REASON IN ACTION

Collected Essays: Volume I

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INTRODUCTION

Deliberating about what to do is itself already an action. True, it is internal and, in a sense, procedural. But it is voluntary and intentional, even if not deliberate, and is already to some extent self-shaping. Philosophers of more or less Humean persuasion hold that it is one's reason's service to desire. Judgments based more closely on evidence will hold, instead, that deliberating extends to, and is guided by, discerning what is desirable, beneficial, worth desiring. This discerning is a matter of *understanding* what gives *reason for* desiring ends (the more or less far-reaching purposes one has in mind) as well as for fashioning the ways and means one chooses in order to pursue and attain them.

Reason as a capacity, an aspect of one's natural constitution, and reason's responsiveness to the intelligible products of its own activity—the decisive and self-determining responsiveness (to projects and proposals for action) that is called *will*, willingness, and so forth—is the subject of Volume II. In the present volume, reason is considered not so much as a capacity or activity, an element of one's make-up as a person, but rather in the intelligible *content* of its activities. Reason is the capacity to understand and work with *reasons*. Reasons are reasons for judging a thought, a proposition, to be true (or false, or doubtful). Some reasons are reasons for judging it to be true (or not certainly true) that some state of affairs that one might help bring about *by doing* something would be beneficial, worth bringing about. Call these reasons *practical*. They include principles picking out possible states of affairs as beneficial (desirable), and propositions (plans, proposals) for pursuing such opportunities effectively and in other ways reasonably. This volume is about such *reasons for action*. Volume III deals with the relatively specific kinds of reason for action that we call rights and, more compendiously, common good. Volume IV deals with the kinds of reasons that are systematically and publicly adopted—in some cases simply ratified, in others created, 'posited'—by persons acting in and for a political community, to articulate and supplement the principles which

pick out *human* rights and standing elements of political common good. And Volume V locates reasons for action in the context of their deepest sources, considers their intelligible content in its furthest reaches, and proposes them as public when sound.

I. FOUNDATIONS

Before reasoning is understanding—those acts of insight, mostly humdrum and inconspicuous, by which one gains the concepts and words with which one thinks, communicates, and gets to know the world far more broadly and deeply than senses alone enable one to experience it. We do not understand without prior experiences of the world we can see, hear, touch, taste, smell, and correspondingly imagine it; but when we do understand, we go beyond those data of experience. The propositions, explicit and implicit, in which alone our concepts and words have their full meaning, take us beyond the particulars given in experience to the more or less universals, the types, the general; to the true as opposed to the mistaken; and, by reasoning, from the caused to the cause; and so forth.

At least after it has first begun to supervene upon bare experience, understanding is preceded and occasioned by questions. The young child's questions ask for data ('What happens if you…?' 'What's a "…"?') to supplement what is given it by its own experiences. Children ask also for names; and for the understanding that comes by location of the named in types and the typical, and in relationships such as the causal in any of its varieties; and before long they ask for assurance about what is real and true as opposed to what is just a picture or a story. The child notices that questions can get answers, that answers can suggest further questions, that answers—at any rate those which make sense and do not contradict other answers and the data of its senses—hang together. By an act of insight—of understanding which is not reasoned to—the child (you or me) gets the idea (concept) of *knowledge*, of a whole set, indeed *the* whole set, of correct answers to all the questions that could be asked, of a possible access to all that is real and not just a picture or a story. More precisely, the child gains, more or less clearly and explicitly, the proposition that *knowledge is possible.*

That insight is not, properly speaking, an inference, a deduction from premises, or even a *conclusion* from data or experience. *Knowledge* is, for the child, a new concept, and acquiring the concept is an essentially simple insight. The acquisition brings into view (that is, into one's understanding) a double reality: a world, so to speak, of knowables, of truths, and of realities, getting the truth about which is or would be knowledge; and among those

realities are me, the child, and my parents and teachers and playmates, all of whom are or can be anticipated to be bearers—*knowers*—and sources of knowledge. And this is not a bare concept, but a proposition incorporating it: knowledge is possible and to some extent also actual. Getting into the position where some such proposition is not only understandable but also affirmable will have included some encounter with negation: statements that lacked meaning, or coherence, or correspondence with obvious realities, and statements that were disowned by their makers as 'only a story' and such like. Knowledge comes into one's childish and maturing intellectual life as counterpart to mistakes, deceptions, and illusions or fantasies.

