

MORAL CORRUPTION

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"But, my dear Mrs. Casaubon," said Mr. Farebrother, smiling gently at her ardour, "character is not cut in marble - it is not something solid and unalterable. It is something living and changing, and may become diseased as our bodies do."

"Then it may be rescued and healed," said Dorothea.

George Eliot. Middlemarch.

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Abstract

I begin with an analysis of physical corruption, in the hope that it will throw light on moral corruption. An understanding of corruption of either sort requires an understanding of what it is to be in a sound state. I consider the criteria for natural soundness and corruption, and then attempt to discover what the state of moral soundness might be. I first consider innocence, but argue that this cannot be taken as the morally sound state. Corruption of innocence is properly seen as the moral corruption of an innocent person; moral corruption can follow other states than innocence and must be contrasted with a state of moral soundness other than innocence.

My second suggestion is that integrity is an essential part of the state of moral soundness. Integrity is seen as the keeping of commitments, both those to others and those to ideals or values. I argue that we cannot think of a man who lacks integrity as a good man. Corruption is then identified as a rejection of the binding force of commitments. I test this criterion against various examples of corruption. This leads to qualification and the recognition of a commitment to obey one's conscience, and further to a discussion of the relation between self-deception and corruption. In the last chapter I try to show that moral corruption and natural corruption have much in common, and can be seen as the same process operating in two different spheres.

The OED says that when something is corrupt it is 'changed from the naturally sound condition'. An analysis of corruption must give an account of how a corrupt thing departs from its sound state. One must give an account of what it is for something to be sound, and then lay down the conditions under which a failure to be sound amounts to corruption. The physical realisation of the sound and therefore also of the corrupt state will differ according to what kind of thing is in question. The sound state for a tree will involve growing leaves at the proper time while for a bird or a piece of metal it will be something quite different. The physical description of the sound state will vary from kind to kind and is a matter for scientists, not philosophers. Likewise with corruption: a philosophical account will explain what it is for anything to be corrupt in terms of a departure from the sound state, and scientists will determine how each thing satisfies these conditions after its kind. I begin with such an account of corruption in the natural sphere. I shall then ask what are the states of moral soundness and moral corruption, and finally discuss what, if anything, moral and natural corruption have in common.

The first thing to say about the sound state which we attribute to anything is that it must be a possible state for that thing. We couldn't, for example, call a tree corrupt on the grounds that it can't sing. Singing is not the kind of thing trees can do; no tree could possibly sing. Anything which can sing isn't a tree. Therefore the ability to sing cannot form part of the sound state for trees. The sound state in contrast with which something is called corrupt must be one in which, had certain specifiable things been otherwise, it would have been. Aristotle may be able to find a sense in which a man is more perfect by becoming more god-like, but a man cannot be called corrupt for lacking immortality or omniscience.

But this doesn't take us very far. The sound state is not any old

state which the thing could get into. The state which a tree would be in after a nuclear war (if it existed at all) is a perfectly possible state for it to be in, but isn't likely to be sound. The sound state is the state a thing ought to be in. This isn't the 'ought' of obligation but the 'ought' we find in 'There ought to be a plentiful crop of tomatoes this year'. This is a statement about what we have reason to expect. Just so a stranger might say, faced with one of our sad elms, "But elms ought to have leaves on in June". This is a claim about what the sound state for elms is. The sound state is the state we would expect to find a thing in if we knew nothing about its individual history but only what kind of thing it is.

This kind of 'ought' is not restricted to 'sound state' claims, as the tomato example shows. Indeed it can be used to make the opposite claim, as in 'If this trend continues those trees ought to get the disease next year'. Though this use is rather strained. But in this example we can see what the 'ought' claim is based on - conditionally on the continuation of the trend. There is a condition buried in the tomato example too, though it is one which is already satisfied: something like 'since it has been so warm and sunny'. In these two examples specific conditions obtain which lead us to expect a certain outcome. The sound state is also a claim about what we may expect. If we can find out why we may expect it we shall get a clearer idea of what it is to be in a sound state. Does the elm claim - the sound state claim - have such a condition? No; it is not a claim about what in some particular circumstances we should expect, but about what in general we may expect. It is a statement about elms as a kind. If the statement were 'this tree ought to have leaves on in June' and it was questioned, one could reply 'because it is an elm, and elms....'.

What I called the conditions in the non-sound state examples are reasons why we should on a certain occasion expect a plentiful crop or diseased trees. The reason why we should expect leaves on this tree in June, however, is because that is part of the natural development and behaviour of elms, and this tree is an elm. To be in a sound state is to

be at some stage of the natural development of things of the appropriate kind. Further, it must be the right stage, given the age of the specimen. The size which is sound for a one-year-old elm is not sound for a ten-year-old elm, for an elm which develops naturally continues to grow after it is one year old.

What the natural development of a given kind is is discovered by observation of members of it. But not by majority verdict; the sound state for a six-year-old elm may not be that state which most six-year-old elms are found to be in. It may be that most or even all elms have Dutch Elm Disease; but still an elm with the disease is not sound. An observer may, if all his specimens have some peculiarity, be led to a mistaken view as to what the sound state is; but even in the absence of any sound specimens it may be possible to tell that the specimens one has are unsound, and even what it would be for them to be sound. This is a possible theme for science fiction or after-the-bomb stories: a shrewd observer realises, concerning some creatures which everyone else takes to be normal specimens of a certain kind, that they are in fact unsound or abnormal specimens of some other kind, as Gulliver is forced to realise that the Yahoos are not a separate species but degenerate men. How is this done? If we can find criteria by which a specimen might be judged unsound without comparing it with others of its kind, it will be clear that, and perhaps why, the sound state is not by definition the state which most members are in.

If one has only diseased elms, but an abundance of sound specimens of other kinds of tree, the task is easy. It may be clear enough that the elm is a tree, and trees normally have sap, unbroken branches, leaves and so on. These elms don't have these things, so there must be something wrong with them. But this proceeds via a knowledge of the sound state for the genus 'tree'. In the absence of such assistance but with some knowledge of living things, one might note the weakness of the elm, its brokenness, its dryness. One might notice that while there are some green shoots, elsewhere similar shoots are dry and dead. One might see that while some small shoots are green and supple, the large limbs are dry,

black and brittle. One's reaction might be, 'It can't be meant to be like this'.

Not to pursue this story to tedious length, the point I wish to draw from it is that 'natural development' can't just mean usual development. If one observes the kind of activity which creatures of some species carry out, the kind of nourishment they need to survive, and so on, one will take the natural development to be that which makes ammember of the species reasonably efficient at these things. One must form some idea of what that creature's wellbeing might consist in; the sound state is one which allows it to enjoy reasonable wellbeing. If one meets a creature with patchy fur, blind, incapable of much movement although it has legs which seem suitable for moving around on, it will be clear that it is not in a sound state even if one is not acquainted with that kind of creature. (It may not be an easy matter to determine wellbeing. One might think at first sight that a two toed sloth had some horribly lingering disease; yet further observation of how its capacities and its needs for life and survival fit together may show that it is quite normal for a sloth to move so slowly).

This account concentrates on living things, while kinds of stuff may also be in a sound or unsound state. Presumably there is some normal course of development by which metal and stone come into existence. But they do not continue to change as living things do. However, one may use the same sort of model; the natural course is for stone to be formed in a certain way and to have a certain chemical composition, and it is sound as long as it retains that composition.

The sound state and the normal development of things of a certain kind have a special role to play in explanation. No individual explanation is usually required of why a certain thing is in a sound state. Thus the explanation of why a certain tree has leaves in June is that it is an elm tree and it is part of the natural development of elm trees to have leaves in June (in the northern hemisphere). Any further explanation will apply to the kind as a whole; in this case the function that leaves

have for elm trees. If anything departs from the sound state, an explanation is required of why that particular thing isn't sound. It may be objected here that, to return to a previous example, if we were to find a tree in a sound state after a nuclear war, we should want an explanation. But this is because we already have a specific reason to think that it might not be sound. The sound state is the state which things of that kind have a natural tendency to be in, the state they will be in if left to themselves. It is not a necessary condition for x to belong to the kind ϕ that it is in the sound state of kind ϕ . A corrupt ϕ is still a ϕ . But the sound state tells one what ϕ s are like, the sound ϕ is the good specimen. The diseased or unsound elm will provide one with a perfectly good definition: an elm is anything which correct scientific theory assigns to the same species as this.* But if you want to know what elms are like you must look at a sound elm. And the way the scientific theory works to assign this unsound one and the sound ones to the same species is to discover the natural development of the species and then explain what in this case has interfered to prevent it from developing that way. This is by no means a vacuous explanation. There is a perfectly clear difference between that which isn't in the sound state of elmhood because it isn't an elm and has no tendency whatever to be in that state, and one which is and has but has been prevented from being so. The preventive agent must be discoverable and describable. But this would allow one to say that all elms are unsound and diseased even if one had never encountered a sound elm; if one could identify some disease which they all had. Also it might permit one to say what the sound state for elms is even if one had never observed it. One could do so if one could work out from the unsound specimens what would happen if the interfering factor were absent. For this one would have to identify the interfering factor and discover its effects and tendencies.

(This might work both ways. If, when the goddess with the apples of youth is removed, all the gods begin to age, this might lead one to conclude that they aren't gods at all but humans who have managed to

* Professor Wiggens's nuxia of the definite of a natural kind.

improve on the natural human state).

A possible objection to taking soundness to be some stage of natural or normal development must here be faced. Death, it may be complained, is natural. If we are to expect anything for certain to befall a living thing, it is death. One may be able to deny that a creature afflicted with mortal disease is a sound creature by pointing to a virus or other cause as an external agent interfering with its natural functioning. But not all creatures die of disease; some die of old age. They just wear out. What more natural than that? Yet a dead creature is surely not sound. It may be correct but will not satisfy this objector to claim with Aristotle that a dead cat is not a cat. (Does 'cat' in 'dead cat' occur in an 'inverted commas use'?) Also it doesn't deal with the cat which is dying of old age; certainly a cat, not diseased, but surely not in a sound state.

