

Natural Obligation

1. Introduction

This study concerns the foundations of ethics and particularly what it means to be ethically obligated. I will argue that ethical obligation is objective (is a factual, extracognitionally existing state of affairs), unconditional (is made nonhypothetically necessary by the natures of things), and knowable, (is ascertainable by reason from evidence). That ethical obligation has these characteristics can be shown on the basis of the following propositions:

- (1) Humans are equal with respect to possession of a common nature that underlies our individual differences.
- (2) Human reason is capable of knowing the natures of things to some extent and at least to the extent required to know our equality with respect to this underlying nature.
- (3) Our ability to make ethical decisions* is a rational appetite, that is, a faculty of desire that orients us to goals according to our knowledge of the natures of things.

I have defended Proposition (2), reason's ability to know the natures of things, elsewhere.* I will defend Propositions (1) and (2) here. Defending Proposition (1), our possession of a common nature, will not be as difficult as it might appear. In the present context, a common human nature is at issue only to the extent that it has ethical significance. That significance will not commit us to as much as belief in a common nature may commit us in other contexts.

Proposition (3), a faculty of desire oriented to goals according to reason's knowledge of the natures of things, will be the crucial one for this study. For many, the phrase "rational appetite" may have a Kantian ring, but a concept of rational appetite (or the will) that is almost diametrically opposed to Kant's goes back at least to the high middle ages. That concept of rational appetite overcomes both the fact/value and is/ought dilemmas, on the one hand, and the teleological/deontological dilemma, on the other.

Briefly, the rational appetite has the intrinsic finality of valuing things according to reason's knowledge of what things are. For example, when we know that an infinitely perfect being exists, a decision that would deny this being the highest and ruling place in our system of values would be intrinsically defective. That is, the decision would be defective by the standard of a finality, a relation to goals, that is identical with the nature of the rational appetite and of the decision itself as a product of the rational appetite. It would not be defective by the standard of some goal imposed on the will from without. The decision, in other words, cannot avoid being defective by the standard of its own nature.

Such a defect in the will's act is what constitutes moral evil. Moral goodness, on the other hand, is constituted by the fulfillment of the finality inscribed in an act of the rational appetite. To be morally obligated to make a certain decision means that the opposite decision cannot avoid being defective by the standard of the will's intrinsic finality. I will argue that

*Throughout this essay, I use the phrase 'ethical decision' to refer, not to a judgment that a choice is ethically good or bad, but to a choice that is to be so judged. For example, an ethical decision is a choice to cheat or not cheat on an examination, as opposed to the judgment that such a choice is ethically right or wrong.

this analysis both conforms to our everyday understanding of morality and solves the main philosophic problems concerning the objectivity, unconditionality, and knowability of moral obligation. For example, the fact that obligation is based on finality does not render obligation hypothetical as long as the relation to the goal is intrinsic to the rational appetite and its acts. To momentarily use some traditional terminology that I will not rely on in the remainder of the discussion, what is a final cause from one point of view is an intrinsically perfecting formal cause from another point of view. And the absence of that intrinsic perfection is an intrinsic defect. The opposition between teleological and deontological ethics is a false dilemma.

Another false dilemma is the opposition between appetite and reason concerning who prescribes to whom. It is entirely true that value presupposes desire, and desires spring from appetites adapted to certain kinds of goals. But if there is a faculty of desire adapted to valuing the being of things as known by reason, that faculty's act is intrinsically defective if it does not reflect what reason knows about things. This notion of rational appetite, far from being a contrivance for escaping from dilemmas, is in conformity both with our prephilosophic understanding of ourselves and with the demands of a philosophic analysis of experience.

One more proposition will enter into this account of ethical obligation:

(4) Rational appetite gives us freedom of choice.

I mention Proposition (4) last because those who disagree with freedom of choice will find that they can go quite a long way with the analysis before parting company with it.

1.1. Method of Proceeding

To show that ethical obligation can be objective, unconditional, and knowable, it is only necessary to show that obligations with these characteristics sometimes occur. And since my conclusions are so controversial, the examples illustrating them should be as uncontroversial as possible. Accordingly, I will confine myself mainly to examples of one of the most universally admitted kinds of ethical value, justice in the sense of fairness to others in the pursuit of a goal that can be possessed by only one of those pursuing it. This limitation on the scope of the study does not imply that justice in the sense of fairness is the only ethical value. Section 5.3 and Chapter 6 show how the analysis can be extended to other cases.

Let us assume I am competing with another person on an examination that will determine which of us gets a job. Assume, further, that our reasons for wanting the job are not such as to make it more important for one of us to get it. Neither of us has a special need, for example, a sick child who will not receive medical care if we do not get the job. I claim that in such a case a really existing situation obtains that the English language describes by phrases like "my having an obligation not to cheat on the examination." That situation consist in the fact that the decision to cheat has an intrinsic defect because of the nature of decisions and the natures of the things this decision deals with. And the evidence of experience makes that situation knowable to reason.

Why is it wrong for me to cheat on the examination to ensure that I get the job? In cheating, I am not treating the other person's interests equally

to mine, since I am not giving her an equal opportunity to attain the goal we are both seeking. Why is it wrong to treat her interests as if they were not equal to mine? The assumption just made is that our needs are equal, but that is not a sufficient answer to the question. Both my child and my African violet may be in danger of death if they do not get fed, but I would not consider the interests of my African violet equal to those of my child. Neither the need for food nor the desire to get a job exist in abstraction; they exist as characteristics of concrete entities. And I do not consider the interests of the plant to be equal to those of my child because I do not give the concrete entity that the plant is a place in my system of values equal to that of my child. Likewise, to treat the interests of the other person in pursuing a job as equal to mine is to treat the other person as in some sense equal to me. The question is, then, why is it wrong not to treat her equally?

A necessary condition for answering this question is to determine in what sense the other is equal to me. We are presumably not equal in an indefinite number of respects. In addition to all the ways in which we are unequal, is there some way in which we are equal, a way that can make our interests equal in a morally binding sense? For most human beings, to believe that we are equal in a moral sense is to believe that there is a respect in which we are equal that is more fundamental to what we are than are the respects in which we are unequal, and to believe this is to believe in a common nature underlying our differences, a nature more fundamental to what we are than are the respects in which we differ. Later, I will argue that a belief in a common nature is not precisely what is necessary for ethical equality. Therefore, there is no need to defend the claim that most people share this belief. However, for the time being I will assume the truth of this belief for two reasons. First, in practice, our judgments about equality of interests are based on it. Second, the belief happens to be true in a sense sufficient for ethical equality, as I will argue.

In the meantime, a few words clarifying this assumption are in order. The hypothesis of a common nature does not commit us to as much as one might think. In fact, the evidence for a common nature is basically the same as the evidence for other minds. Nature is a causal concept; human nature is a set of causal dispositions underlying our behavior. To believe in a common nature is to believe that the similarities in our behavior are accounted for by similarities in the dispositions that enable us to behave as we do. The belief that our behavior is similar does not require, for example, that humans have a common language or culture; it only requires that humans have a capacity for language (surpassing that of animals) and a capacity for culture. The question of nature concerns the underlying causes of the capacities for such behavior, as well as the capacity for degrees of knowledge superior to that of animals, the capacity to conceive of nonphysical modes of existence, the capacity to conceive of an afterlife, and so on. Why should we believe the roots of such behavior are similar from human to human when it is entirely possible for similar effects to be produced by dissimilar causes?

The mere possibility of dissimilar causes does not make it reasonable postulate them, unless multiplying causes can account for differences in effects that cannot otherwise be accounted for. The differences in human behavior are manifold. But rather than arguing against common underlying causes, differences in human behavior argue for them. Differences in languages presuppose that humans are alike in having linguistic ability

greater than that of animals; differences in culture presuppose that humans are alike in having psychological capacities necessary for developing culture; and so on. The differences in such abilities are differences regarding language or culture because of the similarities in the abilities, and the similarities in the abilities call for explanation by similarities in the underlying causes of the abilities. A similar set of underlying causal dispositions is what is meant by a common human nature.

And another causal consideration makes postulating different natures unreasonable. Effects have whatever their causes put into them. The causes of human beings are their parents. Human parents produce children by means of reproductive faculties that are similar from one set of parents to another. And although dissimilar causes can have similar effects, similar causes, as such, do not produce dissimilar effects. Dissimilarities in effects do have to be accounted for by dissimilarities in their causes, and the dissimilarities between human reproductive faculties are manifold. But these dissimilarities also presuppose basic similarities without which reproduction could not take place. The dissimilarities are associated with reproduction only because of the similarities. Two people can carry different genes only if both carry genes; one human ovum differs from another but both are human ova. The reproductive faculties of other species share similarities with human reproductive faculties. But specifically human behavior has its ultimate source in causal dispositions given us by the similar reproductive faculties of human parents and not given to the offspring of other species.

With respect to other human beings, then, the only reasonable belief is that the behavior we discover in them by external observation is accounted for by their having a nature similar to that we discover in ourselves through reflective self-awareness. What moral significance does the knowledge of our possession of a common human nature have?

We can gain some insight into this question by comparing a conscious decision that treats unequally two beings equal with respect to an underlying nature with another kind of conscious event, the belief that the two things do not share a common nature. By hypothesis, such a belief is defective, incorrect, lacking in the kind of achievement appropriate to a belief. Section 1.2 looks at what makes such a belief defective to help us see why the corresponding ethical decision is defective; for both are defective as conscious states relating us to things existing independently of our conscious states. Examining belief will show that falsehood is an intrinsic, nonhypothetical, defect for beliefs.

Before turning to the direct comparison between belief and acts of the rational appetite, I will compare belief to appetites in general, with respect to having intrinsic defects, in Chapter 2. That discussion will clear up some a priori difficulties with the notion of an objective and unconditional ethics. Those difficulties include the idea that appetite and desire are necessarily egocentric, and the idea that there is no standard by which to deem a desire for an end defective except some other desire for an end. Chapter 3 takes up the direct comparison between belief and a decision on the part of the rational appetite to treat equals unequally. There, the idea of a common nature and the sense in which it is pertinent to ethics will be refined. Ultimately, it is not our equality with respect to being humans but our equality as pursuers of goals that is pertinent to obligation, and something could be equal to us as a pursuer of goals without being human.

In Chapter 4, I will argue that the concept of rational appetite elucidated by the comparison with belief is the operative concept in our everyday ethical judgments and is sufficient to resolve the main philosophic problems concerning the foundations of ethics. In addition to the already mentioned fact/value and teleology/deontology problems, there are the problems of the knowability of obligation, of "Why be moral?" and of why immoral actions deserve punishment.

All of those questions will be dealt with before the question of freedom of choice comes up in Chapter 5. The concept of rational appetite, in addition to solving other problems in the foundations of ethics, solves the problem of free choice. And the fact that we have free choice explains the ethical concept of a person being an end-in-itself, that is, of our obligation to treat a person as an end, not as a means.

In Section 4.4.1, I begin to extend the analysis of obligation to cases beyond that of fairness in competition. And in the final chapter, Chapter 6, I extend the analysis to cases that appear even more remote from fairness: artificial contraception, drunkenness, and suicide. Since this study concerns foundations, the purpose is not to cover all cases of ethical decision but to cover cases diverse enough to make it reasonable to expect the analysis to apply to other cases as well. The study will have succeeded if it makes that expectation sufficiently reasonable to motivate the development of a complete ethic based on the foundations examined here.

Finally, since fairness in competition is the main example for the study, there is a danger that the equal treatment of equals will appear to be the central issue in ethical obligation. It is not, nor is the kind of equality, if any, holding between human beings the crux of the problem. The central issue is the intrinsic finality of the will as a rational appetite, an appetite whose nature is to value things according to reason's knowledge of what they are. When this notion of rational appetite was introduced at the beginning, the example illustrating it was not fairness but the obligation to give the boundlessly perfect being the ruling place in our system of values, that is, to make Him the value to which all others are subordinated. There is no question of equality between ourselves and God. Yet for a person who knows that God exists, a decision that would deny Him the ruling place in our values would be defective as the act of a faculty oriented to valuing the intrinsic perfections of things according to reason's knowledge of what things are. On the other hand, if we give someone equal in nature to us an unequal place in our system of values, we cannot be treating her according to what she is, and our decision is defective for that reason.

At this point, the idea of valuing things according to what they are has to be unclear, to say they least. The purpose of the study is to make that idea clear. To accomplish that purpose, however, it is better not to start with an example like the obligation to love God, even though that example does not risk making equality appear to be the essence of ethical value. Not only is the existence of God -- tragically -- controversial, but one can recognize that there is something wrong with cheating in competition even if one does not know that God exists. In other words, the recognition of the objectivity, unconditionality, and knowability of ethical obligation does not require knowledge of God's existence. Therefore, the explanation of the nature of obligation should not appear to make God's existence an assumption.

1.2. Why a False Belief Is Defective

The decision to treat another human unequally is one thing; the belief that she is unequal in nature to us is another. But on our hypothesis, that belief is false and hence defective. Understanding why a false belief is defective will aid in understanding the kind of defect in decisions that we are obligated to avoid.

The defectiveness of a false belief consists in its failure to achieve a certain goal, truth about what exists. But why should the absence of that goal make a belief defective; aren't there many other goals by which to judge mental states and events? For example, the falsehood that Mary and Tom do not share a common human nature could be just what we need in a science fiction story, as as part of an enjoyable daydream or joke, or as a means of making someone angry.

