Contours of Agency
Essays on Themes from Harry Frankfurt

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that I had done so, would hardly arise. Similarly, the peculiar authority over me of my ideals does not come simply from my recognition that they are, like many things that are not among my ideals, worthy or valuable. It comes from my sense of the particular way in which my ideals are valuable to me. In cases of neither kind is my loyalty nothing more than a response to a perception of the inherent merit or appeal of the object, which leaves aside any sense of my own investment of myself in it. In both cases, the stringent and intimate necessity to which I feel subject derives from the fact that my personal integrity is at stake.

Note

1. Scanlon acknowledges that people may sometimes be driven by the sheer power of desire, apart from any influence of reason, but he thinks that this is unusual. In my opinion, he underestimates its prevalence. Of the behavior of Trollope's Lord Fawn, for instance, he says: "What happens in this case, as I would describe it, is that the fact that his intended plan of action would involve discussing such an intimate matter with a coarse person of low class strikes Lord Fawn as an absolutely compelling reason against it." It is worth noting that this is not how Trollope describes it. According to Trollope, what happens is not that Lord Fawn finds compelling reasons against carrying out his original plan. Rather, Lord Fawn finds that "every feeling of his nature" revolts against it.

Identification and Agency

In the preface to his collection *The Importance of What We Care About*, Harry Frankfurt remarks how the dominance of mechanism in our philosophical and scientific culture, along with the "evisceration" of the notion of cause itself in the eighteenth century, "have made it difficult to give a good account of the difference between being active and being passive." It is, of course, not easy to imagine how we could do without some such distinction and still think of ourselves as persons at all, for the "difference between passivity and activity is at the heart of the fact that we exist as selves and agents and not merely as locales in which certain events happen to occur" (ix). The distinction between what happens to us and what we do is, of course, central to our specifically moral self-consciousness, and the ability to draw this distinction in practice is part of thinking of ourselves as agents at all, creatures who are peculiarly accountable for certain events that occur and not others. And later developments in moral philosophy have placed this distinction at the center of the understanding of autonomy, including under this head the question of what it is to stand toward elements of one's own psychic life as an agent rather than as a "passive bystander."

But our concern with autonomy, both inside and outside of the study of philosophy, is not restricted to a concern with what we can be held responsible for, or how we may be proper subjects of praise and blame. The importance of this source of interest in autonomy doesn't need to be argued for, but the value of autonomy is broader than the requirements of moral evaluation, and is intimately connected with seeing oneself as a person living a life at all, rather than simply as a thing with a particular
career through time. And the idea of being a particular person brings with it the distinction between what is “one’s own” and what is experienced as other or alien. It is only with respect to something with a quite particular kind of unity that we can speak of either identification or alienation.

In various papers Frankfurt has investigated the sense in which a person may fail to identify with some part of his mental life, an element of his thought or desire which, in another sense, is undeniable his and no one else’s. In “Identification and Externality,” he explicates this strong sense of identification by, among other things, comparing obsessional thoughts or desires with involuntary bodily movements that the person may not think of as his.

It is not incoherent, despite the air of paradox, to say that a thought that occurs in my mind may or may not be something I think. This can be understood in much the same way as the less jarring statement that an event occurring in my body may or may not be something that I do.2

As with various bodily reflexes that just “happen” to the person, a person may be more or less the passive witness of certain mental events which he experiences as “external” to him. He may feel he has no more to do with them than being the scene of their occurrence. As Frankfurt notes, there is a distinction to be made here between two ways we may speak of an aspect of psychological life “belonging” to some person. An obsessional thought that a person feels alienated from is nonetheless an episode in the psychological history of that person and no other. In this respect it may be like a reflex-movement or internal bodily process that, while not an action of the person, is nonetheless his reflex and no one else’s. We may call this the weak or “empirical” sense in which the thought or movement is his. But the fact that we can describe such a person as alienated from his obsessional thought, as if coming to him from without, shows that there is also a stronger sense in which such a thought may or may not be experienced as “his own.” The failure of this stronger sense of identification is expressed in various different ways in Frankfurt’s writing. For example, the person may feel that the source of the thought or desire is outside of him, or that he is the passive scene of its occurrence, or that its occurrence is inexplicable to him, that he cannot link it up with the rest of his mental life, or that he does not endorse its promptings. Thus the failure to identify in the stronger sense with some part of one’s mental life is described in terms of several different oppositions: between internality and externality, activity and passivity, explicability and inexplicability, and the attitude of endorsement and rejection or disavowal.

I want to understand which, if any, of these oppositions may be thought of as primary, and how some of the other features associated with this notion of “identification” may be understood in terms of it. In addition, I hope to say something about the point of having such a concept as “identification” or “alienation” in the first place. That is, once it is agreed that even a “disowned” thought or desire nonetheless empirically belongs to the psychological life of that person, we will want to know what the point could be of insisting on some “stronger” sense of identification that may nonetheless fail to obtain in such a case. If the language of “identity” is appropriate here at all then this idea must express more than the person’s disapproval of some part of himself; and making this out will require getting clearer about just what concept of the person, what sense of “agency,” is being invoked here, such that a failure of the normal “active” relation to some aspect of psychic life can be described as a failure to “identify with” it.

Endorsement, Control, and Choice

As mentioned, Frankfurt begins the discussion of “Identification and Externality” with a parallel between two contrasts. Among physical events concerning my body, only some of these count as things that I do, and among mental events only some of these count as thoughts that I think. And much of what he says about in that paper and later in “Identification and Wholeheartedness” and elsewhere suggests that he believes the distinction between activity and passivity is central to the distinction between internality and externality with respect to states of mind. The interplay between these two sets of distinctions is subject to important qualification in the later work, but one of the more explicit presentations of it is in his 1975 paper, “Three Concepts of Free Action.”