One might turn back to my remarks about wellbeing. The sound state includes not only a certain physical composition but the capacity to perform certain activities and to keep alive given adequate supplies and barring accidents. Also a system, living or not, is by definition self-maintaining. It is not functioning properly as a system unless it maintains itself. A dying cat's system is still functioning, but feebly, not enough to permit it to do much, nor enough to support it for long, nor enough to renew parts which need replacing if it is to keep going. On these grounds we can deny that it is sound. But this complaint makes necessary a qualification to the claim that unsoundness requires some interfering factor. We can say what prevents it from being sound, but it is not any external interference; it is simply the fact that the parts are worn. We must then say that if something is unsound, either there must be some interfering or preventative cause, or it is suffering from ordinary wear and tear.

Finally, death is certainly natural, but it is not natural for an individual living thing, in the sense that it has a 'life support

system' which is directed against death, and it is only when the system fails that death ensues; in no sense is the system aimed at death, it just can't keep going for ever.

To turn to corruption, it is not sufficient for this that a thing be unsound. There is nothing corrupt about a stunted tree or a one-legged man. In looking for examples of corruption our thoughts would most naturally turn first to kinds of stuff; especially organic stuff such as wood and flesh, but also rusty metal and perhaps even stone, for instance the stones of Venice. Here the most obvious feature is disintegration. Rusty metal is no longer solid; it is full of holes and falls into pieces. Rotten wood is light and spongy; one can push one's finger into it and crumble it with one's hands. The rotten and corrupt is weak and unreliable; rotting beams will not support a roof, nor a rusty chassis a car body. But the corruption of these stuffs doesn't consist solely in their unfitness for our purposes. We choose these materials for these purposes in the first place because unlike some other materials, e.g. spider-webbing, they have when sound a certain strength and solidity suitable for holding up houses and things. Corrupt metal or wood has lost its proper strength and solidity and either is disintegrating or tends to disintegrate under slight pressures.

But disintegration is not sufficient for corruption. For wood or metal may be pounded to pieces; they will disintegrate if enough pressure is applied without being at all corrupt. Less pressure is required to make corrupt material disintegrate than to make sound material disintegrate. But corrupt material will also disintegrate by itself. In corruption, there is a process of disintegration going on within the material itself; the disintegration is caused by a process within the material and not by pressure applied from outside. There may be an external cause, such as moisture, which sets the process going. But in corruption the moisture doesn't cause the disintegration by wearing away the material; it does so by starting a process within the material which then continues independently. The initiating cause may also be the

removal of some factor which prevents corruption; as when life departs from an animal body the cleaning and purifying mechanisms cease, and the body begins to corrupt. Once rust or rot or putrefaction begin, they continue and spread by an internally *maintained* process; corrupting parts infect sound parts. If one wants to stop the process one has to remove not some external cause but that part of the material itself which is already corrupt. If the cause which set the process going is still present one will have to remove that too otherwise it will start again. Yet it is still true that removal of infected material stops the process even if it does immediately start again.

It may not be strictly correct to say that the stones of Venice are corrupting. They are disintegrating as the result of chemical deposits from nearby industry, and this process seems to be self-perpetuating. Yet if one removed the chemicals from the face of the stone the disintegration would stop, without removal of any 'infected' stone. Moth, also, is said to corrupt; but this is to treat the moth grubs as part of the very cloth. Again, one could stop the process by removing the moths without having to cut out any infected cloth. Rust seems more properly a form of corruption; the metal itself undergoes a change and becomes oxidised and this oxidation will continue to spread from infected to uninfected parts even if the metal is removed from the rain and put in a shed. But the central example of corruption is the decomposition of animal and vegetable matter.

This feature of corruption, that it goes on autonomously within the corrupting material and is not carried on, only initiated, by an external cause, may seem to make trouble for my earlier account of the sound. I equated the sound state with being at some appropriate stage of natural development. Natural development was the course the object will pursue or the state it will be in if left to itself, to fulfil its own tendencies, without being prevented from doing so. But the inner and autonomous operation of corruption seems to allow it to satisfy this condition. Obviously the corrupt is not sound. Some adjustment is

necessary. Perhaps we might try to make something of the initiating cause of corruption, to make a case for calling this 'interference within the meaning of the act'. But I don't think this will work. For what is responsible for the initiation of corruption may be nothing more than a favourable causal condition. In the case of animal bodies I mentioned the departure of life. (This is neither a sufficient nor a necessary causal condition for the operation of corruption, because on the one hand of embalming and on the other gangrene. But we may ignore the necessary qualifications here). Yet certain favourable conditions are also necessary for things to be in a sound state. And there is no warrant for calling the conditions necessary to soundness normal conditions and the conditions necessary to corruption abnormal interferences. For a dead animal body will corrupt if left alone, while if interfered with, say by deepfreezing, the flesh may remain sound. (This isn't inconsistent with my earlier claim that death is unsound. A dead cat is not a sound cat, but it may be composed of sound flesh).

To clear up this difficulty we need to return again to the connection between soundness and wellbeing. It may be odd to talk of the wellbeing of pieces of stuff, yet to cease to exist might be said to be 'bad' for them. There is a close connection between corruption and ceasing to exist. To be in a corrupt state is to be at some stage in the process of corruption. The process of corruption is a process as a result of which things cease to exist. Not the only one, for they may be burnt or worn away for instance. But corrupting things undergo chemical change which is infectious and as a result decompose and cease to exist. Although coal results from the corruption of wood, it is not itself corrupt wood. The wood has rotted away and ceased to exist, and in the end those same elements or some of them may combine in a different way to form coal. Anything in a corrupt state is on its way to extinction, it is tending to cease to exist; though the process may be halted.

In the case of inorganic stuffs our extra condition for the sound state must simply be 'provided that this state is not part of an

internal process leading towards non-existence'. But organic material is the most central subject of corruption; it seems probable that rust may be called a corruption of metal because of its similarities to the corruption of animal and vegetable matter. And for organic stuff we may make the condition more interesting. Organic stuff is sound only if it is suitable to support life, the life of the kind of living things which are composed of that kind of stuff. This would have to be qualified in some way because my kitchen table doesn't seem suitable to form part of a living tree, yet it isn't rotten. Seasoned wood has had the sap dried out of it; yet it retains its composition and organisation by which sap could flow through it. Rotten wood, decomposing into its elements, couldn't carry sap, as we see on trees with rotten branches. When a person dies the system fails in some way, but the material of the person's body remains for a short time sound, fit to support life. When it corrupts it becomes unsuitable. The soundness of organic matter thus is not judged solely according to its own existence as stuff, but ^{also according} to its existence as stuff suitable to constitute the appropriate animal or vegetable; it was generated as part of that animal or vegetable and precisely as being stuff suitable for such a role.

We have then the following features of corruption. It is a process of disintegration and in the case of organic matter decomposition. Though the initial change may be set off by an external cause, it then proceeds by infection of sound by unsound parts within the material itself. To stop the process one must remove the infected material. It is a process which leads to the non-existence of the corrupting material. In the case of organic matter the process of corruption unfits it to constitute the body of a living thing.

I have so far discussed the corruption of matter, for the central application of the concept of corruption seems to be to the decomposition of animal and vegetable matter. But is there corruption of living things as such? It is true that the flesh of an animal or the wood of a tree may corrupt while the animal or tree is still alive, as in gangrene or

Dutch Elm Disease. But this is still the corruption of the stuff of which the animal or tree is made, not of the animal or tree itself. The corrupting stuff does become unfit to support life and will eventually kill the object if not cut out in time. But I now want to ask whether there is such a thing as the corruption of animals and vegetables as living systems, even though their matter may remain sound.

I think cancer may be described as a corruption of a living system as such. The OED says cancer is 'a malignant growth or tumour that tends to spread and to reproduce itself; it dorrodes the part concerned, and generally ends in death'. Cancer does lead to corruption of the stuff of the body, both because it leads to death and possibly because it results in dead cells within a living body, which corrupt. But as well as causing corruption, it is itself a corruption. The body is a living system which maintains itself. Part of proper maintenance is the growth of new cells to replace worn out ones. In cancer, a certain kind of cell is reproduced too fast so that instead of maintaining the system this activity damages and destroys it. Instead of maintaining the organ in question the tumour eats it away; tumours also damage the system by taking up space and impeding the operation of the organ where they are and then other organs. Here we have many of the features of corruption previously noted. There may be an external cause, such as smoking, of the original mutation in the cells which makes them begin to behave in this way, but once the cancer is started the cells reproduce themselves with the mutation and spread the malfunction to other parts by means of the ordinary operation of the system itself (e.g. the blood-stream). The system which should maintain itself is destroying itself. If one wants to stop the process one must kill or remove the affected cells, that is, a part of the corrupt system itself. The system has dis-integrated, in the sense that instead of working in harmony, one part is working against other parts. And it ends with the non-existence of the system. There can, then, be corruption of a living system as such, and any disease in which the system betakes itself to self-destruction by

means of its own maintenance mechanisms gone wrong, is such a corruption.

Here is another example of a corruption of a different kind of living system. It is a fanciful story, but if it took place would constitute the corruption of a species. Imagine a species of fowl which has a mating ritual, well adapted to its preservation, among the features of which is the attraction of females to males with red feathers on their heads. Some members of the species contract a disease which weakens and deforms them, and at the same time gives them remarkably fine red head feathers. Females prefer, therefore, diseased males to sound ones and, if we may suppose both the debilitation and the feathers hereditary, this process will continue. The result will be weaker and weaker members of the species, until they are unable to support the rigours of existence at all.

