 Well-Being and Curriculum Planning**

The avoidance of harm and the promotion of good present problems of their own for the paternalist and it is only when these are recognised that we shall be better placed to determine whether or not failure to make reasonable choices is a sufficient condition for paternalistic interference. There is a widely held belief that if children were not made to go to school they would suffer serious harm and it is this that legitimates compulsory schooling. But people are not only concerned with preventing harm to themselves and to their children; they have a proper concern with securing opportunities which are necessary for at least a minimal degree of flourishing. That these are by no means the same thing is sometime forgotten. Failure to obtain that which is compatible with my overall long term interests does not always entail that I have been harmed. Furthermore, we must guard against the possibility of too much elasticity attaching to the notion of harm. John White may legitimately be accused of this in his early attempt to justify compulsory mathematics, physics and philosophy for fear that those who opted out of such activities *ab initio* might well be harmed in virtue of their ignorance of whole areas of possible wants. It is an exaggeration to suggest that ignorance of a possible want is necessarily harmful.<sup>19</sup> Having said this however, 'good promotion' and 'harm avoidance' may be seen as two sides of the same coin which makes it impossibly difficult at times to justify paternalistic intervention in the interests of one as something entirely separable from the other. The idea that one could devise an education system which would concentrate exclusively on one or the other is thus absurd.

If the prevention of harm is at least a necessary condition of justified paternalism what of the legitimacy of paternalistic interventions designed to promote human flourishing? The answer depends on whether or not we are talking about constraints devised with the intention of ensuring that people do indeed flourish or of those, less ambitious in intent, which are imposed in order to prevent people from embarking on courses of action likely to frustrate any possibility of flourishing. Legislation relating to seat belts in cars and crash helmets for motor cyclists is paternalistic but its purpose is to prevent people from ruining their lives unnecessarily. It is not suggested that restricting liberty in this way will ensure that people do in fact flourish. The justification underpinning legislation designed to prevent serious injury and unnecessary deaths depends on the truth of the assumption that most of us (with the exception of Sikhs perhaps) care more about loss of life than we do about freedom not to wear safety gear. Similarly, Jehovahs Witnesses are notorious in refusing to accept blood transfusions even when their own children's lives are at stake. To force an adult Jehovahs Witness to have a blood transfusion would indeed be a violation of his individuality but one can take respect for religious conviction too far. To presume that a child in desperate need of a blood transfusion would, were he to survive without it, conceive of his well-being in Jehovahs Witness terms is to presume too much. As we saw when discussing the so-called rights of Amish parents to withdraw their children from school, the child's future interests and well-being take precedence over parents' wishes even where these are inspired by the dictates of religion.

Education is in many ways very different from all this. Being educated and autonomous unlike being in possession of a crash helmet or having enough blood, is both a condition of flourishing as well as partly constitutive of flourishing. To flourish in our society presupposes a measure of autonomy, the wherewithal to participate fully in democratic decision-making procedures, the capacity to discriminate, to imagine alternatives, to develop a sense of who one is and what one possesses in terms of abilities and character traits. And if this is to be anything more than a pipe dream some kind of formal education is essential. Consent theories of justification for paternalism have been seen to be seriously flawed. Their flaws are particularly apparent where children are concerned. The justification of compulsory

schooling cannot hinge on anything so unpredictable as consent. Indeed it is largely because children are incapable of meaningful consent (in virtue of their relative incompetence) that there is a need to invoke the notions of real-interest, well-being, or flourishing to which children have a right. And if they have such a right it is wrong to deny them the opportunity of acquiring the means whereby they can exercise that right. As Amy Gutmann says:

‘A child’s right to education is a necessary precondition for the development of capacities to choose a conception of the good life and to enjoy the political freedom of democratic citizenship... the value (of which) ... is in large part contingent upon the ability of its citizens to exercise their political rights intelligently as well as to choose among alternative conceptions of the good life’<sup>20</sup>

To deprive a child of a liberal education is to adversely affect his chances of being able to discover where his well-being lies and to choose accordingly. It is to restrict his conception of the good to the immediate and familiar or what Postman and Weingartner call the tyranny of the present.<sup>21</sup> None of this lends support to those who would accuse us of enforcing our own conception of what the good life amounts to on those who may have a different set of values. For we are not imposing anything. And yet we are not operating with a totally neutral conception of the good life. Although our conception of the good life includes amongst its components the capacity to choose from competing conceptions of what such a life might amount to - and it is difficult to see how one could impose any such thing - it is far from being a neutral conception.

A liberal education is the very antithesis of something narrow and blinkered. It is necessarily concerned with widening children’s horizons, with getting them to appreciate the significance of different modes of reasoning and to respect evidence which supports and refutes particular judgements. In helping them to recognise that not just anything counts as a reason for believing in something it is necessarily non-neutral when it comes to the value of competing ways of life. A life consisting of a particularly limited number of options is, as we have seen, of less value than one offering a rich diversity and paternalism is frequently assumed to be justified if it contributes to freedom maximization. Such an argument is likely to have more

weight where children are concerned. The older people become the more difficult it is to be sure that paternalistic interventions are justified even if a greater degree of freedom results.<sup>22</sup>

In our haste to defend paternalism we must not forget that it should be used only when there are no alternative strategies. There is much to be said for leaving people alone and letting them learn from their own mistakes - at least for most of the time. But if they cannot be persuaded to put on safety belts the results of which may be catastrophic we are justified in making it mandatory. It is simply disingenuous to compare the wearing of seat belts in cars with preventing someone, whose whole sense of self-worth and self-identity is bound up with challenging the elements, from climbing mountains or sailing round the world alone. We may not be able to go along with Feinberg's insistence that present autonomy should always take precedence over future good, but we can agree with him when he says that children are different and that respect for a child's future autonomy as an adult frequently necessitates preventing him from doing as he pleases. And it is by reference to future autonomy that compulsory schooling is largely warranted. Concern for dispositional autonomy is not the same as trying to ensure that future options remain open. While an education that failed to increase a child's awareness of the multiplicity of options open to him in life would of necessity be a very bad education, it would be absurd to pretend that it is possible to keep one's options open indefinitely. Decisions to study one thing rather than another with its associated steps towards a particular career, or to travel instead of staying put or to live alone and celibate, are all necessarily restrictive. An education which was obsessed with increasing the number of options available would be nothing short of grotesque because as we saw in Section 1 reference to numbers counts for nothing as a measure of freedom without reference to their significance or value. Once a course of action is acknowledged as having some value or purpose within one's scheme of things it would be absurd to remain forever on the fence refusing to commit oneself in the fear that such commitment would foreclose possible future options. Refusing to act in accordance with one's values is the very antithesis of rational agency.

Critics of compulsory schooling either ignore the distinction between occurrent and dispositional autonomy or refuse to accept that the liberty of an untutored and largely heteronomous child to stay away from school is not as worthy of the same respect as that of an autonomous adult to leave the Civil Service. It is absurd to pretend that all restraint *qua* restraint is an evil.<sup>23</sup> As Callan argues, the freedom that compulsion takes away from most children counts for very little because the possibility of choice it forecloses could not instantiate more than negligible autonomy.<sup>24</sup> But what about an adolescent who, having attended school for several years and having discovered something about his own talents and aptitudes as well as having had his horizons extended, is autonomous enough to cause little concern if he were either to leave school prematurely or to refuse to take up a place at University? For reasons already stated I would be reluctant to introduce a flexible leaving age but would agree with Callan that if he were in the sixth form it would be going beyond the bounds of legitimate paternalism as it would result in a major loss of freedom for the sake of future benefits that are far from guaranteed. While enhancement of freedom may well warrant some form of paternalistic intervention in people's lives it is not in itself a sufficient condition for its justification short of a convincing account of freedom which shows it to be more valuable than anything else.

Throughout this section children have been referred to as if that is all they are. But all the time they are growing towards adulthood with its associated responsibilities and duties. If they are to be made to go to school there needs to be some assurance that attendance will foster commitment to democratic institutions and decision-making procedures as well as a degree of moral, sexual, and emotional literacy combined with a healthy scepticism towards the *status quo*. It could be argued that by attending schools committed to an education of this kind, albeit on a non-voluntary basis, children are making a substantial contribution of their own to the well-being of the community.

Some form of schooling is absolutely essential if children are to develop the wherewithal to transcend the familiar and the parochial and so be able to take advantage of alternatives open to them in their private and public lives. Exactly how

much schooling is required will no doubt vary from society to society and depend to some extent on the prevailing economic circumstances. But according to Peter Hobson certain general criteria are universally applicable. They include the acquisition of sufficient knowledge and skills to enable young people to choose a career for which they are fitted and interested, the ability to fulfil their social and political responsibilities adequately and not to be hampered significantly by lack of those specific abilities that school can provide for living the kind of life they wish.<sup>25</sup> Acceptable as this is, it remains to be seen whether all this can be achieved by the age of sixteen; if anything it would seem to require the raising of the school leaving age to eighteen or nineteen. But the educational diet offered by most sixth forms with its narrow and specialised curriculum could not possibly merit compulsion. It would require a separate and lengthy essay to construct a relevant and coherent curriculum for sixteen to nineteen year olds. In view of the fact that different considerations apply to curriculum construction for those attending school on a voluntary basis I shall say no more about it here.

The beginnings of an attempt to construct an appropriate curriculum for five to sixteen year olds has been eloquently rehearsed by John White in two recent publications. His *Education and the Good Life* concludes with a major attempt to pin point what is wrong with our National Curriculum as it stands. Although its stated aim is to promote 'the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of pupils' it is, as White says, remarkably unclear how the identification of ten so-called foundation subjects are supposed to realize these aims. There is nothing in it to suggest a concern for the well-being of individual pupils or our society and its concern for meeting people's needs - for fulfilling relationships, personal autonomy, variety, pleasure, fun, co-operative endeavour, meaningful work and suchlike. It is detailed in content but sees content in terms of subjects and knowledge to be acquired with little or no reference as to how it is supposed to contribute to human flourishing. One cannot help feeling that there is more truth than paranoia in White's surmise that its rationale 'corresponds with traditional right-wing educational objectives all over the world: to shape pupils for their destinations in the socio-economic system',<sup>26</sup>

where reference to autonomy, empowering people to give shape and purpose to their lives, positive freedom and participatory democracy are given very short shrift.