It is the intrinsic nature of belief that makes a false belief defective and a true belief good. When we say that a false belief is defective, we are not first discovering a species of mental event, giving it the name "belief", and only then analyzing the nature of the event to see if it has a goal in terms of which we can measure it as good or defective. Instead, we first recognize the existence of mental events with characteristic of claiming to achieve a certain goal, truth about what exists; we then name events with this intrinsic goal, as opposed to other mental events which are characterized by different goals, "belief." To say that having the goal of truth is intrinsic to belief is to say that a belief, by its very existence, asks for, calls for, evaluation in terms of this goal. Whether or not it is necessary for an act with such a goal to exist, belief happens to be such an act.

What is the exact nature of this goal? For the purposes of our comparison with ethical decision, we do not have to give a complete philosophical analysis of truth. But one feature of what goes on when we believe something is true of what exists has to be pointed out. Belief claims to relate us to things as they exist independently of our acts of belief. The goal in terms of which beliefs ask to be measured is that of informing us what things are in themselves; and ethical decisions also have the goal of relating us to things as they really exist.

2. Intrinsic Finalities and Defects

To make clear the comparison of defective beliefs to defective acts of the rational appetite, this chapter will first compare belief to appetite in general. The relevant points of comparison are their possession of intrinsic finalities, on the one and, and their relation to real -- extracognitional and extra-appetitive -- existence, on the other.

The specific comparison of belief with ethical decision will be made in Chapter 3. That comparison will not logically depend on the general analysis of appetite. In theory, one could go immediately to the comparison of belief with ethical decisions. Historically, however, misconceptions concerning appetite and desires in general have been among the main obstacles to recognizing those characteristics of the rational appetite that constitute the objectivity, unconditionality, and knowability of obligation. Certain common errors have acquired the appearance of necessary truth, and the belief in their necessary truth makes it difficult to see the rational appetite for what it is.

2.1. Beliefs and Desires

There is nothing mysterious about a conscious state having an intrinsic finality. An inanimate object may have no intrinsic relation to the goal for which we use it. For instance, we can use a hammer for pounding nails or pulling them, as a paper weight or as a weapon. The hammer's relation to the goal for which we use it is entirely extrinsic to what the hammer is. The hammer's relation to the goal a person is using it for is in the consciousness of the user, and the hammer is also in the user's consciousness. But unlike the hammer, the hammer's relation to the goal of its use is only in the consciousness of the user.

But what about the person's conscious relation to the goal she is using the hammer for? The person has a desire for that goal. The desire's relation to the goal is not extrinsic to the desire the way the hammer's relation to the goal is extrinsic to the hammer. In fact, that is what a desire is, a relation to a goal. And if a desire's relation to a goal were extrinsic to it, the desire would have to get its relation to the goal from a source where the relation to the goal was intrinsic; otherwise, we would be in an infinite regress. The other source, then, would be the true desire for the goal. For that is what we mean by a "desire," namely, way way of being related to things such that things stand, in this relationship, as "goals."

Desires, however, are not the only conscious states that involve intrinsic relations to goals. Belief involves an intrinsic relation to a goal because belief is an evaluation, an estimation, of something as having achieved a certain goal. It is an evaluation of a statement as having achieved the goal of truth.

The achievement of that goal depends on conditions extrinsic to both the act of belief and the statement believed. Because of the dependence on extrinsic conditions, the statement can fail of that goal, and the belief's estimation of whether the statement achieves the goal can be defective. But the fact that the success of the belief's relation to the goal depends on conditions extrinsic to the belief in no way lessens the fact that the belief, as an evaluation, is a conscious state with an intrinsic relation to a goal whose achievement will make the belief successful or unsuccessful on the belief's own terms. For conscious states like beliefs and desires to have intrinsic relations to goals requires no more than that they be relations to goals. And that requires no metaphysical magic or sleight of hand. Why is the defect in a belief or desire intrinsic if it depends on conditions extrinsic to the belief or desire? Because a belief or desire is a relation to something other than itself. That is what conscious states in general are.

Like beliefs, desires are evaluations; they give things places in the desiring entity's system of values. An extracognitionally existing thing becomes describable as an object of knowledge because the thing terminates a relation of knowledge belonging not to the thing known but to the knowing subject. Likewise, something is a describable as a value because it terminates a relation of desire, or at least potentially terminates a desire some appetite is oriented to producing. A thing becomes a value, therefore, by the relation to it of a desire or of the appetite oriented to producing such a desire. Another way to put it. A thing is a value either as something's end or as a means to something's end. In the sphere of conscious

beings, a means is a cognized object desired because of its known relation to another cognized object, while an end is a cognized object not desired because of its relation to some further object. Both ends and means, however, are values because they terminate a relation of desire. Therefore, desires are evaluations; they make things values as ends or as means to ends.

Let me put this important point one more way. Desires are evaluations because they make things more or less values for us, according to the kind of desire we have for each thing. A desire is an estimation of that which is desired, an estimation of it as being the kind of thing an appetite is an appetite for. When a dog is offered two pieces of meat and desires one more than the other, the dog's desire is an evaluation of the preferred meat as offering the dog more of the kind of thing one of its appetites is oriented to. Assume the appetite is oriented to a certain kind of gustatory experience. The preference for one of the pieces of meat is an evaluation of that piece as a means to more of that kind of experience.

The dog's desire for the meat is an example of evaluating one thing as a means to another thing, an end. But desires also evaluate ends. What is it for a state of affairs to be an end to which an appetite is oriented? It is for the state of affairs to be desired, if it does not yet exist, and for the existence of the state of affairs to cause the cessation of the desire and the satisfaction of the appetite (*at least partially). An appetite can desire the existence of one thing as a result of a desire for the existence of another thing. But the existence of that which we call an "end" or "goal" is not desired in view of the satisfaction of some other desire, and so the existence of the end causes the appetite's satisfaction. To desire a state of affairs as an end, therefore, is to evaluate the state of affairs as being the kind of thing an appetite is adapted to.

Confronted by one piece of meat, the dog may have an image of one kind of gustatory pleasure. The image can provoke a desire in the dog for that pleasure. If so, the desire is an estimation of the pleasure as the kind of thing to which the dog's appetite is adapted. Confronted by another piece of meat, the dog can have an image of another kind of gustatory experience. The second image can provoke in the dog a greater desire for the second piece of meat than for the first. If so, the desire is evaluating the pleasure suggested by the second piece of meat as more of the kind of thing to which the appetite is adapted than is the first experience. But in both cases, the gustatory pleasure is an end that is not desired for the sake of anything else. Therefore, desires are evaluations of ends as well as of means.

Section 5.1.2 will explain that acts of the will involve evaluations of ends in a way that the acts of other appetites do not. Hence, if one does not agree with calling desires for ends evaluations, the analysis of the rational appetite will not be affected. But any desire for an end is an evaluation of the end in the sense of an esteeming of the end, that is, an estimating of something's worth as an end for the appetite. To desire something as an end is to value it, to appreciate it; and to desire one end more than another is to esteem it, to value it, to appreciate it more than the other.

Can a desire be defective as a belief is? Clearly, the estimation of something as being a means that will bring about an end can be defective, and it can be defective the way an evaluation of a statement as achieving the goal of truth can be defective. In each case, the success of the evaluation depends on conditions extrinsic to the act of evaluation and to that which is

evaluated. The success of an evaluation of something as a means to an end depends on whether the end actually comes about. The success of an evaluation of a statement as true depends on the statement's relation to the way the world exists independently of the existence of the statement.

But how could a desire for the end as such be defective? To evaluate something as defective, we must evaluate it in relation to an end. Therefore, it would seem that we have nothing by which to evaluate a desire for an end except by a other desire for some other end. But if one desire is defective by reference to a standard set by another desire, the first desire is not defective as a belief is. That is, the defective desire is not intrinsically defective; it is not defective with reference to the end that the desire is itself a relation to, as a false belief is defective with reference to an end that the belief is a relation to. The desire is defective only with respect to the end of some other desire.

That we can judge a desire for an end to be defective only on the basis of another desire for an end is one of the errors about desires that make it difficult to see ethical obligation for what it is. The possibility of the rational appetite's evaluation of ends being defective can be shown independently of making the general argument for intrinsic defects in desires for ends. I will attempt to do that in Chapter 5. But is also important to know that rational appetite is not unique in this respect. Understanding the general case will remove an obstacle to understanding the kind of defect that makes a decision unethical and its opposite obligatory.

2.2. Defective Desires for Ends

Contrary to appearances, the desire for an end can be defective otherwise than the standard of some other desire. For example, the gustatory experience that a desire evaluates to be the kind of thing its appetite is oriented to may not satisfy its appetite after all. If not, the desire for the experience was a defective evaluation of something as an end. How can this be? Like belief, desire has an intrinsic relation, in fact, is a relation, to a goal. But the goal to which it is intrinsically related is something other than the desire itself; something extrinsic to it. And just as the success or defectiveness of a belief depends on conditions extrinsic to the belief, so does the success or defectiveness of a desire for an end.

A belief asserts something other than itself to be a certain kind of thing; if the thing is other than the belief asserts it to be, the belief is defective. A desire for something as an end evaluates a thing to be of a certain kind; it evaluates it to be the kind of thing to which the appetite causing the desire is an orientation, the kind of thing to which the appetite is adapted by being what it is. If the thing so evaluated is not that kind of thing, the desire is defective. For example, animals, including humans, can misevaluate a pleasurable experience presented by a memory or an image to be the kind of experience that will satisfy a sensory appetite.* Such a misevaluation can result from disease, tiredness, sensory illusions, drugs, excessive heat or cold, and so on.

By what standard are we judging such a desire for an end defective, if not by some other desire for an end? I have said a desire is defective if it evaluates something to be other than what it is, that is, if it evaluates something to be a thing of a certain kind and the thing is not of that kind.

But why choose agreement between what a thing is and what it is evaluated to be as the standard? Because a desire springs from a preexisting orientation on the part of an appetite whose act a desire is; and every appetite is by nature oriented to the existence of something such that the appetite produces a desire for the thing, if the thing does not exist, and the appetite experiences satisfaction in the existence of the thing when that existence comes about.

In postulating appetites, I am not postulating occult entities. I am simply recognizing that desires and pleasurable states resulting from their satisfaction are acts of preexisting causes. A cause produces an act because the nature of the cause, what the cause is, orients it to this act and not some other. If not, the nature of the alleged cause would no more orient it to this act than to that. Therefore, what the alleged cause is would be no more a cause for this act than for some other incompatible act; so, when this act occurs, it would no more be caused by what the agent is than is the act that does not occur.

To use definite descriptions like "the rational appetite" and "the will" in speaking of appetites, we do not have to be able to individuate appetites and relate individual appetites to individual desires or sets of desires. That is, we do not have to relate desires to discriminable parts of our makeup. We only have to know that each occurrence of a desire springs from some preexisting orientation. It may be, for instance, that my orientation to produce a certain desire consists of a set of characteristics. If so, convenience would still allow us to speak of that orientation as "an appetite."* In fact, I believe there is a case for identifying the will with an individual faculty, but my argument will not depend on making that case.

A desire occurs, therefore, because a preexisting orientation for the desire exists. We call such a preexisting orientation an appetite. But the preexisting orientation is not just an orientation for the existence of the desire. It is an orientation to the existence of the particular thing that is desired as an end. An orientation to the production of a desire is an orientation to by the existence of an end other than the desire itself. A desire exists only because the state of affairs for which the appetite is an orientation does not yet exist. Hence the appetite's orientation to an end can serve as a standard for judging a desire defective.

If our will is free, however, its desires can be defective even if those of other appetites could not be. Achieving the will's natural finality would require that it freely and, hence, contingently desire things in ways that fulfill its finality. (See Section 5.1.) That free desires for ends can be defective does not depend on the analysis just given. But for those who do not admit free choice, defective desires for ends are still possible.

2.3. The "I" of the Beholder

You may object that the end we are really seeking is the pleasurable state of consciousness that results from some experience, for example, the dog's gustatory experience. Therefore, the gustatory experience is defectively evaluated as a means to an end, not defectively evaluated as an end. The desire for the pleasure itself could be called defective only by reference to the end of some other desire, and that other desire would be no more than a desire for another kind of pleasurable experience. Therefore, we cannot speak of a desire for an end as being defective.

The reply to this objection will do away with a number of misconceptions about the relation of appetites and desires to ends. Even if these misconceptions were true of other appetites, they would not be true of the rational appetite. Hence, establishing the foundations of ethics does not logically depend on dispelling them. But these are the kind of misconception that appear to exclude the possibility of an objective ethics before the examination of the rational appetite has even begun.

Supposedly, value is essentially egocentric. A thing becomes a value by being related to a desire. And why do we desire it? Because of the thing's relation to an appetite we possess independently of the thing. Value is in the ego of the beholder; it is not a characteristic in things. Associated with the egocentric analysis of value is the view that, since we are seeking happiness in every action, the value of other things for us, including other persons, can be no more than that of being means to our happiness.

To begin with the objection that desires for ends cannot be defective. As a matter of fact, we can desire a particular pleasure; that very pleasure can come about, and we can still find ourselves with an unsatisfied appetite. The end of the desire has been fulfilled, and yet the end of the appetite has not. Does it follow that the end of the desire is only a means to the end of the appetite? No. What follows is that the appetite's act was a defective evaluation of a particular state of affairs to be the appetite's end. It is possible to distinguish the end to which an appetite is orientated by its nature from the end aimed at by a desire produced by the appetite. But that distinction will not help us avoid calling a defective desire a defective desire for an end. In fact, that distinction is part of the reason the desire for an end can be defective.