The knowledge—warranted and true belief—that knowledge is possible is knowledge of a kind that in a reflective, philosophical categorization can be called 'theoretical' or, even less satisfactorily, 'speculative' or even 'contemplative': knowledge about the way things are—*Is*-knowledge. But these names make little or no sense except by contrast with knowledge that is 'practical'—directed and directing towards deliberation, choice, and action. But what is practical understanding and knowledge? The child begins to acquire it almost as soon as it begins to acquire non-practical understanding and knowledge, which along with other experience provides a 'basis' for the getting of practical understanding. But the acquisition of practical understanding is no more an inference from non-practical understanding than the acquisition of a new, foundational concept such as 'knowledge' was an inference from the experience of questions being answered.

Take the example that lies to hand. Understanding that knowledge is not only possible but *desirable*, a benefit, a good *to be pursued*, and that being ignorant or mistaken is undesirable, a lack, deficiency, a bad *to be avoided*, is another simple, original, and foundational act of insight. It adds to the *Is*-knowledge that knowledge is possible a new concept and category of concepts: *Ought*-knowledge. This is not the 'ought' that is part of non-practical knowledge's stock of information about regularities: 'It's the equinox, so the tides ought to be higher'; 'It's spring, so the roses should be budding'; and so forth. Rather, it is an ought that directs me to the good I *am to* (should, even if in fact I don't) choose and try to achieve—an 'am to' which is not predictive but normative, not future indicative but gerundive, action-guiding by making sense of action by making it intelligible as the means to an intelligible purpose. And the purpose or objective is intelligible precisely as *beneficial*, as the attaining, instantiating, actualizing of an intelligible good: knowledge, moving from ignorance to knowing. Ignorance is bad, so it's good to listen to the teacher, read the work assigned, ask questions, and so forth—oughts that are truly directive

or normative, even though they have to be reconciled with other oughts that I come to understand, and none of them directs to action regardless of circumstances.

The proposition that knowledge is a good worthy of being pursued is a proposition of a kind so foundational and original that it can be called a practical *principle*, indeed a practical first principle. But this one is not the only first principle of practical reasoning. Among the others is the one that essay 2 pairs with it, in discourse about 'discourse ethics' with Jürgen Habermas: friendship, in various forms and strengths, is intelligibly desirable, choice-worthy, and to be pursued. Only reflectively and philosophically are this good and practical principle clearly distinguishable from a feature of all the basic human goods and all the first practical principles: that they are good also for *others like us* and that the principles direct each of us to have an interest in the attaining and instantiating of the relevant good not only in our own life but in the lives of *anyone.* The boundaries of 'anyone' and 'others like us', doubtless quite hazy in the young child's initial grasp of the basic goods and first practical principles, eventually get clarified in terms of the human: all human persons. This universality of the practical principles, and of their normativity for each of us, both reinforces the normativity of the good of friendship, and is capable of qualifying and limiting that normativity.

Here practical reasonableness comes into view as a further basic intelligible good to which a distinct practical first principle directs us. For it is obvious, or soon obvious, that one might respond to one or other or all of these basic human goods and practical first principles unreasonably. The limitations and vulnerabilities of one's life and capacities not only occasion in us an understanding of a further basic good—human life (one's very existence) and health—but also demand that one adjudicate between the normative claims of each and all of the first practical principles in their bearing on the ways one's own choices and actions might affect the future existence and flourishing of oneself and others. That such an adjudication be reasonable is obviously good not only as a means to realizing any of the other intrinsic goods but also in itself. This architectonic good—of pursuing the other goods in one's own and others' lives *well*, fully reasonably, without deflection or distortion by sub-rational motivations—is the matrix of all normativity that is not merely practical but specifically *moral* (ethical). The principle that adequately articulates its content and directiveness is not successfully identified in, say, essays 7 and 8 or in *Natural Law and Natural Rights*, but can be found in *Fundamentals of Ethics* and many later works such as, in this volume, essay 14, sec. II and essay 15, sec. IV. Its formal demand is that one be reasonable. But since the good of practical

reasonableness, like the corresponding principle articulated as that formal demand to be reasonable, is only one of a number of equally fundamental and obvious basic goods and corresponding first principles, 'be reasonable' is not left with Kantian thinness as a demand merely for non-contradiction (universalizability). It has instead the substantive content provided by those other first principles, picking out and directing us to promote and respect the basic aspects of human flourishing.