White reminds us that the central aim of education in a liberal democracy should be to prepare people for a life of autonomous well-being and he is wise to caution those responsible for school timetables by referring to the awesome complexities involved. Oversimplification notwithstanding, White is without doubt correct to insist that 'the general direction must be from the top downwards, from the most general aims through further specification of them down to more detailed objectives at school level.'<sup>27</sup> Only by starting with the clearly stated aim of promoting autonomous well-being can any form of knowledge, subject or area of experience have any credibility or claims to space on a timetable. What this entails is spelled out with considerable ingenuity in the book and in an inspiring pamphlet written in collaboration with Philip O'Hear.<sup>28</sup>

In their pamphlet O'Hear and White are right to emphasise the priority of personal qualities required for autonomous well-being since it is only from these that a coherent framework for the kinds of knowledge and understanding, experience of the arts and practical competencies can be derived. The personal qualities they highlight as meriting special concern include: (i) personal concerns such as attentiveness to one's basic needs as an autonomous person (health, liberty, options and such like), the qualities of character necessary for one's own flourishing (courage, self-control, confidence etc), commitment to personal projects pursued for their own sake and enjoyment of physical pleasures; (ii) social involvement and concern for others which involves amongst other things working with others for shared goals, enjoying others' company, promoting and protecting the well-being of those to whom one is closely connected as well as more general altruistic concerns with the wider community. Concern for others extends to refraining from harming others as far as one is able and a degree of impartiality between one's own and other people's claims; (iii) critical and reflective awareness about priorities among one's values, obstacles to self-determination and human nature in general as well as the possession of intellectual virtues necessary for practical reasoning. And they are careful to point out that the



distinction between (i) and (ii) is one of mere convenience in view of the intimate relationship between concern with self and others and the ways in which our own well-being is bound up with that of other people.

Of course there are always dangers in any schematic compilation of aims and values in education but O'Hear and White's list reflects much of what was said in Section 6. It recognises the importance of our social nature and the way in which our own flourishing in an advanced industrial society is inseparable from that of other people and that the cultivation of altruistic dispositions is a legitimate and desirable task of the educator.

O'Hear and White go on to show how all this serves to inject coherence into curriculum planning. They demonstrate how knowledge and understanding of geography, sociology, politics, history, science and maths are essential to anyone with a concern for beneficence or playing an active role as a citizen in a democracy. Again, choosing between options and giving a direction to one's life requires knowledge and understanding of the options available, the means of achieving them and the obstacles likely to cause frustration. If students are to begin to develop the personal qualities outlined they will require a great deal of knowledge and understanding in order to enable them to discover who they are and what matters to them in life, as well as what contribution they might make to their community. In order to achieve this, a degree of specialist teaching is unavoidable - especially at secondary level. But unless and until such teaching (which need not be entirely subject based) can justify itself by reference to something like the values and concerns outlined by O'Hear and White it will lack credibility and at worst could result in little more than time-filling. This is not to say that the traditional grammar school curriculum was entirely irrelevant, it is just that it was never clear *why* children should be so concerned with amassing vast amounts of propositional knowledge. There is no reason to suppose that such a curriculum was of much help in promoting the highly prized personal qualities required of citizens in a democracy.

O'Hear and White conclude their aims of a new National Curriculum with a list of practical competencies which should be the concern of those responsible for implementing and delivering a school curriculum. These include communication and numeracy as well as competencies relating to physical movement, health and safety, planning and organisation and social interaction. And they quite rightly remind us of the dangers associated with treating such competencies as discrete items or areas of study within a curriculum as something totally unconnected with the personal qualities suggested.

How all this translates into timetables for specific age groups is a task which is fortunately not the concern of this essay. It is to their credit that O'Hear and White point us in the right direction. Anyone with an hour or two to spare can draw up a National Curriculum on the back of an envelope. Indeed the speed with which ours was introduced combined with its shoddy philosophical underpinning leaves one wondering if it were constructed in exactly this way. O'Hear and White do not pretend to have completed the complex theoretical task required before a National Curriculum can be written, but a curriculum premised on concern for well-being would be genuinely liberating and one which any society with a concern for freedom dispenses with at its peril.

## CONCLUSION

Any attempt to overcome the limitations imposed by the insistence that values are ultimately preference-dependent is confronted with the task of rebutting the charge of authoritarianism and in those cases where a particular vision of the good life or, when freedom is at stake, the removal of constraints is designed to serve a particular life-plan, the charge might well have some justification. But the form of objectivism which it has been the purpose of this essay to sustain is quite compatible with radically different conceptions of well-being or life-plans. Nothing follows from the fact that a set of circumstances are evaluated in one way rather than another that a rational agent's options are foreclosed in some ways; rational agency itself presupposes that an action stems not only from an appreciation of what it is that is chosen but also has a sound basis in terms of self-knowledge and understanding by reference to which the question '*Is it right for me?*' (as opposed to '*Do I want it?*') is both intelligible and answerable.

While human nature provides limits to what could conceivably be compatible with human flourishing, it allows scope for an enormously wide variety of differing lifestyles all of which may result in personal well-being. Liberal democrats have nothing to fear in conceiving of freedom in positive terms. Neither should they feel threatened by surrendering their attachment to the priority of desire over value. While recognising the difficulties associated with any attempt to refute non-cognitivism, it is the proper appreciation of the social nature of man which leads inexorably to a justified scepticism concerning subjectivism. If such scepticism can be channelled into a re-examination of what it is to genuinely flourish as a person, there is cause for optimism that our children might be brought to appreciate the extent to which their own well-being is not only inextricably linked to that of their fellows but requires an abiding concern with freedom's promotion and defence.

The need to be free to choose from a variety of alternatives is an unavoidable feature of human nature and an education system has to recognise this. It is indefensible, therefore, so to constrain children that they leave school with little or no awareness

of the possibilities before them. Where the constraints are such as to prevent them taking advantage of such possibilities, schools are duty bound to try and equip them with the determination to refuse to accept oppressive constraints with equanimity; which is to say that they need amongst other things self-knowledge, imagination and courage. In this respect schools are directly concerned with political and moral education, not in the sense of mere providers of information important as this undoubtedly is, but in the deeper sense of character building such that knowledge and understanding has an impact on what people do.

We live in troublesome times, where freedom and opportunities of various kinds are increasingly exposed to the chilling rhetoric of right-wing ideologues who seem to care little for the gains made by freedom fighters from the early trade-unionists to contemporary feminists. If the next generation is to understand the forces of reaction it needs to be educated to appreciate the significance of freedom within the lives of civilised people. But if educators are to be remotely successful in this wholly admirable and crucially important task they must themselves have some understanding of the nature of freedom and the respects in which the good life depends on its securement. It is naive to expect that such concern would be forthcoming if the measure of individual liberty were nothing more than unconstrained pursuit of desire-satisfaction, and a moral education which concentrated on helping young people to work out hierarchies of desire by reference to nothing more than subjective and individualistic considerations would be a hopelessly attenuated version of what is required. Such an education would force upon children a kind of moral myopia far removed from the moral vision that we need.

For too long teachers have been wedded to the idea of ethical subjectivism or, what is in many ways just as bad, the assumption that morality is dependent upon religion. Teachers have a right to expect a lead from moral philosophers in helping them overcome the despondency and lethargy associated with subjectivism. This is why it is important to continue to persevere in trying to overcome the enormous problems associated with the attempted refutation of non-cognitivism. If some form of moral realism is sustainable and we can demonstrate that moral motivation is not necessarily

dependent upon desire then we might break through a significant barrier which is holding up all kinds of exciting experiments in political education for citizenship.

Children have a right to what Feinberg calls an 'open future', but if this is to be anything more than mere rhetoric philosophers must not rest content with the scepticism associated with moral non-cognitivism. If values are simply up for grabs, where desirability is ultimately reducible to preference, then all talk of discovery of value by reference to the language of contrastive evaluation would be impossible. If, on the one hand, we come to want things in virtue of being able to classify them in terms of such evaluations, we have the beginnings of a strategy for providing an account of well-being by reference to more objective criteria than desire-satisfaction theories would admit.

Educationalists, especially curriculum planners, need to take this on board and begin from a standpoint far removed from a mere listing of subjects. Not only children, but society as a whole has a right to expect of those responsible for a system of schooling that they have a more inspired and altogether clearer vision of the nature of well-being than is currently on offer from both the Department for Education and philosophers wedded to desire-satisfaction accounts. If we seriously want a society in which all of its members stand a reasonable chance of being able to flourish, we have to plan for it. It is just not the sort of thing that is likely to arise by osmosis from a subject-based national curriculum so hastily conceived as that in accordance with which teachers are currently forced to operate.

## NOTES AND REFERENCES

### 1. FREEDOM: ONE CONCEPT OR TWO?

1. **Green, T.H.**, *Works* Vol. II ed. Nettleship, R.L.
2. **Green, T.H.**, *Works* Vol. III ed. Nettleship, R.L., pp. 370-371.
3. This is a controversial claim but its justification will, I hope, become apparent as we proceed.
4. **Benn, S.I., and Weinstein, W.**, 'Being Free to Act, and Being A Free Man' *Mind* Vol. 80, 1971, p. 195.
5. **Mill, J.S.** *On Liberty*, esp. Ch. 3.
6. **Berlin, I.**, *Four Essays on Liberty*, pp. 121-122. This book is a collection of papers and contains Berlin's Inaugural Lecture 'Two Concepts of Liberty' given in 1958. In what follows page references in Roman numerals refer to the Introduction to *Four Essays on Liberty*.
7. *Four Essays* p. 144 and p. xxxix.
8. *Ibid.* p. 124.
9. *Ibid.* pp. 171ff.
10. Cf. *Ibid.* p. 122 and p. liii.
11. *Ibid.* p. 130.
12. *Ibid.*
13. *Ibid.* p. 122.
14. See e.g. **Steiner, H.**, 'Individual Liberty' *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* Vol. 75, 1975, pp. 30-50, **Day, J.P.**, 'On Liberty and real will' *Philosophy* Vol. 95, 1970, pp. 177-192 and **Oppenheim, F.**, "'Facts" and "Values" in Politics' *Political Theory* (February 1973) p. 56, where he claims that the expression 'with respect to *B*, *A* is free to do *x*' may be defined by '*B* makes it neither impossible nor punishable for *A* to do *x*'. The advantage of defining it thus is, according to Oppenheim, that it is entirely descriptive and in two ways: 'the defining expression consists exclusively of descriptive terms, and it is "value-free" in the sense that it can be applied to determinate states of affairs by anyone independent of his political convictions'.