An appetite's orientation to a particular state of affairs as its end is preconscious, since this orientation is the cause of something that is conscious, the desire. The desire itself is a response to an object of cognition, for the desire is a response on the part of the appetite to an object, for example, a pleasurable experience, presented by cognition, for example, by memory or imagination. (*We have desires that are not responses to the cognition of an object; often it is hunger that makes us think of food, rather than the thought of food that makes us hungry. Here, I am only discussing appetites that respond to cognized objects. We can call them cognitive or conscious appetites, as long as it is not forgotten that the appetite's orientation to its end is preconscious in the first instance.) We can desire an object of cognition, an ice cream cone, for instance, as a means to a pleasurable experience. But if so, we are desiring the ice cream cone for the sake of some other cognized object, a pleasurable taste that we remember or imagine. If we are not desiring the other object of cognition as a means to a further cognized object, we are desiring it as an end. When a desire for cognized object A is not provoked by A's contribution to the attainment of some other cognized object but is provoked by the recognition that A is what it is, the desire for object A is the desire for it as an end, not as a means.

The objection claims that an appetite desires everything other than its own satisfaction only as a means to its satisfaction. But if so, what is the object of cognition that provokes the appetite's response? What is the thing the appetite is so oriented to that the cognition of it causes the appetite to desire it as an end and its existence causes the satisfaction of the appetite? That thing can be nothing other than the satisfaction of the appetite, the fulfillment of the appetite's preconscious orientation to an

end. But then there is no end whose existence will cause the satisfaction of the appetite; for a nothing is the cause of itself. The object of cognition whose real existence will presumably fulfill the appetite's preconscious orientation and satisfy the appetite would be the fulfillment of the appetite's orientation or would be the appetite's state of satisfaction in that fulfillment. That is, the cognition the provokes desire would be the cognition of the satisfaction of the appetite. But what is it that will satisfy the appetite? The satisfaction of the appetite. And what is the appetite an appetite for? For something that will satisfy it. But what is the thing that will satisfy it? Its own satisfaction.

If an appetite's own satisfaction were the object of cognition that is desired as an end and whose existence will satisfy the appetite, there would be nothing that satisfies the appetite. Why does the appetite respond to object of cognition A and not to B? Because the appetite is so oriented to what A is that the cognition of A provokes the appetite's response, and the existence of A satisfies the appetite. But unless there were some A to respond to other than the appetite's state of satisfaction, there would be no reason for the existence of A to satisfy the appetite rather than the existence of B. In short, it cannot be the case that an appetite must evaluate everything other than its own satisfaction only as means to its satisfaction. We get nowhere if we analyze a desired object that is not desired in view of another desired object not as an end but as a means to the satisfaction of the appetite.

An end is a state of affairs knowledge presents to an appetite and to which an appetite responds by causing us to desire that the state of affairs exist. What we desire to exist is not that our appetite for the existence of something be fulfilled. It is the existence of a state of affairs consciously desired as an end that will satisfy the desire and -- assuming the desire is not defective -- the appetite. It follows that there can be a defective desire for an end, if the end desired is not, at least in some respect, the kind of state of affairs to which the appetite producing the desire is oriented.

More generally, the fact that a thing is valued only insofar as it terminates a relation of appetition or desire proves no more in ethics than the fact that a thing is known only insofar as it is known proves in epistemology. That a thing is known only insofar as it is known has been used to justify idealism, or at least subjectivism, in knowledge. Allegedly, we cannot know things as they are outside of knowledge because we know them only by bringing them within knowledge. From the fact that we know something, however, it cannot follow that it is known under the aspect of being known. The aspect under which it is first known must be something more than and something causally prior to the fact that it is known; something must already be known in order for it to be known as known.

Similarly, a thing becomes a value by terminating a relation of appetition or desire. But it cannot follow that a thing is desired only because it has the characteristic of terminating a relation of appetition or desire. The characteristic because of which we desire something is not and cannot be the fact that it is desired. A thing has the characteristic of being desired only if it is desired; so the thing would have to be desired already in order to become that which is desired. The thing must terminate the relation of desire because it possesses some other characteristic. Nor can we avoid the dilemma by saying that the characteristic by which the thing provokes desire is the characteristic of satisfying an appetite, of being that

which an appetite is oriented to. The desire for A is provoked because an appetite is oriented to A as its end. But what is it for an appetite to be so oriented? It is for the appetite to be oriented to A because of some or all of the characteristics making A what it is. Therefore, a thing can have the characteristic of being that to which an appetite is oriented only if the thing already possesses other characteristics by reason of which an appetite is oriented to it.

In fact, the statement made at the beginning of this section, that things become values by being related to appetites or desires, is not strictly true. We do not make things values by relating them to appetites and desires. Rather, appetites and desires relate us to things, and the relation of an appetite or desire to an actual or potential thing makes the thing a value for us. An appetite's relation to a thing is something in us, not in the thing. That is the element of truth misleadingly put by the statement that value is not a characteristic in things. But the conclusion to be drawn is the opposite of the egocentric analysis of value. Values are centrifugal, not centripetal. By being relations to things, appetites and desires relate to characteristics in things, characteristics other than that of things being related to appetites and desires.

If "being a value" means being that to which an appetite is oriented, being a value is not a characteristic of things in their own existence. Being-that-to-which an appetite is oriented, like being-known, is a logical construct, specifically, a relation of reason, based on a characteristic, the appetite, existing in an entity other than the thing itself. But "being that to which an appetite is oriented" is predicated of the thing, not the appetite. And the very fact that it predicates a logical construct implies that there can be no real distinction between what is so described and what can also be described as "a thing that is what it is independently of our appetites." If "being desired" adds only a relation of reason to "what something is," what is desired is identical with what the thing is, that is, with what some or all of its characteristics are. Therefore, there is no real distinction between the value of a thing and what its desired characteristics are (in other words, goodness is a transcendental property of being).

As argued earlier, any desire evaluates the thing it makes an end to be a certain kind of thing, namely, the kind of thing to which the appetite producing the desire is adapted. For an appetite can either desire the existence of a state of affairs that does not yet exist or experience satisfaction in the state of affairs when it does exist. Any appetite or desire is an appetite or desire for some mode of existence. And a desire is defective if it evaluates something to be the kind of existent to which an appetite is adapted when the thing is not that kind of existent. This existential character of appetite implies, again, that the value of a state of affairs for an appetite is identical with what that state of affairs is.

Chapter 3 will show that the rational appetite would have this existential character even if other appetites did not have it. In fact, however, the rational appetite shares this characteristic with all appetites.

Before turning to the rational appetite there are some important consequences of this analysis of value to be pointed out. Since we are seeking happiness in every action, must the value of other persons amount to their being means to our happiness. Or, since in every action we are aiming at an end, must the value I place on another person be her relation to one or more of the ends I am seeking? Must the value of another be that of a means to my ends and never be any thing higher than that? The affirmative answer to

these questions embodies a fallacy similar to the fallacy of deriving idealism from the fact that a thing is known only insofar as it is known.

There is a way in which happiness is our end, but there is also an important way in which happiness is not our end. Happiness is not our end in the sense of being the object our knowledge proposes to us and to which our faculty of desire responds. In this latter sense, an end is an object of knowledge that we value, for example, wealth, social justice, or reliable personal relationships. When that which we desire in this sense is achieved, there is a conscious state of satisfaction of desire. The conscious state of satisfaction is a state of partial happiness. If all our desires could be satisfied completely, we would have a state of complete happiness. But as just argued, the satisfaction of an appetite cannot be the cognized object that provokes desire on the part of the appetite. To say we are pursuing a course of action only insofar as it brings happiness is like saying a thing is known only insofar as it is known. It does not and cannot follow that the object of knowledge which provokes our desire, the end we are thinking of as we pursue action and whose attainment will bring happiness, is happiness itself. An end whose accomplishment brings happiness is not valued because it possesses some relation to happiness. Rather, it brings happiness because we possess the kind of relation to it that makes it an end for us. If my end is the happiness of another person, that person's happiness is not valued merely as a means to my own happiness.

Just as we are always seeking happiness when we act, we are always acting because we are seeking an end. But it cannot follow that my orientation to an end is the cognized object that provokes desire for an end. Therefore, it cannot follow that other persons can be valued only for their relation to my orientation to ends, understood as itself the end that I am seeking. If I make the interests of another person the object of my desire, I am pursuing my own end, but I am not thereby reducing the other person's interests to being an means toward the fulfillment of my ends anymore than knowledge reduces the known to being known only as an object of knowledge. To be a value is to be the term of a relation of appetition or desire. But that which is valued is not valued as related to appetite or desire. Rather, appetites and desires are relative to perfections in things just as human knowledge is.

2.4. Sensory and Rational Appetites

The centrifugal and existential character of values, even though true, may not seem to buy very much in the case of sensory appetites. Our appetite for the pleasurable taste of an ice cream cone is an appetite for what that taste is as a real existent, not for some relation to the appetite the taste possesses prior to the appetite's being related to the taste. Still, the end to which the appetite for taste is related, namely, a pleasurable experience, is a state of the same entity to which the appetite belongs. The relation of the appetite to its end is not egocentric. But the relation of the entity possessing the appetite to the end of the appetite is egocentric in the sense that the end of the appetite is a state to be undergone by the appetite's possessor, as opposed to some other state that does not modify the possessor.

However, the payoff with the centrifugal and existential character of values is for the rational appetite. By the senses, we are aware of things outside of us through their actions on us. Sensory appetites, therefore, have as their ends the way we are affected by those actions, for example, the kind of taste the ice cream cone produces. Rational knowledge, on the other hand, goes beyond objects the senses are able to distinguish from one another to the

not-directly-sensible features things must possess in order to act on our senses the way they do. Sensory cognition can distinguish the blue of one litmus solution from the red of another, but the distinction between what it is to be acidic and what it is to be alkaline is not an object of sensory knowledge. We call our ability to know such distinctions "reason."

The senses are not unaware of what things are. To know things as acting on us in certain ways is to know them as able to act in these ways, and their ability to so act is constituted by what they are.* Still, the ends of sensory appetites are ways things affect us, and what external things are constitute means to those ends, since the senses know external things only through their actions on us.

Rational knowledge of what things are derives from sensory knowledge of what they are. But as distinguished from sensory knowledge, rational knowledge attains what things are independently of their actions on our sense organs. Sensory knowledge is both the source of and locus of verification for rational knowledge. But that which is known by rational knowledge may have no direct relation to the actions of things on our sense organs. Contrast, for example, seeing the color of the litmus paper to seeing the location of a pointer on a measuring device. A causal relation obtains between the acidity of litmus solutions and differences in their their perceptible colors. The location of the pointer may allow us to verify a theory, but the theory may have little or no relation to the reason light from measuring devices so acts on our eyes that we are able to see differences in pointer positions. For example, a pointer reading can indicate the difference between two theories of a subatomic particle, but those theories may call for no difference in the explanation of why light allows us to perceive the positions of pointers, whatever those positions may be. Or, if they explain light differently, they may not call for differences in the way light from a pointer affects our sense organs.

As correlative to rational knowledge, rational appetite is able to have ends other than states undergone by the entity the appetite belongs to. For example, we can have as an end the well being of our children. It is true that the satisfaction of the appetite will come not just from the well being of our children but from our knowledge of their well being, and knowledge is a state belonging to the same entity the appetite belongs to. Does it follow that our end is really the gratifying knowledge of the state of affairs, and the state of affairs itself is only a means to that end? No, unless our end were the state of affairs itself, there would be no reason why knowledge of state of affairs A, rather than state of affairs B, gratifies us. The existence of the end satisfies us only insofar as it is known, just as we desired its existence only insofar as it was known. But no more follows from that than from the truism that a thing is known only insofar as it is known. Specifically, the aspect of a state of affairs that causes our satisfaction by being known cannot be the fact that the state of affairs is known (*except in cases where knowledge is our end). Something must already be known in order for it to be known as known. Therefore, the aspect under which a thing is first known must be something more than and something causally prior to the fact that it is known. Knowledge of that prior aspect must cause our satisfaction, and so that prior aspect is what makes the state of affairs our end.

For a rational appetite, it is a false dilemma to oppose an external state of affairs to our internal knowledge of the state of affairs as the end of the appetite. Knowledge is needed to satisfy this appetite because it is

an appetite oriented to valuing things insofar as reason is aware of what those things are. But the objects of reason are what things are in their extracognitional existence; when truth is obtained, there is identity between what an extracognitional state of affairs is and what the object attained by reason is. A state of affairs becomes an end for the rational appetite because of our rational knowledge of what the state of affairs is or will be. Therefore, our appetite is satisfied by our knowledge that the desired state of affairs exists. But unless there were identity between the object of knowledge and the existent that is the end of the appetite, the appetite's satisfaction would be illusory, just as a desire that miscalculates a potential existent to be the kind of thing an appetite is oriented to would be a defective desire.

This defense of the nonegocentric character of the rational appetite, like the other arguments of this chapter, is not a logical presupposition of the remainder of my analysis. The characteristics of the will that explain obligation can be shown independently of the discussion of other appetites. But we have to clear the ground before we can erect a building or, in this case, lay the foundations.

3. The Rational Appetite

I discussed belief in order to compare the false belief that two humans do not share a common nature to a decision that treats the two unequally. The next section discusses what the identity, in true belief, between what is believed and what things are has to do with ethical decisions. Section 3.2 discusses in what sense a common nature is and is not a necessary presupposition for this comparison of rational appetite with belief.