That last sentence could have ended with the word 'nature'. For in identifying flourishing, well-being, fulfilment, one is implicitly identifying the nature of the being which is (or might in propitious circumstances be) flourishing. The storm of 'conservative' objections with which essay 9 contends would never have blown up if the objectors had appreciated how central to the thought of their philosophical masters, and how sound, is this axiom: you know something's nature when you know its capacities/potentialities, and these you know when you know their actualizations, and these activities/actions you understand and know only when you know their objects. The axiom applies analogically across the various fields of knowable subject-matter, and its terms, such as 'object', are analogical: their meaning shifts systematically according to the kind of subject-matter, while never becoming a mere pun. When the shift of meaning is allowed the scope that evidence of reality's complexity suggests, the axiom survives the emergence of modern experimental and mathematicized natural science from its Aristotelian forerunner. And the axiom's applicability to the field of human existence, freedom, and action is clear enough. The objects of human action are the intelligible goods picked out and directed to by practical reason's first principles. These goods when realized by freely chosen actions in propitious circumstances go to make up the flourishing of human beings and their communities. That flourishing is the manifesting of human capacities at their fullest. It is the adequately full unfolding and disclosing of human nature. Of course, we can only flourish because we have the capacities to do so—because we have the nature we have, prior to any choices we might make. But none of us knows, adequately, what human flourishing is and what its component goods are, by first knowing that nature. In the order of coming to know (the epistemological order), knowledge of the goods, as intelligible, desirable, pursuit-worthy, comes before knowledge of our nature as such. True, one cannot gain the practical insight that knowledge is good and pursuit-worthy unless one first knows that it is possible. But one also knows that ignorance is possible, and death (as opposed to life), and folly (as opposed to practical reasonableness), and a loner's self-sufficiency (as opposed to friendship). It is the original, underived insight into which in these pairs of possibilities

is *good* and *to-be-pursued* that enables us to know what human flourishing is and, reflectively and theoretically ('speculatively', 'contemplatively'), to give an adequate account of human nature.

So the rationally available standard for our deliberating, choosing, and acting is not 'Follow (your) nature', or even the Suarezian/Grotian 'Follow rational nature'. Those are not false standards, but they are rationally available only once their content has been supplied by following out the available, true, and sufficient standard: 'Reason is to be followed'—that is, reason's first principles, the foundational *reasons* for action.

The *mainstream* in ethics, which runs from Plato through Aristotle and Aquinas and then to the various more or less Suarezian or Grotian thinkers against whom Hobbes, Hume, and Bentham react with more confidence than care, lacked clarity—at least at its textual surface—on the matters about which these critics proved most influential. Aristotle remarks that *phronēsis* ('prudence' in the sense of practical reasonableness as the virtue that integrates one's whole character and deliberation) concerns means, not ends. And then, having left hanging the question how we identify and ratify our ends, the ultimate purposes that provide all practical reasoning with its starting points (its principles), he made matters worse by saying—in the course of a taxonomy of reason's elements and functions—that *nous*, understanding and insight, is concerned with the particular, with the judgment made about a particular option in its particular circumstances. All the elements of the answer to the hanging question about practical reason's first principles are provided by Aquinas; but he was a theologian, never wrote a philosophical treatise to expound the philosophical (not theological) positions which he had in mind in his treatment of moral theology, and left the elements scattered about in his vast writings. And instead of repudiating the Aristotelian dictum that prudence is about means not ends, he employed the dictum in his own work, leaving his interpreters to sort out the resulting confusion: see essay 1 n. 16, and essay 11. Even some of his earliest followers succumbed to the temptation to treat reason as fundamentally contemplative; for them, reason becomes practical not—as Aquinas held and this Introduction argues—by further insights into what is not merely attainable but would be *good* to attain, as an *intelligibly* desirable kind of end; rather (as the scholar wrote who finished his unfinished commentary on the *Politics*) reason becomes practical, end-pursuing, by the addition of some act of *will* preferring some kinds of practical possibility over others. But one's 'will' is either one's responsiveness to reasons, or one's responsiveness to the urges of emotions, passions, and 'desires', sub- and pre-rational. The Humean picture of practical reason—reason in deliberation—as the slave