The species's capacity for survival is impaired. But this isn't sufficient for corruption; a species all of whose members are weakened by disease or famine wouldn't count as corrupt. Nor is it sufficient if they simply degenerate. Degeneration may come about as a result of scarcity of food, or absence of some essential element of diet; external influences. The reason why I call this case of mine one of corruption is that the mechanism by which the degeneration takes place is the breeding habits of the species itself, which should maintain and assist the survival of the species. The species, here, is considered not simply as a collection of individuals, but as a collection which has a system for ensuring that there continues to be a collection of similar individuals. It is this system which is now tending to bring it about that there is no longer such a collection. The species considered as such a system is not just dying out, it is killing itself off, and the only way to stop the process would be to remove a part of the system itself, viz, some of the individuals which compose it.

A similar phenomenon has occurred in human behaviour; perhaps it is also a kind of corruption of our species. This is the elevation of the consumptive woman as an ideal of female beauty. To find beautiful and

to prefer as a mate a woman with a mortal disease, on account of the appearance and weakness which her disease gives her, does seem a kind of corruption, not moral but of the species as a survival system.

Consumption is now no longer mortal, unless untreated; it also (as a result?) seems to have lost its fascination.

The ideas of survival and extinction become even more important when thus applying the notion of corruption to living systems. Part of the justification of calling these changes in their functioning corrupt has been that they tend to destroy the living system. This would prevent evolution from being corrupt; a desirable outcome. A creature which suffers a mutation departs from the sound state of its species. Often it just dies as a result; there is neither corruption nor evolution. If it survives and passes it to its descendents, they may degenerate if it is a harmful mutation but if there is no mechanism at work by which the whole species tends to take on the harmful mutation (as there was with my fowls) there will simply be degeneration of some members, not corruption. But if it is a profitable mutation it will not count as a corruption even though by natural selection the whole species may tend to exhibit it, for it enhances rather than damages the survival capacities of the species.

Corruption is, whatever else it is, a kind of deterioration, and extinction is the clearest kind of evil which may befall a creature or a species. Only man can make the judgment, on his own behalf and that of animals, that in some circumstances it is better to die than live; no other creature can commit suicide, though they can kill themselves. But perhaps we may step a little beyond this unequivocal criterion and use the idea of impoverishment instead of that of extinction in order to justify an attribution of corruption. A living thing has a range of activities and abilities proper to it. If these are drastically reduced and restricted by some mechanism internal to the species we might say those creatures have been corrupted even though they are not likely to

die. In this sense it might be suggested that we have corrupted various species by domesticating them. I do not know the facts of domestication, but it seems possible that hens' ancestors could fly, and cows' ancestors run fast. It is we who have brought about the impoverishment, but it can still be called corruption since it was done using the natural mating procedure of the species, manipulated for our purposes, and their feeding behaviour and so on. Until recently, men engineered which bull mated with which cow, but the beasts themselves did the actual mating. It may be that the fact that we have impaired these creatures' capacity for survival without our assistance would form a ground for saying that we have corrupted them. But so also might the fact, if it is one, that their lives are now impoverished in comparison with the lives of their ancestors.

On my account of corruption there can be no corrupt kind of thing as such. So it may be asked whether anything which is in a corrupt state must have once been in the sound state of its kind, or if things may come into existence already corrupt. This is not a question about natural history but a conceptual question, for the following reason. We must have some justification for calling a certain object a corrupt ϕ , rather than a perfectly good member of some other kind. The simplest way would be to say that it was once in the sound state for ϕ s and has got by some traceable path from that state into the state of disintegration in which we find it. And the quotation from the OED with which I began suggests that this requirement, that an object in a corrupt state must have got into that state by a process of corruption from the sound state, is built into the concept of corruption. It says that to be corrupt is to be 'changed from the naturally sound condition'. In the case of inorganic stuff this requirement seems to hold good. If a piece of metal were found which had all the properties of rusty tin but could be proved to have always been like that, it seems to me that we would say that a new kind of stuff had been found which was just like rusty tin. For if the stuff is to be tin, there must be some story about what has prevented it from being in the sound tin-state. If it has always been in this state-like-rusty-tin, the interference must have occurred before

it came into existence. But if something happened at that stage to prevent whatever elements form sound tin from doing so, and instead something else happened, it seems as though some other kind of thing was formed; and if some other kind of thing then not tin and ipso facto not rusty tin.

But the case is different with organic material. It is different because inorganic material does not reproduce itself. Organic material on the other hand composes a living thing, which reproduces its kind by forming the beginnings of a new member of the kind from its own material. If the relevant bit of its own material is already corrupt, it could pass on the corruption and the new thing which grew would be made of corrupt material. This couldn't happen if the relevant bit of material were completely corrupt (as completely as is compatible with existing as that kind of material at all); for I have said, surely correctly, that completely corrupt organic matter is unfit to sustain life, therefore not the new life of a new member of the species. The parent might lay an egg or drop a seed, but if these were quite corrupt they would rot away, not be a new living being. But there are many degrees of corruption. If some of the material were a bit corrupt, there might be the possibility of a new growth whose matter was to some extent corrupt from the beginning.

But though this answers in the negative the question whether every corrupt thing must once have been sound, this is because a new plant or animal is not created from nothing but receives matter from its parent. So the question is shifted back: must there have been soundness somewhere back in the line? To this the answer must be yes. Firstly, the corrupt material isn't fit to sustain life, and it spreads, so this corruption cannot have been present long or the 'family' would have died out. More cogently, we require still, for anything which isn't sound, a specific interference or diversion which has prevented it from being sound. If no such thing is forthcoming but we are told and asked to take seriously

the claim that it has always been so, there is no ground for ascribing to the kind a sound state other than the one we find in the example, and this excludes the possibility of its being corrupt. Therefore it must be the case that for any corrupt thing, either it or its ancestor, if it is the kind of thing which has ancestors, was once sound.

I now summarise the conclusions of this chapter. The sound state for a member of a natural kind is the state it will be in if left to pursue the natural development of things of that kind. The concepts of soundness and natural development are connected with welfare: the sound state is that which allows an animal or plant to survive and to engage ^{adequately} in the typical pursuits of things of that kind. The sound state has a special role in explanation. No explanation is usually required of why an individual is in the sound state for its kind whereas it is required when an individual deviates from its sound state. This is because the sound state is the realisation of the natural tendencies of that kind of thing.

Corruption is disintegration maintained and spread by an internal process. It unfits its subject for its proper function and leads to extinction. It applies to stuff, especially to the decomposition of organic stuff. It also applies to living systems, when the system itself is turned from maintenance and survival to self-destruction. I suggested finally that an internally maintained process leading to impoverishment might count as corruption. A necessary condition for the attribution of corruption is that the corrupt thing or its ancestor was once sound.

Chapter Two. Innocence

If we are to apply the concept of corruption to morality, we must have some idea of the sound moral state. I shall begin by considering whether innocence may be the sound state with which we contrast moral corruption. We certainly speak of the corruption of innocence; and innocence is a state which people seem to start off in, both individuals and, according to the story, the 'race of men' itself. It does, therefore, fulfil the rather tentative requirement that the sound state should actually precede the corrupt one. There is some reason to consider innocence as a possible sound state, for there has been a persistently recurring tradition which recommends it as the sound natural state of mankind, an ideal 'state of nature' from which man descends into the corruption of civilization. This view would suggest that innocence is not only the state mankind and perhaps individual men were originally in, but that it is the natural state, in the sense noted earlier that they would remain in it if their natural development were pursued without interference, and that to leave the state of innocence is a corrupt departure from mankind's true nature.

The phrase 'corruption of innocence' seems to suggest a corrupt version of some quality, innocence. I should explain that what I am here, as elsewhere, interested in is the corruption of a person - here, an innocent one. I consider innocence and corruption as two states which a person may be in; I do not consider the state of innocence in a pure form and in a corrupt form.

The sense of innocence I shall be concerned with is not that in which we say that a man is innocent of a certain deed. In this sense it means that a man has committed no legal or moral offense. The law is irrelevant here, and it would be vacuous for this enquiry to examine the sound state as that of not having committed a moral offense. No doubt this is very sound, but so far from providing a starting point for a

moral enquiry, it requires that we first discover what a moral offense is.

I take the central feature of innocence to be the lack of acquaintance with evil. This may be either the lack of acquaintance with anything which is, in fact, evil, or the unawareness, with respect to anything with which one is acquainted, that it is evil. A minor example. In L. P. Hartley's 'Go Between', the boy Leo questions Lord Trimmingham about the fifth Viscount, who died in a duel of jealousy concerning his wife. Leo says "Oh, what fun!" and plies Trimmingham with bright, interested questions (e.g. "Was he angry with her?"). He has no idea of the jealousy, hatred and betrayal involved. He is quite unacquainted with these passions, and therefore unaware of any evil in the story. In this way he is an innocent.

The acquaintance in question, as we may gather from the example, is not just a theoretical knowledge that certain things are evil. It is more like the knowledge involved in knowing or being acquainted with a person. I am acquainted with a person not just when I know who he is, but when I have met him or had some personal experience of him. The innocent does not understand wickedness, moral evil. He may know that there is wickedness in the world, because he has been told (as Leo knows, in an external and incomprehending way, that murder is evil). But he has no experience of evil motivations and desires in himself, and so cannot understand what it would be like to feel, e.g., jealous hatred, or to do murder. A whole dimension in which we see the world and understand the actions of others is lacking to him. This does not mean that he thinks that everyone acts from morally good motives; he has no understanding of moral assessment at all.

Innocence, then, is a negative moral quality, admirable for its absence of evil motivation, but making its possessors somewhat unrealistic, since they are ignorant of a certain genuine aspect of the actions of others. The attempt to elevate it into a virtue produces the more sickly and sentimental of Dickens's heroines. It can be seen why it carries with it certain qualities such as trustingness and straightforwardness.