Now a person is active with respect to his own desires when he identifies himself with them, and he is active with respect to what he does when what he does is the outcome of his identification of himself with the desire that moves him in doing it. Without such identification the person is a passive bystander to his
desires and to what he does, regardless of whether the causes of his desires and of what he does are the work of another agent or of impersonal external forces or of processes internal to his own body. As for a person's second-order volitions themselves, it is impossible for him to be a passive bystander to them. They constitute his activity—i.e., his being active rather than passive—and the question of whether or not he identifies himself with them cannot arise. It makes no sense to ask whether someone identifies himself with his identification of himself, unless this is intended simply as asking whether his identification is wholehearted or complete.\(^3\)

If it is the concept of the person as agent that enables us to speak of "identification" in the case of bodily movements, does a similar sense of agency have application in the case of mental life? It is not immediately clear how it could, since we do not appear to produce our desires and other attitudes in anything like the way we produce our immediate physical movements. A simple physical movement can be performed "at will," for an arbitrary reason, or for practically no reason at all. But a person's beliefs, desires, fears or cares are not simply chosen by him, and especially not when we would see his identification with them as most complete. Here it would seem not only that full identification with an attitude does not involve the sort of simple control we have over our immediate movements, but that the very considerations that are suggestive of "identification" with a desire run contrary to the requirements of simple control. Indeed, it is essential to the will itself, according to Frankfurt, that it is not subject to our immediate arbitrary control: "A person's will is real only if its character is not absolutely up to him. It must be unresponsive to his sheer flat."\(^4\) At the very least, then, we are going to have to pursue an understanding of what it is to be "active" beyond the picture of arbitrary acts of will, beyond the idea of free choice, if the idiom of "activity" is to help us to explicate the notion of what it is to "identify" with an element of one's psychic life.

The unwilling addict, or the akatic person who is aware of his condition, feels alienated from his desire. That is, although the attractiveness of what he craves may be all too familiar and comprehensible to him, he feels controlled by his desire, rather than the other way around. And the force of his desire in a given case may be wholly unhinged from his own conclusions about what's desirable or even worth bothering with. It grows and persists independently of his more classically active exercises of reflecting, evaluating, and endorsing. In a different way, the schizo-

phrenic also suffers a "passivization" of the person's normal, directed relation to his thinking.\(^5\) He is alienated from the content and experience of his thinking because its arrivals and departures are split off from the rest of his activity and the reasons that are part of it. The thought he experiences does not appear in the course of thinking about a particular thing, but seems to come of its own, and the desire is one that is similarly isolated from (and contrary to) the person's wider values and practical projects.

In these cases, however, it seems to be something more like the absence of rational endorsement of the state in question that makes the person feel passive in the face of it, not the fact that the belief or desire itself is not subject to direct control or adopted at will. Or if the difference does not lie in rational endorsement of the state itself, then it may lie in seeing that state (e.g., as thought or as willing) as responsive to and expressive of one's engagement in the world, rather than something with sources and a direction wholly independent of that engagement. But in neither case does the happier state which these cases are alienated from appear to involve any direct role for decisions or acts of will with respect to the thoughts and desires themselves. And in other contexts we may feel that the sense of identification is incompatible with the feeling that the state in question is, or even could be, directly under the control of one's will.

Many of a person's deepest emotional commitments, that is, the ones he identifies with most strongly, are precisely the ones that do not appear to him to arise from any decision of his, but rather to express the limits of what it is possible for him to will, and thus to define the shape of his will. This, of course, is an idea that Frankfurt has explored in several of his more recent papers.\(^6\)

If an experience of choosing seems absent from both the feelings and desires we feel are most deeply ours, as well as those we disown and struggle against, then the existence of an act of choice or volition cannot be what distinguishes them. And further, if the idea of rational endorsement still has some role to play in capturing the sense of "identification" we're pursuing, this notion will have to include more than the fact that one approves of the state or disposition in question. For a person may approve of, and even follow the guidance of, some state of mind which he nonetheless experiences as "other" to him, and coming to him from without. Socrates said that from childhood he had a divine guide
[daimon], a kind of voice that would prevent him from continuing in something he was about to do. He certainly approved of its promptings, for he always followed them and believed them to have saved him from many evils and mistakes. But nonetheless he did experience the voice as something “other” to him; much as he endorsed it, he did not identify with it as he did with his other thoughts and intentions. What was most apparently missing from his relation to the voice was that he would have no access to the reasons for the prohibition in question. The daimon would simply halt him and issue an injunction, and it was usually only some time after following it that he would figure out what the rationale was. He would follow it both because it had a certain independent power over him, and because he had a belief which was justified by repeated experience that the advice it gave would turn out to be good.

Thus his relation to it was like that toward some wise but inscrutable advisor (or parental superego), and this is very much not the relation a person has to the ordinary beliefs and desires he identifies with and acts on. Thus in addition to simple endorsement, the ordinary way in which a person identifies with his desires and other states of mind would appear to require a kind of involvement in and accessibility to the reasons in question.

Yet even endorsement combined with accessibility to reasons (of the sort absent from Socrates’ relation to his daimon) does not give us what we want, does not capture the ordinary ease of unquestioned identification with one’s thought or desire. For it is not enough for a person to approve of his desire, or even to appreciate its reasonableness, for him to identify with it wholeheartedly. The person is, after all, not just the appraiser of his own mental life. At least, identification would seem to require that he takes his thought or desire to be an expression of him and not simply some force inside him, and that its direction and development is in some sense “up to him,” even though we’ve seen reason to reject the picture of the agent directing his thought just in the same way that he directs his bodily movements. What is wanted is an explicaton of the idea of identifying with one’s thought in terms of assuming some kind of active stance toward it, but which doesn’t involve a voluntaristic picture of the formation of desires and other attitudes. Further, certain familiar senses of “activity” not only fail to capture the stance a person takes toward those attitudes of his he identifies with, but are actually incompatible with such identification. For instance, the thoughts I take steps to drive from my mind, as well as the desires I have to work myself up to, are certainly ones I may be said to take some kind of active stance toward, but they are partly for that very reason not states I identify with in the sense that concerns us here.

Activity and the Attitudes

As a way of gaining some perspective on the part played by the active-passive contrast, and its relation to the contrast between internality and externality, it will be helpful to compare this pair of contrasts with a certain traditional picture of the distinction between sensations and intentional states such as beliefs, desires and other attitudes. (Elements of this picture can be found in such diverse figures as Plato, Descartes and Kant, but I am not ascribing the picture to Frankfurt.) What this distinction within mental life will show is a distinction between two senses of the person’s responsibility for his thought or feeling, and the proper sense of responsibility will, I suggest, be what shows us the sense of “activity” that is relevant to the notion of “identification.”