of the passions was in a sense prepared for by the Aristotelian sayings about *phronēsis* and *nous*, and by scholastic sliding away from Aquinas's quite fundamental grasp that will is at bottom responsiveness to reasons, to the intelligibility of intrinsic human goods.

The critical response to Hume which Kant intended and attempted to carry through miscarried by its failure to question Hume's assumption that reason cannot do what, we should be clear, every modestly intelligent child can do. The neo-scholastic response to Hume similarly failed to bring to bear a philosophically clarified and contextualized showing of the first principles of practical reason; the response conflated them with the moral norms for which they are the principles, put forward a doctrine of human nature which though sound enough was not critically grounded, and left the transition from *Is* to *Ought* in an obscurity which minimized or even eliminated the differences between free but reasonable, ought-aware choice and compliance with either sheerly given instincts (inclinations) or the commands and prohibitions of a source threateningly superior in power.

That is the context, then, not only of the already mentioned fairly early essays 7 (on reason's normativity, against Hume) and 8 (on foundations, against radical sceptics), but also of the even earlier essay 6 (on reason and one of its first principles, friendship, as potential sources of an exit from the sequence of unsustainable positions in twentieth-century English moral philosophy). Essay 1 has pride of place because the Humean problematic about reason and sub-rational motivations remains central to our philosophical culture and atmosphere, and is itself radically and fruitfully problematized by Christine Korsgaard, even if, as the essay goes on to argue, she is prevented from harvesting most of the fruits by her own Kantianism. Korsgaard's critique of Hume and Humean assumptions about practical reason is carried through by her into critique of sophisticated contemporary versions which disclaim descent from Hume. Bernard Williams's distinction between 'internal' and 'external' reasons for action is a good instance of such a covertly Humean position, as essay 5 recalls in the course of a wider exploration of flaws in this representative late-twentieth-century philosopher's appropriation both of the tradition, and of truth and reasonableness itself.

One's philosophical or other 'theoretical', 'speculative', or 'contemplative' thinking—for example, on natural scientific, or historical questions—is directed 'formally' (that is, regardless of its 'content', its subject-matter) by a normative standard or consideration: that one's reasoning be responsive to all the relevant data or evidence, free from fallacies, and coherent both with itself and with other positions one judges sound and for present

purposes unrevisable. This normativity internal to non-practical reason is also internal to practical reason. Indeed, practical reason includes among its concerns one's non-practical reasoning, as an activity at least partly subject to one's will and therefore a substantive matter for deliberation and choice. Reason is not a little person inside oneself, and practical reason and non-practical reason are not two entities. One's reason is an aspect of one's undivided reality, and the distinction between theoretical and practical reason is a distinction between two different functions of one's reason, that is, of one's own understanding and reasoning. And these functions overlap and include each other, primarily because making use of each or either is a voluntary activity guided by an at least implicit judgment that it is worthwhile, a good purpose one has reason to choose, and to choose to do well; secondarily, because practical reason's activities in directing this or any other activity are subjects for reflective scrutiny and philosophical contextualization. The normativity of logic precisely as such—paradigmatically, the necessitation of conclusions by premises—is normativity within the logical order, not the natural, the practical-technical, or the practical-moral.[1] But the demand to respect that normativity conscientiously in one's thinking is a requirement of the practical-moral order, a requirement of the same kind as that one assemble all relevant evidence and follow evidence where it leads, that one not deceive oneself, that one not deceive one's collaborators in scientific projects or one's students, that one not use human beings as mere material for one's scientific purposes, and so forth.

