

Identification and wholeheartedness

I

The phrase “the mind-body problem” is so crisp, and its role in philosophical discourse is so well established, that to oppose its use would simply be foolish. Nonetheless, the usage *is* rather anachronistic. The familiar problem to which the phrase refers concerns the relationship between a creature’s body and the fact that the creature is conscious. A more appropriate name would be, accordingly, “the consciousness-body problem.” For it is no longer plausible to equate the realm of conscious phenomena – as Descartes did – with the realm of mind. This is not only because psychoanalysis has made the notion of unconscious feelings and thoughts compelling. Other leading psychological theories have also found it useful to construe the distinction between the mental and the nonmental as being far broader than that between situations in which consciousness is present and those in which it is not.

For example, both William James and Jean Piaget are inclined to regard mentality as a feature of all living things. James takes the presence of mentality to be essentially a matter of intelligent or goal-directed behavior, which he opposes to behavior that is only mechanical:

*The pursuance of future ends and the choice of means for their attainment are the mark and criterion of the presence of mentality in a phenomenon. We all use this test to discriminate between an intelligent and a mechanical performance.*¹

Piaget similarly, but with even greater emphasis, construes the difference between the mental and the nonmental in terms of purposefulness:

There is no sort of boundary between the living and the mental or between the biological and the psychological. [Psychology] is not the science of consciousness only but of behavior in general . . . of conduct. [Psychology begins] when the organism behaves with regard to external situations and solves problems.²

1 William James, *The Principles of Psychology I* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1983), p. 21.

2 J.-C. Brinquier, *Conversations with Piaget* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), pp. 3, 4.

THE IMPORTANCE OF WHAT WE CARE ABOUT

Powerful currents of thought, then, lead away from the supposition that being conscious is essential to mentality. The psychoanalytic expansion of the mind to include unconscious phenomena does not itself actually require, of course, that mentality be attributed to creatures who are entirely *incapable* of consciousness. On the other hand, the conceptions of James and Piaget do entail that mentality characterizes the lives of vast numbers of creatures – not only animals but plants as well – which enjoy no conscious experience at all.³

Now what is this *consciousness*, which is distinct from mentality and which we generally suppose to be peculiar to human beings and to the members of certain relatively advanced animal species? Anthony Kenny offers the following view:

I think that consciousness . . . is a matter of having certain sorts of ability. To be conscious is, for instance, to see and hear. Whether somebody can see or hear is a matter of whether he can discriminate between certain things, and whether he can discriminate between certain things is something that we can test both in simple everyday ways and in complicated experimental ways.⁴

Kenny's suggestion is that to be conscious is to be able to discriminate. But what is it to discriminate? It would seem that discriminating between two things is in the most fundamental sense a matter of being affected differently by the one than by the other. If my state remains exactly the same regardless of whether a certain feature is present in my environment or absent from it, then I am not discriminating between the presence and the absence of that feature. If my state does differ according to the presence or absence of the feature, then that is a mode of discriminating between its presence and its absence. To discriminate sounds, colors, levels of temperature, and the like just means – in its most general sense – to respond differentially to them.

It does seem indisputable that discrimination is central to consciousness: Seeing necessarily involves responding to differences in color; hearing, to differences in sound; and so on. By no means, however, does this effectively grasp what we ordinarily think of as consciousness. The usual way of identifying the state of being conscious is by contrasting it to unconsciousness, and one way of being unconscious is to be asleep. But even while they are asleep, animals respond to visual, auditory, tactile, and other stimuli. Otherwise it would be difficult to wake them up. To be sure, the range of responses when they are sleeping is narrower than when they are awake. But they do not while asleep entirely lack the

3 Piaget himself cites the behavior of sunflowers as indicative of mentality.

4 Anthony Kenny et al., *The Nature of Mind* (Edinburgh: University Press, 1972), p. 43.

IDENTIFICATION AND WHOLEHEARTEDNESS

ability to discriminate, and Kenny cannot therefore regard them as being at that time altogether unconscious.

Now it might well be acceptable to consider sleep as consistent with a certain level of consciousness – lower than that of wakefulness but above zero. In the view Kenny proposes, however, it is not only sleeping animals that are conscious – so is everything else in the world. After all, there is no entity that is not susceptible to being differentially affected by something. If the notion of consciousness is understood as having merely the very general and primitive sense allotted to it by Kenny's account, then a piece of metal is conscious of the ambient temperature to the extent that it becomes hotter and colder, or expands and contracts, as that temperature changes. Consciousness so construed is a state to which the contrasting state is clearly not unconsciousness, understanding unconsciousness to be what we ordinarily attribute to those who are deeply asleep or anesthetized or in a coma. Rather, the state to which consciousness in this sense contrasts is causal isolation.