A reminder is necessary at the beginning. The analysis focuses on the example of unequal treatment of equals. Once again, inequality as such is not the point of the comparison of decision with belief or of what makes a decision defective. The point of the comparison is the finality of the will as an appetite whose nature it is to value things according to what they are. If we give our equals a place unequal to us in our system of values, we cannot be treating them according to what they are.

3.1. Decision Compared to Belief

I can give my interests a higher place in my system of values than those of another, even though the inherent perfection of our natures are equal. If so, there is a lack of identity between the relative positions of our natures in reality and the relative positions my conscious estimations of value assign them, that is, a lack of identity between the way things terminate my relations of desire and the way their intrinsic realities relate to each other. A decision is a form of desire; it is an appetite's response to a cognized end not yet achieved. Or at least -- if you do not want to call a decision a desire -- what has so far been said about desire applies to decision as well. In particular, decisions are evaluations, since decisions make things values for us and give things relative positions among other values. And just as a conscious act of belief is defective if there is a lack of identity between what the belief asserts about the thing and what the thing is, so a conscious evaluation of the inherent reality of things is defective if there is lack of identity between the way things relate to one another in our evaluation and the relation that obtains between them in real existence. For as belief claims that things exist the way we express them in

statements, a decision treats things as if they existed the way they are evaluated; a decision deals with things as if what they are as values for us is identical with what they are in themselves; a decision evaluates things to be of certain kinds, to exist in certain ways.

For example, in deciding to cheat on an examination, I am depriving another person of an equal opportunity to pursue her goals, so I am putting my pursuit of goals ahead of hers in my system of values. But when I put my pursuit of goals ahead of hers, I cannot avoid putting myself ahead of her. That is, I cannot avoid evaluating myself as if I were higher on a scale of that which it is the nature of the rational appetite to esteem, namely, what things are. For giving my pursuit of goals a higher place is the same as giving myself a higher place as a pursuer of goals. And we are pursuers of goals, as I will argue, because of what we are. In other words, I am not just treating her pursuit of goals unequally; I am treating her unequally. When someone deprives you of an equal opportunity to pursue your goals, she is treating you unfairly. And to consciously treat another person unfairly amounts to giving the other person an unequal place in one's values.

Why must such an evaluation deal unequally with the person and not just with the desire and pursuit of goals? In depriving her of an equal opportunity to pursue her goals, my decision cannot deal with her desire for a goal as something abstracted from the person to whom the desire belongs. Desires and the pursuit of desires have existence only as features of concrete entities, and reason is aware of that fact. Therefore, an appetite adapted to evaluating things according to reason's awareness of them necessarily has the finality of dealing with another person's pursuit of her goals as a feature of the other person. Accordingly, the rational appetite cannot avoid giving concrete persons unequal places in our evaluations when it denies them the equal opportunity to pursue their goals.

Likewise, when I put my interests ahead of hers, I am not pursuing my desire as an abstract entity but as a modality of my being, for I am aware of the desire as something emanating from me and aware of my existence as the being to whom the desire belongs.* Therefore, I cannot avoid evaluating myself, as source and subject of the desire, to be higher than her. I cannot avoid putting myself -- not just my desire -- ahead of her -- not just ahead of her desires -- in my evaluations. I consciously put myself, the source and subject of desires, ahead of her, as if the content of our beings were not equal with respect to that which it is the nature of rational appetite to esteem, what things are as known by reason. I treat what I am as if it were higher on the scale of that to which the rational appetite is adapted, being.

What is the evidence for these assertions? In particular, why must ethical decisions treat things as if they existed the way they are evaluated? In discussing belief, we noted that intellectual acts can have goals other than identity with what exists, but belief happens to be an act to which a relation to this goal is intrinsic. Likewise, to judge an ethical decision defective for treating things otherwise than as they exist is to judge it by the standard of a finality, an orientation to a goal, that is intrinsic to the decision itself. The defect is not hypothetical, as if the decision was defective only by reference to a goal to which the decision itself need not be related. Why?

To begin with, the very occurrence of ethical decisions presupposes that potential values are in opposition; otherwise, we would not have to make a

choice between them. Therefore, every ethical decision is an evaluation that assigns something a relative place in our values higher than something else. Next, as we saw in Chapter 2, appetites are existential. An appetite is an orientation either to desire the existence of an end not yet attained or experience satisfaction in the existence of an end attained. Therefore, every desire evaluates its object to be something, namely, to be the kind of thing an appetite is adapted to. And a desire aims at bringing something into existence so that it will exist the way it has been imagined or conceived to exist. Hence desires deal with their objects as potentially existing the way they are desired. That desires treat things as existing in certain ways is true for sensory desires as well as for ethical decisions, but it is especially true for ethical decisions and would be true of ethical decisions even if it were not true of sensory desires.

In the case of sensory desires, what is evaluated to be a thing of a certain kind is a sensory experience. In preferring an experience presented by one image, say the experience of eating chocolate, to an experience presented by another image, the desire evaluates the taste of chocolate to be more of the kind of thing our appetite, at least at the moment, is oriented to. But our rational knowledge of what exists does not stop at our knowledge of what our sensory experiences are. We can have knowledge of what things are as they exist independently of our conscious states. And our disposition for making ethical decisions is a rational appetite. As an appetite, it orients us to goals. As rational, it is a power of responding to objects of rational knowledge and, therefore, of desiring things according to what reason informs us about them. But by reason, we are aware of what things are in themselves. Therefore, a rational appetite relates me to goals according to my knowledge of what things are in themselves; a rational appetite is a power of valuing, esteeming, appreciating, honoring the intrinsic reality of things that are presented to that appetite by reason.

If there is any doubt about the existence of the rational appetite as here described, we have only to consider that otherwise we would not be capable of desiring goals according to our rational knowledge of what things are. Yet, to pursue a goal is precisely to aim at making something consciously conceived exist as we have conceived it. And our conception of future goals is always founded on our consciousness of what things are that already exist. Furthermore, our satisfaction in an accomplished goal derives from our awareness of what exists when that goal exists.

Since the rational appetite relates me to goals according to my awareness of what things are in themselves, a decision made by the rational appetite cannot avoid consciously evaluating things to be of certain kinds, to exist in certain ways; it cannot avoid evaluating things as if their being were this or that. In other words, by its intrinsic nature as an act of a rational appetite, an ethical decision calls for, asks for, being judged in terms of identity or lack of identity between the way it treats things as values and the way things exist, between what something is as a value for us and what it is in itself. Sensory desires also call for judgment on this ground, but even if that were not true of sensory desires, it would be true of ethical decisions.

But is it true that to treat people unequally is to evaluate them as if they were otherwise than they are? People are unequal in many respects. When we evaluate them accordingly, are we not evaluating them according to what they are? For example, if you are hiring a piano player, your decision would be defective if you did not choose Vladimir Horowitz over, say, the author of

this study. The defectiveness of the choice would be determined by your goal of hearing pleasing music and by what the things being evaluated are. That is, the choice would be defective because it would incorrectly evaluate something to be more of the kind of thing desired; it would evaluate me to be someone with more ability to play the piano than Horowitz.

The incorrectness in question is strictly hypothetical. If you want pleasing music, Horowitz is your person. But there is nothing intrinsically wrong with choosing a musical clod over a Horowitz. It all depends on what you want; for instance, you might want ugly music. Let us assume, however, that you want pleasing music; you hold a competition for the job, and I win by drugging Horowitz. Now the issue is not our equality or inequality as musicians but our equal opportunity to pursue chosen goals. I am arguing that my decision to deny him equal opportunity cannot avoid being defective because, no matter what my specific goal, the rational appetite's finality is to evaluate things as if they existed the way they are evaluated. And my decision to deny him equal opportunity evaluates what we are unequally even though we are equal. Therefore the decision is defective as a false belief is, defective by the standard of a goal the decision is related to just by being what it is.

3.2. Equality and Human Nature

But in what respect are we equal in a way that would make the decision intrinsically defective as an act of a rational appetite? We are equal in the sense that we possess a common human nature. And a decision denying us equal opportunity is intrinsically defective because it cannot avoid treating us as if we were not equal in the sense of having a common human nature.

In deciding to deny Horowitz an equal opportunity to pursue his goals, I am giving myself a higher place in my evaluations. But in what specific respect do I evaluate myself as higher? In putting my interests ahead of his, I evaluate myself to be higher as a pursuer of goals. To give my pursuit of goals a higher place in my evaluations is the same as giving myself a higher place as a pursuer of goals. The reason the relative positioning does not stop at our desires is that we are aware of the desires as emanating from and belonging to Horowitz and myself. The recipients of the unequal evaluations are the concrete entities that are the agents and subjects of the conflicting interests. And to be a pursuer of goals here means to be a maker of decisions based on rational knowledge, for the pursuit in question is the pursuit of goals chosen by acts of the rational appetite. In evaluating myself to be higher as a pursuer of goals, I am evaluating myself to be higher as a producer of rational decisions.

In a moment, I will discuss what "rational knowledge" means in this context. But first, what does evaluating another person to be unequal as a maker of acts of will have to do with inequality with respect to human nature? To be aware of myself as a producer of decisions is to be aware of myself as a being whose makeup includes features sufficient to enable me to produce decisions. And to be aware that another is equal to me as a pursuer of goals is to be aware that her makeup includes features sufficient to enable her to produce evaluations based on rational knowledge of what things are. The evidence that she is equal to me in this respect is the evidence that she too can consciously aim at making something exist as she has rationally

conceived it to exist, that her conception of future goals can be based on her rational knowledge of what things are that already exist, and that her satisfaction in an accomplished goal can derive from rational awareness of what exists when that goal exists.

The features enabling me to cause decisions include proximate dispositions, for example, my state of readiness to make decisions when I am awake. They also include more remote dispositions, for example, the dispositions for making later decisions that I possess when asleep, drugged, or in a coma. But it is not the dispositions that cause decisions; it is I who cause decisions by means of whatever features of my being constitute my dispositions for making decisions. To be aware of myself as a cause is to be aware of myself as a concrete existent. Only concrete existents, not their features considered in abstraction, can be causes.

Therefore, in evaluating myself to be higher than another person as a producer of decisions, I am evaluating myself to be higher as a concrete entity whose features enable him to be the cause of decisions, and I cannot avoid evaluating myself as higher with respect to what makes me a cause of decisions. When I put my interest ahead of hers, the reason my comparative evaluation does not stop at the interests in abstraction from the entities whose interests are in conflict is that I am aware of our desires as achievements, effects, of dispositions belonging to us. But both the proximate and remote dispositions by which I cause decisions are themselves actualizations of more fundamental dispositions. If the fact that our desires are actualizations of dispositions requires evaluations made by rational beings not to stop at the desires themselves, that same fact requires that those evaluations not stop at the more proximate dispositions but extend to the more fundamental dispositions.

Indeed, for a being who evaluates things according to knowledge of what things are, the more fundamental dispositions must be the more fundamental features in respect to which the things are evaluated; otherwise, the evaluations would be defective by the standard of failing to evaluate according to our knowledge of what things are, the intrinsic finality of the will. For I am made a cause of decisions principally, as opposed to instrumentally and secondarily, by the more fundamental dispositions through which I produce the more proximate dispositions for decision. In particular, I have my proximate ability to make decisions because the organism that existed when I was a child developed that ability by means of causal dispositions it then possessed, causal dispositions that still exist in every cell of my body.

A child is an agent who will produce, in the course of her development, the dispositions enabling choice, just as a novice athlete is an agent who will produce, in the course of her training, the dispositions for feats she is now incapable of. And just as the agent who now produces admirable athletic feats is the same agent who undertook training some time ago, the person who now makes ethical decisions is the same agent who began developing the proximate ability to make decisions long before she had that ability. Contrast the existence of the sperm and ovum that will become the child to the existence of the child. When the sperm and ovum exist separately, there does not yet exist an agent whose causal dispositions will enable it to produce the proximate dispositions for choice; when the child exists, there does exist such an agent. Therefore, when the child begins producing choices, the agent producing them is the same agent that existed before. And it is this agent that we evaluate as equal or unequal to another person.

Nature is a causal concept and a temporal causal concept. A nature is a set of features that accounts for ongoing development and change. Do we value an infant because of what it is or because of what it can become? A false dilemma. We value what it is because what it is now has a relation to what it can become. What it is now is a set of dispositions by which it is destined to become a mature human being, given the proper environmental support. The underlying dispositions that determine our other features constitute our nature. And whatever features constitute our mature ability to make decisions are themselves caused by means of the more fundamental features that belong to our nature.

Therefore, it is principally by means of the nature I already possessed as a child that I am a cause of decisions, somewhat as it is the artist rather than her tool that is principally the cause of a human fabrication. In order to make something, an artist may first have to make a tool. But the artist is more the cause of the final work than is the tool. The tool produces the effects it does only because it is both designed by and used by the artist to produce those effects. Likewise, in order to cause decisions, an organism must first produce whatever features proximately dispose it to cause decisions. Decisions are not ends in themselves; they are means to the kind of ends we are related to by the inclinations and faculties of our nature (see Chapter 5 and Section 6.2). In fact, the rational appetite is itself a means to ends, to achievements, relations to which are inscribed in the zygote; for evolution selected the human zygote because of its relation to achievements of that kind. Therefore, reason knows that the rational appetite and its decisions are related to the more fundamental dispositions of the rational decider the way tools are related to the artist; and an evaluation of humans as pursuers of goals is defective as an act of a rational appetite if it does not evaluate us with respect to what reason knows about the nature through which we principally become causes of rational decisions.