An innocent will not be suspicious because he will not realise there is anything to be suspicious of. It is also clear in what sense children are innocent. It is not that they all possess some quality of glowing moral goodness. To think so is to sentimentalize childish innocence. Hartley's portrait of Leo is a much truer description of childish innocence. Leo, to begin with, has no perception of the moral dimension of actions at all. He has a concept of 'right' and 'wrong': there are in his life things-to-be-done and things-not-to-be-done. But these are seen in completely external, legalistic terms: "I felt sure that when a girl was engaged to a man she did not write letters to another man calling him 'darling'. She might do it until the day of the engagement but not after. It was automatic; it was a rule; like leaving the wicket at cricket when you were out; and it scarcely crossed my mind that to comply with it might be painful." (Penguin p.156). Gradually Leo comes to a vague realisation of the moral dimension of what is going on: "For the first time in my life I had a strong sense of obligation in a matter that didn't really concern me - a sense of ought and ought not But now for some such scruple I felt constrained to take preventive action - and at a sacrifice to myself." (p.182). This is the beginning of a loss of innocence: "Though I didn't know the term 'hush-money', its meaning flittered, bat-like, about my mind." (p.194).

So the phrase 'unacquainted with evil' carries with it not only ignorance but the idea of being untainted with evil, in a way in which someone, however upright in his behaviour, who is aware of his own and others' complex desires and can see them as good and evil, and who accepts them as part of the world, is tainted with it. "I knew that (the letters) were very secret and aroused the strongest feelings - feelings which, until this afternoon, I had not known that grown-up people possessed, feelings which might lead - well, lead to murder."

It seems that of innocence, as of virginity, the loss is irrevocable. On a logical parallel with virginity, if at any time one becomes acquainted with evil, it will never again be true of one that

one has never been acquainted with it. But what is the reality of this? Let us see what would be necessary for innocence to be regained.

First, one would have no longer to see or feel anything in one's present experience as evil. But in addition, one would have to forget one's past acquaintance. One must no longer see or feel anything in one's past experience as evil, since this would be a present judgment and therefore a present acquaintance. We have seen that the innocent view is somewhat unrealistic, and lacks a dimension. Once one has seen the world in the fuller, non-innocent light, it is impossible to discard it. One may revise one's judgment of a particular event. One might have believed that certain people were deceiving one or manipulating one, and later come to believe that this wasn't the case. But this cannot return a person to a state of innocence, since deceit and manipulation remain in his battery of possible explanations of behaviour; they just don't explain that behaviour.

The one possibility for regaining innocence seems to be amnesia. Since one cannot remember past events without remembering the light in which one saw and experienced them, perhaps a man can regain innocence by forgetting all the events of his life since he was last innocent. (a possibility exploited by Graham Greene in 'Ministry of Fear'). But forgetting particular events would not be sufficient; it would be necessary also to forget the way of looking at the world which was involved in remembering them. As I put it earlier, it would be necessary to forget that certain explanations or descriptions of events and people were even available; one would have to lose the attitudes involved in using and understanding these explanations. This takes us from the knowledge a man possesses to his character. A man's attitudes to the world and his way of understanding it form part of his character. If he is to regain innocence he must lose contact not only with that part of his life which wasn't innocent, but also with a part of his character.

Character is something which is formed and changed continuously throughout a man's life by his interaction with the world. I don't

want to argue that a man cannot lose part of his character in this way, that if he suffers a radical change of character he is a different person. But our moral interest centres on a man's conscious aims and purposes and their origin in one consciously continuous individual. Innocence, however, seems to be regained, if at all, by a kind of moral discontinuity. In typical amnesia stories the change is brought about by a bump on the head. Perhaps a man might be able to cause such a bump to be administered to himself in exactly the right spot and thereby regain innocence; but it would be a curious moral aim. It might be possible to regain innocence other than by bumps on the head, but if I am right as to what this project would require, what one could not do would be to conceive a deliberate project of regaining innocence and carry it through consciously in such a way that one could compare one's success at the end with one's state when one set out. For that would require remembering one's state when one set out as a state of oneself, and that would involve recognising the attitudes and explanations one had then as possible ways of seeing the world.

There can be such a thing as a moral project to change one's attitudes. Such a project is described by Iris Murdoch in her essay 'The Idea of Perfection' (in 'The Sovereignty of Good'). A mother gradually changes her attitude to her daughter in law, thinking of her at first as silly and vulgar and finally as spontaneous and gay. It is an exercise of charity or justice; it is continuous and at the end she can remember her former attitude and consider it unjust. On the other hand it is hard to see the regaining of innocence as I have described it, involving an abrupt discontinuity and the loss of contact with the point of departure, as having any moral relevance at all (though, as in the Greene story, it may bring peace of mind). The process may be irrelevant to personal identity, but it does seem to involve some loss of moral identity.

Innocence, then, is a lack of acquaintance with evil, involving both ignorance and an unrealistic or narrow view of the world. The

innocent has no idea what certain attitudes would be like, and lacks a certain range of explanations. For moral purposes loss of innocence can be regarded as irrevocable.

What, then, is the corruption of innocence? We do regard innocence as particularly vulnerable, and it is easy to see why. Innocence involves not knowing a very real aspect of the world; this doesn't amount to a false belief because the innocent lacks the understanding to have either a false or a true belief on the subject. But it resembles a false belief in being vulnerable to the truth. If the innocent comes into close contact with evil, it will tend to enforce recognition. If, being surrounded and closely touched by something evil, the innocent doesn't recognise it or notice it, we will be forced to call him morally blind rather than innocent. If we try to represent innocence as a virtue of positive strength whose exercise consists (in part) in a refusal to recognise some evil which is under one's nose, we find ourselves with nothing more glorious than stupidity. We see this in Dickens's portrait of Tom Pinch in 'Martin Chuzzlewit'. Nobody is taken in by the hypocrisy and evil designs of Pecksniff except Tom, his closest associate, and Dickens tries to present this as a consequence of his nobly simple and innocent nature. In fact, what we get is a picture of crass stupidity which does him no credit at all.

Again, there is the absence of certain motivations and desires. I first mentioned these as evil desires, but this is wrong. Many are adult passions which in certain circumstances may be evil. Part of Leo's innocence is his total lack of awareness of sexual passion; he has a natural contempt for 'spooning' because he doesn't suspect the existence of any strong passion which provides a good reason for this 'silly' activity. But if the absence of this kind of desire is involved in innocence, innocence will be vulnerable to the normal process of development, in most people.

However this vulnerability, as I have so far described it, makes a difficulty in saying what the corruption of innocence is. For clearly

loss of innocence is not in itself corrupt. It usually occurs as a normal part of growing up. Nor is it corrupt just to experience certain sorts of desires, e.g. sexual ones, at least if we can carry over my claim that there is no corrupt kind of thing; we are naturally subject to such desires. Yet equally obviously loss of innocence is a necessary condition for the corruption of innocence; when innocence is corrupted the subject does not retain innocence in some corrupted form, but loses it.

I suggest that the corruption of innocence is the loss of innocence in such a way that, as a consequence, one becomes morally corrupt. I suggest, in fact, that there is not some special kind of corruption which is the corruption of innocence. All innocence does is to depart; the corruption that arrives is a moral corruption which may follow other states than innocence. And this moral corruption must be contrasted with some other morally sound state than the state of innocence.

How can a person lose innocence in such a way as to become morally corrupt? I mentioned the vulnerability of innocence; it is vulnerable not only to loss but also to corruption. The innocent is vulnerable because he doesn't know what to avoid; not knowing what is dangerous he will have no suspicion and no protection. If, as his eyes are gradually opened, he has the firm foundation of finding that that part of the world with which he is involved and to which he is committed is on the whole all right, he will simply lose innocence. But if a person wakes to a knowledge of good and evil to find himself involved in evil, or if he is given evil instead of good when he is still unable to judge between them, he may be corrupted. (He needn't be, as Henry James shows in 'What Maisie Knew'). To come to a first awareness of evil by realising that one is oneself involved with it is likely to be corrupting. The innocent is (i) likely to become involved in evil because he lacks the knowledge of it which would enable him to avoid it and (ii) likely to become morally corrupt through no fault of his own - it may be impossible to hold him responsible for his own corruption.

Whereas we do in general hold ordinary moral agents responsible for their own corruption, since we believe they have that acquaintance with evil which would enable them to avoid it.

For example, we might take children 'educated' by some character like Fagin. Their education consists in being taught a skill, the skill at picking pockets. In the familiar way they are praised for excelling at it; in addition the adults who are held up to them as models of excellence (e.g. Bill Sykes) have a high degree of this skill.

Let us imagine a child naturally adventurous and idealistic. It may seem glorious to him to undertake risky escapades; he may idealise Bill Sykes as the best there is. Suppose he then gradually comes to realise some things like the following: Bill Sykes takes things other people have a right to or value; his (the child's) love and admiration are made use of rather than returned in kind; Bill Sykes is a coward; as a result of his (child's) actions people who trust him are hurt - and so on. It may finally be no longer possible for him to regard the enterprise as glorious. The child's corruption may consist in his believing that this is in general what the world is like; he may become cynical; the best things in his world are rotten therefore any lesser thing will be more rotten therefore all is rotten. He may continue in corrupt ways thinking there is no other way to go on.

Or the story may run slightly differently. The children will want to value and be valued. They will pick up not only the criterion (success in stealing) but the tone of their elders' value-talk. The thing to be is clever and sly and crafty; such persons are the ones who excel in stealing. These children through imitation and the desire to be valued will form a conception of the good as something clever and sly and crafty, and as involving getting the better of people. They do admire something as constituting excellence, but it is something which is not in fact admirable. It will be practically impossible to detach, for such persons, the idea 'admirable and to be pursued' from the idea 'getting the better of people, crafty'. Yet how could they

have avoided making that identification in the first place? In these cases, innocents come to an awareness of evil to find themselves involved in it, and may be unable to reject it when its nature dawns on them.

Innocence then is peculiarly vulnerable to corruption, but the corruption to which it is vulnerable is moral corruption, judged corrupt by reference to some other standard than innocence. Leo, for example, as the thought about hush-money comes to him (see page 19), must enter the fray as a moral agent; once his world contains the possibility of such an institution as *hush-money*, he has before him not the choice between corruptly accepting *it* and the sound innocent state of not realising what it is, but between corruptly accepting it and soundly refusing it under that title. Once the innocent loses his innocence, he enters the world of morality, where the standard for his behaviour is no longer innocence but a fully moral sound state, which remains to be discussed.