The arguments about self-refutation in essays 3 and 4 give a kind of particularity to these reflections on theoretical reason's practical character (all questions of utility aside), and on practical reason's integrity as the slave of truth, not the passions. For the point of respect for evidence and coherence and logical validity is that they are requirements of truth attaining. Practical truth is truth. Like non-practical truth it is found by critical attention to all relevant data and questions, coherence with all other truths, and correspondence, not to reality in the same sense as non-practical truth's correspondence (since practical principles and the propositions derived from them concern what is not yet real but might be made real by the actions they direct), but rather correspondence to fulfilment. That is, practical principles have their truth by anticipating—being in an anticipatory correspondence to—the fulfilment whose realization is possible through actions in accordance with them.[2]

[1] On these four kinds of order, see e.g. essay 14, sec. III.

[2] See *Aquinas* 99–101; also 1987f at 115–20.

As it happens, the essays in this volume say relatively little about the content of an adequate inventory of practical reason's first principles; essay 14's summary list, structured around the concept of harmony, is a somewhat over-synthesized construct. Better is the brief account in footnote 25 of essay 15 (see further essay III.5 (1996a), sec. III), with its clear inclusion of the human good whose omission from the account in *Natural Law and Natural Rights* and essay 14 (and from 1987f) could not fail to be puzzling to anthropologists and social historians, but whose inclusion is unsettling, embarrassing, and 'controversial' to many in our strangely ideologized generation: marriage, the commitment and institution fully adequate to living out a loving and equal joint and several parenthood (fatherhood and motherhood). As sympathetic a philosophical critic as Timothy Chappell argues that marriage cannot be a basic human good:

> We do not complete any action-explanation by saying that the action to be explained is aimed *at marriage*. It is perfectly intelligible to go on and ask why marriage is a good thing, in a way that it is arguably not intelligible to go on and ask why friendship and knowledge are good things. Moreover, what makes marriage a good thing is nothing separate from its instantiation of other basic goods, such as, say, friendship, self-integration, play, aesthetic good . . . , physical health and well-being—and even, dare one say it, *physical pleasure*.[3]

Chappell's list of goods he thinks explain the good of marriage conspicuously omits the very good which gives the friendship of spouses its *marital* point and its commitment to permanent exclusiveness in sharing of sexual pleasure: its orientation to procreation and parenthood. And it is just a mistake to say that no action-explanation is completed by stating that marriage is the action's end. The action of marrying (which in a certain sense extends through the entire marriage and everything done for the sake of it: essay III.20 (2008c), sec. I) is sufficiently explained by saying that it is the beginning of the actualizing of this intrinsic good itself. Knowledge and friendship have all sorts of benefits as means to other goods, benefits which can usefully be explained while leaving unexplained the *intrinsic* good (knowledge, or friendship, for its own sake and in spite of every cost and disappointment)—unexplained because in need not of explanation but only of some exemplification(s) sufficiently unencumbered by distractions to allow the intrinsic desirability to be manifestly intelligible. So too the benefits of bringing into being, and then into maturity, children who will maintain their elders and contemporaries can usefully be explained while leaving unexplained—and again in need of no explanation but only clear exemplification—the intrinsic good of parenting by joint and equal

[3] Chappell, 'Natural Law Theory and Contemporary Moral Philosophy' at 38–9.

procreating and by appropriately dedicated providing for and nurturing: the central case[4] of marriage.[5]

My failure to have identified marriage as the basic good it is (leaving it divided between procreation and friendship) reinforces the reflective question whether the inventory is the right one, and an inventory of the right components. Studying criteria for assessing human development in the context of international aid, Sabina Alkire tackled the question from two of the various relevant directions: theoretical reflections of philosophically minded scholars, and the practical experience of recipients of aid whose lives and circumstances are close to basic. Her book, *Valuing Freedoms: Sen's Capability Approach and Poverty Reduction*, surveys over thirty attempts at an inventory, and gives prominence, as its title witnesses, to the terms with which Amartya Sen's theory of welfare and justice is constructed: freedom, capability, and functioning. She shows that Sen wavers between these terms because each is meant by him to signify something which it does not quite articulate: human good or value, a way of flourishing, of being fulfilled by chosen actions and cooperation. Capabilities, functionings, and 'substantive' freedoms are intelligible as the Aristotelian 'capacities' and 'actualizations' of capacity in their application to the specifically human, characterized as it is by the fact of freedom of choice and the opportunity (with its many economic, cultural, and political preconditions) of self-determination, valuable if used for truly intelligible goods. She concludes that Sen's terms, in his use of them, get their sense as ways of speaking about (aspects of) *basic reasons for action* and *basic dimensions of human flourishing* or development or, negatively, of poverty reduction.[6]