15. *Ibid.* p. xxxviii.
16. *Ibid.* p xxxix.
17. *Ibid.* p. xl.
18. Berlin is more generous with respect to the requirement of intentionality than some writers within the negative tradition. (See, for example, the views of Felix Oppenheim).
19. **Parent, W.**, 'Some Recent Work on the Concept of Liberty' *American Philosophical Quarterly* Vol. II, No. 3, July 1974, p. 152. Cf. **Oppenheim** in *Dimensions of Freedom* pp. 71ff.
20. *Ibid.* p. 153.
21. *Op. cit.* p. xlii.
22. *Ibid.* p. xliii.
23. *Ibid.* p. xlvi.
24. According to Berlin 'Just as a democracy may, in fact, deprive the individual citizen of a great many liberties which he might have in some other form of society, so it is perfectly conceivable that a liberal-minded despot would allow his subjects a large measure of freedom (which means that) there is no necessary connection between individual liberty and democratic rule'. *Ibid.* pp. 129-30.
25. See e.g. **Schumpeter, J.**, *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy*.
26. **Brenkert, G.**, *Political Freedom* pp. 181-82.
27. *Op. cit.* p. 131.
28. *Ibid.* Berlin's use of the term 'positive freedom' varies in different parts of the lecture. On the following page he speaks of positive freedom as self-mastery and later on as 'rational self-direction' (p. 145 and elsewhere), and yet again as self-realisation (pp. 146-7).
29. **Taylor, C.**, 'What's Wrong with Negative Liberty?' in **Ryan, A.**, (ed.) *The Idea of Freedom* p. 182.
30. **MacCallum, G.C.**, 'Negative and Positive Freedom' *Philosophical Review* Vol. 76, 1967, pp. 312-334.
31. **Feinberg, J.**, *Social Philosophy* p. 11.

32. **von Hayek, F.A.**, *The Constitution of Liberty* p. 19.
33. **Steiner, H.**, *op. cit.* p. 43.
34. **Hobbes, T.**, 'Of Liberty and Necessity' in **Sir William Molesworth** (ed.), *English Works*, Vol. 4, pp. 273-274.
35. **Benn, S.I.**, *A Theory of Freedom* p. 130.
36. *Ibid.* p. 129.
37. **Taylor, C.**, *op. cit.* p. 219. In a similar vein Richard Norman says: 'my freedom is not increased by the availability of a large number of options if there is, as we say, "nothing to choose between them" ... the more important the options are that are open to me, the greater the difference they make to my freedom. If my freedom is increased by the choice of foods available to me, it is increased more significantly by the choice of political parties for which I can vote - unless, of course, as sometimes happens, the parties are as indistinguishable as pork-pies'. **Norman, R.**, *Free and Equal* p. 38.
38. *Op. cit.* p. 130.
39. *Op. cit.*
40. **Connolly, W.E.**, *The Terms of Political Discourse* p. 141.
41. **Oppenheim, F.**, *Dimensions of Freedom* p. 71.
42. Connolly quite rightly reminds us that while it is inappropriate to describe the poor as unfree with respect to everyone who could but do not act to relieve their poverty, certain people such as a Prime Minister and other members of a legislative body are in a particularly strategic position with respect to enabling the poor to escape poverty. 'If a government stood in a strategic position to remove impediments against those striving to escape poverty but failed to make it possible for them to do so, the government's failure ... would properly be seen as a constraint on the freedom of the impoverished.' *Op. cit.* p. 165.
43. *Op. cit.* p. 217.
44. *Ibid.* p. 218.
45. *Op. cit.* p. 17.
46. **Partridge, P.H.**, 'Freedom as the Possibility of Meaningful Choice' in **Dewey, R.E.** and **Gould, J.A.** (eds.) *Freedom: Its history, nature and varieties* p. 94.



47. **Rawls, J.**, *A Theory of Justice* p. 204.
48. *Op. cit.* p. xxxix.
49. *Ibid.* p. 130.
50. *Op. cit.* p. 205.
51. **Crocker, L.**, *Positive Liberty*.
52. *Op. cit.* p. 220.
53. Robert Simpson has argued for a twofold distinction between will and desire. Firstly, there is an essential transitoriness in desire whereas the object of a person's will is characterised as something towards which he has a relatively enduring regard. Secondly, the answer to the question 'Why do you want such and such?' is different if the object is wanted *qua* object of will. If such and such is merely desired a person may well be unable to answer the question in any terms other than that of desire-satisfaction. But if the object is wanted as an object of a person's will he must be able to point out what there is about it which leads him to believe in its *value*. Of course desire and will may or may not conflict, but where desire prevents a person from acting in accordance with his will he is in important respects unfree. See **Simpson, R.**, 'Happiness' *American Philosophical Quarterly* Vol. 12, No. 2, April 1975.
54. *Op. cit.* p. 234.

## 2. FREEDOM AND CONSTRAINT

1. **Berlin, I.**, *op cit.* p. 122.
2. **White, D.M.**, 'Negative Liberty' *Ethics* 1970, pp. 185-204.
3. **Benn, S.I.**, and **Weinstein, W.E.** *op. cit.* p. 200.
4. I am thus unable to accept White's comment to the effect that where there is no possibility of redress the question of freedom does not arise. I am no less unfree because my jailer has lost the only means of escape from my bomb-proof cell than if he had deliberately taken the key away. *Ibid.* p. 204, n.18.
5. **Oppenheim, F.** *Dimensions of Freedom* p. 71.
6. **Oppenheim, F.**, *Political Concepts* p. 53.

7. **Berlin, I.**, *op. cit.* p. 122.
8. *Ibid.* p. 123.
9. *Political Concepts* p. 55.
10. Benn and Weinstein point out that 'by extending the range of restrictive conditions judged capable of alteration, the concept of freedom can itself be extended. Conditions formerly accepted as necessary may be called progressively into question', (*op. cit.* p. 313) and they go on to illustrate this by showing how the concept of economic freedom has been extended during the last century and a half from a mere absence of legal limitations on contracts of employment to the radical accounts of today which see economic freedom as having to do with workers realising their aims.
11. **Blackstone, W.T.**, 'The concept of Political Freedom' *Social Theory and Practice* Vol. 2, No.4 (1973), p. 421.
12. Although as we shall see in due course the relationship between freedom and choice is not straightforward.
13. **Feinberg, J.**, *op. cit.* p. 13.
14. For an interesting and informative discussion of mental illness and its relation to freedom see **Bay, C.** *The Structure of Freedom* esp. pp. 179ff.
15. **Steiner, H.**, 'Individual Liberty' *Aristotelian Society Proceedings* Vol. 75, (1975).
16. **Oppenheim, F.**, *Political Theory* 1973, p. 56.
17. **Connolly, W. E.** *op. cit.* p. 163.
18. **Steiner, H.**, *op. cit.* p. 35.
19. *Ibid.*
20. **Day, J.P.**, 'Threats, Offers, Law, Opinion and Liberty'. *American Philosophical Quarterly*, Vol 14, 1977.
21. Indeed they often, but not inevitably, enhance it. For arguments purporting to show the contrary, see e.g. **Plamenatz, J.P.**, *Consent, Freedom and Political Obligation* p. 111, and **Honderich, T.** (ed.) *Essays on Freedom of Action* pp. 77ff.
22. **Miller, D.**, 'Constraints on Freedom' *Ethics* Vol. 94, 1983/4, p. 72.

23. **Oppenheim, F.**, *Political Concepts* p. 57.
24. They are critical of Hobbes in this respect, who wrote: 'All actions that men do in commonwealths for fear of the law are actions which the doers had liberty to omit ... as when a man throws his goods into the sea for fear the ship should sink, he doth it nevertheless very willingly, and may refuse to do it if he will .... So a man sometimes pays his debt only for fear of punishment, which because nobody hindered him from detaining, was the action of a man at liberty.' (*Leviathan II*, Ch. xxi) (Cf Locke's example of the man who, although locked in a room, remains there willingly because he wishes to see someone. Locke concludes that he does so *voluntarily* (*Essay II xxi*).
25. **Crocker, L.**, *op. cit.* p. 60.
26. **Oppenheim, F.**, *Political Concepts* p. 73.

### 3. FREEDOM AND DESIRE-SATISFACTION

1. In what follows I use 'want' interchangeably with 'desire' although I realise there may well be occasions when this is inappropriate. My argument is not affected substantially by whatever term is used.
2. **Hobbes, T.**, *Leviathan* Ch. XXXI Pt. 1.
3. **Mill, J. S.**, *On Liberty* Ch. V.
4. **Russell, B.**, 'Freedom and Government' in ANSHEN, R. N. (ed.) *Freedom : Its Meaning* p. 231.
5. **Berlin, I.**, 'Two Concepts of Liberty' reprinted in *Four Essays on Liberty*. Although Berlin was to modify this some ten years later as follows: 'If I am prevented by others from doing what I could otherwise do, I am to that extent unfree...' *Four Essays on Liberty* p. 123.
6. **Frankfurt, H. G.**, 'Freedom of the Will and the Concept of a Person' *Journal of Philosophy* LXVIII (1971), p. 10.
7. **Taylor, C.**, 'What's Wrong with Negative Liberty ?' in **Ryan, A.**, (ed.) *The Idea of Freedom* p. 192.
8. *Ibid.* p. 185.
9. *Ibid.*

10. **Hampshire, S.**, *Freedom of the Individual* p. 45.
11. **Frankfurt, H. G.**, 'Identification and Externality' in **Rorty, A. O.** (ed.) *The Identities of Persons* pp. 239-251.
12. *Ibid.* p. 243.
13. *Ibid.* Frankfurt refers to 'desires' and 'passions' interchangeably.
14. *Ibid.* p. 244.
15. *Ibid.* p. 245.
16. *Ibid.* p. 247.
17. *Ibid.* p. 250.
18. **Penelhum, T.**, 'Human Nature and External Desires' *The Monist* Vol. 62, 1979, pp. 304-319.
19. **Neely, W.**, 'Freedom and Desire' *Philosophical Review* LXXXIII No. 1 January 1974, p. 47. (Neely's emphasis).
20. **Gauthier, D. P.**, *Practical Reasoning*, Gauthier's thesis that it is the latter, reflective wants, that provide justifying reasons for action is something we shall have cause to dispute.
21. **Frankfurt, H. G.**, 'Freedom of the Will and the Concept of a Person' *op. cit.*
22. *Ibid.* p. 9.
23. *Ibid.* p. 13.
24. *Ibid.* p. 15.
25. *Ibid.* p. 13.
26. *Ibid.* p. 16.
27. *Ibid.*
28. **Dworkin, G.**, 'The Concept of Autonomy' in **Christman, J.**, (ed.) *The Inner Citadel : Essays on Individual Autonomy* p. 61.
29. **Bond, E. J.**, 'Desire, Action, and the Good' *American Philosophical Quarterly* Vol. 16, No.1, January 1979, p. 56.