Consciousness in the everyday sense cannot be exclusively a matter of discrimination, then, since all sorts of discriminating responses may occur (so to speak) in the dark. One might perhaps avoid this difficulty by saying that consciousness is the ability to discriminate *consciously*, but that would not be helpful. In any event, I wish to consider another feature, distinct from discrimination, which is essential to ordinary consciousness: *reflexivity*. Being conscious necessarily involves not merely differentiating responses to stimuli, but an awareness of those responses. When I am awake on a hot day, the heat raises the temperature of my skin; it also raises the surface temperature of a piece of metal. Both the metal and I respond to the heat, and in this sense each of us is aware of it. But I am also aware of my response, while the metal is not. The increase in the temperature of my skin is itself something which I discriminate, and this is essential to the mode of being conscious that consists in feeling warm.

Of course the fact that a creature responds to its own responses does not entail that it is conscious. It goes without saying that the second response may be no more conscious than the first. Thus, adding reflexivity to discrimination does not provide an explanation of how consciousness arises or of how it and unconsciousness differ. Nonetheless, being conscious in the everyday sense does (unlike unconsciousness) entail reflexivity: It necessarily involves a secondary awareness of a primary response. An instance of exclusively primary and unreflexive consciousness would not be an instance of what we ordinarily think of as consciousness at all. For what would it be like to be conscious of something without being aware of this consciousness? It would mean having

THE IMPORTANCE OF WHAT WE CARE ABOUT

an experience with no awareness whatever of its occurrence. This would be, precisely, a case of unconscious experience. It appears, then, that being conscious is identical with being self-conscious. Consciousness *is* self-consciousness.⁵

The claim that waking consciousness is self-consciousness does not mean that consciousness is invariably dual in the sense that every instance of it involves both a primary awareness and another instance of consciousness which is somehow distinct and separable from the first and which has the first as its object. That would threaten an intolerably infinite proliferation of instances of consciousness. Rather, the self-consciousness in question is a sort of *immanent reflexivity* by virtue of which every instance of being conscious grasps not only that of which it is an awareness but also the awareness of it. It is like a source of light which, in addition to illuminating whatever other things fall within its scope, renders itself visible as well.

II

There is a baffling problem about what consciousness is *for*. It is equally baffling, moreover, that the function of consciousness should remain so baffling. It seems extraordinary that despite the pervasiveness and familiarity of consciousness in our lives, we are uncertain in what way (if at all) it is actually indispensable to us.⁶ Be this as it may, the importance of *reflexivity* to those in whose lives it occurs is readily apparent. A creature's sensitivity to its own condition – whether it is by way of the inwardness or immanent reflexivity of waking consciousness or by way of a less dazzling variety of secondary responsiveness – is essential for purposeful behavior.

- 5 What I am here referring to as “self-consciousness” is neither consciousness of a self – a subject or ego – nor consciousness that there is awareness. Both require rational capacities beyond what would seem to be necessary for consciousness itself to occur. The reflexivity in question is merely consciousness's awareness of itself. To hear a sound consciously, rather than to respond to it unconsciously, involves being aware of hearing it or being aware of the sound as heard.
- 6 Thus, the Nobel laureate physiologist John Eccles says: “I would like to [ask] as a neurophysiologist, why do we have to be conscious at all? We can, in principle, explain all our input-output performances in terms of activity of neuronal circuits; and, consequently, consciousness seems to be absolutely unnecessary. I don't believe this story, of course; but at the same time I do not know the logical answer to it. In attempting to answer the question, why do we have to be conscious? it surely cannot be claimed as self-evident that consciousness is a necessary requisite for such performances as logical argument or reasoning, or even for initiative and creative activities.” (In J. Eccles [ed.], *Brain and Conscious Experience* [New York: Springer-Verlag, 1964].) Perhaps, despite Eccles's reluctance to admit it, the inwardness of human life is an ontological absurdity – something which takes itself enormously seriously but actually has no important role to play.

IDENTIFICATION AND WHOLEHEARTEDNESS

The metal does not change in any purposeful way when it becomes hot; on the other hand, under certain conditions a sunflower turns toward the light. Both the metal and the sunflower respond to what goes on around them. Each is affected by, and hence discriminates, environmental stimuli. But the sunflower, unlike the metal, makes second-order as well as primary discriminations. This contributes essentially to its capacity for purposeful change. The metal lacks this capacity, since it is insensitive to its own responses – which is to say that it is altogether unresponsive or indifferent to what happens to it. A creature engaged in secondary responsiveness is monitoring its own condition; to that extent the creature is in a position, or at least is closer to being in a position, to do something about its condition.