But why won't innocence do as the sound moral state? One reason I have indicated already - it is lost as a part of normal development. However, I haven't considered the possibility that the correct description of what usually happens is that we all become corrupt. Perhaps the original innocence of Adam and Eve is the proper and sound state for mankind, as some of those who object to civilization suggest.

The first thing which which would make innocence at least peculiar as the sound state is that it cannot be aimed at. Either one has it, or one has irrevocably lost it. And the innocent lacks even the knowledge which would enable him to preserve his condition. It can only be envied.

I would claim further that innocence cannot be thought of as worthy to be aimed at. To regard innocence as the proper human condition is to deny a large part of our capacities, to restrict both knowledge and our emotional natures. Consider the much maligned Eve. She was given a reason not to eat the apple, the reason of authority. Then the serpent

tempts her, and she considers the matter for herself:

And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat..
(Genesis.III.6)

These are good reasons, and the last even a morally good one. To take innocence as the sound state would be to accept something restricted as the human good. Had Eve insisted on remaining innocent, she would have been refusing to develop the capacity for knowledge. Innocence also involves the absence of certain passions; perhaps Eve lost her innocence by wanting the fruit and by reasoning about it at all. But the sound state must surely be some right adjustment of our whole nature, not the abandonment of some part of it.

It may be felt that I have ignored a powerful tradition, exemplified for example in Dostoyevsky's 'The Idiot', which takes innocence to be a supremely worthy ideal. I cannot do this tradition justice here, but there are reasons for thinking that it is anyway beyond the scope of a purely ethical investigation.

Prince Myshkin is a morally good person in a quite unmysterious way: kind, honest, courageous, generous, conscientious. Dostoyevsky seems to have thought of his innocence not as part of his virtue but as a personal characteristic which will make him a sympathetic hero (see Introduction to the Penguin translation). He is guileless and unsuspecting and lacks many of those passions (e.g. ambition, possessive love) which sometimes make men wish one another evil. But the most important reason why he wishes no one evil is not his innocence but his goodness - his love of the good and of his fellow men.

If Prince Myshkin's innocence is to be taken as more than an endearing characteristic it must, I think, be seen as part of a religious ideal of purity. (As we see it, for example, in the Holy Man of Kipling's 'Kim') Such purity has two major differences from the kind of innocence I have discussed: it is invulnerable, and it can be aimed at. Both these differences arise from the fact that the innocence is based on a

religious view of the world which involves a kind of detachment from its hullabaloo. The innocence is invulnerable because based on a view of reality, rather than on ignorance; the same view of what kind of a place the world is enables the man who holds it to aim at and achieve innocence and look back upon his former state as benighted. But innocence of this sort is a religious ideal based on religious metaphysics; the reasons for taking it as a sound state must be religious rather than simply moral, and this takes it beyond my project. (Eve's behaviour looks quite different from a religious point of view; her fault was surely in disobeying God, not in desiring wisdom. There is no reason to think that a morality based on religion will command the same things as one not so based).

According to my analysis of natural corruption, there can be no corrupt kind of thing; the sound state was part of the natural development of the appropriate kind. If the analogy with the natural can be carried through, we cannot accept innocence as the sound state since it would deny this development. And even if we accept the suggestion that there is some corruption, perhaps the result of original sin, in human nature itself, yet on the mundane plane of morality there is a great difference in point of corruption between some of us and others. This investigation concerns the differences between David Copperfield and Uriah Heep which makes us call one corrupt and the other sound, and not any similarity between them. This difference remains to be accounted for by one who claims that innocence is the sound state and to depart from it a corruption.

Chapter Three. Integrity

There are two ways in which we might locate the morally sound state. One is by treating the morally sound state as a special case of the naturally sound state. This must involve the assumption or claim that men are naturally good, and only become corrupt as a result of some alien interference with their natural course of development. This line of thought suggested innocence as a likely candidate for the sound state, as a good state which is natural to man and in which he would remain if his development pursued its proper course unhindered. But the attempt to take innocence as the sound state failed. This does not show that man is not naturally good, only that even if he is, innocence is not the state of natural goodness. There have been many other attempts to describe a state of moral goodness as the proper or natural development of a man's nature, and evil as an unnatural departure from it. But without a fair amount of metaphysics, more than I shall attempt here, we cannot identify the morally sound state with that state which a man would naturally develop into if left to himself - the formula that was used for the natural case. For, quite apart from the seeming impossibility of deciding what it would be for a man to be left to himself, there seems to be no particular moral state into which we might expect such a man to develop. Some crimes are certainly called unnatural, but on the whole these seem to be ones which indicate in the criminal a complete absence of some affection or sensibility which we call natural because we most of us share it and think it good. Murder of parents and torture of children are examples of such ^{un-}natural crimes. But calling them unnatural seems not so much to contrast their moral wickedness with the naturally good condition of the rest of us as to indicate surprise that anyone, whatever his moral state, should want to do such things. Most human beings don't happen to want to torture children. But if people can be said to be naturally disposed not to commit certain crimes, they also seem to be

naturally subject to certain temptations. Pope Alexander VI's gross nepotism in favour of children whom he had no business to have anyway may have been immoral and corrupt, but hardly seems unnatural. These rather idle reflections on our talk of what is natural show, if they show anything at all, that what we consider natural doesn't coincide at this level with what we consider morally good, nor the bad with the unnatural. To establish that the morally sound state is the natural or proper state for man requires a theory of human nature. The undertaking seems to me a worthy one, but it is beyond my competence.

But there is another possibility: that both the naturally sound state and the morally sound state are discovered by reference to a further principle which governs both, though in different ways. My procedure in the natural case was to give reasons why we must think of a certain state as the standard or norm for judging things of the appropriate kind. In parallel fashion, I want now to argue that a certain attribute must at least form part of our moral norm or standard; we could not, I shall claim, adjudge to be a good man one who lacked this attribute. And thus that it is a vital ingredient of the sound moral state. Although the reasons which we find for taking a certain state as the norm in the natural case may be quite different from those which we find to support our moral norm, we are in both cases searching for that without which we could not consider something a good example of its kind. Any attribute of which this can be said will be an ingredient of the sound state. In the natural case, for example, survival capacities are relevant; but we are unlikely to find that people die of moral corruption. When I have established a certain state as morally sound, I shall use it to analyse moral corruption; finally I shall look for parallels between moral and natural corruption.

My candidate for the sound state this time is integrity. My discussion of innocence took up the connection between corruption and impurity; but in so far as purity could be accepted at all as the sound state, it seemed to be a religious rather than a moral aim. Now I

take up the association of corruption with disintegration and turn to the state of integrity which provides us with a metaphor of wholeness. What then is integrity, and what is it a wholeness of? Integrity must apply to a man's character. But the investigation must start with what the man of integrity does. His character consists to a large extent of his inclinations to do and attitudes towards certain actions.

A first suggestion might be that to act with integrity is to stick to or support one's values. As Gary Watgon argues in his paper 'Free Agency' (J.P.1975) there are for each of us certain things which we value, judge to be worthwhile, good and worthy of pursuit, as distinguished from the things we 'just' want. We judge the world and our own lives good in so far as they conform to these values, they give meaning and point to our lives and provide us with answers to the reflective questions we pose ourselves: what shall I do? what shall I be? Thus Father Sergius, in Tolstoy's story, values chastity. It is part of the ideal round which his life is built and if he gives in to the temptation presented by the strange lady, he will on this view lack integrity.

As it stands, this won't do. Consider the case of Cesare Borgia. He had, it might be said, one overwhelming value: to be a great prince. This seemed to him the thing most worthy of pursuit and achievement; his life was built around it and was given its meaning for him by reference to it. But for him this value was so important that it wiped the floor with all other possible values, including - especially - integrity. His standpoint is clear and simple and he consistently pursued his aim through a career of deception, treachery and murder. It may not yet be clear what integrity is but it is quite clear that (a) Cesare Borgia consistently pursued what he held to be of value and (b) whatever integrity is he didn't have any. It cannot therefore consist in the single-minded pursuit of what one takes to be worthwhile.

A natural reaction to this case would be to attempt to disqualify anything like 'my being a great prince' as the sort of value sticking to

which gives one integrity. Two things seem to be wrong with it. First it makes essential reference to him. He doesn't value anyone else being a great prince, in fact in some cases he sets considerable disvalue on it. He doesn't think a great prince is a good thing to have in the world if it isn't him. But we might want to say that the sense of 'value' which we need here is that in which to value something is to judge it worthy of pursuit by anyone. Secondly, to hold this one single value by itself utterly disregards the good of anyone else, whether aiming at great princehood or not. Their physical, moral or emotional well-being or suffering are simply of no interest whatever.

Following this suggestion, we might take integrity to consist in upholding one's moral values, and use these two objections to restrict what is to count as a moral value, i.e. by stipulating that it must essentially contain no referring terms and should contain references to human good and harm. These of course aren't sufficient conditions since the following seems to satisfy them: that whoever is uttering this sentence should excel at grinding the faces of the poor. Yet we are unlikely to want to accept this as a moral value. But even if the restriction to the moral could be made precise along these lines, this formulation will not be acceptable. For taking something unequivocally moral, one can construct a case where a man fails to uphold his moral values yet doesn't fail in integrity. For example, the following. Generosity is clearly a moral value; any criterion for a moral value which excluded generosity would be unacceptable on that account. Imagine then a man who values generosity. On some particular occasion - say, a person in distress knocking on his door at midnight - he not only believes he ought to act generously but is also quite clear what generosity requires that he do. At a minimum, let us say, open the door. He doesn't open the door. He is certainly open to criticism, but to accuse him of lack of integrity doesn't seem to hit the mark. Yet he does act against his moral belief, stemming from his attitude to generosity, concerning what should be done in this situation. Integrity therefore cannot

consist in upholding one's moral values.