30. **Watson, G.**, 'Fee Agency' *Journal of Philosophy* LXXII No. 8, 1975, p. 219.
31. There are persuasive reasons for believing that self-consciousness is something peculiar to language users and that only creatures who are capable of linguistic communication are in a position to formulate intentions. Wittgenstein (*Philosophical Investigations* 647) may well be correct in saying that 'trying' is the primitive expression of intention, and a cat may well be trying to catch a mouse while sitting in front of a mouse-hole. What the cat could not do, however, is to intend to catch a mouse and then abandon that intention without ever doing something about it, such as waiting by the hole, stalking etc. To formulate an intention presupposes an awareness of oneself as a being with an existence over time and cats just do not have such a capacity. Cf. **Casey, J.**, 'Human Virtue and Human Nature' in **Bentham, J.**, (ed.) *The Limits of Human Nature* p. 80 and **Scruton, R.**, 'Freedom and Custom' in **Griffiths, A. P.**, (ed.) *Of Liberty* pp. 181-196.
32. Much more needs to be said in defence of this and I attempt as much in Section 5.
33. **Taylor, C.**, *op. cit.* p. 104.
34. As Taylor puts it: 'Motivations or desires don't only count in virtue of the attraction of the consummations, but also in virtue of the kind of life and kind of subject that these desires properly belong to. *Ibid.*
35. **Berlin, I.**, *Four Essays on Liberty* p. xxxviii. John Gray is right to point out that only by invoking some form of human nature that is discriminatory as to wants which are to be counted, and which include evaluations of the agent's state of mind, can the intuition that the utterly contented slave remains unfree be supported? **Gray, J.**, *Liberalisms: Essays in Political Philosophy* p. 60.

#### 4. **DESIRE SATISFACTION AND WELL-BEING**

1. **White, J.**, *The Aims of Education Restated* p. 27.
2. *Op cit.* pp. 39-40. We find exactly the same view expressed by Rawls: '... while rational principles can focus our judgements and set up guidelines for reflection, we must finally choose for ourselves in the sense that the choice often rests on our direct self-knowledge not only of what things we want but also of how much we want them ... the rational plan for a person is the one ... which he would choose with deliberate rationality. It is the plan that

would be decided upon as the outcome of careful reflection in which the agent reviewed, in the light of all the relevant facts, what it would be like to carry out these plans and thereby ascertain the course of action that would best realise his more fundamental desires'. *Op cit.* pp. 416-417. Furthermore, according to Rawls, one is able to envisage the alternatives open to one and establish a coherent ordering of them or, as White expresses it, a 'hierarchy of desires'.

3. Although White's emphasis is slightly different from that of Rawls in that he asks us to suppose that the desire to count blades of grass is the reflective individual's 'most intense and most permanent desire' (p. 40). Rawls, on the other hand, asks us to imagine someone whose only *pleasure* is doing this (p. 432).
4. *Ibid.* pp. 424 ff.
5. *Ibid.* p. 426.
6. The discussion is reminiscent of Mill's account of higher and lower pleasures where those 'equally acquainted with and equally capable of appreciating and enjoying both' will prefer the former. **Mill, J.S.** *Utilitarianism* Ch.II paras 6-7.
7. **Barry, B.** *The Liberal Theory of Justice: A Critical Examination of the Principal Doctrines in 'A Theory of Justice' by John Rawls* p. 28.
8. See **Haksar, V.** *Liberty, Equality and Perfectionism* Ch. 11.
9. *Op. cit.* pp. 432-433.
10. I do not wish to become bogged down in a detailed critique of one very small part of *A Theory of Justice*. All I have tried to show is that however fanciful the example of the grass-counter may be, Rawls is forced to conclude that should someone (for whom we have no reason to suppose is unfree) remain convinced that his well-being lies in counting grass (or whatever) there is nothing to demonstrate that his belief is either erroneous or irrational. We are simply denied the possibility of objective means for any such evaluation.
11. *Op. cit.* p. 48.
12. *Ibid.* p. 50.
13. *Ibid.* p. 40.
14. *Ibid.* p. 57.

15. The difficulty with the whole view of rational choice under discussion is, as Hegel recognised, that it provides no criteria for a coherent ordering of desires resting as it does on what he called the 'arbitrary will'. 'It is just as little help to make a hierarchy of impulses - a device to which the understanding resorts - since no criterion for so ordering them is available here, and therefore demand for such a hierarchy runs out in the tedium of generalities.' (*Philosophy of Right* para.17 addition) Mortimore emphasises the importance of learning to assess options in terms of the agent's ends, but assumes that while there is more to a comparative assessment of one's ends than ordering the objects of one's inclinations in terms of the felt strength of inclination at the moment of choice, he is still content to restrict what is involved here to possible future wants and is thus open to the same objection that may be levelled against Foot and Nagel (for whom it may be said that they at least, unlike philosophers as far apart as David Hume and Bernard Williams, allow a person's *future* wants and interests to provide reasons for acting) for refusing to deny that the value of ends ultimately rests on wanting. For a detailed exposition and critique of the views of all these philosophers on the relationship between reason and desire satisfaction, see **Bond, E.J.**, *Reason and Value*, esp. chs. 1 and 2 where although (contra Nagel, who believes that cognition as such can determine the will, desire itself being little more than a logical inference from the fact that an action was performed) he accepts the Humean view to the effect that while there must be some connection between action and desire satisfaction, he does not accept the widely accepted view so forcefully defended by Williams in his paper 'Internal and External Reasons' (in **Harrison, R.** (ed.) *Rational Action* pp. 17-28) whereby reasons are necessarily dependent on actual existing desires, or what Williams refers to as a person's 'subjective motivational set'. Although Bond is a philosopher who believes that cognition *qua* cognition cannot determine the will, he is happy to accept that desires arise as a result of cognition, thus allowing for the possibility that we come to want things in virtue of discovering or acknowledging their value. The truth in the Williams position, according to Bond, is that one cannot acknowledge something as a reason without it having some motivational force and this is where desire enters the picture; if it is a fact that *x* provides a reason for  $\Phi$ -ing, this fact has motivational force only to the extent that someone wants *x*. And yet it is still true to say that reasons can exist without my recognising them as such at all. They exist 'in virtue of what is to be *gained* by doing the thing, whether the agent is aware of it, and hence can use it in his deliberations, or not.' (*Reason and Value* p. 35). Such reasons are what Bond calls 'grounding reasons' to distinguish them from 'motivating reasons'. The possibility of basing reasons on values which are discovered rather than merely chosen is denied by White. Some of the issues involved are taken up again in the next section.
16. Cf. **White, J.** *Towards a Compulsory Curriculum* esp. Chapter 3.

17. There is more to *being* satisfied with something than simply enjoying a state of quiescence whereby one is not dissatisfied with something or other; to say as much would simply beg the question of what it is to be dissatisfied with something.
18. **Mill, J.S.**, *On Liberty*.
19. **Aristotle** *Nicomachean Ethics* 1097b,22 - 1098a,18.
20. See p. 18.
21. See *The Aims of Education Restated* p. 52.
22. *Ibid.* p. 54. (my italics)
23. *Ibid.* pp. 54-55.
24. *Ibid.* p. 57.
25. *Ibid.* p. 55.
26. *Ibid.* p. 50.
27. The nature and value of autonomy is discussed at length below in 6.3.
28. *Ibid.* p. 52.
29. *Ibid.*
30. *Ibid.* p. 54 (my italics). Cf **Rawls, J.** We must finally choose for ourselves in the sense that the choice often rests on our direct self-knowledge not only of what things we want but also of how much we want them ...' *op. cit.* p. 416.
31. **Wittgenstein, L.** *Philosophical Investigations* p. 258.
32. **White, J.** *op. cit.* p. 52.
33. **Rawls, J.** *op. cit.* p. 551.
34. **Wall, G.**, 'Moral Autonomy and the Liberal Theory of Moral Education' *Proceedings of the Philosophy of Education Society of Great Britain* 8, July 1974, pp. 222-236 and 'Freedom versus Reason: A Reply' *Philosophical Quarterly* July 1975, pp. 213-229.
35. **Hare, R.M.**, *Freedom and Reason* p. 2.



36. Cf **Hume, D.**, 'Reason is and ought only to be the slave of the passions and can never pretend to any other office than to serve and obey them.' *Treatise* Book II pt. III Sec.3. There is no basis within Hume's theory for the idea that desires should be subject to rational evaluation. The only place for reason in moral judgement is the extent to which it can render desires consistent with one another.
37. Wall is also swift to point to the difficulties implicit in Hare's individualism for his account of the universalizability of moral judgements. In order for moral judgements to be universalizable in a strong, non-conditional sense, they must be related to public criteria which are more than fortuitously shared; a possibility which cannot be accommodated within Hare's theory because the only criteria allowed are those based on the contingent desires and inclinations of the individual.
38. **Wall, G.**, *op. cit.* p. 229.
39. **Taylor, C.**, 'What is Human Agency?' in his *Human Agency and Language*, pp. 30ff.
40. *Ibid.* pp. 124-125. He continues: 'A self decides and acts out of certain fundamental evaluations ... This is what is impossible in the theory of radical choice. The agent of radical choice would at the moment of choice have *ex hypothesi* no horizon of evaluation. He would be utterly without identity ... The subject of radical choice is another version of that recurrent figure which our civilization aspires to realise, the disembodied ego, the subject who can objectify all being, including his own, and choose in radical freedom. But this promised total self-possession would in fact be the most total self-loss.'
41. **Sandel, M.**, *Liberalism and the Limits of Justice* p. 55.
42. **Murdoch, I.**, 'The Idea of Perfection' in *The Sovereignty of Good*.
43. *Ibid.* pp. 39-40.
44. *Op. cit.* p. 52 (my italics).
45. *Op. cit.* p. 59.
46. *Op. cit.* p. 54.
47. As Roger Scruton says: 'If there is such a thing as practical knowledge it applies to all aims and emotions, and it is a knowledge that in all possibility cannot be achieved by individual fiat, but depends on concepts, activities and perceptions made available in a common culture. If I am right in thinking that practical certainty is an integral part of rational fulfilment, and that it

comes only through perceptions that are shared, then it becomes difficult to see how we might form a coherent picture of the well-being of the individual, except in terms of the health of the community of which he forms a part. There is something already deeply contentious in the idea of a fulfilled rational agent whose style of life is entirely of his own devising. Certainly the cult of 'authenticity' should not lead us to accept its ideal of freedom as an obvious one.' 'The Significance of a Common Culture' *Philosophy*, Vol. 54, No. 207, January 1979, p. 66.