Thus reflexivity has a point, just as action itself does, in virtue of the riskiness of existence. It enables a creature, among other things, to respond to the circumstance that its interests are being adversely affected. This makes reflexivity an indispensable condition for behavior that is directed purposefully to avoiding or to ameliorating circumstances of this kind, in which there is a conflict between the interests of a creature and forces that are endangering or undermining them.

There is also another sort of reflexivity or self-consciousness, which appears similarly to be intelligible as being fundamentally a response to conflict and risk. It is a salient characteristic of human beings, one which affects our lives in deep and innumerable ways, that we care about what we are. This is closely connected both as cause and as effect to our enormous preoccupation with what other people think of us. We are ceaselessly alert to the danger that there may be discrepancies between what we wish to be (or what we wish to seem to be) and how we actually appear to others and to ourselves.

We are particularly concerned with our own motives. It matters greatly to us whether the desires by which we are moved to act as we do motivate us because we want them to be effective in moving us or whether they move us regardless of ourselves or even despite ourselves. In the latter cases we are moved to act as we do without wanting wholeheartedly to be motivated as we are. Our hearts are at best divided, and they may even not be in what we are doing at all.

This means, moreover, that we are to some degree passive with respect to the action we perform. For in virtue of the fact that we do not unequivocally endorse or support our own motive, it can appropriately be said that what we want – namely, the object of our motivating desire, and the desire itself – is in a certain ordinary sense not something we *really* want. So while it may be that we perform our action on account of the motivating force of our own desire, it is nonetheless also true that we

THE IMPORTANCE OF WHAT WE CARE ABOUT

are being moved to act by something other than what we really want. In that case we are in a way passive with respect to what moves us, as we always are when we are moved by a force that is not fully our own.

It is possible for a human being to be at times, and perhaps even always, indifferent to his own motives – to take no evaluative attitude toward the desires that incline him to act. If there is a conflict between those desires, he does not care which of them proves to be the more effective. In other words, the individual does not participate in the conflict. Therefore, the outcome of the conflict can be neither a victory for him nor a defeat. Since he exercises no authority, by the endorsement or concurrence of which certain of his desires might acquire particular legitimacy, or might come to be specially constitutive of himself, the actions engendered by the flow and clash of his feelings and desires are quite wanton.

III

Now what conceptualization of this range of phenomena fits its contours in the most authentic and perspicuous way? My own preference has been for a model that involves levels of reflexivity or self-consciousness. According to this schema, there are at the lowest level first-order desires to perform one or another action. Whichever of these first-order desires actually leads to action is, by virtue of that effectiveness, designated the will of the individual whose desire it is. In addition, people characteristically have second-order desires concerning what first-order desires they want, and they have second-order volitions concerning which first-order desire they want to be their will. There may also be desires and volitions of higher orders.

This makes it natural to distinguish two ways in which the volitional aspects of a person's life may be radically divided or incoherent. In the first place, there may be a conflict between how someone wants to be motivated and the desire by which he is in fact most powerfully moved. An example of this sort of inner conflict is provided by the situation of a person who wants to refrain from smoking – that is, who wants the desire to refrain from smoking to be what effectively motivates his behavior – but whose desire for a cigarette proves to be so strong that it becomes his will despite the fact that he prefers not to act upon it and even struggles against it. Here there is a lack of coherence or harmony between the person's higher-order volition or preference concerning which of his desires he wants to be most effective and the first-order desire that actually is the most effective in moving him when he acts. Since the desire that prevails is one on which he would prefer not to act,

IDENTIFICATION AND WHOLEHEARTEDNESS

the outcome of the division within him is that he is unable to do what he really wants to do. His will is not under his own control. It is not the will he wants, but one that is imposed on him by a force with which he does not identify and which is in that sense external to him.

Another sort of inner division occurs when there is a lack of coherence within the realm of the person's higher-order volitions themselves. This does not concern the relation between volitions and will. It is a matter not of volitional strength but of whether the highest-order preferences concerning some volitional issue are *wholehearted*. It has to do with the possibility that there is no unequivocal answer to the question of what the person really wants, even though his desires do form a complex and extensive hierarchical structure. There might be no unequivocal answer, because the person is *ambivalent* with respect to the object he comes closest to really wanting: In other words, because, with respect to that object, he is drawn not only toward it but away from it too. Or there might be no unequivocal answer because the person's preferences concerning what he wants are not fully integrated, so that there is some *inconsistency* or *conflict* (perhaps not yet manifest) among them.

Incoherence of the first kind (the kind that afflicts the smoker) might be characterized as being *between* what the person really wants and other desires – like the rejected but nonetheless inescapably preemptive desire to smoke – that are *external* to the volitional complex with which the person identifies and by which he wants his behavior to be determined. The second kind of incoherence is *within* this volitional complex. In the absence of wholeheartedness, the person is not merely in conflict with forces “outside” him; rather, he himself is divided.