There is a natural sense in which a sensation like a headache is something one is passive with respect to. It is a happening to which the person is passively subject, something that befalls him, and he is the scene of its occurrence. A person’s beliefs and intentions, on the other hand, are not like this. Because they are attitudes, concerning some state of affairs, they are subject to justification. My beliefs don’t just happen to me; rather I am responsible for the reasons which I take to support them. This is part of what makes them mine. Thus I am active with respect to my beliefs and intentions in a way that I am not with respect to my sensations. The fact that I am active with respect to them goes with the fact that they belong to me as a person in a way that does not apply to my various bodily sensations. The line here need not be sharply drawn, and not all of a person’s mental life will fall neatly on one side or the other. But we should notice that even when Descartes, for instance, speaks of “mixed states” such as the passions, he is indicating both their passive nature and their kinship with sensational states, something which complicates the sense of them as attitudes. Pure feelings and sensations belong to our bodily nature and as such are manifestations of mere passive matter.
This is mere reactivity. By contrast, the person as such is something essentially active, autonomous and self-moving. All the more reason within this tradition to identify the person as such with the thinking part of his nature, where he is active without external impediment or dependency on the cooperation of the physical world, and master of his own house. And hence the tendency to explicate the notion of “identifying” with some aspect of one’s mental life with the adopting of some kind of active stance toward it.

Naturally, the opposition as set forth here is fairly crude. Nonetheless I think we can see that neither identification nor alienation of the sort that is relevant to our attitudes (e.g., fear or desire) has any application to a purely sensational state like a headache. Within mental life, the categorical difference between the intentional and the nonintentional runs across the two senses of identification we have distinguished. With respect to sensations, it is only the weaker, empirical sense of identification that has any application. A person’s headache is simply a part of his psychological history, and there is no deeper sense of identifying with it, or seeing it as truly his own, which might apply or fail to apply to his relation to it. Nor does the possibility of his being active with respect to it seem relevant to this point. His headache does not become in any deeper sense his if it is somehow produced by the person himself. This is another limitation of the comparison with the distinction between bodily events that I cause and those that happen by themselves. For, as we will see, that distinction does not capture the difference between those physical movements that are actions and those that simply happen on their own. For example, I might cause my heart rate to increase, or my digestive processes to resume, without that making either of these into actions of mine.

Instead, the stronger sense of identification at issue here concerns only attitudes and appetites that are directed on some object or state of affairs. The directedness on an object means that the ideas of reasons and justification have application to these states, and these are the same ones for which identification in the strong sense can even be an issue for the person. Hence whatever the sense of activity and passivity is that may help to explicate this notion of identification, it must not only apply to attitudes as such, but must be the specific sort of activity that is characteristic of our relation to our attitudes in the normal case, and not simply the sense in which we may be active with respect to our sensations.

It will help in identifying this characteristic sort of activity to begin by distinguishing different kinds of desire. Some desires, such as those associated with hunger or sheer fatigue, may be experienced by the person as feelings that simply come over him. They simply happen, without the person as such playing any role. On some occasions their occurrence may be inexplicable to him, but their inexplicability in such cases need not diminish their force. Like an alien intruder they must simply be responded to, even if one doesn’t understand what they’re doing there or the sense of their demands. The person’s stance toward such desires, and how he deals with them, may be little different from his stance toward any other empirical phenomenon he confronts. From this angle, a brute desire is a bit of reality for the agent to accommodate, like a sensation, or a broken leg, or an obstacle in one’s path.

Other desires, however, may be states of great conceptual complexity, attitudes we articulate, revise, argue about, and only arrive at after long thought. Thomas Nagel, for instance, distinguishes between “motivated” and “unmotivated” desires, and by now the general distinction is familiar from various contexts. When someone wants to change jobs, or learn French, or avoid being seen, these desires are “motivated” or “judgment sensitive” in that they depend on certain beliefs about what makes these various things desirable. This dependence is twofold. The desire to change jobs depends for its justification on various beliefs (e.g., about oneself, about one’s present job and prospects elsewhere). Were the person to lose these beliefs he would lose justification for the desire. And second, losing justification for this desire is supposed to make some difference to whether he continues to have this desire. The actual existence of the desire may well not survive the discovery that the new job prospect involves even more heavy lifting or a more toxic environment than one’s present situation. This connection can fail, of course, and when it does the person may be open to familiar forms of criticism. It is the normal expectation of the person, as well as a rational demand made on him, that the question of what he actually does desire should be dependent in this way on his assessment of the desire and the grounds he has for it. For the person himself, then, his thought-dependent desire is not a brute empirical phenomenon he must simply deal with, like any other bit of reality he confronts. For this sort of desire, as a “judgment-sensitive” attitude, owes its existence (as an empirical psychological fact) to his own deliberations and overall assessment of his situation.
In fact, by far, most of our desires are of this sort, and not of the sort that simply assail us with their force (despite the nearly exclusive concentration by philosophers since Plato on the “brute” desires of hunger and lust). For a desire to belong to the thought-dependent category, it is not necessary that it be formed as the result of deliberation. Very few of our desires come into existence as the conclusion of an exercise of practical reasoning. Equally, however, very few of our beliefs arrive as the conclusion of any theoretical reasoning that we undertake. It is nonetheless essential to the category of belief that a belief is a possible conclusion of some theoretical reasoning. That possibility defines the kind of state belief is. Similarly, what is essential for a desire to belong to the thought-dependent category is for it to be the possible conclusion of some practical reasoning. This already indicates a categorical difference between such desires and mere feelings, including such things as the sensation of thirst. With respect to the sensation of thirst, neither identification nor externality has any application. The only sense in which such a state is mine is as an empirical episode in my psychological history.

Two Kinds of Responsibility

This brings us a bit closer to the particular sense of “activity” that should be characteristic of our relation to our attitudes, if this notion is to shed light on the idea of “identification.” There’s more than one way of being active with respect to an attitude or other mental state of one’s own. Consider again one’s relation to one’s feelings and sensations. On the picture sketched out earlier, sensations and the like are typically mere “happenings” to which the person is passively subject. But in what sense do we understand sensations or “brute” desires as mere happenings to which the person is passively subject? After all, a person can, of course, inflict various sensations on himself, and can do this quite actively and freely. He pinches himself, and produces the very sensation he intended to. But naturally this possibility does not contradict what is meant by the passivity of sensation. True, as the person doing the pinching, he is active, but the sensation itself is the passive effect of his action. It has no telos of its own; it is merely an effect, much as if he has produced a scratch on himself. By contrast, a person’s thinking that it’s getting too late to take the train, or his hoping for rain, are not effects he produces, even when they result from a process of thinking on his part. Instead, such attitudes are constituents of his thinking, and are thus more analogous to the act of pinching than to the sensation produced by that act.