Another aspect of the features by which we make decisions leads to the same conclusion. Usually, the tools an artist makes in order to produce her final work exist independently of her, as brushes exist independently of the painter. However, the more proximate dispositions by which I make decisions exist in me derivatively and secondarily relative to the more fundamental features of which the proximate dispositions are achievements. The proximate dispositions exist only by residing in a being constituted what it is by more fundamental features, features by which the proximate dispositions are caused. And it would be defective for an appetite adapted to what exists as known by reason to value things according to what exists secondarily and derivatively more than what exists primarily and foundationally.

However, the features of our nature necessary for making decisions include many dispositions we share with nonhumans. Does it follow that I must give them a place equal to myself in my evaluations? No, the equality in question is equality as beings whose natures bestow on them, actually or potentially, the ability to pursue goals based on rational knowledge. The generic features we share with nonhumans are necessary but not sufficient for our having underlying dispositions that will produce the rational appetite, since rational appetite is specifically human. Hence, it would be defective to evaluate what these other beings are equally to what I am as a being that can produce acts of a rational appetite.

What about a species that did not share a common nature with us yet was able to make decisions based on rational knowledge? From the point of view of

the finality of the rational appetite, what those beings were would call for equality of evaluation with what we are. That is why I said in Chapter 1 that community of nature was not precisely what constitutes ethical equality. What the argument of this section has emphasized is the causally underlying character of nature rather than its logical character of commonness. We evaluate actually or possibly existing entities, not logical relations. And we evaluate entities according to their underlying causal dispositions, since causes are what make things what they are, and reason is aware of that fact. Specifically, we evaluate entities according to the relation of the rational appetite to their underlying causal dispositions, since it is evaluations by means of the rational appetite that are in question.

(*On the other hand, is a nature sufficient to produce a rational appetite common to all humans? What about the severely retarded or human offspring without human brains? The phenomena of idiot savants and of Downs' Syndrome victims attending college make it rash, to say the least, to assume that the retarded lack the kind of knowledge required for a rational appetite. More generally, there are only two possibilities. Either the afflicted human's causes, her parents, did not pass on a rational nature to their offspring, or a nature sufficient to produce rational faculties is present, but, due the presence or absence of other causes whose cooperation or lack of interference is necessary, the rational nature cannot produce its normal effects. In the latter case, the afflicted human is equal in nature to us just as a zygote that has not yet produced its normal effects is equal in nature to us. And even if the former were the case, a decision to treat the afflicted human unequally would be defective unless we knew her causes had not passed a rational nature onto her, since we know that human parents normally do pass on a rational nature. Sufficient, though not necessary, evidence that her causes had given her a rational nature would be her ability to produce offspring with a rational nature. Other evidence could come from the kind of genetic repair that would correct the affliction.)

The question of human nature in the sense significant for the foundations of ethics, then, is not the question of whether we possess some identical genes or whether another species possesses some corresponding genes. Perhaps totally different combinations of genes can be functionally similar in that each combination supports an ability to make decisions based on rational knowledge. And perhaps some alien rational species does not reproduce by means of genes or does not even reproduce. Still less, therefore, is the question of human nature the question of whether some form of specifically human behavior is carried on the same way in all cultures, for example, the question whether some social rule is the same in all cultures. What if "human" cultures represented biologically distinct species? As long as the members of the cultures could make decisions based on the degree of rationality necessary to create social rules, these people would possess a rational nature in the required sense.

For the foundations of ethics, also, equality as pursuers of rationally chosen goals does not require equality in our degree of rational intelligence, in our degree of will power, or in any other degree. That is one implication of the fact that the rational appetite's finality is to evaluate us according to the underlying nature that gives us our rational appetite. Two beings whose degree of intelligence or will power differ greatly can each possess a nature that gives them a rational appetite. If so, to treat them unequally as pursuers of goals is to treat one of them as if its nature is not what it

is; for as argued above, our evaluation does not stop at the behavior and cannot avoid dealing with the behaving entity as possessing the underlying causes of the behavior.

Even underlying nature, however, can be subject to degrees. Assume that what gives us a rational appetite is substance X; assume further that rational beings can have more or less of substance X. Would it be defective for a rational appetite to evaluate these beings equally as pursuers of goals? No, even members of different species would be equal from the point of view of the finality of the rational appetite, if their underlying natures endow them with the ability to make decisions based on rational knowledge. A fortiori, beings so endowed by different degrees of the same substance are equal from that point of view. Reason knows that quantities, that is, numbers and dimensions, exist only as quantities of something, of things and states of affairs with quantitative characteristics. In other words, reason knows that quantities exist secondarily as characteristics of something that exists more fundamentally. And, again, it would be defective for an appetite oriented to evaluating according to reason's knowledge to evaluate according to what exists secondarily and derivatively rather than primarily and foundationally.

But what if the difference between a subrational being, a chimp, say, and a rational being where a certain degree of substance X? No matter. Since a chimp's degree of substance X does not give the chimp a rational appetite, failure to treat a chimp equally as a pursuer of goals is not failure to treat it as what it is. Failure to treat a human equally as a pursuer of goals, on the other hand, is failure to treat her as a being with a nature like ours insofar as our nature endows us with a rational appetite.

But what is this degree of intellectual ability called "reason" that humans have and other species lack? In particular, what is it that makes those who have the ability to value things according to reason's knowledge equal from the point of view of this evaluative ability? In this context, reason is the ability to know not-directly-sensible truths concerning the causal dispositions things possess in order to act on the senses as they do. The senses do not simply make us aware of the way things act on the sense organs. By making us aware of the way things act on us, the senses make us aware of things as having features enabling them to so act; for to know that something is acting on us in a certain way is to know that it is able to so act. But by the senses we can know nothing more of what these enabling features are other than the fact that they exist and enable this action. By reason, on the other hand, we can know truths about what these features are beyond their directly sensible manifestations. In other words, reason gives us an awareness of the what the dispositions are that underlie the sensible characteristics of things.

But even more specifically in the context under consideration for ethics, reason is the ability to know that some beings do, and some do not, possess unobservable features similar to those we observe in ourselves by introspection. For that is the awareness required to judge the equality and inequality of other beings to us as pursuers of goals. To evaluate myself to equal to another person as a cause of decisions, I do not need an explicit concept of causal dispositions nor of the relations between proximate dispositions, remote dispositions, and human nature. Nor do I have to understand human genetics or development. At some age, children can be aware of the fact that, behind the directly observable behavior of other humans, are unobserved abilities like the ones the child directly observes through

introspection. Children give evidence of this kind of awareness when they ask others to close their eyes and imagine, remember, count silently, think of a number from one to ten, etc.

It is not necessary to know at what age that childhood awareness reaches the level crucial for ethics. But at some point, a child is able to judge that other persons are like she is in being the kind of thing from whom decisions emanate and in which decisions reside. She is also able to judge that infants and the unconscious are of the same kind as her in this respect, even if they not now have the ability to make decisions. And she can judge that nonhuman species give no evidence of being things of this kind. They give no evidence of having the kind of awareness of what things are on which she is able to base decisions, as she knows through introspection.

Thus, there is nothing arcane about the concepts of nature and reason necessary for ethics. If children can know that animals do not have a rational nature in the ethically significant sense, philosophers should be able to also. There are many difficult questions about the differences between animal and human mental capabilities, but the question of an ethically significant difference should not be counted among them. A chimp is capable of recognizing another chimp. But recognizing two things as being of a kind is not the same as knowing the truth of a judgment about unobservable causal dispositions accounting for observable behavior. Even granting chimps knowledge of sentential truths, the truths they are capable of grasping are not of the kind whose verification requires appeal to principles such as "Similar causes have similar effects," "Dissimilarities in effects require dissimilarities in their causes," or "Since the goal of judging truth is conformity with what exists, where there is no evidence for the existence of diverse causes, there is no evidence that the goal of judgment is achieved by positing them."

However, principles like these are implicit in a child's reasoning at some early stage. Learning from experience, which chimps can do, is not the same as judging a sentence about causal relations to be the only acceptable hypothesis on the basis of inductive evidence. Even the noninductive judgment that a chimp's senses make it aware of a thing as having causal dispositions by which the thing acts on the senses is a judgment achieved by reason, which chimps do not share, rather than by the senses themselves, which chimps do share. Might chimps have the ability to judge the truth of an inductively established hypothesis about causal dispositions without displaying that ability? Perhaps. But even children are capable of knowing that, while we can imagine rocks thinking, it would be foolish to believe they do. And if it is foolish, it is hardly consistent with the finality of an appetite oriented to valuing things according to reason's knowledge.

There is a virtuous circle worth noting in our awareness that others are equal to us from the point of view of the rational appetite's finality. Briefly put, to be aware of others as equal is to be aware of them as rational; to be aware of them as rational is to be aware they have the same kind of knowledge as that by which we are aware of their rationality. If the essence of reason were the awareness that someone else had reason, the circle would be vicious. Rather, reason is the faculty by which we know the natures of things, and among the natures we know are the natures of things endowed with reason as we are.

To return to the main point. The features primarily responsible for our being causes of decisions are features belonging to our underlying nature. Therefore, in denying her an equal opportunity to pursue goals, I cannot avoid

evaluating us as if we were unequal with respect to our underlying nature. Since the finality of the rational appetite is (1) to evaluate concrete entities (2) according to what reason knows of them, my evaluation could abstract from the nature only if I did not know that the underlying nature made me the kind of entity that can make decisions. In making the decision, I am evaluating myself as a certain kind of agent. The fact that it is my nature that enables me to be such an agent by producing the proximate dispositions is something that could not be altered by a choice to act as if it was not. If I chose to kill someone who was unconscious on the grounds that she was not then equal to me with respect to the proximate ability to make decisions, my decision could not avoid evaluating her as if her nature were not equal to mine. I would still be evaluating one concrete entity as being higher than another in respects that include human nature. For I would be evaluating myself as the kind of entity from which decisions emanate, that is, as having whatever the features are that enable me to cause decisions.

In denying another person equal opportunity to pursue goals, I am consciously relating to existing things as if what they are in themselves was not what I know them to be. Therefore, my decision is defective as the conscious act of a rational being just as a false belief is defective, that is, not by the standard of some finality external to itself, but by a finality it has just by being what it is. Acts of that kind happen to exist. Not only that, but we cannot avoid producing them. And we can no more change the structure of those acts as acts of a rational appetite than we can change the structure of belief so that falsehood would not be a defect.

Finally, it is important to recall again that equality of evaluation is not the goal of the rational appetite's intrinsic finality; the goal is evaluation of things according to what they are. But the failure to evaluate our equals as equal to us requires us to fail to evaluate either them or ourselves according to what we are. On the other hand, for those who know that an infinite being, possessing all possible modes of being, exists, a decision not to love that being completely and above all else would be defective by the standard of an appetite oriented to esteeming things according to what reason knows of the being they possess. Equality would not be at issue. (Why, then, would it not be defective to value my African violet more than my dog, since the dog is higher on the scale of being? See Section 5.3.)

4. The Nature of Obligation

The preceding comparison of ethical decision with belief will enable us to analyze our fundamental ethical concepts. I have described a factual state of affairs, namely, the fact that the will's acts have an intrinsic finality and that those acts can be defective by the standard of that finality. But I have so far introduced no ethical terms into the discussion. I have not even made an ethical judgment about the kind of defect I have described in ethical decisions. I have not, for instance, claimed that we are obliged to avoid such defects or that we ought not make decisions having them. I have not said that equals deserve or have the right to be treated equally.*

In this chapter, I will argue that ethical obligation consists in the factual situation I have described. For one thing, our common beliefs about obligation require and use the concept of the rational appetite with its intrinsic finality. That concept is what is involved in our everyday uses of

ethical terms. I will not try to argue that this account of ethical terms conforms to the usage of any particular philosopher. Instead, I will argue that analyzing ethical concepts in this way answers the main philosophic objections to the unconditionality, objectivity, and knowability of obligation. Philosophers wanting to defend ethical deontology, categoricity, and absoluteness, as well as naturalness and knowability, do not need any other meanings for ethical terms. This despite the fact that the analysis is based on finality and appetite.

I begin with a statement, in Section 4.1, briefly explaining the meaning of ethical terms by reference to the rational appetite and its intrinsic finality. The significance of the statement will unfold as I defend it in subsequent sections.

4.1. The Meaning of Ethical Terms

The fact that a decision consciously treating equals unequally is defective as the kind of conscious act it is (as a false belief is defective as the kind of conscious act it is) is what we mean by saying we ought to treat equals equally, we should treat equals equally, or we are obligated to treat equals equally. That fact is also what we mean when we say someone equal in nature to us has the right to be treated equally to us or is owed, is due, or is deserving of equal treatment. To say a certain kind of treatment is "due" or "owed" someone is to say this treatment is called for by the intrinsic finality of an appetite oriented to valuing things according to what they are as known by reason. A conscious decision not to so treat her is defective as an act of an appetite oriented to valuing the inherent being of things, while the decision to treat her equally fulfills the finality of that appetite.

Our rights and obligations are rights and obligations from the perspective of the rational appetite, where "from the perspective of" means that the fulfillment of that which is an "obligation," that which another person has a "right" to from us, consists in the accomplishment of the rational appetite's intrinsic finality. Conversely, when we use "right" to mean that we have the right to perform such and such an action, that we are not obligated to avoid the action, we mean that the decision to so act does not contradict the will's finality of valuing things according to what they are known to be.