How does an exercise of generosity differ from a display of integrity? The proper reaction to generosity is gratitude; but gratitude doesn't seem applicable to integrity. One may feel gratitude towards one who displays integrity if his act benefits oneself. For instance, when a man under oath tells in evidence the truth which clears another of a crime, the innocent man may feel grateful to him. Nevertheless, it would be proper for the witness to repudiate the gratitude as inappropriate, saying: I only did what was required. Can we alter my earlier case of lack of generosity so that it becomes a lack of integrity? Yes: in troubled times a man undertakes a dangerous journey and his friend undertakes to give him shelter at the end of it. The traveller arrives and knocks; the friend doesn't open. The traveller falls therefore into the hands of enemies. The fate of the traveller is not strictly relevant; it merely shows why the friend's failure matters. What makes this a case of lack of integrity is that the friend had undertaken to open the door and the traveller was relying on him. Likewise the man on oath had undertaken to tell the truth. Gratitude is for favours; to carry out an undertaking is not to do a favour. Undertaking to open the door or tell the truth in the first place may be a favour and deserving of gratitude. But to carry out what has been undertaken is not a favour but required. I suggest that integrity consists in the honouring of commitments.

Well, it may be said, wasn't Borgia committed to becoming a great prince? How does this get us any further? Let me specify what commitments ~~seem to me~~ ^{are} relevant to integrity.

There are, I think, three kinds. First, specific, explicitly undertaken commitments. These don't need much comment. Promises, oaths, marriage contracts, business contracts. If promises are to include informal undertakings (e.g. "Will you come?" "Yes, all right, I'll be there.") there may sometimes be difficulties in deciding whether there is an undertaking or not. For example, take the man who says to his friend, "I'm going that way tomorrow anyway, I'll give you a lift", and then has

a very good reason for going another way or staying at home. Has he promised or undertaken to be there (the man may be relying on him) or only offered a prediction? I ignore these problems, and include only clear cases of commitments, where someone has by words or signs undertaken to do something, that is, not just predicted that he will do it from knowledge of his plans and circumstances but explicitly formed a new intention or ratified an old one and provided himself with a reason for doing it which he did not have before. The man of integrity, then, keeps his word in these matters. This, I think, is a better explanation of the case of Father Sergius than that offered earlier. He had taken a vow of chastity. To succumb to temptation would have been to break his vow and it is for this reason that it would have constituted a lack of integrity.

But this isn't enough. The man of integrity is also not, e.g. a liar, whether on oath or not; but when did he undertake to tell the truth? Or consider the case of a man who complies with the McCarthy Committee demand that he give names of those among his friends who are or have been communists. The man of integrity does not provide evidence, whether true or false, to the persecutors of his friend: Yet he is unlikely to have promised not to do so, and probably will have made no explicit promise not to betray his friend nor damage his interests. It seems that we may find ourselves with commitments which have not been explicitly undertaken.

There is an answer to the question: when have I undertaken to speak the truth? In an exaggerated form, it is: whenever you open your mouth. When we communicate with others, we say what we say as true. We cannot assert something without committing ourselves to the truth of what we say. If we use one of the many ways of cancelling the assumption that we are offering what we say as true (of which "I don't vouch for the truth of this" is only the most explicit and cumbersome) we are in virtue of this

*Note: it is interesting that while from the point of view of justice it makes a considerable difference whether the evidence is true or false - an unjust law may be applied justly or unjustly - it makes no difference from the point of view of loyalty. In this case it is just as much a betrayal to say truly that one's friend has been a communist as to say it falsely.

no longer asserting it, no longer telling anyone anything. More accurately, we may be telling our hearer something else, for instance that this is what someone else thinks, but we are not telling him that which we don't vouch for the truth of. It is not, itself, offered as information. The liar is always failing to honour his commitment to the truth of what he says, otherwise he wouldn't be lying. Lying relies on the fact that what is asserted is offered as true. The practice of children and law courts of demanding, on solemn occasions, oaths that one will speak the truth doesn't indicate that they believe there to be no prior commitment, but rather a belief that in certain pressing circumstances people aren't going to keep it without the extra threat of imprisonment for perjury or (in the case of children) the fulfilment of the various hypothetical maledictions. The 'man of honour' rejects the suggestion that he should provide any extra commitment, holding rightly that he is already fully committed to telling the truth; 'my word is my bond' says how things are. Children have a device - crossing their fingers behind their backs - by which they reckon to cancel the claim that their words are true without anybody knowing. But of course this is a device for lying; the crossing out is to be secret but the claim to truth is contained in the statement itself. If one were really to cancel the truth-commitment, the other would have no reason to believe one's words. If one could cancel the assertive force of all one's utterances, the effect would not be that one could lie with impunity but that one ceased to communicate.

This is certainly oversimplified. Much information can be extracted from the statements of someone assumed to be lying if he is taken to be lying for a purpose and not at random, and governments are no doubt adept at using this fact to convey one thing in words saying the opposite. And one who answers the question "Do you know Jocelyn Jones?" by saying "No, I have never heard of that low-down skiving blackleg bitch in my life" cannot be said to have done much damage to the communicative possibilities by his lie. Nevertheless the situation is basically as I have said: a statement is offered as true and standardly implicates that one

believes that what one says is true. A lie fails to keep this standard commitment.

Loyalty is problematic. There have been in the past and to a lesser extent still are explicit loyalty structures, such as mediaeval oaths of fealty, where it is made explicit that a loyalty relationship is thereby entered into and what it commits the parties to. And there are also relationships whose terms, though not made explicit, are so widely known and accepted in a community that members of that community who enter into the relationship with one another can clearly be held to have undertaken explicit commitments. For example, an Australian who becomes the 'mate' of another is, I believe, committed among other things to supporting his mate in any fight he gets into however ridiculous or unjustly provoked. The commitment is attached to the role quite overtly. But although ordinary friendship commits one to something, it is not very clear what, or where one's commitment begins and ends. And it seems that in contemplating some course of action one can find oneself with a commitment one didn't realise one had; one can discover that some course of action would be disloyal. Finally, an act of loyalty can advance a friendship, make it closer or more binding than it had been. A man who stands by his friend at great risk to himself may make the friendship something it wasn't before, and not just carry out something to which he was previously committed. These reflections undermine the plausibility of considering loyalty as the fulfilling of an unexplicit commitment, and indeed of the existence of such things. But the man of integrity is surely loyal. So perhaps my claim that integrity is the keeping of commitments will have to be abandoned.

But it seems to me that in spite of these difficulties we must interpret loyalty as the keeping of a commitment even where the 'terms and conditions' of the friendship are left vague. For what does the man who discovers some proposed act to be disloyal discover? What could he discover except that it contravenes some commitment which he takes himself to have to his friend. The vagueness of a commitment is no argument

against its existence, and accounts for the fact that it may not be immediately obvious to a man what it involves in some unforeseen situation. As for the final case, where an act of loyalty advances a friendship, there are several possibilities. It may not be loyalty, but a favour. It may be a discovery that the past nature of the friendship does, in fact, constitute a commitment to act in a way which hadn't occurred to one. Or perhaps in a case of loyalty at great personal risk, it may be the carrying out of an admitted commitment in circumstances so unforeseen that one would certainly have been immediately forgiven for breaking it, or released from it on request. But the commitment interpretation can be upheld. This is a very sketchy discussion, but my primary concern is not with loyalty. I cannot here give a very convincing account of what the commitment might be: seeking one's friend's good, or protecting such of his interests as are in one's hands, would have to be offered, and these are really blanket phrases. This is because the particular development of each friendship interprets this for the people involved in a great variety of ways, and what loyalty amounts to will be different in each case.

Thirdly, there is commitment to one's values. To be relevant to integrity these must be not just aims pursued for one's own satisfaction but aims thought of as worthwhile for anyone to pursue. They are thought of as goods in general, not just for oneself; anyone would be right to value them. They are thought of as defensible and the sort of thing that could be validated by others. To be committed to a value is not just to think it good or valuable but to resolve to embody it in one's life or further it by one's activities because of its worth. We don't commit ourselves to all the things we think of as worthwhile; one may think it of great value to be a surgeon without having the slightest intention of becoming one. But one who decides that the most worthwhile thing he can do with his life or some slice of it is x, lacks integrity if he fails to pursue that course and especially if he pretends to pursue it and doesn't. Unless, that is, he changes his mind about its value.

But if a man is to have acted with integrity, it surely is not sufficient that he is in fact keeping a commitment. We need some condition about how he sees the matter. Suppose, to return to the law court, that a man under oath gives the evidence which clears the innocent man not because he is bound to do so but out of generosity to the man, or even malice towards another whom his evidence implicates. That is to say, he wouldn't keep the commitment just because it is a commitment, but he does in fact keep it because he has another reason for doing so. Has he acted with integrity? Let us make a distinction between an act of integrity and a man of integrity. We may allow that the act is one of integrity since he does what he has undertaken to do; but it doesn't show him to be a man of integrity because it gives us no reason to think he will in general keep commitments. The man of integrity is one who had a certain attitude towards commitments. He personally accepts them as binding on him, and regards having a commitment as a sufficient reason for keeping it. A man of integrity then will be a man who not only performs acts of integrity but who does so because that is what they are. Thus a man who always in fact keeps his commitments because on each occasion it is profitable to do so or he fears the consequences of not doing so will perform many acts of integrity without being a man of integrity. He lacks the required general attitude.

But what of the man who keeps a commitment by mistake? Someone might set out to break a commitment and in fact do what fulfils it by mistake. We need a slight amendment: an act of integrity is an intentional keeping of a commitment, though it need not be done because it is a keeping of a commitment. Also I should add that

a man does not lack integrity if he fails to keep his commitment because he has broken his leg, though he may do so if the disability which prevents him is his own fault. If a man is to be said to have lacked integrity, it must have been possible for him to keep his commitment.