So there is a sense in which a person can be active with respect to his sensations when he manipulates himself in one way or another to produce some feeling. And a similar stance is possible with respect to one’s attitudes. In various cases a person may work to produce in himself various desires, beliefs or emotional responses, either by training, mental discipline, the cooperation of friends, or by hurling himself into a situation that will force a certain response on him. But exercising this sort of control over one’s attitudes is not the expression of autonomy or identification. In such cases of producing a desire in oneself the attitude itself is still one I am essentially passive with respect to. It is inflicted on me, even if I am the one inflicting it.

There is, of course, another way in which a person may assume responsibility for some aspect of his psychological life, one that does not apply to sensations but only to his relation to his “judgment-sensitive” attitudes of one sort or another. Consider the distinctive kind of responsibility a person assumes for his desire when it is the conclusion of his practical reasoning. In such cases, he is not only prepared to justify it, but the presence or absence of justification makes a difference to the presence or absence of the desire itself, and the direction of his desire is in fact guided by the direction of his thought about what is desirable. He is active with respect to his desire not because he has produced it in himself, but because he takes the general question of what he wants here to be the expression of his sense of what he has best reason to pursue in this context. Were those considerations to be undermined, the desire itself would be undermined. And that means there is a kind of control he does not take himself to have here, in that he won’t take himself to be in a position to retain the desire, or to reproduce it at will, were he to lose or abandon the considerations that supported it, so that the object in question now seems worthless to him. Or rather, perhaps he could find some way to retain it, if we think of this now as a purely causal question, a choice of effective means to somehow maintain the presence of this desire. But if his “activity” with respect to this desire were confined to this sort of external control, this would be the very expression of his alienation from it, even though he managed to produce it in himself.
By contrast, the kind of responsibility for my desire that is the expression of my identification with it is the responsibility for its internal justification. In considering what we might call “internal” responsibility, compare two of Frankfurt’s addicts, whose addictive desires are fully independent of their practical reasoning. Given their condition, the sort of “internal” rational responsibility sketched out above is not available to them. For the desire arises on its own, and will persist and move them, regardless of how they conceive or evaluate it. Nonetheless, there is still a possible difference between two such addicts, with respect to what we might call “external” responsibility. The way the cases are described, neither addict identifies with his desire, but one of them may still take responsibility for it in the “external” way that he might take responsibility for any other condition of his which he cannot control. He tries to anticipate its onset, he makes allowances for it in his planning, and tries to minimize its harmful effects, and so on. But the fact that he is alienated from it precludes his taking responsibility for it in the “internal” sense, the sense that is relevant to identification. Being alienated from it means that he does not take his desire to be subject to his thinking about what is good to be pursued. The desire itself, as an empirical fact about what drives him, does not adjust itself in the light of his own considerations of what’s worth pursuing. It is not an expression of his thinking or his other attitudes, but is rather experienced by him as a facticity that his thinking and other attitudes must somehow accommodate.

This second “external” sort of responsibility is not essentially first-person at all. It is the sort of responsibility I might take toward the actions or attitudes of another person, for instance a child under my care. I do not produce those actions, they are not an expression of my will, but nonetheless I can exert some influence over them. And in similar ways one may take some responsibility not only for the actions but also for the thoughts and attitudes of another person. And here, perhaps, the differences between the two kinds of responsibility show up most clearly. I can take responsibility for the beliefs of another person when I believe I can exert some influence over them, redirecting them in one way or another. But I do not thereby see the other person’s beliefs as the expression of my sense of the balance of reasons. In seeking to redirect them, I need not myself share the reasons I offer to the person to change his mind. My concern is with what will appeal to him. This stance toward changing his mind need not be crudely instrumental, but it can develop in that direction. By contrast, the specifically first-person responsibility that a person has for his own desire is essentially not instrumental, and approaches incoherence insofar as it takes that direction. The person’s responsibility here is to make his desire answerable to and adjustable in the light of his sense of some good to pursue. It is not a responsibility that reduces to the ability to exert influence over one’s desires, and that is why the idiom of “control” is misleading in this context. At the beginning of his practical reasoning he was not aiming to produce a particular desire in himself (as he might with respect to another person), but rather holding open his desire to how the balance of reasons falls out.

This is the same sense of activity and responsibility we rely on in ordinary reasoning with others where the operating assumption must be that the person is in a position to respond to the considerations offered, to see the point of some criticism, and thereby determine whether such considerations shall count here and now as a reason for changing his mind. Otherwise the whole activity of offering certain reasons and countering others would be quite senseless. Without the understanding that the person you’re speaking to is in a position to exercise some effective agency here, there would be no point in criticizing his reasoning on some point since otherwise what would be, the person you’re talking to, have to do with either the process or the outcome? He might be in a superior position to view the results of your intervention (“from the inside,” as it were), but both of you would have to simply await the outcome. Instead, it seems clear that the very possibility of ordinary argument (and other discourse) presumes that the reasons he accepts and the conclusions he draws are “up to him” in the relevant sense. Acknowledging this sort of agency and responsibility does not involve us in any sort of voluntarism about the formation of beliefs or desires, any more than we need to see ordinary argument with others as aiming at getting one’s interlocutor to somehow adopt a new belief by sheer act of arbitrary will.

This “internal” responsibility is also different from the responsibility I may have for a desire of mine that is by its very nature not subject to (because not the expression of) my sense of what is good. Something like hunger or fatigue, for instance, may be a judgement-insensitive desire, something just given, in which case it is not the possible conclusion of any practical reason. And yet, of course, a person may be responsible
for getting tired or hungry at an inconvenient time. In certain circumstances he may even be blamed for being hungry (more precisely, he may be blamed for letting himself get hungry; the passive voice is appropriate here). Perhaps he should have eaten earlier, when there was time. This is a different kind of responsibility from that which attaches to an essentially “judgement-sensitive” desire. Here one’s responsibility would attach to the considerations internal to the desirability of the object, seeing it as the expression of one’s sense of what is worth wanting in some way.¹⁴

Further, as mentioned, the specifically first-person responsibility relevant to “identification” goes beyond the mere appraisal of one’s state. The person is not only responsible for rethinking his reasons favoring wanting this thing, but it is also up to him for the rethinking he does to make a difference to what his desire actually is. If the actual course of his desire or other attitude were not in any way sensitive to his thinking about what supports it or undermines it, then he would indeed be alienated from it. At the least he must take his other attitudes (including other desires) as having some voice in determining the course of this desire. That is, he may not be able to offer reasons in the sense of considerations that would produce the desire in someone, but he must see what he wants in the light of considerations that make it attractive to him. Were he unable to see the course of his desire as answerable to such considerations, then the only influence he could have over it would be the sort of “external” control he may exert over his judgement-insensitive desires, or indeed over the desires of another person.