One advantage of this model is that it provides a convenient way of explaining how, as in the case of the reluctant smoker, passivity or impaired autonomy may be due to the force of what is in some basically literal sense the individual's own desires. The model also lends itself in fairly obvious ways to the articulation and explication of a variety of useful concepts pertaining to structural features of the mind (e.g., weakness of the will, ego-ideal, and so on). But the model's central notion of a hierarchy of desires seems not to be entirely adequate to its purpose. For it appears to be impossible to explain, using the resources of this notion alone, in what way an individual with second-order desires or volitions may be less wanton with respect to *them* than a wholly unreflective creature is with respect to its first-order desires.⁷

7 The notion of reflexivity seems to me much more fundamental and indispensable, in dealing with the phenomena at hand, than that of a hierarchy. On the other hand, it is not clear to me that adequate provision can be made for reflexivity without resorting to the notion of a hierarchical ordering. While articulating volitional life in terms of a

THE IMPORTANCE OF WHAT WE CARE ABOUT

Someone does what he *really wants* to do only when he acts in accordance with a pertinent higher-order volition. But this condition could not be sufficient unless the higher-order volition were *itself* one by which the person *really wanted* to be determined. Now it is pretty clear that this requirement cannot be satisfied simply by introducing *another* desire or volition at the next higher level. That would lead to a regress which it would be quite arbitrary to terminate at any particular point. The difficulty bears on both types of volitional incoherence I have distinguished. A characterization of either type of incoherence requires construing some of a person's desires as integral to him in a way in which others are not. Yet it is not obvious what account to give of the distinction between volitional elements that are integrated into a person and those that remain in some relevant sense external to him.

The mere fact that one desire occupies a higher level than another in the hierarchy seems plainly insufficient to endow it with greater authority or with any constitutive legitimacy. In other words, the assignment of desires to different hierarchical levels does not by itself provide an explanation of what it is for someone to be *identified* with one of his own desires rather than with another. It does not make clear why it should be appropriate to construe a person as *participating* in conflicts within himself between second-order volitions and first-order desires, and hence as vulnerable to being defeated by his own desires, when a *wanton* is not to be construed as a genuine participant in (or as having any interest in the outcomes of) conflicts within himself between desires all of which are of the first order. Gary Watson has formulated the issue succinctly: "Since second-order volitions are themselves simply desires, to add them to the context of conflict is just to increase the number of contenders; it is not to give a special place to any of those in contention."⁸ It appears that the hierarchical model cannot as such cope with this difficulty. It merely enables us to describe an inner conflict as being between desires of different orders. But this alone is hardly adequate to determine – with respect to that conflict – where (if anywhere) the person himself stands.⁹

I tried some time ago to deal with this problem, in the following passage:

hierarchy of desires does seem a bit contrived, the alternatives – such as the one proposed by Gary Watson in "Free Agency" (*Journal of Philosophy*, 1975) – strike me as worse: more obscure, no less fanciful, and (I suspect) requiring a resort to hierarchy in the end themselves.

⁸ Watson, p. 218.

⁹ The problem of explaining identification is not, of course, peculiar to the hierarchical model. It must be dealt with by any account of the structure of volition. Accordingly, it is not a fault of the hierarchical model that it requires an explanation of identification.

IDENTIFICATION AND WHOLEHEARTEDNESS

When a person identifies himself *decisively* with one of his first-order desires, this commitment “resounds” throughout the potentially endless array of higher orders. . . . 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 volitions of higher orders. . . . The decisiveness of the commitment he has made means that he has decided that no further questions about his second-order volition, at any higher order, remain to be asked.¹⁰

The trouble with what I wrote in this passage is that the notions I invoked – namely, “identification,” “decisive commitment,” “resounding” – are terribly obscure. Therefore, the passage left it quite unclear just how the maneuver of avoiding an interminable regress by making a decisive commitment can escape being unacceptably arbitrary. Thus, Watson says:

We wanted to know what prevents wantonness with regard to one’s higher-order volitions. What gives these volitions any special relation to “oneself”? It is unhelpful to answer that one makes a “decisive commitment,” where this just means that an interminable ascent to higher orders is not going to be permitted. This *is* arbitrary.¹¹

Now in fact Watson is in error here. As I shall attempt to explain, making a decisive commitment does not consist merely in an arbitrary *refusal* to permit an interminable ascent to higher orders.

IV

Consider a situation somewhat analogous to that of a person who is uncertain whether to identify himself with one or with another of his own desires, but which is rather more straightforward: the situation of someone attempting to solve a problem in arithmetic. Having performed a calculation, this person may perform another in order to check his answer. The second calculation may be just the same as the first, or it may be equivalent to it in the sense that it follows a procedure which is different from the first but which must yield the same result. In any case, suppose the first calculation is confirmed by the second. It is possible that both calculations are faulty, so the person may check again. This sequence of calculations can be extended indefinitely. Moreover, there is nothing about the position of any particular item in the sequence that gives it definitive authority. A mistake can be made at any point, and the same mistake may be repeated any number of times. So what is to

10 “Freedom of the Will and the Concept of a Person,” Chapter 2 in this volume.