Someone may object that Judas undertook a commitment to the Chief Priests and kept it to the letter, but that this was hardly an act of integrity. The solution must lie in the fact that Judas had a prior commitment of friendship or discipleship to Jesus. He broke this commitment by agreeing to betray Jesus in the first place. We still judge that he commits a further breach of integrity by actually betraying Jesus and, though nothing could alter his previous lapse, would have retained more integrity had he refrained from doing so. There are grounds for saying that his agreement with the Chief Priests was invalid, because it was a corrupt commitment: a commitment to break a commitment. It might also have some weight towards invalidating the commitment in this case that his commitment to Jesus is prior to his commitment to the Chief Priests. But this need not be so. In Sophocles's 'Philoctetes', Neoptolemus makes a commitment to Odysseus to win and betray the trust of Philoctetes before he acquires any commitment to Philoctetes. Yet the first is the immoral commitment and it doesn't prevent him from acquiring real obligations to Philoctetes when he wins his confidence. It does show lack of integrity to take on what I have called a corrupt commitment, but a person who has done so may still ask which of the alternatives of breaking or keeping it most accords with integrity. We may, I think, conclude from this that integrity requires a man to keep his commitment unless that commitment is corrupt (is a commitment to break a commitment).

There may also be conflict of commitments neither of which is corrupt or immoral. Does a man of goodwill who finds himself with two conflicting commitments lack integrity in failing to keep one of them? He acts with integrity with respect to one of them; does he lack integrity with respect to the other? I suggest the following conditions under which in a case of conflict a man doesn't lack integrity in failing to keep one of the two conflicting commitments: where he concludes in good faith and with justification that one is more binding than the other and for that reason keeps it. Thus Lydgate concludes at the end of 'Middlemarch' that

his commitment to the happiness of his wife Rosalind takes precedence over his personal commitment to pursue medical research, and this is a conclusion we can respect. He acts with integrity in fulfilling his commitment to Rosalind. He doesn't display integrity in abandoning his commitment to medical research, but he doesn't lack integrity either.

This allows me to qualify my fierce earlier claim that there is always a strict obligation to tell the truth. Intuition suggests that there are situations where one is obliged to tell a lie. Sometimes this is a choice of two evils, but sometimes a lie may be a good action. In 'David Copperfield' Betsy Trotwood's fortune has been lost by, she thinks, Mr. Wickfield, to whom it was entrusted. She tells his daughter Agnes that she lost it herself in order to spare the girl distress and out of loyalty to her old friend. We can acquit this generous act of lack of integrity on the grounds that a more binding commitment of loyalty, or more serious moral consideration, requires the lie. (It is a comparative matter. The lie in this case is trivial compared with the misery the truth would cause her friend). I shall have more to say in the next chapter concerning the overriding of commitments.

Why should we take integrity to be an essential ingredient of the sound moral state, something without which a man cannot be thought of as good? I offer four considerations.

There is, first, the social case. I shall not make this case in detail. Integrity makes trust possible, and lack of integrity destroys trust. Society works by mutual co-operation. Bargains require confidence by each party that the other will do his part. There is more chance for people to flourish when they are not having to defend what they have, but can combine in undertakings and share resources. Trust is needed in public officials if there is to be good social order. Integrity is of great social use.

This procedure for recommending integrity may be objected to. First, it may be said, integrity is not necessary to social order and

and co-operation. Hobbes indeed tried to establish these in spite of an assumption that nobody was to be trusted, using self-interest and coercion. Secondly, it may be complained that the commitment-keeping behaviour recommended here is recommended solely on grounds of self-interest, and therefore doesn't amount to integrity, which requires commitment-keeping whether or not this is in one's interests.

The following may be said for the social approach. We, meaning ordinary members of society, could hardly regard as good a man who lacked integrity and was willing to betray our trust and damage our interests. Furthermore we are likely to value him who has integrity and will keep commitments whether it suits him or not. Integrity may not be necessary to society, but since the mechanism of self-interest and coercion is run at some cost to get people to keep commitments, we are likely to value the man who does it without being made to. But this evaluation does rest entirely on the usefulness of the man of integrity to us, and the damage done to us by his opposite. And if asked why the man ^{who} is useful to us should be considered morally good, we should perhaps have the grace to blush and be silent, or include on a plea of fairness the butcher, the baker and the candlestick maker.

A second consideration is as follows. Not only is trust an instrument for securing certain goods, but it is itself an essential part of certain other goods. There are relationships of which trust forms an integral part; without trust they do not exist at all. Chief among these is friendship. A schoolgirl may say, "If you don't trust me I won't be your friend", as if this were parallel to, "If you don't lend me your pen I won't walk to church with you". But without trust there is no friendship; the relation between trust and friendship is neither optional nor consequential. As to love, there are differing opinions as to whether it essentially involves trust. Many English novelists present it as doing so, where it is a relationship between two people rather than a feeling which one person has for another. Proust however doesn't seem to think love between man and woman has much place for trust; but Proust also

seems to regard love as something of an affliction, and to value friendship more highly. Finally there are more restricted trust-relationships, such as that between professional partners or colleagues in a common enterprise. All these relationships involve trust because in them two or more people share at least a part of their lives. Friends and lovers have common enterprises and share values; each shares with the other the things which matter to him and each accepts the other's values and enterprises as his own or as having a claim on his care. Partners and colleagues, if their relationship is one of personal trust, see themselves as sharing a worthwhile goal; each sees the other's efforts as to be assisted and protected rather than undermined and damaged because they are directed to the same good end as gives point to his own. All these relationships require trust, which in turn must be based on integrity.

Thirdly, we may try to link the keeping of commitments with the pursuit of something thought of as worthwhile - holding something to be of value, in my earlier sense. To think of something as a worthy object of pursuit is to think of it as defensible to others. One may never actually defend or even explain it to anyone else; one may believe truly that nobody else actually does agree with one about its value. But to think of it as defensible is to think of the judgment of others as having a certain significance in relation to it. To take an example of such a value, St. Francis regarded poverty as a state in which it would be good for anyone to live, and as something which anyone could and should value. He thought of it as something in respect of which he could show reason why others should value it. To think of it as defensible in this way is to think of it as presented to the judgment of others. If one has such a value, one must think of oneself as living in a world of other people who make judgments, who themselves value things, and whose judgments and values matter.

But to lack integrity, not just in occasional actions but as a characteristic, is to break commitments when it suits one, to betray trust. This denies any importance to what matters to other people. The man who

lacks integrity may think of himself as living in a world of other men, but he doesn't think of them as creatures who make judgments and have a point of view - or he doesn't regard this characteristic as having any importance for him. To keep commitments because they are commitments is to allow some weight to the trust which others put in one, to take account of them as having a point of view, concerns which matter to them, and values. To keep commitments only if it suits one is to regard others only as objects which may impede one or make trouble for one if one doesn't.

Thus a man who lacks integrity lacks an attitude to others which is necessary for anyone who is to have a value, or pursue something thought of as worthwhile. He who has this kind of value, therefore, must have integrity.

Fourthly, there is a tradition of regarding integrity as a matter of personal honour. I mentioned the man whose word is his bond; here is a nineteenth century young lady on her high horse: "Thank you from the bottom of my heart for believing me incapable of demeaning myself by telling lies". (Dostoyevsky. *The Idiot*). She is a little comical, but the thought is that integrity is of personal value to her. She doesn't think of the social value of integrity but of how dishonourable it would be for her to lack it. It seems to be for its own sake a good state for a person to be in.

We must beware of a mistake here, one pointed out by George Eliot in *'Middlemarch'*. Fred Vincy has got Caleb Garth to guarantee a debt which he is then unable to meet. He comes to confess to the Garths, feeling very bad. But he feels bad because his honour is damaged; what bothers him is that he will be lowered in their estimation, not that they will suffer. It hasn't occurred to him that the reason why it is dishonourable to lack integrity is that it damages those who trust one.

George Eliot says:

"Indeed, we are most of us brought up in the notion that the highest motive for not doing a wrong is something irrespective of the beings who would suffer the wrong."

There must be a reason why integrity is made a part of personal honour, if this honour is to have any moral significance instead of being merely decorative. The reason lies in its usefulness to others. I said that we would be likely to value the man of integrity as socially useful but that this valuation was dubiously moral. But the person concerned with his honour is one who wants to think of himself as good. He doesn't want to be a man who preys on others or achieves his wellbeing at their expense; he wants them to be able to rely on him and trust him and he wants such trust and reliance to be justified. For the latter he needs integrity.

So far my case isn't made. Of the four considerations advanced, the first didn't seem to provide a reason for taking integrity to be part of the morally sound state. Concerning the other three, I have been trying to show that there are three goods, friendship, having values and personal honour, for which integrity is a necessary condition. But why should we take to be morally sound the man who wants or has these three goods?

If we are to think of a man as good, he must be trying to live a life which he thinks of as worthwhile. Our moral interest in the good man and his life is an interest in how to be and how to conduct ourselves. The good man's life is not of moral interest as a series of events, it is of interest as a life conducted from his point of view. If a man is not even concerned with what is worthwhile there is no reason why his life as conducted by him from his point of view should have any moral hold on us. We cannot think of him as good unless he is concerned with living a life which he takes to be worthwhile.

I have argued straightforwardly that to have values is to try to live a life thought of as worthwhile and that integrity is necessary for this. In addition, a worthwhile life might well be thought to involve personal honour, friendship and love. The case for personal honour may be part of the claim about the necessity to live a life thought of as worthwhile. It seems to boil down to a claim that a man needs integrity if he is to be able to think of himself as good. The claim that friendship

must form part of a worthwhile life seems more dubious. I can't argue the case for friendship here. Perhaps it might be more plausible to say that since friendship is undeniably a good, a man who disqualifies himself for friendship cannot be a good man. But since integrity is necessary for each of friendship and love, personal honour, and having values, my claim that at least one of these is necessary to a worthwhile life will ensure that we cannot think of a man as good who lacks integrity, and therefore that it forms a necessary part of the sound moral state.

Of course, anyone who is uninterested in living a worthwhile life or being a good man will be untouched by anything I have said. I am not out to convince the amoralist; but what he decides to do makes no difference to what the sound state is.