So, when a person does reach a (thought-dependent) desire through a process of practical reasoning he assumes a kind of responsibility for it, and he identifies with it. When he identifies with a thought-dependent desire in such a case he sees it as the expression of his reasons. But it would be misleading to say that he is active with respect to it in the sense of controlling or producing it. Since it is (already) the expression of his reasons, he doesn’t need to exert any control over it. As in the case of ordinary theoretical reasoning, which issues in a belief, there is no further thing the person needs to do in order to acquire the relevant belief once his reasoning has led him to it. The need for such a further exercise of control would be the indication of his failure to identify with his thought or desire. At the beginning of his practical reasoning he was not aiming to produce a particular desire in himself (as he might do with respect to another person). Instead, he was thinking about what’s good to pursue, and holding himself passive in a sense, to how the balance of reasons would fall out in the end. The person’s responsibility or “activity” here is twofold: to be clear and undistorted in his thinking about the matter, and to allow the desire he arrives at to be the result of the conclusion of this thinking. This latter aspect of his responsibility is not the sort of responsibility for which he may have to produce or suppress a particular desire in himself.

The Activities of Love, Care, and Pleasure

All this may seem excessively rationalistic to capture the sense of “activity” Frankfurt has in mind in explicating the notion of “identification.” And it may also seem that this story pictures the agent as too purely active with respect to what reasons count for him, and does too little justice to the sense in which we are hostage to the contingencies of the empirical which we do not control, even in our most resolute declarations of will and desire. As Frankfurt reminds us, after the person has done all his “resolving” and “deciding,” there always remains the empirical question of whether he has indeed succeeded in making his will what he wants it to be.

Indeterminacy in the life of a real person cannot be overcome by preemptive decree. To be sure, a person may attempt to resolve his ambivalence by deciding to adhere unequivocally to one of his alternatives rather than to the other; and he may believe that in thus making up his mind he has eliminated the division in his will and become wholehearted. Whether such changes have actually occurred, however, is another matter. When the chips are down he may discover that he is not, after all, decisively moved by the preference or motive he supposed he had adopted. Remember Hotspur’s reply when Owen Glendower boasted, “I can call spirits from the vasty deep.” He said: “Why, so can I, or so can any man; but will they come when you do call for them?” The same goes for us. We do not control, by voluntary command, the spirits within our own vasty deeps. We cannot have, simply for the asking, whatever will we want.¹⁵

In this and in other passages, particularly in his more recent writing, Frankfurt is rightly critical of the philosopher’s occupational tendency to “intellectualize” anything he can bring himself to take seriously in human life, to treat all internal conflicts as conflicts of judgments. And this same tendency to intellectualize is normally also an expression of an
exaggerated sense of the authority and control of reason over the self. Nonetheless, I would like to argue that the picture of our "active" relation to our attitudes developed so far remains appropriate both in itself and as an explication of the sense of "identification" we've been tracking, and that this sense of "activity" is in danger of being lost in comparisons such as the one made by Frankfurt above. Let me begin by noting that, if the sort of case under consideration in this passage is to be seen as a case of ambivalence, we will have to assume a particular understanding of its description, and I will suggest that unpacking this understanding will bring us back to the sense of "activity" that is the one that was relevant all along.

When the person finds that he is moved by something other than the will he previously identified with, seeing this specifically as a case of ambivalence means distinguishing it from all the other ways in which the carrying through of a decision can be interrupted or interfered with (e.g., seizure, fainting, a new threat from without, another person's intervention). For the example to serve this purpose, this must be a different kind of case from the one where the person finds himself moved in a contrary direction by something that is not his will at all, either a purely external force or something within himself that is alien to any will of his. We need, therefore, to see the way in which he is moved, contrary to his resolution, as being nonetheless an expression of his divided will. Not every interference with the will is something to which the language of identification and alienation has any possible application. And at the same time, being moved by some force is not sufficient to make it (part of) the person's will, not even a will that he disapproves of or is alienated from. When he recoils from some manifestation of his will and seeks to defeat it, his recoil or shame expresses the fact that he recognizes this will as his own. In both cases the alienation itself is a response to an expression of one's agency, and not simply disappointment at some failure of transmission.

So even when the chips are down, we are not to imagine this person as simply waiting and watching to see how he will end up being moved. And then further, to understand this as a case of divided will we will need to know what reason we have to describe the situation as his "discovery that he is not decisively moved" as he resolved, rather than seeing it either as his refusal to follow through on his previous decision or his having changed his mind about it. (The expectation being that understanding those features of the case as determining it as specifically one of ambivalence will take us back to the complex of the person's own conflicting reasons, which he has an active relation to.) True, as Frankfurt says, in the clutch I may find that I can't go through with what I have decided on, or that, when the time for action arrives, I don't in fact care about the thing I had decided in favor of. A person can be confused or willfully blind to himself in these ways. But to speak of alienation or ambivalence here requires reference not simply to some forces within (or without) the person, but to his cares and concerns, which are active attitudes, even when the person is confused about them.

The image of Glendower's impotent summons is certainly compelling, but in thinking about the kind of "activity" I am claiming is proper to the attitudes generally, there is the danger that this image most naturally represents the situation of an already alienated will, one subject to external manipulation at best, and hence directs our attention to the wrong kind of "activity," the wrong kind of control. That is, the image of calling up spirits from the deep suggests not only the exercise of some extraordinary causal power, but in particular the situation of the person aiming at the securing of some particular will (and then either succeeding or failing). But in that case the only activity in question would be the "external" sort, merely a matter of causal control, and not relevant to the explication of "identification." The agent's relation to his ordinary willing, wanting, believing does not involve the exercise of either magic powers or a voluntaristic ability to pick the will, desire, or belief that one would most prefer to have.

What the relevant sort of "activity" does mean in this context will be different according to the type of orientation in question. In outlining the two different senses of being active with respect to one's attitude, the "internal" sense was illustrated with respect to the case of belief, where the internal sense of activity is given by the internal demands of belief itself (e.g., the relations of evidence and justification). In this sense of "activity," being active with respect to my belief means such things as a responsiveness to reasons and evidence, and a responsibility for justification and revision. It does not mean selecting a belief for acquisition and then settling about doing whatever it takes to make that happen. Rather, the primary sense of "activity" with respect to attitudes like
belief has its own passive aspect, because the person takes his belief to be answerable to standards and demands that are independent of his other aims and interests.