Recall that the example of an ethical decision under discussion is the decision to cheat or not cheat on an examination, that is, the decision whether or not to give another person equal opportunity to pursue her goals. With respect to the decision to treat another person's interests as equal or unequal to my own, moral goodness and evil are the presence and absence, respectively, of identity between the comparative positions her nature and mine have in my evaluations, on the one hand, and the comparative perfection of our natures in reality, on the other. (Again, equality is not the essence of the will's finality, but if I am not placing a value on her equal to that I place on myself, I am not evaluating her according to what she is.)

4.2. Rational Appetite as a Common Belief

What does analyzing ethical concepts by reference to the rational appetite's intrinsic finality have to do with our everyday ethical judgments?

The ordinary person is perfectly capable of recognizing that there is something wrong with treating another person's interests unequally to her own. And she is perfectly capable of recognizing what makes it wrong is not a

relation to some hypothetical goal that need not be used as a standard for such an act. She is capable of knowing that unfair behavior is wrong, period. The question is what does this recognition consist in, or what does the wrongness, the evil of the act consist in, or what does the standard of judgment consist in and why is its application unavoidable? In judging the act to be wrong, she is recognizing that unfair behavior does not treat other persons according to what we know they are. Therefore, she is recognizing that our decisions cannot avoid having the finality of treating things according to what we know they are. In other words, she is capable of judging ethical decisions the way she judges beliefs, namely, as having an intrinsic finality whose frustration makes them nonhypothetically defective. Specifically, she is able to recognize that beliefs and decisions have the finality of identity between what things are in our conscious states and what they are in themselves.

All this talk about the rational appetite, about intrinsic finalities and defects, about a desire evaluating the desired to be a thing of a certain kind, etc. may sound too abstract and unfamiliar to be a plausible candidate for the meaning of our everyday ethical concepts. If so, consider this. When we blame someone for treating us unfairly, we are judging her decision to be defective. Therefore, we have a goal in mind by the standard of which we judge the decision; we are using the achievement of a certain goal as a standard to judge a product of her decision-making ability, and we are judging the product to be deficient by that standard. In particular, we have in mind the goal of our receiving equal treatment, and we are judging a decision of hers to be defective because it fails to achieve that goal.

Why do we apply this standard to her decisions; why do we think this finality is pertinent? Is the following answer too far-fetched? We know rational decisions have this finality because we know from our own case what rational decisions are, and we know she is similar to us in having the ability to make decisions based on rational knowledge. We know that if we do not treat her equally to ourselves as a pursuer of goals, we are not treating her according to our knowledge of what she is. And we know such a decision is defective because a decision made in knowledge of her equality in this respect has the intrinsic finality of giving her a place in our evaluations consistent with what she is known to be. That is, our reflective awareness of the nature of our own decisions reveals them to have the intrinsic finality of evaluating her to be the kind of being we know she is.

Not only is this explanation not too far-fetched, but also it is most direct and simple explanation of our behavior with respect to judgments about fairness. And there is another way to arrive at the same conclusion concerning the nature of our ordinary ethical concepts.

It is the common belief that unfair ethical decisions are defective, and it is the common belief that the reason they are defective is their unequal treatment of equals. The question is whether unequal treatment of equals means treating them as if they really were unequal, that is, as if they are related in existence the way they are related in our evaluations. If so, it is also the common belief that ethical decisions do treat things as if they existed the way our decisions evaluate them -- and that is the concept of rational appetite I have put forward.

To see that this is indeed the common view of ethical decisions, notice that we do not hold someone ethically responsible who could not have known any better. When inculpable ignorance is behind a decision that we would otherwise hold morally defective, we do not hold it defective in a moral

sense. And if we hold someone's ignorance to be culpable, we do so because of other knowledge she possesses on the basis of which we judge that she should have taken steps to overcome the ignorance.

With reference to fairness, we would not hold someone morally responsible for an unfair decision if she was inculpably ignorant of human equality with respect to underlying nature. So, when the common person judges that an unfair decision is indeed defective in a moral sense, the moral defect is judged on the basis of the unfair person's presumed rational knowledge of the equality in nature. The moral defect in treating people unfairly is believed to come from the fact that people are known to be equal, or at least thought to be equal, in their extracognitive existence. Hence, the ethical decision is judged by the standard of whether it treats things according as they are known really to be. When we judge an ethical decision by this standard, we are implying that in making decisions, we are treating things as if we they existed way our decisions evaluate them. Otherwise, treating another person equally would not be treating her contrary to what we know her to be. If an unfair decision did not treat her as if she were unequal to us, as a pursuer of goals, in real existence, the decision would not treat her contrary to our knowledge of what she is. And if not, the prior knowledge that we are equal in having a rational nature would not make our decisions culpably defective. If we did not assume that rational decisions have the goal of evaluating things to exist as they are known to exist, we would not judge decisions defective by their failure to achieve that goal.

4.3. The Is/Ought Dilemma

The common person, in other words, believes our ethical decisions are governed by our rational awareness of what things are, where "governed" does not mean physically regulated (necessitated) but means that rational knowledge provides the standard by reference to which decisions are to be judged properly done or defective as rationally conscious decisions. Does this position imply the supposedly impossible circumstance of reason prescribing to appetite, rather than vice versa?

Appetite is nothing but a species, in the domain of consciousness, of the universal relation of powers and their acts to goals. In the case of acts of the rational appetite, the goal of treating things as if they exist the way they are evaluated is inscribed in the nature of the act as a rationally conscious function; it is not an external standard imposed on the act by reason or by anything else. It is a goal ethical decisions cannot avoid being related to, since they are related to just by being what they are. If our decisions resulted from an appetite that was not oriented to acts treating things as if they exist the way they are known to be, then what reason knows about the existence of things could not prescribe for that appetite. But if the appetite producing our decisions has the nature of a rational appetite as described here and as believed in by the person on the street, that is, an appetite relating to things as reason relates to them, then it is a false dilemma to oppose reason to appetite on the matter of who prescribes to whom or to oppose deriving "ought" from appetite, on the one hand, to deriving it from knowledge of what is, on the other.

The rational appetite is not a construct arbitrarily designed to escape the fact/value, is/ought dilemma -- anymore than the evaluation of things as they are known to exist is a goal contingently imposed on our decisions. It

is true that value presupposes appetite. It is true that reason can only prescribe for an appetite oriented to valuing what things are as known by reason. But given that reason exists, the existence of such an appetite is not something accidental or paradoxical. Any cognitive appetite is oriented to some mode of being that can be an object of knowledge. The rational appetite is simply an appetite adapted to being insofar as it can be an object of reason's knowledge, that is, to being in its fullest extent. To the question "Why does the rational appetite have being for its value?", we can give a reply similar to one once offered to "Why does metaphysics talk about being?" Because there is nothing else for it to talk about -- and there is nothing else for an appetite to value but being.

To return to the clearest example, when we know that an all-perfect being exists, there is nothing arbitrary about our obligation to love that being. That is, there is nothing arbitrary about the fact that a decision not to love Him would be defective by the standard of its own intrinsic finality. Reason can prescribe this love because reason knows that this being possesses everything that any appetite could value.

Only if nature could have so designed us that we had reason but did not have a rational appetite would there be a problem about reason prescribing to appetite. But if nature had so designed us, we would not be ethical beings, that is, beings who pass the ethical judgments we do pass on our decisions and the decisions of others. For our everyday ethical judgments apply the standard of rational appetition to our decisions. If there were no rational appetite as here described, all the relations to ends which could provide standards by which we would judge decisions would be other than a rational appetite's relation to ends, and we could not apply the moral standards that we do apply.

Furthermore, the only appetites we would have would be appetites for particular modes of being, such as the appetites we share with animals. The desires of those appetites often come in conflict with what we could desire had we the ability to evaluate things according to reason's knowledge; yet those would be our only desires. Therefore our desires would often necessitate our behaving in immoral ways, that is, ways contrary to the relation to ends that would be inherent in a rational appetite. (Nor could we have the free choice to refrain from being immoral since, as argued in Section 5.1, only a rational appetite can endow us with free choice.)

Was it necessary that nature produce beings with rational appetites? We do not have to answer that question. The fact is that nature has produced such beings. We are stuck with that contingent fact and, therefore, with its necessary consequences. One of those consequences is that a decision failing to conform to what reason tells us about the equality of our natures is a decision defective by the standard of the decision's own intrinsic finality. In other words, the contingent fact of a rational appetite's existence necessarily implies the equally contingent fact of the existence of beings who make unconditional, objective, and knowably true ethical judgments. (And while we do not need to know if nature had to endow us with rational appetites, it is worth noting how paradoxical it would have been for nature -- not to mention God -- to give us reason and not give us the ability to value things according to reason's knowledge.)

We might wish that nature had not given us such an appetite, but that wish would itself be an act of a rational appetite, and an intrinsically defective act. For it would be an act with an inherent finality as an act of a

rational appetite and at the same time an act wishing that its inherent finality not be fulfilled and not be able to be fulfilled.* The finality of valuing things according to what they are is intrinsic to an act of a rational appetite; it is not an finality set for these acts extrinsically as when we use a hammer for chiseling or for driving a nail. The wish that the rational appetite not have the finality of valuing things according to reason's knowledge of what they are would be an act with the finality of valuing things according to reason's knowledge and at the same time an act willing that things not be valued according to reason's knowledge.

None of the above, however, should be considered an attempt to derive "ought" from "is." In fact, I have not attempted to derive "ought" at all. Instead, I have attempted to describe a factual situation, not a situation that ethical obligation is derived from, but a situation ethical obligation consists in.

4.4. The Sufficiency of This Explanation of Obligation

Adequate foundations for ethics must do much more than my account has done so far. For one thing, an adequate account must explain the intrinsic defectiveness of unfairness in cases other than cheating on competitive examinations. For another, an adequate account must explain how we judge what is fair and what is not. An adequate account must also answer the question, "Why be moral?", and it must explain the justice of punishment for morally defective acts.

Section 4.4.1 discusses our knowledge of the correctness or incorrectness of ethical decisions. That discussion begins the treatment of cases other than cheating on a competitive examination. Hopefully, the examples of Section 4.4.1 are sufficient to show that the intrinsic finality of the rational appetite can account for obligation in all cases where the issue is justice in the sense of fairness toward other rational beings. (Issues of other kinds will be considered in Section 5.3 and Chapter 6.) Section 4.4.2 takes up the question, "Why be moral?", and explains how the concept of intrinsic finality reconciles teleology with deontology. Lastly, Section 4.4.3 discusses the justice of punishment from the point of view of the rational appetite.

4.4.1. Our Knowledge of Our Ethical Obligations

This account obligation provides an objective, verifiable way of knowing the truth of "This decision is ethically correct" or "This decision is ethically defective." For the moment, consider only the example of cheating on a competitive examination. Reason judges the ethical correctness or defectiveness decision by whether beings whose nature makes them equal to what we are as pursuers of goals have a place equal to ours in our evaluations. In other words, reason judges a decision to be good or bad that way it judges the proposed belief that the natures of things are equal or unequal to be true or false. The evidence for the latter is also evidence for the former.

I have discussed that evidence in Sections 1.1 and 3.2. The point there was that only a narrow understanding of similarity in nature is needed for this account of obligation and that the evidence of observation is overwhelmingly in support of that understanding. Very elemental causal reasoning leads to the conclusion that we are similar in having an underlying

nature accounting for our ability to base decisions on rational knowledge. Again, the evidence of similarity in nature in the required sense is basically the same as the evidence for other minds. The causal reasoning involved, like all causal reasoning, is nonHumean. It is not a matter of subsuming less universal connections under more universal. It is a matter of recognizing that changes, since they occur to things other than themselves, are dependent on other entities, and a matter of attributing the causing of changes to the kind of things necessary to satisfy the dependency. Children are capable of this reasoning -- perhaps because they have not yet read Hume and been conditioned to think that we cannot know that changes require causes.

But reason can give us more information pertinent to the rational appetite's finality than the fact that our natures make us equal as pursuers of goals. Reason's knowledge of human nature, human behavior, and the environments in which we live also provides criteria for judgments concerning the relative importance of conflicting interests. Experience provides ample evidence that some things are more important than others to our ability to pursue chosen goals; that is, reality establishes conditions necessary for us to have equal opportunity in the pursuit of goals, and experience shows us what those conditions are. We have empirical evidence of conditions related to our ends as necessary or normally necessary means, and we have evidence of the relative importance of different conditions to our pursuit of ends.

For example, biological facts about human nature reveal that some physical conditions are normally necessary for our pursuit of goals, and that some physical conditions are more necessary than others. Also, facts about the environments in which we pursue goals make some things normally necessary for the pursuit of goals that might not otherwise be necessary. On this planet, for instance, we usually need to earn a living, unless our goal is to die of exposure or starvation. Finally, observation of human behavior reveals the relative importance of different goals to different individuals and cultures. When our interests are in conflict with the interests of others, we have to evaluate the relative importance of the conflicting goals and/or of the interfered with means to goals. Failure to evaluate the conflicting ends or means according to what their relative importance is as known by reason can result in failure to evaluate the others to be equal to us as pursuers of goals.

For example, does my desire for loud music at 4 o'clock in the morning make it justifiable for me to keep the person in the next apartment awake? We know this is not the case from our knowledge of the biological needs of human nature. A decision that would evaluate my listening to loud music as equal or higher on a scale of priorities to her sleeping would give these things relative places in my evaluations in conflict with their relative importance to our ability to pursue chosen goals. If it is just to keep another awake with loud music, then at least one horn of the following dilemma must hold: her interests are not equal to mine (our natures are not equal), or human nature makes loud music as necessary as a good night's sleep for our having the ability to pursue goals. Since in fact human nature makes sleep more necessary, I am depriving her of an equal opportunity to pursue her interests and, therefore, treating her as if her nature did not make her equal to me as a pursuer of goals.