Sen himself has avoided making any kind of inventory, expressing doubts about its appropriateness yet seemingly inviting others to the task and pointing, appreciatively but without commitment, to Martha Nussbaum's explorations and taxonomies.[7] Nussbaum builds these on a sound critique

[4] Chappell's final argument is summarized in the question 'Was Solomon partaking of the basic good of marriage when he took his seven-hundredth wife?' Yes, and No—rather as one who today devotes his life to astrology or necromancy does and does not partake of the basic good of knowledge, and as the wary friendship between Mafia killers (like members of Stalin's Politburo in 1937) does and does not partake of the good of friendship.

[5] Alkire, 'The Basic Dimensions of Human Flourishing: A Comparison of Accounts' at 93 concludes 'One could go part of the way towards addressing the above problems by proposing "family" as a distinctive reason for action'. But the problems arose because she was not clear that the central case, that gives what intelligibility they have to non-central cases (both reasonable and unreasonable/ immoral), is precisely the one in which marriage is understood and lived as both the instituting of a new family and the continuing of earlier ones. It is this (in brief) that makes unsatisfactory the position adopted in *NLNR* and maintained in Alkire's list of nine basic reasons for action (*ibid.*, 99), namely that 'reproduction' is simply an aspect of life.

[6] Alkire, *Valuing Freedoms*, e.g. 51–2, 76–7.

[7] *Ibid.*, 28–31. For the developed inventory, see Nussbaum, *Women and Human Development*, 78–80. Sen, 'The Place of Capability in a Theory of Justice' at 248–9, hints that, whereas Nussbaum

of scepticism, and to emphasize the significance she rightly attributes to self-determining choice[8] focuses not on 'actual functions' but on 'central human functional capabilities': each item on the list begins 'being able to...'. But though the goods that are the objects of capabilities and the point of 'functions' (better: freely chosen actions) are thus kept out of focus, her conceptions of flourishing give the list an evaluative quality that in many instances removes it from the level of first principles to the level of an already at least partly moralized set of conclusions from them—and moralized, in some instances, quite questionably. Thus *Life* is said to include 'not dying...before one's life is so reduced as to be not worth living'.[9] Knowledge appears not as a basic human good concerned with truth and reality but rather, if at all, as an aspect of a capability to use *Sense, Imagination, and Thought* 'in a "truly human" way, a way informed and cultivated by an adequate education, including...literacy and basic mathematical and scientific training'.[10] *Practical Reason* appears as 'Being able to form a conception of the good and to engage in critical reflection about the planning of one's life'; that the conception of the good, and the plan of life, be not only self-formed but also reasonable is a value—indeed a basic value—left in silence. Yet into the tenth and last item, *Control over One's Environment*, enter the overt moral and political judgments involved in specifying the content of that phrase as: 'Being able to participate effectively in political choices that govern one's life...' and 'Being able to hold property (both land and movable goods)...'. The political judgments are not (on certain factual assumptions) unreasonable, but their reasonableness is not the intelligibility of first principles or basic aspects of human flourishing. The good of handing on one's life and culture procreatively and familially (that is, maritally) nowhere appears, despite the references to 'reproductive health' and 'choice in matters of reproduction' and the allusions to a satisfying sex life or opportunities for sexual satisfaction which appear under both *Bodily Health* and *Bodily Integrity*. Relationship to the transcendent: not envisaged. It is a list dateable to within a decade.