11 Watson, p. 218.

THE IMPORTANCE OF WHAT WE CARE ABOUT

distinguish a calculation with which the person can reasonably terminate the sequence? How does the person avoid being irresponsible or arbitrary when he ends at some particular point a sequence that he might extend further?

One way in which a sequence of calculations might end is that the person conducting it simply quits, negligently permitting the result of his last calculation to serve as his answer. Perhaps he just loses interest in the problem, or perhaps he is diverted from further inquiry by some compelling distraction. In cases like these, his behavior resembles that of a wanton: He allows a certain result to stand without evaluating its suitability or considering the desirability of allowing it to be his answer. He does not *choose* a result, nor does he *endorse* one. He acts as though it is a matter of complete indifference to him whether there is in fact adequate support for the acceptability of his answer.

On the other hand, a sequence of calculations might end because the person conducting it *decides for some reason* to adopt a certain result. It may be that he is unequivocally confident that this result is correct, and therefore believes that there is no use for further inquiry. Or perhaps he believes that even though there is some likelihood that the result is not correct, the cost to him of further inquiry – in time or in effort or in lost opportunities – is greater than the value to him of reducing the likelihood of error. In either event there may be a “decisive” identification on his part. In a sense that I shall endeavor to explain, such an identification resounds through an unlimited sequence of possible further reconsiderations of his decision.

Suppose the person is confident that he knows the correct answer. He then expects to get that answer each time he accurately performs a suitable calculation. In this respect, the future is transparent to him, and his decision that a certain answer is correct resounds endlessly in just this sense: It enables him to anticipate the outcomes of an indefinite number of possible further calculations. Now suppose he is not entirely confident which answer is correct, but is convinced that it would nonetheless be most reasonable for him to adopt a certain answer as his own. Then he cannot with full confidence expect this answer to be confirmed by further inquiry; he acknowledges that accurate calculation might produce a different result. But if he has made a genuinely unreserved commitment to the view that adopting the answer is his most reasonable alternative, he can anticipate that *this* view will be endlessly confirmed by accurate reviews of it.

The fact that a commitment resounds endlessly *is* simply the fact that the commitment is *decisive*. For a commitment is decisive if and only if it is made without reservation, and making a commitment without reserva-

IDENTIFICATION AND WHOLEHEARTEDNESS

tion means that the person who makes it does so in the belief that no further accurate inquiry would require him to change his mind. It is therefore pointless to pursue the inquiry any further. This is, precisely, the resonance effect.¹²

Now what leads people to form desires of higher orders is similar to what leads them to go over their arithmetic. Someone checks his calculations because he thinks he may have done them wrong. It may be that there is a conflict between the answer he has obtained and a different answer which, for one reason or another, he believes may be correct; or perhaps he has merely a more generalized suspicion, to the effect that he may have made some kind of error. Similarly, a person may be led to reflect on his own desires either because they conflict with each other or because a more general lack of confidence moves him to consider whether to be satisfied with his motives as they are.

Both in the case of desires and in the case of arithmetic a person can without arbitrariness terminate a potentially endless sequence of evaluations when he finds that there is no disturbing conflict, either between results already obtained or between a result already obtained and one he might reasonably expect to obtain if the sequence were to continue. Terminating the sequence at that point – the point at which there is no conflict or doubt – is not arbitrary. For the only reason to continue the sequence would be to cope with an actual conflict or with the possibility that a conflict might occur. Given that the person does not have this reason to continue, it is hardly arbitrary for him to stop.

Perhaps it will be suggested that there remains an element of arbitrariness here, in the judgment that no pertinent conflict can be found: This judgment is also subject to error, after all, and it would be possible to reassess it endlessly without any of the reassessments being inherently definitive or final. Whatever the merit of this point, however, it does not imply a deficiency specific to the principle that a person is justified in terminating a sequence of calculations or reflections when he sees no conflict to be avoided or resolved. For the point is quite general. It is *always* possible, in the deployment of any principle whatever, to make a mistaken or unwarranted judgment that the conditions for applying the principle correctly have been satisfied. It should go without saying that no criterion or standard can guarantee that it will be wielded accurately and without arbitrariness.

12 I am here agreeing with the suggestion concerning the relation between resonance and decisive commitment made by Jon Elster in his *Ulysses and the Sirens: Studies in Rationality and Irrationality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), p. 111, n. 135. My own treatment of these matters owes much to Descartes's discussion of clear and distinct perception.