But can someone not have loud music at 4 a.m. as her goal? Yes, and there is nothing wrong with that, unless pursuing that goal deprives others of an equal opportunity to pursue their goals. And reason is able to judge from

experience whether that is the case. The amount of sleep people need differs from individual to individual. But experience shows that a certain amount of sleep is necessary for earning a living, which, in turn, is normally necessary for pursuing goals like listening to music. Therefore, by depriving another of sleep, I am treating her unequally as a pursuer of goals.

Among the conditions we need for the pursuit of our ends are social arrangements and institutions. For example, the pursuit of many of our ends requires relying on commitments given us by others. If in the pursuit of some end I break a commitment, I am treating the other unequally unless my breaking the commitment provides for a need that observation shows to be more important to us as pursuers of goals than is the commitment in question. The observation, again, is observation of biological facts, of our environments, and of our behavior. In all normal circumstances, to break an appointment to play golf for the sake of watching a cartoon on television would be to treat the other unequally as a pursuer of goals; breaking the appointment would evaluate watching cartoons to be as important a goal, or a means to goals, as keeping the commitment. We know that is not normally true from our observation of human behavior, of the time, energy, and resources we invest in differing pursuits, of the way we complain when deprived of different ends or means to ends, etc., and from our observation of the things, like the keeping of social commitments, that nature and environment make necessary as means for the achievement of ends.

To understand the kind of knowledge involved, consider cases in which it would not be unfair to break the appointment for the sake of watching cartoons. We can imagine an espionage or science fiction situation where watching the cartoon would be necessary to save other persons from destruction or from some debilitating disease. Here, observation could inform us that keeping the appointment would deprive others of a condition necessary to pursue any end, existence, or a condition normally necessary for the pursuit of ends, health. So observation would inform us that keeping the appointment would treat others unequally as pursuers of ends. Or we can imagine a culture in which the opportunity to watch cartoons was a rare and highly prized occurrence, much more highly prized than playing golf. Observation of behavior in this culture could show us that people would not expect someone to keep an appointment for golf, if the opportunity to watch cartoons came up. If I criticized someone for not keeping the appointment, I would be treating her differently from the way I would expect to be treated in the same circumstance. Therefore, I would be treating her unequally as a pursuer of goals.

At the other extreme would be the person who treats another unequally just by choosing to make watching cartoons her end at that time and thereby deprives another person of the opportunity to pursue their end, since pursuing their end depends on the first person keeping the prior commitment to play golf. Contrast this to breaking the appointment for the sake of taking your sick child to the hospital. It would be defective act of the rational appetite to evaluate keeping the appointment to be a condition equally or more important to the human pursuit of ends than is health; for the evidence of experience shows that health is in all normal circumstances a more necessary prerequisite for the pursuit of ends than is the keeping of appointments. Therefore, keeping the appointment would deprive the child of an equal opportunity to pursue her ends.

Of course, there are also abnormal circumstances. An invalid, for example, is not treating us unequally if she asks us to do for her things she cannot do in return. On the contrary, we would be treating her unequally if we did not give her special treatment, since we would be depriving her of conditions necessary for her pursuit of ends. Her physical condition limits her range of choices in ways we are not responsible for and are not responsible for correcting, since we do not have the ability to correct them. But within those limits, she can choose goals, and we would be depriving her of equal opportunity to pursue goals if we did not supply her with necessary means by doing things for her we are not obligated to do for others. The difference between her physical condition and ours makes different treatment necessary if we are to give her a place equal to ours in our system of values. Of course, invalids can make unreasonable demands. Reason is aware that we all have limited time, abilities, and resources. And when we attempt to balance her pursuit of goals against what we need to pursue our goals, we are attempting to evaluate the relative importance of differing goals and means for achieving goals according to reason's knowledge of human nature and the human condition.

Thus, the existence of abnormal circumstances contradicts nothing I have said about our ability to know the truth of ethical judgments nor about the nature of those judgments. We have empirical evidence that different people have different needs, if they are to have an equal opportunity to pursue goals. As the last example is meant to illustrate, the fact that experience provides evidence for ethical judgments does not imply that these judgments are always easy. Differences in needs and abilities, and differences in natural and social relations, between human beings often make it difficult to judge what constitutes equality in treatment of people as pursuers of goals. But that difficulty does imply that ethical judgments are subjective and relative to egocentric interests, nor does it imply that ethical judgments are not made on the basis of experiential evidence. On the contrary, a theory implying that such difficulties do not or should not exist would be inconsistent with evidence. What these difficulties do indicate is the complexity of human nature and the complexity of the situations within which objective moral values are at stake. Likewise, complexity may make the laws of acoustics and hydrodynamics difficult to apply in practice. Complexity does not make them subjective.

For example, reason does not always know the exact point at which an invalid's demands on us are unfair. But the existence of unclear cases does not disprove the existence of clear cases. Clear cases of reasonable and unreasonable demands exist, respectively, before and after that point.

Furthermore, our empirically based knowledge of human nature, environments, and behavior provides a standard by which we can judge that some individual needs are pathological and do not impose moral obligations. If someone has a psychological need for loud music twenty-four hours a day, we have no obligation to let her fulfill that need. Rather, those with the appropriate social relation to her (her spouse, her mature children, her pastor, etc.) would have the obligation to help her overcome that need. For we have ample evidence that such a need cannot be fulfilled without depriving others of their needs. Not only that, but we have ample evidence that abandonment to that goal would deprive her of means the human condition makes necessary for the ability to pursue other goals she could reasonably be expected to have. Tomorrow she may have different goals for which she needs

the good will she has lost by her previous behavior, or she may develop a medical or legal problem she cannot afford to pay for due to her past decisions. We know that such occurrences are real possibilities because we know that the world, including human beings, is what it is.

As explained earlier, when I put my interests ahead of another's, my evaluation cannot stop at the desires but must include the entities to whom the desires belong. That is why equality of opportunity does not obligate us to refrain from using our abilities when they are greater than another person's abilities. Equality of opportunity in the pursuit of an end is equality of opportunity for another concrete entity with all the features that constitute her being, even if we are unequal with respect to those features. Equality of opportunity is equality for us to use the means at our disposal, especially means that are features of the concrete entities who are the objects of our evaluations. Our differing abilities, however, are not the only means we use in the pursuit of goals. In the environments in which we live, possession of property is a normally necessary means for the pursuit of goals. If I could play the piano like Horowitz but could not purchase food, clothing, and shelter, I could not long use my musical ability as a means to my ends. And just as equality as pursuers of goals does not make it defective for us to use abilities that are greater than those of another, equality as pursuers of goals does not make an unequal distribution of property intrinsically defective. Nothing in the finality of the rational appetite, for instance, makes it defective to reward someone with greater skill in proportion to their accomplishments.

Still, there are intrinsically defective ways of obtaining property. In particular, it would be defective to deprive someone of property without their informed consent. I would not be treating her equally as a pursuer of goals, just as I would not be treating her equally if I prevented her from using her abilities to the fullest. Her possession of property is just as much a fact about the concrete entity I am evaluating as is her possession of unequal abilities. Property is different in that it is a social arrangement rather than a personal endowment. But we are social beings, and social arrangements are among the means necessary to pursue personal goals. On the other hand, our knowledge of human existence shows that there are things more necessary to us than property. Property is a means to things, like food and shelter, without which we would not be able to make use of our personal abilities to achieve other ends. Someone without enough property to provide the things more fundamental to us than property may have no way to obtain them other than to take from those with more than enough. To do so would not be to evaluate anyone unequally to us as pursuers of goals.

Incidentally, there are many ways to treat others unequally with respect to resources. If I drink the spring water at work but deliberately avoid doing my share of changing the bottle, I am evaluating others unequally to me as pursuers of goals. For I am making them spend more time and energy than I am spending for the same benefit.

With reference to unequal personal endowments, notice that there are many cases where we are obligated to evaluate human beings according to their inequalities. Thus, if I am judging a competitive examination to decide which of the competitors most merits some award or position, I am obligated to judge on the quality of performance, rather than, say, decide for someone because she is my cousin. But even though I should judge the competitors by certain of their inequalities, the basis of obligation remains the fact that, to treat

them according to what they are, I must treat them equally as pursuers of goals. What bestows moral significance on such inequalities and makes my evaluating people on the basis of inequalities an obligation is the fact that these inequalities belong to beings who are equal to one another and to me in having human nature. If my cousin is competing with Horowitz in a piano competition, they do not have equality of opportunity in the pursuit of goals if they are not going to be judged by the quality of their playing. So in deciding for my cousin on the basis of kinship, I am denying Horowitz equality of opportunity.

Among the most important diversities in conditions that differentiate our obligations are the husband-wife and parent-child relations. Assume two children are drowning. One of them is my child; the other is not. If I can only save one of them, I am obligated to try to save my child. I am a cause of the fact that my child is now in need of help, since she would not be in need if I had not brought her into existence. I am not a cause of the fact that the other child is now in need of help. If I chose to save the other child at the expense of my own, I would be being unfair to my child. I would be pursuing my goal by causing her to be deprived of something she needs to be able to pursue any goal, life; for I am a cause of the fact that she has a life that will be lost by my pursuit of my goal. Therefore I am placing myself as a pursuer of goals ahead of her in my evaluations. But if I chose to save my child at the expense of the other's life, I would not be a cause of the other's being deprived of life, since I am not a cause of the fact that she has a life to lose. Therefore, my decision would not evaluate her unequally to me or to my child in human nature, but would correctly evaluate her as unequal to my child with respect to my pursuit of goals being a cause of her deprivation. The alternative to evaluating her unequally in this respect would be to evaluate my child unequally as a pursuer of goals.

If, however, the other child was drowning because I had accidentally pushed her in, I would have more obligation to save her than my own child, since I would be a more direct cause of her need of help. By deciding to save my child, I would be pursuing my goal by causing the other to be deprived of life, since I am the cause of the fact that she will not live unless I save her. Thus, I would be evaluating her unequally to myself as a pursuer of goals.

A final example. The evidence of experience shows that lying usually violates the finality of the rational appetite by treating others unequally. But experience also shows that telling the truth can sometimes deprive others of an equal standing in my evaluations. I can be obligated to lie to save someone from an unjust death, since not lying would amount to participating in an intrinsically defective act on the part of the would-be killer. In other words, lying is wrong when it treats another unequally as a pursuer of goals, but right when telling the truth would treat another unequally. As in the previous examples, the ethical correctness or defectiveness of the decision is constituted by a factual state of affairs; and the difference between these cases is judged by the evidence of experience.

4.4.2. Why Be Moral? Teleology and Deontology

If ethical obligation is as I have described it, making ethically correct decisions is a necessary condition for achieving the ends given us by our nature and, therefore, a necessary condition for happiness. If that condition is lacking, we will fail to achieve the state that constitutes our happiness, since happiness consists in the complete achievement of the ends we are oriented to.

Why are correct ethical decisions necessary conditions for happiness? Perhaps the connection can appear arbitrary, as if some higher beings were going to dispense happiness to us upon our successful completion of an obstacle course they have designed for their ends, an obstacle course whose successful navigation would otherwise have no relation to our ends. To see why the connection is not arbitrary, all we have to do is look at the nature of ethical obligation as analyzed here and at the reason why we cannot avoid actions to which that obligation applies.

Ethical obligation springs from our nature as beings with reason, beings who direct our actions by means of our knowledge of what things are, beings who are capable of so directing our action that things are valued according to their known intrinsic reality. In other words, our nature is identical with a tendency to, among other things, decisions of the kind governed by ethical obligation. Such actions are among the goals the achievement of which constitutes the fulfillment of the tendencies of our nature, and the fulfillment of those tendencies produces happiness. Thus, that which makes decisions governed by ethical obligation necessary conditions for happiness is the same thing that makes ethical decisions intrinsically correct or defective by the standard of their own finality, and that which makes intrinsically correct or defective ethical decisions necessary features of our existence is the same thing that makes ethical decisions necessary conditions for happiness: our nature includes knowledge of things as they are in themselves and, consequently, a power oriented to valuing things according to our knowledge of what they are. If we fail to so evaluate things, we fail with respect to the tendency of our nature that necessitates such acts to begin with. Therefore, for a rational being, good ethical decisions must be necessary conditions, at least, for happiness.

On this analysis, good ethical decisions are not obligatory because they are necessary for happiness. The ethical correctness or defectiveness of a decision does not consist in the fact that it fosters or inhibits happiness. Decisions are ethically correct or defective because they fulfill or fail to fulfill their own intrinsic finality as acts of a rational appetite. And since the fulfillment of that finality is a necessary condition for happiness, correct ethical decisions are necessary for happiness because they are correct, that is, because they fulfill the intrinsic finality of ethical decisions.

Therefore, answering "Why be moral?" with "To be happy" does not reduce morality to being a means to happiness. If our decisions are intrinsically ethically defective, we fail of happiness by that fact. But as argued in Section 2.3, happiness is not our end in the sense of being an object of knowledge that provokes desire. Happiness is the state of satisfaction -- partial or complete -- that accompanies the existence of the cognized object that is our end. Good ethical decisions contribute to happiness by fulfilling our ends; they fulfill our ends by valuing things according to what they are known to be in themselves, not by valuing things according to their perceived contribution to our happiness. In fact, we are obligated to seek happiness, since consciously choosing against happiness would amount to consciously choosing against some end to which the rational appetite is oriented by being what it is.