The preceding paragraph's analysis and comment are mine, not Alkire's. Her own critique of Nussbaum's list and of the many others she surveys, and her own testing of the categories with women subjects of development aid in northern Pakistan, led her to a list[11] essentially the same as that

seems to think that a list of minimally needed capabilities 'can be arrived at directly on the basis of foundational theory', he himself envisages such a list emerging only 'as outcome of participatory public discussion'. But only by making a 'foundational' judgment about its *content* could such a discussion (unlikely enough in itself) be reasonably said to have had such an 'outcome'.

[8] *Women and Human Development*, 74. [9] *Ibid.*, 78. [10] *Ibid.*

[11] Alkire, 'Basic Dimensions of Human Flourishing' at 99; cf. *Valuing Freedoms*, 72–3.

in essay 14, to which she adds 'harmony with the natural world' (which I think more a matter of aesthetic appreciation, acknowledgement of the transcendent's larger purposes, and a prudent concern for sustainability), while remaining open to the possibility that under some other description the marital-familial might find a place. Her work repays reflection in its own right, and is a reminder that the dialectical, exploratory, and clarifying philosophical vindication of practical reason's foundations has dimensions which I have scarcely revisited systematically since *NLNR*, Chapter IV.

II. BUILDING ON THE FOUNDATIONS

The essays in this part relate more or less closely and centrally to the movement from first principles to moral standards and moral judgments. In this movement the first principles, in themselves intelligible as pre-moral and lending intelligibility to immoral plans and decisions, take on their fullest range and true implications—as moral principles. Essay 11, as indicated above, is also concerned with the vindication of first principles even independently of their moral implications. But it is prudence, the supreme moral-philosophical virtue, that is accomplishing this vindication, and since prudence's goal is not only philosophic clarity and truth but also moral truth and morally sound choices and actions, the essay is involved in that movement up and out from first principles into morality.

Essay 10 is a response to Aristotelians and Thomists who found difficulty in recognizing *NLNR*'s account of practical reason and ethics as a continuation rather than a betrayal of the tradition. Though the essay's last sections, and touches here and there in earlier sections, are theological, the essay's purpose is to show how a strictly philosophical moral philosophy (ethics) needs and has a unifying 'last end'. This turns out to be, not an end-state whether in this world or the next, but an ideal of practical reason—integral human fulfilment, not as goal of any plan or project, but as an ideal against which options can be measured as open to such fulfilment or not open to it, and thus as fully reasonable (morally sound) or more or less unreasonable (immoral). For this ideal is the conceptual counterpart or resultant of the idea that the directiveness of each and all of the first practical principles must not be deflected or cut down by sub-rational motivations. That their integral directiveness involves prioritizing and specializations of many kinds is evident, but the true measure of such prioritization is not emotional even when, as in the application of the Golden Rule (fairness), the application of a rational standard for prioritizing legitimizes resort to emotionally shaped preferences (and de-legitimizes an inhuman Kantian or Stoic exaltation of rationality or moral law above spontaneous love

and affection). Integral human fulfilment is the fulfilment of all human persons and their communities, precisely because each of the first practical principles picks out and directs one towards a basic human good which is as good in the lives of others as in one's own. Essay 10's intimations of this ideal of practical reason, intimations tailored to showing how far Aquinas employs it as the working integrator of his philosophical ethics, are elaborated with some care and specificity, in their own philosophical right, in essay 14, sec. II (and essay 15, sec. IV).

Essay 12, whose discussion of Strauss is revisited in essay III.5 (1996a), sec. II, itself supplements the more foundational philosophical treatment in Chapter V ('"Kantian Principles" and Ethics') of *FoE*, by questioning the easy assumption of contemporary Oxford scholars that Aristotle had no time for moral absolutes, that is, for exceptionless negative moral norms/rules/standards. Those who find it embarrassing to consider the issue in the context of the basic good of marriage, as Aristotle did, can profitably transpose the discussion to the matter of torture (in response to the ticking bomb). The possibility of absolute moral rights, which an organ of modern conscience such as the European Convention of Human Rights acknowledges and juridically adopts, is dependent on a successful critique of consequentialist ethical theories. Essay 13, sec. V, locates the issues briefly. Their place in any sound and central-case legal system is shown and exemplified a bit in essay 14, secs VI and VII. The purpose of this essay, which gives it its place in this volume rather than in Volume IV (where it would have been quite fitting), is to explore the various different ways in which a decent system of positive law will derive from morality and thus, most ultimately, from the first principles of practical reason and the vision of human good that they outline.