THE IMPORTANCE OF WHAT WE CARE ABOUT

V

The etymological meaning of the verb “to decide” is “to cut off.” This is apt, since it is characteristically by a decision (though, of course, not necessarily or even most frequently in that way) that a sequence of desires or preferences of increasingly higher orders is terminated. When the decision is made without reservation, the commitment it entails is decisive. Then the person no longer holds himself apart from the desire to which he has committed himself. It is no longer unsettled or uncertain whether the object of that desire – that is, what he wants – is what he really wants: The decision determines what the person really wants by making the desire on which he decides fully his own. To this extent the person, in making a decision by which he identifies with a desire, *constitutes himself*. The pertinent desire is no longer in any way external to him. It is not a desire that he “has” merely as a subject in whose history it happens to occur, as a person may “have” an involuntary spasm that happens to occur in the history of his body. It comes to be a desire that is incorporated into him by virtue of the fact that he has it *by his own will*.

This does not mean that it is through the exercise of the will that the desire originates; the desire may well preexist the decision made concerning it. But even if the person is not responsible for the fact that the desire *occurs*, there is an important sense in which he takes responsibility for the fact of having the desire – the fact that the desire is in the fullest sense his, that it constitutes what he really wants – when he identifies himself with it. Through his action in deciding, he is responsible for the fact that the desire has become his own in a way in which it was not unequivocally his own before.

There are two quite different sorts of conflicts between desires. In conflicts of the one sort, desires compete for priority or position in a preferential order; the issue is which desire to satisfy *first*. In conflicts of the other sort, the issue is whether a desire should be given *any* place in the order of preference at all – that is, whether it is to be endorsed as a legitimate candidate for satisfaction or whether it is to be rejected as entitled to no priority whatsoever. When a conflict of the first kind is resolved, the competing desires are *integrated* into a single ordering, within which each occupies a specific position. Resolving a conflict of the second kind involves a radical *separation* of the competing desires, one of which is not merely assigned a relatively less favored position but extruded entirely as an outlaw. It is these acts of ordering and of rejection – integration and separation – that create a self out of the raw materials of inner life. They define the intrapsychic constraints and boundaries with

IDENTIFICATION AND WHOLEHEARTEDNESS

respect to which a person's autonomy may be threatened even by his own desires.¹³

Aristotle maintained that behavior is voluntary only when its moving principle is inside the agent. This cannot be correct if "inside" is construed in its literal sense: The movements of an epileptic seizure are not voluntary, but their moving principle or cause is spatially internal to the agent. The location of a moving principle with respect to the agent's body is plainly less relevant than its "location" with respect to the agent's volition. What counts, even with respect to a moving principle that operates as an element of his psychic life, is whether or not the agent has constituted himself to include it. On the one hand, the principle may be internal, in the sense pertinent to whether the behavior to which it leads is voluntary, by virtue of the fact that the person has joined himself to what moves him by a commitment through which he takes responsibility for it. On the other hand, the moving principle of his behavior may remain external to the person in the pertinent sense because he has not made it part of himself.

This suggests another respect in which Aristotle's theory is unsatisfactory. He maintains that a person may be responsible for his own character on account of having taken (or having failed to take) measures that affect what his habitual dispositions are. In other words, a person acquires responsibility for his own character, according to Aristotle, by acting in ways that are causally instrumental in bringing it about that he has the particular set of dispositions of which his character is constituted. I think that Aristotle's treatment of this subject is significantly out of focus because of his preoccupation with causal origins and causal responsibility. The fundamental responsibility of an agent with respect to his own character is not a matter of whether it is as the effect of his own actions that the agent *has* certain dispositions to feel and to behave in various ways. That bears only on the question of whether the person is responsible for having these *characteristics*. The question of whether the person is responsible for his own *character* has to do with whether he has *taken responsibility* for his characteristics. It concerns whether the dispositions at issue, regardless of whether their *existence* is due to the person's own initiative and causal agency or not, are characteristics with which he

13 The determining conditions that are pertinent here are exclusively *structural* arrangements. I mention this, although I shall not pursue the point, since it bears on the familiar issue of whether *historical* considerations – especially causal stories – have any essential relevance to questions concerning whether a person's actions are autonomous.

THE IMPORTANCE OF WHAT WE CARE ABOUT

identifies and which he thus by his own will incorporates into himself as constitutive of what he is.