The possibility of this activity and this passivity is part of what defines the same difference between attitudes and sensations. It is because sensations and the like are not defined by internal normative demands that the possibilities of alienation and failure to identify that are characteristic of desires and beliefs simply don't apply to them. And it is for similar reasons that aiming at the direct production of some sensation is not fraught with the same paradox and self-defeat that we find with respect to the various projects of the external manipulation of one's attitudes. Someone in Glendower's position with respect to his will or desire is already alienated from it; that is to say, already in a position where the primary agent's relation to his will or desire has failed him. Hence, even if we were to imagine him as in this case successfully calling up this spirit, such a special causal relation to it would not capture the sense of activity that is relevant to identification.

The normative dimension of the attitudes, which differentiates them from mere happenings, and which I am trying to the sense of activity that is relevant to identification, is probably most familiar in the case of belief, in part because the understanding of its basic terms has been such a long-standing concern of epistemology. But, while being a central case for thinking about attitudes and their normative structure, belief is also a rather special case, with a much greater and more explicit role for reasoning and justification than belongs to other attitudes which nonetheless are defined by their own specific requirements. The thought to be developed further is that when we speak of identification or alienation, we are talking about the possibility of distortions with respect to this wider normative dimension of the attitudes generally—a dimension that will constitute one sort of issue with respect to belief, another one with respect to desire, and something else with respect to love, anger, or pleasure. And I want to suggest that this wider sense is the key to understanding the person's relation to these states as an essentially "active" one, active in a way that does not apply to states like sensations. In this way, I believe, we gain a better understanding of failures of "identification" as compromises of the person's agency. I think we can see this active dimension at work in some of the less classically "cognitive" re-

lations that have concerned Frankfurt lately, including love, caring about something, and even ordinary pleasure. Sketching out how this looks should help allay fears that in aligning the possibilities for identification and alienation with a sense of activity illustrated at first by the case of belief, I have constructed an overly rationalistic or voluntaristic picture of our relations to our wills, desires, and concerns.

Presumably even the most "intellectualizing" of philosophers would not wish to reduce pleasure to a form of judgment. Hence it is certainly natural (though I will argue misleading) to think of pleasure as itself a feeling, a state of the person like some sensation that either obtains or fails to obtain. In favor of this is the fact that it is clearly something which is subject to Glendower-like successes and failures. Pleasure can be the expected or hoped-for attendant of one's activity, and yet not arrive. (Or, of course, it can arrive unbidden, even unwanted.) And that can make the pursuit of pleasure seem like seeking to produce a certain state in oneself. And if so, then like the work of other productions, you keep the end in view while you try to approach it, acknowledging that the outcome is not entirely up to you, but is subject to all the stubborn and unpredictable contingencies of the empirical world. But ordinarly pleasure is not an outcome aimed at in this way. For instance, when a person takes pleasure in dancing, he is not aiming at the production of a particular feeling, which he believes dancing will secure for him. And normally when someone does take pleasure in dancing, this proceeds not by his aiming at a particular feeling, but by his letting himself become absorbed in the activity itself, giving himself over to it. Of course, with pleasure as with caring, one's expectation can be disappointed, and the response fail to come when called upon. The person may find, after "trying" in some way, that he just can't enjoy this, or that he just can't come to care about it as before. The truth is, you can't take pleasure in something or come to care about it just because you want to, or make this true "by fiat." But at the same time, when someone does derive pleasure from dancing, his relation to this activity and what he hopes for from it is not like the wait-and-see attitude he takes to the effect of a sleeping pill either. The result of pleasure requires the involvement of the person in some way that the action of the pill does not. And hence, neither "fix" nor passive self-inducement seem the proper models for the person's relation to his pleasure.
An activity may be pursued for pleasure, but the arrival of its pleasure is normally dependent on allowing it to follow in the train of engaging in the activity "for its own sake." Taking the production of pleasure as one's direct aim, being "active" with respect to it in that sense, is normally self-defeating, since such an aim brings one into an instrumental relation to the activity, which (for many of the most pleasing ones) is incompatible with taking the kind of pleasure in them that proceeds from pursuing them for their own sakes. This is an aspect of the familiar "paradox of hedonism." In such a case, the person is neither active nor passive in the right way, trying to harness the activity to some independent end, rather than allowing the dancing to seize and direct his attention on its own terms, leading him to respond with pleasure to what is there in the dancing to be enjoyed. In this context, the phrase "for its own sake" connotes directedness toward an object or an activity with its own internal demands, its own telos, a structure independent of the person's other aims. To say that the person pursues this activity "for its own sake" is to say that doing this stands as a reason for him by itself, and does not require (and may not admit of) any support from some further end. In pursuing it for its own sake, he gives himself over to it; and it is then at least as true to say the activity makes demands on him as it is to say that he makes demands on it.

As with belief, to say that pleasure is not to be summoned "at will" is not to say that we are passive to it in the sense that applies to sensations, or that it is a state somehow effectively beyond our reach, but rather specifically to indicate the particular kind of responsibility that belongs to that mode of response. Because there is what we could call a characteristic internal normative structure to these types of response, they are at once insusceptible to arbitrary adoption (and in that special sense something one is passive with respect to), and also expressive of the agent's norm-guided activity. For what is meant by "at will" in these locutions is the idea that some actions I can perform for any number of reasons, or for practically no reason at all, on a whim. If I can raise my arm at all, then it is the sort of thing I can do simply because I feel like it, or just because someone asked me to. The execution of my will here does not require determination by any particular kind of reasons, or any particular ends; that part is pretty much up to me. But, by contrast, believing some proposition requires a very particular set of reasons, epistemic ones; and within that set only a particular range will be even relevant to securing belief in a particular proposition. To believe that p just is to take the internal norms determinative of the justification of that belief to be satisfied. Those norms are not up to me, and instead I must take my belief to be answerable to them. What is up to me, what I am active with respect to, is the responsiveness to epistemic reasons relevant to the truth or falsity of this belief. 16