48. **MacIntyre, A.**, *After Virtue* Chapter 15 of which is entitled 'The Virtues, The Unity of a Human Life and the Concept of a Tradition'.
49. **Kekes, J.**, 'Moral Sensitivity' *Philosophy*, Vol. 59 No. 227, January 1984, pp. 3-19.
50. *Op. cit.* p. 194.
51. *Ibid.* pp. 200-201.
52. *Ibid.* p. 207.
53. *Ibid.* p. 209.
54. *Op. cit.* p. 7 (my italics). As McNaughton says: 'We can extend our sensitivity by suitable training and practice so that we can come to appreciate whole areas of human experience to which we were previously blind. Aesthetic sensitivity provides a striking example. We can extend our range of appreciation to include music, painting and drama of cultures very different from those of our own. Once someone has extended his range ... he can make reasoned comparative assessments which do not merely reflect the unexamined prejudices of his own society .... In the moral case it does not seem so easy to extend our appreciation of the merits of some other way of life without abandoning, or at least modifying, our commitment to our own .... It is easy to exaggerate these difficulties .... One may become sensitive to the good points of some other way of life without revising one's assessment of the value of one's own. In order to be in a good position to judge it is not necessary to adopt the evaluative stance of the other culture; it is enough that one has insight into its strengths and weaknesses.'  
**McNaughton, D.**, *Moral Vision: An Introduction to Ethics* pp. 157-158.  
 The importance of this cannot be overemphasised and it is taken up again below in 5.4.
55. 'Breadth involves understanding that conventional morality is only the form of morality one happens to be born into .... Conventional morality will inculcate habits and breadth of understanding will open possibilities .... Depth, the inwardly directed understanding of the significance of moral idioms, provides a perspective from which a moral agent can transform

- himself and come to a more accurate appreciation of others.’ *Op. cit.* pp. 8-9.
56. *Ibid.*
57. **Hollis, M.**, *Models of Man.*
58. In *Radical Philosophy* 1, 1972. pp. 6-14.
59. *Ibid.* p. 11 (my italics).
60. In a footnote to the last chapter of his book *The Moral Philosophers* (p. 253), Norman no longer wishes to maintain that a plurality of world views may be equally valid - which he claimed in the *Radical Philosophy* article.
61. Cf. **Kekes**, *op. cit.* p. 12. ‘The question of what I ought to do has a straightforward answer once the situation has been understood by the agent to come under the provenance of a moral idiom. The selection of idioms, therefore, is a far more important and problematic matter in morality than the choice of action.’
62. *Op. cit.* pp. 35-36.
63. **Cohen, G.A.**, ‘Belief and Roles’ in **Glover, J.** (ed.) *The Philosophy of Mind* pp. 53-63. Cohen provides a convincing example from the *Mikado* where the Lord High Executioner asks his lieutenant Pooh-Bah how much public money he should spend on his forthcoming marriage. Pooh-Bah occupies the dual role of the Lord-Lieutenant and Chancellor of the Exchequer and his advice differs accordingly - or rather it does not. The whole point of the example is to show that because Pooh-Bah is open to bribery, the advice so readily offered as a mere official is not really *his* advice at all. Pooh-Bah’s actions result from entirely different beliefs from those he feigns as a court official. As Cohen says: ‘When the individual is thought of as a set of roles, he may receive the callous treatment appropriate to a thing: he may be shifted from role to role, without any regard to the impact change of station has on him. If the other direction of the assimilation is stressed, and sets of roles are conceived as persons, the social *status quo* is then protected: when roles constitute selfhood, to change society is to mangle human beings.’ (p. 66).
64. *Op. cit.* p. 12.
65. **Montefiore, A.**, ‘Self-Reality, Self-Respect and Respect for Others’ *Midwest Studies in Philosophy* Vol.III, 1978, pp. 195-208.
66. *Ibid.* p. 196.

67. *Ibid.* p. 197.
68. *Ibid.* p. 200.
69. *Ibid.*
70. *Ibid.* p. 202.
71. *Ibid.* p. 205.
72. As Joseph Raz says: ‘... a person’s life is ... a normative creation, a creation of new values and reasons. It is the way our past forms the reasons which apply to us at present .... The fact that one embraced goals and pursuits and has come to care about certain relationships and projects is a change not in the physical or mental circumstance in which one finds oneself, but in one’s normative situation. It is the creation of one’s life through the creation of reasons.’ **Raz, J.**, *The Morality of Freedom* pp. 387-8.
73. See *Education and the Good Life* esp. pp. 28-31. The idea has a long and distinguished history. Henry Sidgwick argued as much in his *Methods of Ethics* and Rawls makes much of the idea: ‘... the best plan for an individual is the one that he would accept if he possessed full information. It is the objectively rational plan for him and determines his real good.’ (*A Theory of Justice* p. 417) and again, ‘... our good is determined by the plan of life that we would adopt with full deliberative rationality if the future were accurately foreseen and adequately realized in the imagination’ (p. 421). The most recent defence of well-being as informed-desire-satisfaction is to be found in **James Griffin’s** *Well-Being: Its Meaning, Measurement and Moral Importance* Sections I-IV.
74. ‘*Information* is what advances plans of life, information is *full* when more, even when there is more, will not advance them further.’ *Well-Being* p. 13.
75. Having said this however, it is important to note Griffin’s reminder that ‘although “utility” cannot be equated with actual-desires, it will not do, either, simply to equate it with informed-desires. It is doubtless true that if I fully appreciated the nature of all possible objects of desire, I should change much of what I wanted. But if I do not go through that daunting improvement, yet the objects of my potentially perfected desires are given to me, I might well not be glad to have them; the education, after all, may be necessary for my getting anything out of them. That is true, for instance, of acquired tastes; you would do me no favour by giving me caviar now, unless it is part of some well-conceived training for my palate. Utility must, it seems, be tied at least to desires that are actual when satisfied. (Even then we should have to stretch meanings here a bit: I might get something I find that I like but did not want before because I did not know about it, nor in a sense want now simply

because I already have it; or I might, through being upset or confused, go on resisting something that, in some deep sense, I really want.)' *Ibid.* p. 11.

76. **Brandt. R.B.**, *A Theory of the Good and the Right* p. 250.
77. *Op. cit.* p. 16.
78. **Thomson. G.**, *Needs* pp. 46-47.
79. *Ibid.* p. 49.
80. *Op. cit.* p. 22.
81. As Thomson says in a footnote on p. 132: 'the relative value of primary goods is not constituted by the fact that they would be desired or chosen under ideal conditions. This is because the reason why they would be desired is that the subject would appreciate or perceive their relative worth. In other words, the informed-desire theory already assumes what it sets out to explain.
82. *Op. cit.* pp. 33-34.

## 5. **DESIRE-SATISFACTION, RATIONALITY AND VALUE**

1. The present section is not directly concerned with the rationality of beliefs as such but with the rationality of action and with what makes a choice of one course of action more rational than that of another. While it is true that no action would be rational unless the beliefs underpinning it are themselves rational, it would require a lengthy and complex discussion to demonstrate what exactly it was in which the the latter would consist. In particular it would require an unnecessarily lengthy digression involving discussion of highly disputable concepts such as 'truth' and 'relevance' as well as a consideration of the claim that there are no universal criteria of rational belief, such criteria as there are being supposedly culture dependent.
2. Some people would have it that an action is rational if the agent has good grounds for believing that the adoption of certain means will optimally satisfy his desires irrespective of whether in actual fact they will do so. All that is required for rational choice is a rational estimate of the probabilities of outcomes. According to Walton there is the additional requirement of adopting means appropriate to one's *ability* to execute the action, it being irrational to adopt means, however instrumental in accomplishing a particular aim, which one cannot oneself employ. See **Walton, K.**, 'Rational Action' *Mind* Vol.LXXVI 1967, pp. 537-547.
3. **Rawls, J.**, *A Theory of Justice* p. 14.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 143. According to Richards 'The principles of rationality depend on the notion of best, or satisfactorily, realising the agents' aims *whatever they are.*' **Richards, D.A.J.**, *A Theory of Reasons for Action* p. 230. Cf. **Weale, A.**, 'Rational Choice and Political Principles' in **Harrison, R.**(ed.) *Rational Action* pp. 93-114. In other words, rationality is not a feature of the ends pursued. As Gauthier puts it: 'Reason does not assess a man's end in relation to some standard beyond his passions (in the Humean sense). Rather, reason assesses a man's ends in relation to the standards implicit in the passions themselves, the standards of consistence between intention and attitude.' **Gauthier, D.P.**, 'Reasons and Maximisation' *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* Vol.IV, No. 3, March 1985, p. 415.
5. As Mortimore suggests two conditions have to be satisfied before a state of affairs (*s*) is an end attributable to a person (*x*): (a) *x* has a pro-attitude towards *s* (a pro-attitude being something very broadly conceived to include desires, preferences, attitudes of approval), (b) *s* is a state of affairs which *x* is in principle prepared to allow to weigh as a reason for or against certain choices (in order to rule out those states of affairs such as impulses or wishes to which he is not prepared to give reflective weight in choices, from his 'ends') **Mortimore, G.W.**, 'Rational Action' in **Benn, S.I.**, and **Mortimore, G.W.** (eds.), *Rationality and the Social Sciences* pp. 95-96.
6. As Mortimore says: 'A ... factor in the development of a man's rationality is his learning to assess comparatively his ends in choosing what to do. This requires more than the capacity to order the objects of his inclination at the moment of choice. Rationality requires the development of the hierarchy of ends independent of the individual's immediate inclinations. There are other things that the rational man knows he wants, even though he may feel no immediate inclination towards them. And he can distinguish his reflective ranking of these things from the comparative strength of the inclinations he may momentarily feel towards them.' *Ibid.* p. 107. All of which is part of his claim that there is a good case to be made for treating rationality as a complex trait *superimposed* on a person's basic status as an end-pursuing agent.
7. **Hare, R.M.**, 'What Makes Choices Rational?' *Review of Metaphysics* Vol. XXXII June 1979, p. 631.
8. **Nowell-Smith, P.H.**, *Ethics* p. 113-114. Cf. 'Unless (someone) has a con-attitude towards getting-*X*-by-doing *Y*, it is irrational for him not to do *Y*. *Ibid.* pp. 167-168.
9. **Woods, M.**, 'Reason for Action and Desires' *Aristotelian Society Proceedings Supplementary Volume* 19. 1972, p. 191. Before examining some of the more important questions to which this theory gives rise, in particular the status of the expression 'Because I want to' as a reason for action, it is worth pausing to consider the attraction that such a thesis has had for so many philosophers. In her book *Intention* Elizabeth Anscombe states that 'the

primitive sign of wanting is *trying* to get'. 'Trying', in other words, is an outward criterion of 'wanting'; if it were not for the fact that people tried to do things we should have no means of making sense of what it was to want something. None of this is to suggest that whenever *X* wants something he tries to do it or obtain it, but it does mean that his failure so to try needs explaining; i.e. we would consider the fact that he was too ill to get out of bed sufficient. The fact remains that if no explanation could be provided we should refuse to accept that he wanted it at all and (which is the same thing) that his claim to want it was unintelligible. When all answers to the question 'But why do you want that?' have been provided and the only thing left to say is 'Because I just do' it seems pointless and perverse to demand a reason for trying to get it or do it over and above the fact that the thing is desired; the connection between the one and the other being a necessary one. Further demands for reasons are, apparently, out of place. Another reason why wanting is supposed to provide (at least a necessary) condition for action is the fact that the term 'reason' is often used when 'explanation' would be more precise. We often ask for the reasons why he did such and such when what we are really after is an explanation of his behaviour. To be told why a person behaved in the way that he did, to be given an explanation of his behaviour, is not to be provided with a reason. When we ask for a reason for someone's behaviour, especially if that behaviour is extraordinary or outrageous, we are, as often as not, asking for a *justification* and not a mere explanation. In so far as such behaviour is explicable in terms of the language of motivation, it is to be understood in purposive terms and not causal terms with its associated involuntariness. This is of course highly disputable and I cannot provide here the defence it requires. (All I can say is that I accept Melden's reasoning to the effect that a motive for a voluntary action logically presupposes the independence of its effect, and the motive of an action is part of the way in which we identify it. 'As motive it ... tells us what the person was doing.' Melden, A.I., *Free Action* p. 77).