When someone identifies himself with one rather than with another of his own desires, the result is not necessarily to eliminate the conflict between those desires, or even to reduce its severity, but to alter its nature. Suppose that a person with two conflicting desires identifies with one rather than with the other. This *might* cause the other – the desire with which the person does not identify – to become substantially weaker than it was, or to disappear altogether. But it need not. Quite possibly, the conflict between the two desires will remain as virulent as before. What the person's commitment to the one eliminates is not the conflict between it and the other. It eliminates the conflict *within the person* as to which of these desires he prefers to be his motive. The conflict between the *desires* is in this way transformed into a conflict between *one* of them and the *person* who has identified himself with its rival. That person is no longer uncertain which side he is on, in the conflict between the two desires, and the persistence of this conflict need not subvert or diminish the wholeheartedness of his commitment to the desire with which he identifies.

VI

Since it is most conspicuously by making a decision that a person identifies with some element of his psychic life, deciding plays an important role in the formation and maintenance of the self. It is difficult to articulate what the act of deciding consists in – to make fully clear just what we do when we perform it. But while the nature of deciding is aggravatingly elusive, at least it is apparent that making a decision is something that we do *to ourselves*. In this respect it differs fundamentally from making a choice, the immediate object of which is not the chooser but whatever it is that he chooses. This difference between deciding and choosing accounts for the fact that deciding to make a certain choice is not the same as actually making it (after all, the time or occasion for doing that may not yet have arrived), whereas deciding to make a particular decision (that is, deciding to decide things a certain way) cannot be distinguished from making the decision itself.

In some languages, the reflexivity of deciding – the fact that it is an action done to oneself – is indicated in the form of the pertinent verb. Thus, the French verb is *se décider*. The closest parallel among English synonyms for “to decide” is the phrase “to make up one's mind,” in which there is an explicit representation of the reflexive character of

IDENTIFICATION AND WHOLEHEARTEDNESS

deciding. Now what are we to make of the rather protean metaphor this phrase invokes? Is making up one's mind like "making up a story," or is it like "making up a bed"? Is it like "making up one's face," or is it rather like "making up a list of things to do"? Or is it, perhaps, more like "making up after a quarrel"? What is the difference, in these various instances, between what is made up and what is not? And which of these differences corresponds most closely to the difference between a mind that is made up and one that is undecided?

The use of cosmetics pertains to a contrast between what a person looks like naturally and how the person may contrive to appear. A similar contrast is implicit in the idea of making up a story, which resembles making up a face in that the outcome is in both cases something artificial or fictitious; it does not simply exhibit the way things really are. One difference between using makeup and making up a story is, of course, that there is a face before it is made up – something to which being made up happens. This has no ready analogue in the case of a story, which is not transformed by being made up, but which comes into existence only as it is contrived. In this respect making up a face more closely resembles making up a bed. As for making up a list, it plainly has nothing to do with the fictitious or the contrived; it is more a matter of establishing certain relationships among the items listed, or of recording relationships among them that already exist.

What appears to be fundamentally common to all occurrences of the notion of making something up is not the contrast between fiction and reality or between the natural and the artificial, but the theme of creating an orderly arrangement. It seems to me that in this light the closest analogue to a situation in which someone makes up his mind is, rather surprisingly perhaps, a situation in which two people make up their differences. People who do that after a quarrel pass from a condition of conflict and hostility to a more harmonious and well-ordered relationship. Of course, people do not always make up when their quarrel ends; sometimes their hostility continues even after the conflict that was its original cause has been resolved. Moreover, people who have been quarreling may restore harmony between themselves even though their disagreement continues. Making up concerns healing a relationship disrupted by conflict, and it has nothing directly or necessarily to do with whether or not the conflict has ended.

Construed on this analogy, the making of a decision appears to differ from the self-reparative activities of the body, which in some other ways it resembles. When the body heals itself, it *eliminates* conflicts in which one physical process (say, infection) interferes with others and under-

THE IMPORTANCE OF WHAT WE CARE ABOUT

mines the homeostasis, or equilibrium, in which health consists. A person who makes up his mind also seeks thereby to overcome or to supersede a condition of inner division and to make himself into an integrated whole. But he may accomplish this without actually eliminating the desires that conflict with those on which he has decided, as long as he dissociates himself from them.

A person may fail to integrate himself when he makes up his mind, of course, since the conflict or hesitancy with which he is contending may continue despite his decision. All a decision does is to create an intention; it does not guarantee that the intention will be carried out. This is not simply because the person can always change his mind. Apart from inconstancy of that sort, it may be that energies tending toward action inconsistent with the intention remain untamed and undispersed, however decisively the person believes his mind has been made up. The conflict the decision was supposed to supersede may continue despite the person's conviction that he has resolved it. In that case the decision, no matter how apparently conscientious and sincere, is not wholehearted: Whether the person is aware of it or not, he has other intentions, intentions incompatible with the one the decision established and to which he is also committed. This may become evident when the chips are down and the person acts in a way ostensibly precluded by the intention on which he thought he had settled.