III. PUBLIC REASON AND UNREASON

The critique of consequentialist conceptions of moral life and judgment is set out, briefly, in some of its fundamental aspects, in essay 15 ('Commensuration and Public Reason'), secs I and II. Section IV of that essay is a synoptic presentation of the morality that results from the integration of practical reason's first principles by the master moral principle of openness to integral human fulfilment. The essay's title and prologue speak of *public reason* in the straightforward sense, unconcerned with the restrictions promoted by Rawls with his misappropriation of that phrase.[12] Those restrictions are discussed in some detail in essay 16,

[12] My use of 'public reason' here—as in essay 2 at 58—is equally unconcerned with the various particular ways in which the phrase was deployed by Hobbes, Milton, and Rousseau, as mentioned in the first endnote to essay 16.

both at large and in the context of the issue which Rawls himself chose to illustrate his conception of public reason.

The volume ends with three essays written nearer in time than we now are to the tipping point at which our culture abandoned the serious attempt of many centuries to protect practical reason's civil rule over the passions in the domain where they are most practised in enslaving it to their destructive sway. This abandonment coincided, not coincidentally, with the blurring of understanding of, and much diminished institutional support for, the good of marriage and maritally structured family. The old law, dealing with the issue in the context of an individual reader of pornography, expressed this sort of blurring and loss of grip with the colourful phrase 'deprave and corrupt', and it seems too quick and superficial to dismiss such terms as mere 'moralizing' when applied to the culture as a whole. Essay 19 challenges the sophisticated lightness with which Jonathan Miller shrugged off the problem. Essay 17 does not reach the moral-cultural problem, but explores some of the psychological context in which practical reason(ing) as an activity is carried through, reasonably or unreasonably. Essay 18 ('Freedom of Speech'), forty years on, seems both right in its opening sketch of the social-conventional restrictions on freedom of speech, and wrong in its inattention to the risk that the law of the land, and the rules of private-public association such as universities, would repress the very kinds of intellectual discourse—on matters of fact, or practical truth, and public importance—that 'freedom of speech and the press' was institutionally proclaimed to protect and public reason, straightforwardly understood, requires.

In a number of this volume's essays, the good of practical reasonableness has been explained as inner integrity and outer authenticity: authenticity in that one's actions carry out one's own choice that one made in line with one's own deliberations; integrity, in that one's emotions—passions—and sensibilities are integrated with one's reason's judgments and choices. No one can expect to be immune to unsettling emotions such as fear; but in one's awareness of oneself as a practical reasoner one can and should aspire to a balance of dispositions such that one's reasonable judgments are not deflected by contrary emotional drives, but rather are supported by the emotions that one can use one's imagination and memory and knowledge of the world to summon up to counteract the emotions that conflict with one's reasonable judgment. Just as it is virtually impossible for even the most sophisticated mathematicians to think mathematically without some support from images (diagrams and the like) which they know perfectly well are partly false to mathematical reality, so it is impossible for bodily beings such as us to act without some support from our emotions and

therefore from our imagination and memory. The reasonable ideal is that one's understanding and reasoning rules over one's emotions civilly and constitutionally, not tyrannically but cooperatively, as civil leaders cooperate with those willing (not supine or slavish) free citizens whom they direct. Those who on the unstable fore-part of the *Admella* could not master their fears and attempt the rope crossing to the stable aft-section soon perished. Some of those sailors who mastered their fears and volunteered to swim for help perished too, as did some of the lifeboatmen who braved ferocious seas to approach the wreck. But the rescue attempts succeeded, so far as they could and did, because many were able to engage emotions—the emotions associated with ideals and reasonable traditions of honour, loyalty, fellow-feeling, and cooperation in common enterprise—in the service of reason. The acts of reason they brought to bear in the action of rescue will have included logical and scientific reasoning about cause and effect, technical reasoning about boat-handling, and practical-moral reasoning about the human goods of life and that friendship which, as the tradition has always taught, extends even to unthreatening human *strangers* encountered in the wilds.