There is, of course, a sense in which happiness can be a cognized object that provokes desire. As reflective beings, we are capable of being aware of our current subjective state of satisfaction and of comparing it to other

states in which we appear more or less satisfied. And as beings who have not yet achieved complete happiness, we are capable of forming ideas of potential subjective states constituted by more complete satisfaction of desires. The ability to acquire such ideas is part of what it means to be rational beings. But to be motivated by such an idea of happiness need mean nothing more than being motivated to seek the ends of our nature, since happiness is simply the state of being in possession of those ends. And the ends to which we cannot avoid being oriented include the will's intrinsic end of valuing things according to what they are in themselves. In this sense, there is no conflict between the motivation to achieve happiness and the motivation to value things according to reason's knowledge of what they are.

That we are seeking happiness in all actions amounts to no more than the fact that we are aiming at an end in all actions. Therefore, the most precise reason for being moral is to achieve an end to which we cannot avoid being oriented. Instead of asking "Why be moral?", should we then ask "Why seek to achieve that which is our end?" We can ask that question as long as we remember that "Why" in this case means "For what end?" or "What end is achieved?" So the question really is "What end is achieved by seeking to achieve our end?" Next question, please.

And as explained in Section 2.3, the fact that action must spring from a prior orientation to an end on the part of the agent does not and cannot make motivation necessarily egocentric. Nor does the fact that ethical value or defectiveness of an act consists in its achievement or failure to achieve an end make the value extrinsic to the act itself and make obligation relative to something extrinsic to the obligatory act. There is no other way for an action to possess an intrinsic value than to possess the perfection the nature of the act calls for by having an intrinsic finality. And since every act emanates from a prior orientation to act on the part of the agent, there is no other way for an act to have an intrinsic finality than to have the finality it acquires by being that which emanates from the agent's prior orientation to act. That is, an act can only have the intrinsic finality its agent gives it by causing the act to be what it is. Hence, that an agent can only act because oriented to an end does not and cannot imply that the value of an act produced by the agent is extrinsic to the act itself, that, in other words, an act produced by the agent must lack an intrinsic finality whose achievement constitutes a value intrinsic to the act.

And as was also explained in Section 2.3, the fact that we only act out of an orientation to an end does not and cannot imply that that other persons can have no value for us other than being means to our ends. When we give their pursuit of goals a place in our evaluations equal to ours, we are treating other persons as ends while achieving our rational appetite's end at the same time. Likewise, the fact that ethical value or defectiveness consists in an act's achievement or failure to achieve its intrinsic finality does not and cannot imply that obligation is relative to our personal fulfillment in a sense opposed to obligation's being relative to rights other persons possess by being what they are. For the finality whose fulfillment constitutes the satisfaction of obligation is the finality of valuing things, especially other persons, according to reason's knowledge of what they are. (The history of ethics is a history of false oppositions.)

On the other hand, my reflective awareness of the subjective states constituted by my achievement of ends enables me to be motivated by "happiness" and to relate other persons to the achievement of my ends in an

ethically defective sense. For it is through my self-awareness that I am able to give my pursuit of goals a higher place in my evaluations than another person's pursuit of goals. "In order to be happy, I must be moral," means "In order to be happy, morality, not my own happiness, must be my goal." If I make my own happiness the end I am seeking and treat another person equally merely so that my treatment of her will contribute to my happiness, I may perform the external acts required of treating her equally, but in my evaluations she does not have a place equal to mine. Therefore my evaluations are ethically bad. I am obligated not to make my happiness my primary consideration, and if I do, I fail in what is necessary for my happiness.

The reason there need be no conflict between seeking happiness, seeking my ends, and being moral is this. The same power of reason by which I am aware of what happiness and the achievement of my ends are enables me to be aware of what other persons are and of the fact that what they are calls for a place equal to what I am in the evaluations of a rational appetite. I am thereby enabled to give other persons an equal place in my evaluations; that is, I can evaluate them according to my knowledge of what they are, not just according to their relation to ends of my own that I have given a higher place in my evaluations.

An obstacle to seeing this point is the common belief that our ends are constituted entirely by states of our own consciousness, the belief that what is ultimately aimed at in our action is satisfying states of our own consciousness. For example, in desiring my child's happiness, I would really be desiring the satisfaction I would get from knowing that my child is happy. The arguments of Section 2.3 apply to this position. Unless it is my child's happiness that is my end, there is no reason why knowledge of my child's happiness, rather than any other random event, should make me happy. Because I am a rationally conscious being, it is possible for me to defectively desire my child's happiness only as a means to my own. But the same rational consciousness enables me to know that what my child is makes her worthy of a place equal to mine in the evaluations of the rational appetite. And that knowledge enables me both to evaluate her equally to me and to know that, if I did not, I could not achieve the happiness that comes from the fulfillment of the finalities of my nature.

Another example will make the point more emphatically. A blind person can have a conceptual understanding of what color is but not the joy of seeing beautiful colors. Likewise, our conceptual understanding of what God is does not give us the joy of an experiential union with infinite beauty. But reason does allow us to know that an experiential union with infinite beauty would bring infinite happiness. Does it follow that in seeking to do what is necessary to see God, for example, in seeking to be moral, what has the highest place in our values is not God Himself but the joy we will get from seeing Him? No, because the same rational knowledge that tells us seeing God will bring happiness tells us that it is because God is what He is that seeing Him will bring happiness. Our happiness will be caused by the knowledge that God is what He is. Our response to that knowledge will be an act of love for God, not for our knowledge of God. That knowledge is lovable but only because it consists in an experiential union with an object that is lovable. Similarly, aesthetic delight is delight in a work's being what it is. To have that delight we must be conscious that the work is what it is. But the consciousness brings delight because it is consciousness of the work's being what it is. We desire the consciousness as an experiential union with what the work is.

We do not now have the kind of consciousness of God that will provoke an infinitely joyful act of love. But the same rational knowledge enabling us to know that the joy will be a response to God's being what He is enables us to know that what God is, not what our experience of God will be, deserves the highest place in the evaluations of an appetite oriented to what things are. In deciding to give God that place, we acting out of an orientation to an end whose accomplishment will make us happy. But the end of the rational appetite is accomplished if and only if God has a higher place in our evaluations than the fulfillment of our ends or our happiness. Deciding not to give God the highest place would be ethically defective because it would frustrate the act's intrinsic finality. But the obligation to love God is not thereby made relative to the fulfillment of the will's ends in the sense that the obligation would not derive from God's being what He is.

4.4.3. Punishment

Among the ethical concepts that the intrinsic finality of the rational appetite can explain is the concept of deserving punishment. In human affairs, punishment can have many purposes, the purpose of deterrence, of education, of making society safer by depriving recalcitrant members of liberty. Here I am concerned only with the justice of punishment, where "justice" means what is due by the standard of the intrinsic finality of the rational appetite.

The rational appetite does not obligate that you claim a right, but it does obligate that you respect the rights of others unless they decline to claim them. For example, if you choose to compete with another in the pursuit of a particular goal, equality in the pursuit of that goal is due you. But you may not be obligated to pursue that goal; nothing in the rational appetite's finality may require you to pursue it.

An unjust act is "worthy" of punishment in the same sense that a right is "worthy" of respect. A right does not have to be claimed, and an injustice can be forgiven. If you are wronged, you are not obligated to will that the offender be punished. But when I deprive another person of what is due her from a rational appetite, what is due me from a rational appetite is the desire that I be sufficiently deprived of goods to restore equality between myself and the wronged person, unless the wronged person chooses that equality not be restored in that respect. If you know that an injustice has occurred and that the offended party does not choose to forgive, your failure to desire that equality between the persons be restored by depriving the unjust person of an equal good would be defective from the point of view of the rational appetite's intrinsic finality. For the finality of the rational appetite is to evaluate these persons according to what they are, and to evaluate them according to what they are requires that they be treated equally, and you would not be desiring that they be treated equally.

In other words, punishment for failing to treat others equally as pursuers of goals is due, from the perspective of the will's finality, as a means of restoring the equality called for by our being what we are. Punishment is due even when goods equal to those lost cannot be restored to the offended person. That is, punishment is due even when all that can be done is to deprive the offender without compensating the offended. The offended is at least due the good of equality of treatment between herself and

the offender; for she is due the good of equality of place in the values of an appetite oriented to what things are as known by reason. Punishment achieves that even when it accomplishes nothing else. To give the offended the place she is due in our evaluations, we must will that the offender be treated equally. Not to will that the offender be punished proportionately to the way in which she has violated equality would be to willfully acquiesce in the offender's failure to treat the offended equally.

In fact, the first good due us from a rational appetite is not equality in treatment, where "treatment" refers to the external behavior directed by the will. The first good due us from a rational appetite is equality of evaluation, that is, the place in the appetite's values required by by what we are. The first good due, in other words, is the ethical value of fulfilling the will's finality. Ethical value requires equality in external treatment as a necessary consequence; we cannot evaluate equals equally if we do not will to behave toward them equally. That is the reason restoration of equality is due even when compensation of the offended is not possible. We cannot give the offended the first good she is due, equality of place in our evaluations, without willing that the offender be deprived of goods in a manner proportionate to her unequal treatment of the offended. Furthermore, the mere intention to treat another unfairly deprives her of what is due from the rational appetite, an equal place in its system of values. Since punishment must be commensurate with the loss suffered, the appropriate kind of punishment for this injustice is a place of disapprobation for the unjust act in our evaluations.

Still, if we are not obligated to claim a right before it has been violated, we are not obligated to claim it after it has been violated. If I choose to compete with you for a goal that cannot be shared, I have the right to equal opportunity in pursuit of the goal. But I am not obligated to choose to compete with you. And I am no more obligated to assert my right to equality after finding you have cheated me than I was before. Similarly, if there is no injustice in giving some of my property away, there is no injustice in declining to seek punishment of a thief. The rational appetite's finality does not require that you seek a restoration in equality with respect to a particular way you have been deprived of it. But unless we know that someone has chosen not to claim her right or not to seek punishment for an injustice done her, our failure to desire the right to be respected or the injustice punished is defective by the standard of the finality of the rational appetite.

The validity of our desire for justice does not imply that we have the right to personally correct the injustice. In fact, our decision to correct the injustice could be defective by the standard of the will's finality. I am not the only one who should desire the injustice to be corrected. If everyone acted so as to carry out that desire, the unjust person would be deprived of more than equal goods; hence, a new injustice would have occurred. And reason knows from observation that, in general, vigilante action can produce more harm than good. Therefore, achieving what the members of groups are due from the point of view of the rational appetite requires developing specific structures for punishing injustice. A social agent charged with punishing injustice would be obligated to punish, unless the offended party decides to forgive. Of course, circumstances will sometimes allow a social agent to act in the stead of an offended person and pardon the offense. For example, the offended person may be deceased or incompetent.

The most obvious case where the victim of injustice cannot benefit from the punishment of the guilty is murder. The author of this essay is opposed to capital punishment for a variety of reasons. Those reasons do not include the belief that capital punishment for murder is unjust. Even though the death of the guilty does not compensate the victim, the death of the guilty is just, since it restores the equality of treatment lost by the decision to commit murder. It is not the case that capital punishment fails to respect the value of human life. On the contrary, it is a way for society to affirm the ethical value of human life, the value it has for a rational appetite, by seeking to restore the lost equality between the guilty and the victim. To oppose capital punishment as not respecting the value of human life is to defectively give some other value for life, perhaps a sentimental value, a higher place in our evaluations than its ethical value. Therefore, opposing capital punishment because of the value of the killer's life under values human life rather than respecting it. In fact, the social under valuing of human life is one of the risks we take in rejecting capital punishment. If we give up capital punishment, as I would prefer, we should replace it by nothing less than life imprisonment with no chance of furlough or parole. The policy of paroling or furloughing first-degree murderers is not more "humane." It is less humane, since it demeans the ethical value of human life by the disproportion between the punishment and the crime. (Then why is capital punishment not obligatory? Because it is not obligatory to claim a right.)

Finally, from the point of view of the agent responsible for the common good of the entire universe, the intention to do injustice is more important than the carrying out of the intention. The intention is within our control; whether we succeed in carrying it out is not. If God did not choose to punish us in a manner proportionate to the evil we intend, His decision would be intrinsically defective as an act of a rational appetite, just as our decision not to disapprove of an unjust intention would be defective.

Can God forgive? We cannot deprive God of any good intrinsic to Him. But denying the infinite being the place due it in our evaluations is an infinitely defective act for a rational appetite. It is an act infinitely more defective than denying another human the place due her in our evaluations. And if denying another human due evaluation calls for punishment from the sake of justice, the infinite debt of justice due God calls for a proportionate penalty. Does God's justice, then, preclude forgiveness? The very least we can say is this: it does not preclude forgiveness if there is a way in which forgiveness would be consistent with the satisfaction of the infinite debt of justice. Could there be such a way? On one reading of the New Testament, the demons may not have thought so. Philosophers should not be so rash.

There is another difference between punishment from God's perspective and from ours. God's punishment is simply His granting us what we choose. In making defective evaluations, we are deciding not to pursue the good that satisfies the rational appetite's finality and, by that very fact, the true good, the good constituted by things' being what they are. By allowing us to suffer the loss of our true good, God would simply be respecting our freedom. Since God gave us our freedom, it would be unjust of Him not to give us what we choose. That is, His decision not to give us what we choose would be defective not only because of what we are, free beings, but because of what He is, the creator of our freedom.