VII

But why are we interested in making up our minds at all? It might seem that the point of deciding is to provide for the performance of an action that would otherwise not be performed. Suppose I make up my mind to show anger more openly the next time I am gratuitously insulted by an arrogant functionary. This might be thought of as establishing a connection, which did not previously exist, between insulting behavior of a certain kind and the sort of response on which I have now decided – a connection such that the response will ensue if the provocation occurs. In fact, however, people often decide to do things which – whether they realize it or not – they would do in any case. The connection between the provocation and the response, which the decision appears to establish, may already exist: I would have shown my anger openly even if I had not previously formed the intention to do so. The point of making up one's mind is not, accordingly, to ensure a certain action.

Nor is it to ensure that one will act well. That is the function of deliberation, which is designed to increase the likelihood that decisions will be good ones. Hobbes suggests that the word "deliberation" con-

IDENTIFICATION AND WHOLEHEARTEDNESS

notes an activity in which freedom is lost.¹⁴ It is, after all, *de-liberation*. This may seem paradoxical, since we customarily regard deliberation as paradigmatically connected to the exercise of autonomy. The difficulty disappears when we recognize that the liberty with which deliberation interferes is not that of the autonomous agent but that of someone who blindly follows impulse – in other words, of the wanton. A person who is deliberating about what to do is seeking an alternative to “doing what comes naturally.” His aim is to replace the liberty of anarchic impulsive behavior with the autonomy of being under his own control.

One thing a deliberate decision accomplishes, when it creates an intention, is to establish a constraint by which other preferences and decisions are to be guided. A person who decides what to believe provides himself with a criterion for other beliefs; namely, they must be coherent with the belief on which he has decided. And a person who makes a decision concerning what to do similarly adopts a rule for coordinating his activities to facilitate his eventual implementation of the decision he has made. It might be said, then, that a function of decision is to integrate the person both dynamically and statically. Dynamically insofar as it provides – in the way I have just mentioned – for coherence and unity of purpose over time; statically insofar as it establishes – in the way discussed earlier – a reflexive or hierarchical structure by which the person’s identity may be in part constituted.

In both respects, the intent is at least partly to resolve conflict or to avoid it. This is not achieved by eliminating one or more of the conflicting elements so that those remaining are harmonious, but by endorsing or identifying with certain elements which are then authoritative for the self. Of course, this authority may be resisted and even defeated by outlaw forces – desires or motives by which the person does not want to be effectively moved, but which are too strong and insistent to be constrained. It may also turn out that there is conflict within the authority itself – that the person has identified himself inconsistently. This is the issue of *wholeheartedness*.

Wholeheartedness, as I am using the term, does not consist in a feeling of enthusiasm, or of certainty, concerning a commitment. Nor is it likely to be readily apparent whether a decision which a person intends to be wholehearted is actually so. We do not know our hearts well enough to be confident whether our intention that nothing should interfere with a decision we make is one we ourselves will want carried out when – perhaps recognizing that the point of no return has been reached – we

14 *Leviathan*, Part I, Chapter 6: “And it is called *deliberation* because it is a putting an end to the *liberty* we had of doing, or omitting, according to our own appetite, or aversion.”

THE IMPORTANCE OF WHAT WE CARE ABOUT

come to understand more completely what carrying it out would require us to do or to sacrifice doing.

In making up his mind a person establishes preferences concerning the resolution of conflicts among his desires or beliefs. Someone who makes a decision thereby performs an action, but the performance is not of a simple act that merely implements a first-order desire. It essentially involves reflexivity, including desires and volitions of a higher order. Thus, creatures who are incapable of this volitional reflexivity necessarily lack the capacity to make up their minds. They may desire and think and act, but they cannot decide. Insofar as we construe the making of decisions as the characteristic function of the faculty of volition, we must regard such creatures as lacking this faculty.

In "Freedom of the Will and the Concept of a Person" (Chapter 2 of this volume) I asserted that being wanton does not preclude deliberation. My thought then was that although a creature might be wanton with respect to goals, he might nonetheless engage in calculation or reasoning about technical questions concerning how to get what he wantonly desires. But reasoning involves making decisions concerning what to think, which appear no less incompatible with thoroughgoing wantonness than deciding what one wants to do. Making a decision does seem different from figuring out how to implement it, but it is unclear that the latter activity can be accomplished without making up one's mind in ways structurally quite similar to those entailed in the former.

We are accustomed to thinking of our species as distinguished particularly by virtue of the faculty of reason. We tend to suppose that volition or will is a more primitive or cruder faculty, which we share with creatures of lesser psychic complexity. But this seems dubious not only because of the reflexivity that volition itself requires but also to the extent that reasoning requires making up one's mind. For to that extent the deliberate use of reason necessarily has a hierarchical structure, requiring higher-order elements that are unavailable to a genuine wanton. In this respect, then, reason depends on will.