As Frankfurt insists, caring about something is also a relation that cannot be adopted arbitrarily, or "at will." And I am suggesting that this is so for reasons of what is shared by belief and pleasure or love and care, and not for reasons of any similarity between love and care, on the one hand, and sensations to which we are passive in their sense. Loving or caring about something are unresponsive to sheer fat because they are essentially active responses to something else, and answerable to the specific norms of that something else. I can take pleasure in something when I learn to enjoy it, and learning to enjoy it is a matter of coming to see what there is in this thing or this activity that could be enjoyed either as delicious, or mildly diverting, or an intense turn-on, or a surprising resolution, or a guilty pleasure, and so on. If I can't see it in any of those ways then I am not taking pleasure here, however much I may otherwise want to. That open-ended variety of ways in which something can be pleasurable maps out the norms of pleasure for me. These norms are not up to me. Only certain modes of attending to something can constitute being diverted, soothed, turned-on, or gratified. And for any instance of pleasure there must be answers to questions like, "Is this a pleasure in, say, touch and warmth, or is it more like the pleasure in besting one's opponent in chess?" "Is this pleasure something savored and repeated, or something fleeting and barely experiential?" "Is it a pleasure for which repetition even makes sense (as it arguably does not for the pleasure of some unexpected good news, or in being a favorite son, or in the recovery of health)?" "Is taking pleasure here a matter of sustained, diffuse attention, or is it absorbed and intense, eclipsing awareness of everything else?" "Is it more like the pleasure in drinking when thirsty, or the pleasure of living in Manhattan, or more like the pleasure which supervenes on the exercise of some complex skill or knowledge?" These categories define the particularities of what it is to take pleasure in some thing, fact, or activity, and not everything we encounter will be so much as a candidate for every conceptual variety of pleasure. The norms of the pleasures of either solving some problem or idly stroking some
surface will determine that only some activities and some surfaces can be possible providers of just those pleasures. To be conducive to the specific pleasures of idle stroking or problem-solving, the thing or activity in question has to be seen as answering to certain quite particular and demanding requirements. These are independent of me and not determinable by my fiat.

It is also not a matter of my fiat whether I do in fact take some specific pleasure in such an object or activity. But here there is room for norm-guided activity on my part. As with believing or caring, to say that I do not “accomplish” these things “arbitrarily” is hardly to say that I do not exercise my agency with respect to them. I can make myself open to caring about something, and take steps to realize this, just as I may refuse to care about something. And I am active with respect to my belief when I hold myself responsible to the norms of justification for that belief, either tacitly or explicitly in the course of reasoning to some conclusion. Again, it is because the person is active with respect to the norms governing his belief that he is not active in the sense of being able “arbitrarily” to adopt some belief. It is because his belief is responsive and responsible to those particular norms (hence “active” in that sense) that he cannot foist some belief on himself that he does not take to respect those specific norms.

None of this is to say that all these different types of response should be seen as simply forms of judgment, or that we either reason our way to them; or abandon them, or are obliged to abandon them, when they turn out to lose some rational foundation. This much I take to be plain about the case of pleasures, and that is why they are such an important case to consider in this context. It is because their normative structures are so manifestly different from a judgment’s requirement of justification, more manifestly even than the case of caring, that it is worth exploring how they can nonetheless be seen as normative responses of this person, in a way that explains why pleasure (like love and caring, and unlike a sensation) is subject to identification and failure to identify, and are thus the expression of the active nature of the person. We can, I am claiming, preserve this crucial aspect in which pleasures, like loves and cares, are aspects of the whole person’s engagement with the world, without “rationalizing” or “intellectualizing” them in the familiar ways that Frankfurt wants us to avoid.

Although we do not arrive at what we love or care about by anything like reasoning, that is not because these are less active modes of engagement than belief is, but because the kind of activity they represent does not express itself through reasoning and inferring. That is a central form of norm-governed activity, but hardly the only sort. Even in the extremely stripped-down and atypical case of taking pleasure purely in some feeling, one’s relation to enjoyment here is unlike waiting for a pill to take effect since one will still need to know how to take pleasure here, and make or allow one’s consciousness to be active with respect to the aspects of pleasure in that particular feeling. In my consciousness of this feeling I like, I have to know my way around, I have to know what there is to enjoy in it, which aspects are central to its pleasure and which are incidental to it, which to attend to and seek more of, and which are indifferent to the pleasure. I have to know how to orient myself toward this feeling in order to enjoy it. That is, it might be a constituent of my pleasure in this sensation that it comes from a certain source, or that it recurs, or that I can control the appearance of the feeling or that it is quite beyond my control, or that it is faint or that it is sharp, and so on. And just as easily, any of these noticeable aspects of the feeling might be entirely irrelevant to the pleasure I take in it. The point is that taking pleasure in it means knowing which is which, whether tacitly or explicitly.

It is sometimes said that certain drugs “produce” pleasure, but this is true only in the same sense that either string quartets or ripe cheeses “produce” pleasure. In both cases we can provide the cause without producing the effect, because the person exposed to either the drug or the music doesn’t like it, doesn’t see what there is to enjoy in it. What was the very form of hazy, druggy pleasure for someone else is to this person merely some unpleasant dizziness and disorientation. Even here, when we speak of drugs “doing” this or that, finding pleasure in the experience is a matter of being inclined to take pleasure in what is given. And the fact that such “know-how” may simply come naturally or spontaneously to the person does not make his engagement any the less active, anymore than it does for ordinary physical skills or habits of inference.

Not being based on reasons, the pleasure or the caring can certainly (and legitimately) survive the realization that the thing in question does not fully satisfy the conditions which would make it worth caring about,
or the realization that it is a cheaper, or nastier, or otherwise less reputable pleasure than one wishes it were (or presents it as being). But the point to notice is that these terms of evaluation don’t even begin to apply to genuinely passive states like sensations, whereas it is internal to pleasures that such terms do apply. When we insist that such terms of criticism have application to pleasures or cares, this still leaves open what the consequences of such application are, or ought to be, in a given case. The very fact that a person can indeed experience some pleasure “in spite of himself” testifies to the relation to agency here, since a person does not experience a sensation like heat or a headache “in spite of himself.” The idea simply doesn’t apply. Here the comparison with laughter can be instructive, as well as the possibility of laughing “in spite of oneself.” For laughter is also not exactly an action, in that it is not something deliberately performed for some reason (not when the laughter is genuine, anyway). It is neither produced “at will,” for some independent end, nor is it the conclusion of any reasoning. And yet it is of course an overt response of the person, an expression of him, in a way that something like a shooting pain is not. It is because the laughter is such a response that it can clash with the rest of a person’s attitudes, and hence is something for which a failure of identification is a possibility, testifying to the presence on the scene of a self to laugh in spite of.