10. The view which attempts to derive all reasons from desires denies, according to Nagel, 'the possibility of motivational action at a distance, whether over time or between persons ... Prudence cannot on this view be explained merely by the perception that something is in one's future interests if the perception is to have an effect ... It may be admitted as trivial that, for example, considerations about my future welfare or about the interests of others cannot motivate me to act without a desire being present at the time of action. That I have the appropriate desire simply *follows* from the fact that these considerations motivate me; .... But nothing follows about the role of the desire as a condition contributing to the motivational efficacy of those considerations. It is a necessary condition of their efficacy to be sure, but only a logically necessary condition .... If we bring these observations to bear on the question whether desires are always among the necessary conditions of *reasons* for action, it becomes obvious that there is no reason to believe that they are. Often the desires which an agent necessarily experiences in acting will be motivated by reasons stemming from certain external factors, and the

desire to perform it is motivated by those same reasons .... The fact that the presence of a desire is a logically necessary condition (because it is a logical consequence) of a reason's motivating, does not entail that it is a necessary condition of the *presence* of the reason; and if it is motivated by that reason it *cannot* be among the reason's condition. Nagel, T., *The Possibility of Altruism* pp. 27-30.

11. **Rorty, A.O.**, 'Wants and Justifications' *Journal of Philosophy* Vol LXIII No.24, December 1966, pp. 765-772. David Gauthier provides a similar defence as does Philippa Foot and, in places, R.M. Hare. Gauthier is careful to distinguish prudential from moral reasoning; in the former an individual's own desires are supposed to provide ultimate reasons for doing something, whereas in the latter the desires and wants of everyone are thought to be relevant. Foot may well be an opponent of Hare concerning what kinds of desire could count as providing reasons for action; she would not accept Hare's assertion that the object of desire can be anything whatever but, like him, she does ground moral reasoning in psychological states of individuals.
12. As Woods says: 'Sometimes whether a suggested reason is a reason for a particular action is not independent of what reasons there are against it. If the reasons against doing something i.e. the reason for *not* doing it are overwhelming, they tend to be regarded as obliterating what would otherwise count as a reason in favour. If a house is on fire, we are inclined to say that I have no reason for staying if the only reason for staying that could be given is that I want to examine further the pictures on the wall.' *Op. cit.* p. 192.
13. *Op. cit.*
14. **Rachels, J.**, 'Wants, Reasons and Justifications' *Philosophical Quarterly*, Vol.18, 1986, pp. 299-309. It is worth noting that 'BIWT' and 'for no other reason at all' are not equivalent. We do a great number of things for no reason at all without having any accompanying positive desires.
15. '(Rorty's) confusion arises from a failure to distinguish the explanation of his act as resulting from his wants, from the justification of his act - two things which can be, and are, quite different. 'BIWT' may tell us why he did it, but it does not justify what he did. The justification is in terms of his approaching death.' *Ibid.* p. 308.
16. As Nagel says: 'There must already be a connection which renders the interest intelligible and which depends not on his present condition but on the future's being a part of his *life*. A life is not a momentary episode, nor a series of such episodes.' *The Possibility of Altruism* pp. 38-39.
17. **Anscombe, G.E.M.**, *Intention* p. 68.



18. **Griffiths, A.P., and Peters, R.S.,** 'The Autonomy of Prudence' *Mind* Vol.LXXI (April 1962) p. 168.
19. Esp. Chapter 3.
20. The reasons why this is so are complex and need not detain us, but are to do with reasons given by Wittgenstein in *Philosophical Investigations* especially para. 241ff concerning the impossibility of a private language. I reject the possibility of such a language and hence 'private meaning' with respect to both words and actions and if I am right in this it follows that a want cannot be intelligible or meaningful to one person only.
21. *Op. cit.* p. 63.
22. *Ibid.* pp. 73-77. He continues: '...I would agree that a child does want things before it ever learns general standards of evaluation. Obviously we can say, for example, that the baby wants the breast simply on the basis that it reaches for it or cries until it is satisfied. Moreover, its wanting the breast is one of those shared "natural reactions" like crying or reacting to the gesture of pointing, which are a precondition of the possibility of rational behaviour, such that a baby who shared none of these natural reactions could never learn the use of public language or the applicability of impersonal public standards. But for all that, it remains true that in a very important sense the child *learns* how to want things. It learns the normal use of the phrase "I want ..." and this is very much more than just a matter of learning to use a particular word .... Out of all the many such movements which a baby makes, only those like reaching for the breast which we understand in terms of existing human norms of intelligible action do we treat as wants and respond to as such. Therefore, for the baby, the process of learning to use the words "I want ..." is inseparable from the process of learning to act *rationally*. And although we ascribe wants to the baby prior to his having learnt this, we do so only because we can see certain elements in his behaviour as *potentially* the actions of a rational agent .... Unless (a background of rational wants) is presupposed, there is no room for the concept of wanting to operate at all ... we can conclude that in that majority of cases where the possibility of wanting something is dependent upon already having learnt to see the thing in the relevant ways, the norm is both logically *and* chronologically prior to the existence of the corresponding want ... What counts as a want, even at a biological level, is determined by the system of rational norms within a culture, and that one is able to ascribe wants to a baby at all because one can see its actions as potentially those of a rational agent. Our paradigm of wanting is not wanting at the biological level of stimulus and response, but wanting at the level of rational reflection and assessment.'
23. **Mackie. J.L.,** *Ethics: Inventing Right and Wrong*, p. 38.

24. As Nagel points out: ‘The claim that certain reasons exist is a normative claim, not a claim about the best causal explanation of anything. To assume that only what has to be included in the best causal theory of the world is real is to assume that there are no irreducibly normative truths.’ *The View From Nowhere* p. 144.
25. **McNaughton, D.**, *Moral Vision: An Introduction to Ethics* p. 90.
26. **Strawson, P.F.**, *Scepticism and Naturalism: Some Varieties* pp. 35-36.
27. *Ibid.* p. 38. Although he continues by saying that: ‘Relative to the detached naturalistic standpoint which we can sometimes occupy, they have no properties but those which can be described in the vocabularies of naturalistic analysis and explanation (including, of course, psychological analysis and explanation)’, it seems to me that McNaughton is correct in reminding us that is only from within a particular perspective that we can ask what is really there and the answer will be determined by the frame of reference which that particular perspective provides. It is the misguided attempt to elevate the perspective into a dominant position that creates the problem. It would, he says, ‘be as absurd to conclude that values were unreal merely because they did not figure in a scientific account of the world as it would be to try to refute the claim that a painting has depth by measuring the thickness of the pigment.’ *Op. cit.*
28. See **Williams, B.**, *Descartes: The Project of Pure Enquiry* p. 245.
29. **McDowell, J.**, ‘Aesthetic value, objectivity and the fabric of the world’ in **Schaper, E.** (ed.), *Pleasure, Preference and Value: studies in philosophical aesthetics* p. 11.
30. *Op. Cit.* p. 244.
31. *Ibid.* p. 295.
32. **McDowell, J.**, ‘Values and Secondary Qualities’ in **Honderich T.** (ed.), *Morality and Objectivity* p. 112.
33. *Ibid.* pp. 113-114.
34. *Ibid.* p. 118.
35. *Op. cit.* p. 41.
36. **Platts, M.**, *Ways of Meaning* pp. 244-245, Cf. p. 253 ff. ‘While non-moral facts fix moral facts such that two circumstances cannot differ in a moral respect while being alike in all non-moral respects, still moral judgements are not analyzable (or translatable) into non-moral terms; the making of a moral

judgement is not an *inference* from non-moral facts. The problem now is that that picture appears to be in tension with the role usually accorded to non-moral differences in *accounting* for differences in moral judgement, accounting in a *reason-giving* way. If I make different moral judgements about situations that appear indistinguishable to you, then, the thought is, I have to *justify* that difference by pointing to a non-moral difference, I have to give a non-moral *reason* for the difference in moral judgement. Indeed, this non-moral reason-giving is the foundation of moral *consistency*: such consistency precisely requires (because it is constituted by) the principle that if two situations are non-morally indistinguishable, we have to give the same moral judgement in each case, together with the principle that if a difference in moral judgement is given, it has to be justified by a non-moral reason'.

37. *Ibid.* p. 254.
38. *Ibid.* p. 255.
39. *Ibid.*
40. McDowell, J., 'Virtue and Reason' *Monist*, Vol.62, 1979, p. 336.
41. Arrington, R.L., *Rationalism, Realism and Relativism: Perspectives in Contemporary Moral Epistemology* p. 151. He continues: 'It might be asked why the constitutive base characteristics, considered in relation to a particular context, cannot be said to entail the moral character of an act *in that context*. Why, for instance, cannot the social, historical, military and psychological features constituting Washington's courage in crossing the Delaware be said to entail this instance of courage? We can answer these questions by reminding ourselves that entailments reflect universal logical rules or propositions. The base characteristics constituting Washington's courage in crossing the Delaware do so only in this particular context. It makes no sense to speak of one set of properties as occasionally, or on a single occasion, entailing another set. Hence base characteristics cannot be said to entail a moral property in a particular context, even though they constitute it on that occasion.' *Ibid.*
42. *Ibid.* p. 162. Cf. McDowell's claim that when confronted by the competing and not necessarily reconcilable moral demands of a particular situation, we need to identify the salient fact about a situation so that we may be 'moved to act by this concern rather than that one.' ('Virtue and Reason', p. 344), and 'the relevant notion of salience cannot be understood except in terms of seeing something as a reason for acting which silences all others.' (*Ibid.* p. 345).
43. *Ibid.* p. 332.
44. *Ibid.* p. 334. Cf. Platts's *Ways of Meaning* p. 248. 'The simple fact of differences in moral judgement does not yet imply the falsity of moral

realism. In moral judgements, as in others, people can, and do, make mistakes. What realism requires is that their errors be *explicable* - in realistic terms. It is not, for example, difficult to explain the erroneous moral judgements of many ... South Africans. Their perspectives are clouded by their desires and fears in just the same way that many of our own factual judgements are clouded: *of course* my wife is completely faithful to me, *of course* my son is quite exceptionally talented!

