

# *Justifying to Oneself*

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## *Deep Deliberation*

When you are faced with a decision about what to do, what counts as *reasons* for doing one thing rather than another? How should we decide what to do? What ultimately determines what the right choice is?

**Deliberation:** "I am asking myself what *reasons* I have for deciding one way rather than the other, and this concern to do what reasons indicates is not just one preference among others but the background presupposition of my question." [Hill, 174]

We often engage in *instrumental* deliberation:

**Instrumental Deliberation:** Take your ultimate ends as given. Deliberate about what are the most efficient *means* for achieving those ends.

But this is not the kind of deliberating that Hill has in mind; rather, he's thinking of deliberation "in which the agent regards all his previous ends and commitments as subject to rational revision ... we are questioning the ultimate ends, or initial value assignments, without which instrumental principles cannot be applied."

### o **Deep Deliberation:**

1. Involves the fundamental evaluation of *ends*.
2. Aims at *justifying* reasons.
3. Evaluates *oneself* as someone who *has* certain ends.

This kind of deliberation is *deep* because it holds nothing fixed. Everything is up for debate. We are looking to make a decision that is justified "all the way down". Even those things that we cannot help but care about need to be justified.

## *What Can Count as a Justifying Reason?*

If there were some ends that were *intrinsically* valuable in and of themselves, then that fact alone could justify us in taking those ends on board when deliberating about what to do. Are there any ends like this?

**Material Principles** say that we ought to act to realize certain specific ends or values, such as pleasure, avoidance of pain, power, peace of

1. We rationally assess our goals, we ask ourselves whether these are the goals we think we should have, etc.
2. Not looking for considerations that merely *motivate* one to do something, or would *explain* why someone did something.
3. We are concerned with what our choices reveals, or makes, of ourselves as agents. We are both "authors" and "critics" of our autobiography.

mind, satisfaction of desire, and the like. To say that they are principles of practical reason would be to say that, *for everyone, rational choice is necessarily determined by reference to the selected values.* [Hill 178]

Kant (and many other philosophers) denies that there are principles like this. There are not ends that are intrinsically valuable in and of themselves.

#### **Kantian Negative Thesis:**

The Material Principles are *not* rationally *compelling*. That is, it is *not* the case that "the selected values give us reasons that determine rational choice, or at least must be counted, *simply because of what they are and what it is to be rational in deep deliberation.*" [Hill 178]

What, then, can we do to justify our choices? What are we to do when we engage in deep deliberation about what to do?

**Decide which Ends you can Justify to Yourself.** "[W]ithout assuming any substantive principles about what is necessarily a reason for choosing, one must *simply decide* what ends *at this moment* one can best justify to oneself; after this, one must rely on familiar instrumental principles for the choice of the best means to one's ends." [Hill 183]

Notice the connection to Kant's argument for the **Formula of Humanity**. For Kant, various ends are valuable because *we confer value on to them*. How? By taking these ends to have value for us, and acting on that basis.

### **Concern For Your Future Self**

Does rationality compel you to have concern for your future self? Are you rationally required to take into account how you *will* feel about your decision, what you *will* desire, etc.?

#### **Hill's Kantian Argument for Future Concern**

- (1) "The one value or end inherent in the deliberative project is that the deliberators are concerned to choose so that their choices stand up, at least at that time, to the most *thorough critical scrutiny of and by themselves.*" [Hill 186]
- (2) "Our deep deliberator sees herself as one rational agent over a lifetime, e.g., the same agent now as the person who will have her body and memories in the future..." [Ibid.]
- (3) I should recognize that "[m]y concern to withstand my own critical scrutiny now seems not to be based on special features of myself (as rational chooser or critic) that I have now but will generally lack in the future."

And what follows from this? *Each person should choose in such a way that he can maintain his self-respect over time.*

We can put the argument this way:

- P<sub>1</sub> In deep deliberation, you should choose so that your choices stand up to the most thorough critical scrutiny by yourself.
  - P<sub>2</sub> If you are a deep deliberator, you see yourself as the same agent over your lifetime (and you see that you now is similar to you later in all respects relevant to rational deliberation).
  - P<sub>3</sub> If a choice stands up to critical scrutiny by one agent, then that choice should stand up to critical scrutiny by an agent that is similar in all relevant respects.
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- C You should choose in such a way that your choices can stand up to scrutiny from yourself now, later, and over your lifetime.