Frankfurt himself, of course, is far from assimilating care or even pleasure to anything like a mere feeling, and one can see some of the consequences of this categorical difference being worked out in his more recent writing exploring the theme of “volitional necessity” and its relation to psychic unity.8 The kind of mutual implication of activity and passivity that I have been claiming is distinctive of the states or attitudes which are subject to either identification or alienation is under investigation throughout several papers on the structure of care and its relation to love, and also in essays on final ends, and the necessity of ideals. And indeed the deep relation in this regard between love or care on the one hand and logic or rationality on the other is thematic in the initiating discussion of “volitional necessity” in “The Importance of What We Care About.” Toward the end of that essay he remarks that “The idea that being rational and loving are ways of achieving freedom ought to puzzle us more than it does, given that both require a person to submit to something which is beyond his voluntary control and which may be indifferent to his desires.”18 One central aspect of this commonality lies in the fact that, with respect to the commitments of love and care, the person not only sees himself as unable to release himself from this necessity, but (more importantly) unable so much as to choose to do so, not without risk to psychic unity. And indeed, in the very language for the transitions of thought most paradigmatically “rational,” we describe ourselves in such terms as “swayed by the force of argument,” “logically compelled” to accept the conclusion, something that is experienced as “irresistible.” And yet, somehow, the very point of such language is to capture something of our most centrally active nature, something the very opposite of either inertia or coercion. So there is a familiar, if still mysterious, paradigm of our freedom and activity that expresses itself in the language of necessitation. And in the case of both love and the conclusions of rational thought, the necessitation is aligned not only with some central aspect of activity, but also with the most complete identification of the person with what moves him. It is in such activities as the drawing of a conclusion or the commitment to what one loves that the person is furthest from being a “passive bystander” to his thought or desire.

Love and care are not the conclusions of reasoning, but they are productive of reasons for the person, and express themselves actively in commitment, desire, and concern. A person’s love may be beyond his control, and it may not depend either on his approval of it or his “good judgment” about the loved object. But for all that it is an active mode of engagement of the person rather than a mere happening. And it is still a matter of reason in the end. For without either love or pleasure being themselves the products of reason, it remains true that either loving or taking pleasure in something provides one with reasons, makes something count as a reason that otherwise was not one. Loving someone makes that person a reason for the lover, necessary for him, something to be pursued for its own sake. And similarly, further down the scale to our pleasures, including the lesser exalted or more purely sensuous among them: the person taking pleasure in some quality of feeling thereby makes it a reason for him. It now counts as something to be pursued, whereas apart from his pleasure it was just a particular quality of texture, no reason for anything. So, to adapt a current phrase, we might say that taking pleasure in something is an expression of our active natures.
because we thereby place that feeling "in the space of (our) reasons," and it is precisely the elements that are within this space of reasons that can be "identified with" or experienced as either "internal" or "external" to the person.

As I understand it, in the activity of "identification" someone determines what shall be part of him as a person. If so, then this prompts the question of how it is that he has any particular say over this; that is, beyond a hopeful recommendation. It is not like the influence he might exert in determining his empirical desires (as in training oneself into certain desires, or suppressing other ones). And it is not a matter of picking and choosing from possible desires. When he determines what shall be part of him as a person, he is deciding, among other things, what kinds of considerations shall count for him at all in deciding what to do. And this is a very different matter from the psychological question of what desires or other motives may in fact be operative in him. There may be no reason a person should have any particular say in determining the facts of his psychological make-up. He may simply do what he can. But if it were not "up to him" in some sense to determine what sorts of considerations shall count for him as reasons, then it would be unclear at best how any reasons could count as his reasons, or any actions could count as his actions.

Acknowledgments

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Notes

4. Harry Frankfurt, "The Faintest Passion," in Necessity, Volition, and Love (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 101. The context of this passage is a discussion of the conditions for overcoming ambivalence and hence achieving full identification. On the previous page he says, "A person cannot make himself volitionally determinate and thereby create a truth where there was none before, merely by an 'act of will.' In other words, he cannot make himself wholehearted just by a psychic movement that is fully under his immediate voluntary control" (100).
5. See, for example, Louis Sass, "Introspection, Schizophrenia, and the Fragmentation of the Self," in Representations 19 (1987): All these symptoms are quite specific, and all involve passivization or other fundamental distortions of the normal self-world relationship. The patient feels, for example, that his thoughts, actions, feelings or perceptions are imposed on him, or are under the control of some external being or force. He may hear his thoughts aloud, as if spoken outside him, or may feel that his thoughts are broadcast throughout the world" (84).
6. I'm thinking in particular of "Rationality and the Unthinkable," in The Importance of What We Care About, and "On the Necessity of Ideals," in Necessity, Volition, and Love (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999). The title essay of The Importance of What We Care About also criticizes the "exaggerated importance [that] is sometimes given to decisions, as well as to choices and to other similar 'acts of will'"(84).
7. Apology, 31c–d, 40a–b.
11. My being responsible for this person’s actions is not just a matter of my having some influence over his actions, but also of my standing in a certain relation to him, one that would make sense of my assuming some responsibility for his actions. After all, I may have some potential influence over the actions of any arbitrary person, and in many cases this may be more influence than I have over the actions of my own child.
12. For these reasons I think Daniel Dennett is mistaken in claiming that “one changes one’s own mind the way one changes somebody else’s.” Daniel Dennett, “How to Change Your Mind,” in Brainstorms (Cambridge: MIT, 1981), 308. This claim is elaborated in another paper with regard to altering one’s desires; “Acting on a second-order desire, doing something to bring it about that one acquires a first-order desire, is acting upon oneself just as one would act upon another person: one schools oneself, one offers oneself persuasions, arguments, threats, bribes, in the hopes of inducing in oneself the first-order desire. One’s stance toward oneself and access to oneself in these cases is essentially the same as one’s stance toward and access to another.” Daniel Dennett, “Conditions of Personhood,” in Brainstorms, 284–285. In a sense, there would be nothing to argue with here once it was understood that these scenarios do not describe the ordinary situation of the formation of desires (or other attitudes) through deliberation, explicit or otherwise. We can, but we typically do not, arrive at a new desire by first identifying it and then acting on the second-order desire to adopt it.
13. Cf. Philippa Foot’s remark that reasons are not like medicine you take in the hopes that it will work. Philippa Foot, “Moral Arguments,” in Virtues and Vices (University of California, 1978).
14. The line between these two classes of desire can be a porous one, and the most basic, intractable of instincts become woven into the most elaborate dependencies of judgment, symbolization, and fantasy. And the transformation of desire from the brute to the judgment-sensitive can itself be pursued deliberately.

17. I have in mind particularly p. 139 of “Autonomy, Necessity, and Love,” and elsewhere throughout the examination of ambivalence in that paper, and in other writings.
18. Frankfurt, “The Importance of What We Care About,” 89.