45. *Ibid.* p. 258.
46. *Op. cit.* p. 153.
47. *Ibid.*
48. **McDowell, J.**, 'Are Moral Requirements Hypothetical Imperatives?' *Aristotelian Society Proceedings Supplementary Volume LII* 1978, pp. 15-16. The Nagel quote is from **Nagel, T.**, *The Possibility of Altruism* pp. 29-30. According to McNaughton 'what is objectionable is not the claim that motivation requires desire, but that a desire must always be a non-cognitive state.' *Op. cit.*, p. 107.
49. *Well-Being* pp. 28-29.
50. *Ibid.* p. 27.
51. *Ibid.* p. 29.
52. *Ibid.*
53. *Reasons for Action* p. 76.

## 6. INTERESTS AND WELL-BEING

1. **Feinberg, J.**, *Social Philosophy* p. 26 (my emphasis). Cf. his 'Harm and Self-Interest' in **Hacker, P.M.S.** and **Raz, J.** (eds), *Law, Morality and Society: Essays in Honour of H.L.A. Hart* p. 288 where he explains that to have a stake in *Y* is to stand to gain or lose depending on the condition or outcome of *Y*.
2. See **Thomson, G.**, *Needs* pp. 19 ff. 'A has a basic need for *X* if and only if he needs *X* but not in virtue of his needing something else .... All fundamental needs pertain to the avoidance of serious harm ... the question "Do you need *X*?" is akin to the question "Is not *X* harmful?". Cf. also **Miller, D.**, *Social Justice* p. 130 and **Wollheim, R.**, 'Needs, Desires and Moral Turpitude' in **Peters, R.S.** (ed.), *Nature and Conduct* pp. 162 ff.

3. Such examples are taken from **Mounce, H.O.** and **Phillips, D.Z.**, 'On Morality's Having a Point' in **Hudson, W.D.** (ed.), *The Is-Ought Question* pp. 228-40.
4. **Telfer, E.**, *Happiness*.
5. **Nozick, R.**, *Anarchy, State and Utopia* pp. 42-43.
6. 'No-one chooses to possess the whole world if he has first to become someone else ...' *Nicomachean Ethics* Book 9, Ch. 4. Cf. **Clark, S.R.L.**, *Aristotle's Man: Speculations upon Aristotelian Anthropology* p. 19. As Mill said, 'It is of importance not only what men do, but also what manner of men they are that do it.' *On Liberty*, Ch.3.
7. **Nozick, R.**, *op. cit.* p. 44. (my emphasis).
8. See **Nathanson, S.**, *The Ideal of Rationality* p. 141.
9. **Connolly, W.**, *The Terms of Political Discourse* p. 49.
10. **Benton, T.**, 'Realism, Power and Objective Interests' in **Graham, K.** (ed.) *Contemporary Political Philosophy: Radical Studies* pp. 10-11.
11. *Op. cit.* pp. 68-69.
12. *Ibid.* p. 64.
13. **Wall G.**, 'The Concept of Interest in Politics' in *Politics and Society* Vol. 5., No.4, Fall 1975, p. 500.
14. *Op. cit.* pp. 31-32.
15. **Lear, J.**, 'Moral Objectivity' in **Brown, S.C.** (ed.), *Objectivity and Cultural Divergence* p. 154.
16. *Ibid.*
17. *Op. cit.*
18. **Kekes, J.**, *Moral Tradition and Individuality* pp. 28-29.
19. **Raz, J.**, *The Morality of Freedom* pp. 289-298. Raz also maintains, quite properly in my view, that a person's well-being depends on the extent to which the goals he has chosen to pursue are valuable. A life devoted to trivial or harmful pursuits would adversely affect the capacity of the pursuant to flourish. Conversely, failure to achieve an altogether worthless goal would not adversely affect one's well-being (pp. 299-303). As Raz puts it: 'It is

part of the very notion of having a reason for a goal that one's endorsement of the goal is conditional on the reason being a good one.' (p. 303). The truth of this depends on the truth of the earlier claim that we pursue things for reasons which have more to do with their perceived value than with any desires we might have. Raz also insists that what happens to people is as important as their success in achieving their goals; thus well-being is affected in this way largely, illness and accident apart, through the way in which their goal-directed actions are adversely affected (p. 305).

20. *Op. cit.* p. 206.
21. *Ibid.* p. 166.
22. *Ibid.* pp. 207ff.
23. *Ibid.*
24. *Ibid.* p. 212.
25. The following are examples of attempts to compile lists of this kind:  
**Finnis, J.**, *Natural Law and Rights*, and **Becker, L.**, 'Good Lives: Prolegomena' in *Social Philosophy and Policy* Vol. 9, No. 2 Summer 1992.
26. John White has, in recent years, made a significant contribution to the debate of what should be included in a common or national curriculum and his suggestions are briefly outlined in the final part of the next section.
27. Two moving accounts of childhood where opportunities for play were virtually non-existent are to be found in John Stuart Mill's *Autobiography* and Edmund Gosse's *Father and Son*.
28. **Becker, L.**, *op. cit.* p. 37.
29. **Benn, S.I.**, 'Human Rights and Moral Responsibility' in *A Theory of Freedom* p. 259.
30. *Ibid.* pp. 220-221 in an essay entitled 'Autonomy, Association and Community'. Cf. his 'Autonomy and Positive Freedom'. 'How can anyone be the author of his own *nomos*? Surely everyone is governed by the basic presupposition of the culture which has furnished the very conceptual structure of his world, the traditions into which he has been inducted, the demands of roles he has internalised? The very canons of rationality that he employs when he thinks himself most independent in his judgement have been learned as part of his cultural heritage. One's range of options, both in belief and action, is as much circumscribed by such mental furniture as the highest speed at which one can travel is governed by the prevailing technology.' *Ibid.* p. 179.

31. **Sandel, M.**, *Liberalism and the Limits of Justice* p. 179.
32. As Sandel says: 'Where seeking my good is bound up with exploring my identity and interpreting my life history, the knowledge I seek is less transparent to me and less opaque to others. Friendship becomes a way of knowing as well as liking. Uncertain which path to take, I consult a friend who knows me well, and together we deliberate, offering and assessing by turns competing descriptions of the person I am, and of the alternatives I face as they bear on my identity'. *Ibid.* p. 181.
33. **Norman, R.**, 'Self and Others: the Inadequacy of Utilitarianism' *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* Supp. Vol. 5, 1979, pp. 193-197.
34. The idea of 'extended interests' on which Norman relies is taken from a paper by Richard Kraut in which he explicates the term as follows: 'Consider a man who loves his child. His feeling for it may be such that he regards it as an extension of himself, so that anything that benefits the child *ipso facto* benefits him. And if anything happens that is to the disadvantage of the child, then it is also to the man's disadvantage, whether he knows about the event or not. Such a person, when he considers his interests, takes into account the things that profit the child, not because whatever profits it *ultimately* affects him, but because the child's profiting is *his* profiting .... Let us say that when such a person considers the child's interest, he is consulting his own *extended* interest ...' See **Kraut, R.**, 'Egoism, Love and Political Office in Plato', *Philosophical Review*, Vol. 82, 1973, p. 333.
35. 'Anyone who values friendship for itself values the occurrence of a reciprocal relationship between two conscious and affective minds. True love is not to be confused with even the most admirable altruism, for it seeks a certain sort of reciprocal affect, not merely the engendering of happiness in the loved one.' **Wolff, R.P.**, *The Poverty of Liberalism* p. 182.
36. According to Aristotle, '... when it is young people who form a friendship the object of it ... is the pleasure they get from it ... But it is only between those who are good, and resemble one another in their goodness, that friendship is perfect. Such friends are both good in themselves and, so far as they are good, desire the good of one another. But it is those who desire the good of their friends for their friend's sakes who are most completely friends, since each loves the other for what the other is in himself and not for something he has about him, which he need not have.' *Nicomachean Ethics* Book 8, Ch. 4.
37. See e.g. **Mayo, B.**, 'Moral Integrity' in **Vessey, G.** (ed.), *Human Values* pp. 27-43.

38. **Lear, J.**, *op. cit.* p. 162.
39. *Education and the Good Life* p. 62.
40. *Ibid.* p. 63.
41. *Ibid.* p. 68.
42. *Ibid.* p. 69.
43. See **Raz, J.**, *The Morality of Freedom* p. 387. Cf. **Brandon, R.**, 'Freedom and Constraint by Norms' *American Philosophical Quarterly* Vol.16, No.3. July 1979 pp. 193-4.
44. **Feinberg, J.**, *op. cit.* p. 290.
45. **Meyers, D.T.**, *Self, Society and Personal Choice* Part 2, Sec.1.
46. As Meyers surmises, perhaps Benn would say 'that a rationally constructed, coherent personality is one in which the individual has amalgamated all of his or her traits, feelings, inclinations, desires, values, beliefs about the world, and the like into a practicable life plan. But this proposal seems too stringent as an account of a rationally constructed coherent personality. Consider the case of Max's unrequited, yet enduring love for Alice. Max loves Alice despite knowing that Alice does not return his affection. Moreover, Max realises that he can never express his feelings as he would like to express them. In this predicament, Max can choose to sustain his love and worship Alice from afar, or he can choose to look for someone else to love. Neither of these options blend all of Max's beliefs and feelings into a practicable life plan. But whereas the former option does not rule out Max's having a rationally constructed, coherent personality, it does rule out his being autonomous.

'Choosing to cherish and nurture an unreciprocated love seems compatible with a rationally constructed, coherent personality. That Max holds a factual belief - namely, that Alice does not and never will love him - that would lead most people, but not Max, to modify their goals does not entail that his personality is irrational and incoherent. A personality that harboured such competing constituents as loving Alice and wanting to make her miserable would seem irrational and incoherent. Likewise, if Max felt perfectly ridiculous nursing this hopeless amour but persisted just the same, his personality would seem irrational and incoherent. But Max's personality can compass feelings that are pragmatically irreconcilable with one of his true contingent beliefs without succumbing to irrationality and incoherence. People can have - indeed, they can rationally choose to have - coherent personalities which they know they must suppress.



In contrast, it is doubtful that an autonomous person would pine away nurturing an unreciprocated love. Unlike coherence, autonomy requires self-direction - that is, expressing oneself in ways that one deems fitting and worthy of oneself'. *Ibid.* pp. 31-32.

47. **Taylor, G.**, *Pride, Shame and Guilt: Emotions of Self-Assessment* p. 126.
48. **Raz, J.**, *The Morality of Freedom* pp. 384-385.
49. Eamonn Callan has recently drawn our attention to the dangers involved in self-deception. 'The individual who deceives herself about her interests or her natural affinities, for example, is surrendering to a mental tendency which, by its very nature, is largely unavailable to conscious control, and the frequency with which one surrenders to it will weaken the capacity to resist in the future. This makes surrendering a very dangerous business, at least in conditions where others cannot be expected to intervene benevolently when things go wrong. Today it may just protect our peace of mind from the disruption of disagreeable facts; tomorrow it may insulate us from truths essential to the meaning of our lives. Self-deception is like falling asleep while driving. The dreams may be nice but the risks are hardly worth it.' **Callan, E.**, *Autonomy and Schooling* pp. 37-38.
50. *Op. cit.* pp. 36-37. And she adds in a footnote: 'Much of the appeal of Frankfurt's identification criterion is that meeting it means that an individual has a self-chosen and well-defined identity ... to have a well-defined identity is not to have a different identity every other day. Whatever the cause of transitory identification, a theory of autonomy must exclude it. The trouble with Frankfurt's theory of autonomy is that the device he fixes on to stabilise identification - namely, decisions - will not do the job.' *Ibid.* p. 263.
51. *Ibid.* p. 38.
52. *Ibid.* p. 45.
53. See his *Liberalism and the Limits of Justice*.
54. Philosophers such as H.L.A. Hart are sceptical about the appropriateness of 'rights talk' in relation to children on the grounds that rights are discretionary powers and as such are inapplicable to those who are incapable of waiving them or enforcing them. See **Hart, H.L.A.**, 'Are There Any Natural Rights?' *Philosophical Review* Vol.64, 1955, pp. 175-191. Hart distinguishes his own theory of rights - something he calls the 'will theory', a theory which requires the legal recognition of an individual's will or choice as having pre-eminence over that of others in relation to a given subject matter. The 'will theory' insists that a right-holder has the legal power to waive or enforce the duties of others. However, as MacCormick has so forcefully argued, such

a theory gives rise to paradoxical conclusions. Given the unproblematic nature of the claim that one has a right (legal and moral) to one's freedom it is difficult to see how the 'will theory' could accommodate such a right. To quote MacCormick: 'A's right to personal freedom involves B in having (a) a duty not to reduce A to servile conditions, e.g. by clapping him in irons; and (b) a disability to impose upon A the status of a slave; and (c) a disability to change the relation (a) and (b) even with A's consent. A does not himself have power to waive his immunities in these respects ... (yet) it appears that his legal dispensation, be it ever so advantageous from the point of view of serving liberty, is so forceful as to thrust liberty beyond the realm of 'right' altogether. If there be no power to waive or assert the immunity, the claim, or whatever, upon some matter, upon that matter there was *by definition* no right either. In the matter of non-enslavement no person in any contemporary western legal system can *de jure* waive his immunity (MacCormick, D.N., 'Rights in Legislation' in Hacker and Raz, *op. cit.* p. 196). In contrast to the 'will theory' MacCormick wishes to subscribe to what is commonly referred to as the 'interest theory' whereby a right is the legal or moral protection or promotion of one person's interests against others, by the imposition on the latter of duties or liabilities in respect of the former.

55. *Op. cit.* p. 288.
56. *Ibid.*
57. In Aiken, W., and La Folette, H. (eds.), *Whose Child? Children's Rights, Parental Authority and State Power*, pp. 124-153.
58. Benn, S.I., "Interests" in Politics' *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* Vol. 60, 1960, pp. 130-1. 'His desires are beside the point, for it is often a question of whether he is to be encouraged to have desires of some appraised sort instead of undesirable ones. It might be in the child's interests to deny him satisfaction of some of his desires to save him from becoming the sort of person who habitually desires the wrong thing!'
59. There is evidence that children who are reared in homes where there is little predictability relating to how people, especially parents, are likely to behave, are likely to end up with beliefs unreflectingly held and where forward planning has limited application. On this see e.g. Klein, J., *Samples from English Cultures Vol. 2: Child-rearing Practices*.
60. Quoted by Feinberg in *Whose Child?* p. 135.
61. Benson, J., 'Who is the Autonomous Man?' *Philosophy*, Vol. 58, 1983, p. 14.
62. Lindley, R., *Autonomy*.

63. **Richards, J.R.**, *The Sceptical Feminist: A Philosophical Enquiry*, p. 109.
64. **Young, R.**, 'The Interests of Children and Adolescents' in **Aiken, W.**, and **Lafollette, H.** (eds.), *op. cit.* p. 183.
65. **Mill, J.S.**, *On Liberty* Chapter 3. For a fuller discussion of the issues involved see e.g. **Friedman, R.B.**, 'A New Exploration of Mill's Essay on Liberty' *Political Studies* Vol. XIV, 1966, pp. 281-304 and **Bogen, J.**, and **Farrell, D.**, 'Freedom and Happiness in Mill's Defence of Liberty', *Philosophical Quarterly*, Vol. 28, 1978, pp. 325-338. The latter presents a convincing argument to show that Mill's justification of autonomy as something possessing intrinsic value is not incompatible with his utilitarianism on the grounds that Mill took 'happiness' to be something far removed from a mere 'mental state'. An argument which is critical of the view that Mill's defence of individuality is straightforwardly utilitarian may be found in **Ten, C.L.**, *Mill on Liberty* Ch. 5.
66. *Op. cit.* p. 102.
67. **Hill, T.E.**, *Autonomy and Self Respect* p. 19.
68. As Raz says in an important footnote: '... dependence of well-being on absence of pain, disappointment, anxiety, frustration, and like emotions and feelings is often exaggerated. Anxiety, worry, disappointments, are an integral part of many valuable pursuits, relationships, careers, creative endeavours etc. Therefore, if you like, their presence contributes to one's personal well-being inasmuch as the pursuits of which they are an essential part do so'. *Op. cit.* p. 303, n.1.

## 7. FREEDOM, WELL-BEING AND COMPULSORY SCHOOLING

1. **Carter, R.**, 'Justifying Paternalism' *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* Vol. VII No.1 March 1977, p. 136.
2. **Dworkin, G.**, 'Paternalism' in **Wasserstrom, R.A.** (ed.), *Morality and the Law*. p. 147.

As to whether such interventions are paternalistic is a matter of some dispute. Gardner, and Lively have doubts. Underpinning Gardner's objection is the view that 'where we have paternalism, the initiative and responsibility rest with those who encroach.' (**Gardner, P.** 'Liberty and Compulsory Education' in **Griffiths, A.P.** (ed.), *Of Liberty*, p. 117). Lively believes that it is 'misleading' to picture such restriction as paternalistic in character, preferring

to call them self-imposed constraints decided upon by the individual with the object of avoiding self-harm.’ (Lively, J., *Ibid.* p. 152).

For my part I see nothing wrong with the idea that paternalism is the apposite term here. For the grounds on which I am motivated to consent to someone’s making it difficult or impossible for me to act in accordance with a particular desire are paternalistic. The fact that I have consented to another’s interference with my liberty on a subsequent occasion does nothing to render the term inappropriate.

3. *Op. cit.* p. 150. This argument has obvious application to whole categories of people in addition to children.
4. *Op. cit.* p. 137.
5. *Op. cit.* p. 156.
6. **Hobson P.**, ‘Another look at Paternalism’ *Journal of Applied Philosophy* Vol. 1, No. 2, 1984, p. 297.
7. *Ibid.*
8. *On Liberty* p. 78.
9. **Kleinig J.**, *Paternalism* Ch. 6.
10. **Murphy, J.G.**, ‘Incompetence and Paternalism’ *Archiv für Rechts und Sozial Philosophie* Vol. 60, 1974, pp. 482ff.
11. See his *Principles of Political Economy*.
12. **Schrag, F.**, ‘The Child’s Status in the Democratic State’ *Political Theory* Vol. 3, No. 4, November 1975, p. 455. Cf. his ‘From Childhood to Adulthood: Assigning Rights and Responsibilities’ in **Strike, K.A.** and **Egan, K.** (eds.), *Ethics and Educational Policy* pp. 69ff.
13. **Chamberlin, R.**, *Free Children and Democratic Schools: a philosophical study of liberty and education* p. 81.
14. **Scarre, G.**, ‘Children and Paternalism’ *Philosophy* Vol 55, 1980, p. 121.
15. *Op. cit.* p. 78.
16. **Kleinig, J.**, *op. cit.* p. 72.
17. *Ibid.* p. 68.

18. A similar defence of strong paternalism is made by Robert Young in his *Personal Autonomy* where he relies on a distinction between what he calls 'occurrent' and 'dispositional' (or 'global') autonomy. Only by reference to dispositional autonomy does it make sense to talk of an individual life having coherence, order and the avoidance of conflict which is likely to lead to fragmentation and loss of integrity. If such states are to be avoided some form of strong paternalism will sometimes be necessary. Respect for persons is respect for temporally extended agents the significance and values of whose day to day decisions is accepted by reference to the wider canvas of ongoing projects and life-plans which is why paternalism may well be perfectly compatible with respect for another's individuality and integrity.
19. White has more recently admitted to having failed to distinguish clearly between them in his *Towards A Compulsory Curriculum*. See **White, J.**, 'Compulsion and the Curriculum' *British Journal of Educational Studies* Vol. XXXII, No. 2, 1984, p. 149.
20. **Gutmann, A.**, 'Children, Paternalism and Education' *Philosophy and Public Affairs* Vol. 9, No. 4. Summer 1980.
21. **Postman, N.**, and **Weingartner, C.**, *Teaching as a Subversive Activity*.
22. It is far from certain that adults should be prevented from smoking tobacco even if such action were to enhance freedom. While the deleterious consequences of smoking are well known, it may well be a requirement of respect for someone's autonomy not to intervene on his behalf. This is certainly the view of Joel Feinberg. 'when a mature adult has a conflict between getting what he wants and having his options left open in the future, we are bound by our respect for his autonomy not to force his present choice in order to protect his future liberty. **Feinberg, J.**, 'The Child's Right to an open Future' in *Whose Child?* p. 127.
23. Cf. **Gardner, P.**, *op.cit* p. 122.
24. **Callan, P.**, *op. cit*.
25. **Hobson, P.**, 'Paternalism and the justification of compulsory education' *Australian Journal of Education* Vol. XXVII, Pt. 2, 1983, p. 144.
26. *Op. cit.* p. 138.
27. *Ibid.* p. 148.
28. **O'Hear, P.**, and **White, J.P.**, *A National Curriculum for All: Laying the Foundations for Success*.

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