I conclude with a quotation which shows the value which may be set on integrity by one who is interested in living a worthwhile life. It is part of Bruno Bettelheim's reflections on life in a concentration camp.

"To survive as a man, not a walking corpse, as a debased and degraded but still human being, one had first and foremost to remain informed and aware of what made up one's personal point of no return beyond which one would never, under any circumstances, give in to the oppressor, even if it meant risking and losing one's life. It meant being aware that if one survived at the price of over-reaching this point one would be holding on to a life that had lost all meaning. It would mean surviving - not with lowered self-respect, but without any ...

Second in importance was keeping oneself informed of how one felt about complying when the ultimate decision as to where to stand firm was not called into question ... One had to comply with debasing and amoral commands if one wished to survive, but one had to remain cognizant that one's reason for complying was "to remain alive and unchanged as a person". Therefore, one had to decide, for any given action, whether it was truly necessary for one's safety or that of others, and whether committing it was good, neutral or bad..."

Bettelheim is not claiming that one can preserve one's integrity completely, but here the attachment to minimal moral values is what holds the man together. Minimal integrity is more important than life because without it life wouldn't be worth living. Even, he suggests, there wouldn't be him left to live it. This is because there is a close connection between thinking of oneself as a person with a particular

character who continues over time, and making judgments concerning what is good. In trying to embody values in one's life, to take thought for what is good and valuable and direct one's life accordingly, one acquires a standpoint in the world; a position from which one judges it. To abandon integrity altogether is to abandon this position, which is what gives one a unity. Bettelheim clings to the remains of directing his life according to judgments of what is good. He considers what would be too great a violation of his commitment to things he values for him ever to direct his life by them again. To commit oneself is to attach a part of oneself to that to which one is committed; if one breaks the commitment one abandons this part.

Chapter Four Moral Corruption

Corruption is often contrasted with integrity; by taking integrity as the sound state - rather, as essential to the sound state - we may hope to gain some insight into corruption. But so far it is quite unclear just how corruption is opposed to integrity. I shall be looking for sufficient conditions for the ascription of corruption to a person or an action; I make no claim that they are also necessary.

To start with a rather obvious point: absence of integrity can't be a sufficient condition for corruption. For if integrity is the honouring of commitments, then one who has no commitments has no integrity. Yet while there may be moral criticism to make of one who avoids commitments, corruption is not the right thing to accuse him of. He is not a candidate for either integrity or corruption. This of course applies only to the person who actually doesn't have any commitments, not to him who refuses to recognise commitments which he has. And this point is rendered somewhat academic by my earlier claim that there are some commitments (e.g. loyalty, honesty) which bind all who are not dumb or isolated. Nevertheless since this is an academic exercise I make it, for what it's worth: Robinson Crusoe, though meet for various kinds of moral assessment (e.g. sloth/industry, courage/cowardice, pride/humility) is without integrity and also without corruption, if we ignore the possibility of commitments (a) to god and (b) to, say, his family, that he attempt to return to civilization. (There may also be commitment to his own personal ideals). Absence of integrity, then, is not sufficient for corruption. Integrity and corruption are both applicable only to people who have commitments.

I will henceforth use the phrase 'lack of integrity' to apply only to those who, having commitments, fail to keep them, and ignore those who have no commitments. The corrupt are to be found among the ranks of those who lack integrity. But not all those who lack integrity are corrupt. For example, the simple akratic. Someone who loses his nerve in a crisis

is not corrupt. For example, one who is intimidated and harassed in the hysterical atmosphere of the McCarthy committee into betraying his friends has not acted with integrity, but isn't corrupt. (If he sets about deceiving himself about his motives or claiming that he was justified corruption may be setting in, but this is looking ahead). Aristotle defends his claim that the akratic is not so bad as the vicious man by pointing out that the akratic will repent and that 'the best thing in him, the first principle, is preserved'. He is 'a man whom passion masters so that he does not act according to the right rule, but does not master to the extent of making him ready to believe that he ought to pursue such pleasures without reserve'. (Nic.Eth.VII.8). I restrict myself to commitment-keeping so that for my purposes the 'first principle' should be his recognition that the commitments is binding; also I include, unlike Aristotle, such things as anger, fear, jealousy and perhaps sloth as well as greed and lust as interfering factors. (He does include anger, with large reservations). But the kind of case I mean is that where an agent is temporarily 'overcome' by some passion (can one suffer an attack of sloth in this way?) and fails to honour a commitment. He doesn't endorse his action as a good or permissible one, he doesn't act from choice, in the Aristotelian sense; he does not carry out the conclusion of a deliberation about what it is best to do. We would, I think, be unwilling to call corrupt a man whose 'heart is in the right place', though he certainly lacks integrity in failing to keep his commitments.

This is even true of the confirmed akratic, the man who fails again and again. Corruption is not simply a matter of time, or of the number of failures of integrity. The difficulty with the confirmed akratic is to make him convincing: he must be a man who over and over again accepts a commitment and intends to fulfil it, over and over again gives in to temptation and fails to do so, and over and over again repents. There is some difficulty in believing that he really means it, that his commitment and his repentance are sincere. But people addicted to something seem a clear example of this state. One can't intend what one takes to

be impossible; and the man of integrity doesn't undertake commitments which he knows he can't fulfil. But there is a great difference between taking something to be absolutely impossible and taking it to be very difficult, and between absolute certainty that it can't be done and a high degree of doubt. Consider an experienced mountain climber who undertakes a climb knowing that it will be very difficult and that he is unlikely to succeed; nevertheless he can set out intending to succeed. The case I am considering is the same as this one, except that the obstacle lies in the man's own nature. To adapt the example, the climber may know that the main obstacle to success is that he will get vertigo half way up. He can set out with the determination to overcome this obstacle in the same way as he sets out to overcome natural obstacles. So far from being corrupt, it seems a kind of saintliness to set out again and again to overcome some besetting temptation (though as for commitments, there is something wrong with making too much of other people's welfare depend on unlikely success); yet if it is a temptation which leads one to fail in one's commitments there is considerable lack of integrity.

What, in addition to lack of integrity, characterises the corrupt man? What is it about the akratic's repentance and preservation of his 'first principle' which acquite him of this charge? He refuses to accept his lack of integrity; corruption on the other hand seems to involve the acceptance of lack of integrity as part of one's life. Of course, the akratic doesn't refuse to accept in the sense of deceiving himself that he is a person of integrity. He refuses to accept in so far as he continues to decide and choose to keep commitments. He still considers having made a commitment to be a sufficient reason for keeping it, though he often doesn't manage to keep it. We have, then, the following;

- | | |
|------------------|---|
| Man of integrity | (a) considers having a commitment a sufficient reason for keeping it. |
| | (b) does keep it. |
| Akratic | (a) considers having a commitment a sufficient reason for keeping it. |
| | (b) doesn't keep it. |

- Corrupt man** (a) doesn't consider having a commitment a sufficient reason for keeping it.
- (b) doesn't keep it.

A corrupt action is one which displays lack of integrity and which proceeds from a deliberate choice not to keep a commitment. The failure must, of course, be intentional; mistakes of fact such that a man doesn't know he is breaking a commitment absolve a man from the charge of corruption, though we need a caveat about avoidance of knowledge: the man who avoids knowing what his commitments are or whether the situation is one which might require action may also be corrupt. The action is corrupt because it shows the agent to be corrupt. It shows the agent to be corrupt in that he doesn't accept the commitment as being a sufficient reason for acting. So Odysseus displays his attitude to undertakings when he urges Neoptolemus to trick and betray Philoctetes:

You see why you can safely deal with him
When I cannot? Because you will be trusted.

.....

Some other time

We will prove that we are honest, but today
Let me persuade you to give up your scruples
A little while, and then forever after
You can be called the noblest of mankind. (tr. T.H. Banks).

This must be qualified to take account of my discussion on conflicting commitments. A man may not be able to preserve integrity if he undertakes in all good faith two equally binding commitments which turn out to conflict but it is going a bit far to call him corrupt. So we must add: unless there is some conflicting commitment of equal or greater weight which he judges is the one to keep. (A test of his sincerity may be his readiness to make amends as far as possible; but in many and often the most serious cases this isn't possible). This seems right; yet there may be some cases where two commitments of such fundamental importance clash that one can't avoid corruption. For some, the entry of their country into an unjust war may provide such a dilemma especially at the point where the country is likely to be invaded; for others it might be wickedness in someone to whom they have deep ties (should the wife of, say, the Cambridge Rapist have given him up to

the police if she knew? What of a member of the resistance married to a collaborator?) Either way treachery may be involved and I am inclined to think that treachery is so gross a breach of commitment as to be always corrupt. I shall have more to say about the possible inevitability of corruption, and about degrees of corruption.

But my formula captures the standard and central cases of corruption, e.g. where a judge accepts a bribe to acquit an accused person. He chooses to abandon his commitment to justice as embodied in local legal procedures (given that he believes them to be reasonably just); he doesn't consider this commitment a sufficient reason for upholding justice in this case and this gives some less strong evidence concerning how he regards commitments in general. He may have given in to a particular temptation, have repented of it, and never done it again. Nevertheless his action was a corrupt one and he was at the time of doing it to th some extent corrupt.

What about the man who chooses to break his commitment but doesn't carry out his decision? Must one act to be corrupt? This is the fourth combination not listed on the previous page: he who considers having a commitment not to be a sufficient reason for keeping it but who keeps it none the less. One such case I have discussed in the previous chapter; he who doesn't consider the commitment a sufficient reason but who keeps the commitment for some other reason. Here I think of the man who makes up his mind to break some commitment but doesn't do so because (a) he repents and changes his mind or (b) he is prevented or forced (e.g. falls ill). These two reasons for failing to fail to keep a commitment don't alter the guilt of the original decision. Repentance never makes it true that there was no wrong, it is precisely a recognition and repudiation of that wrong. Accidental prevention likewise doesn't alter the decision that was made. No corrupt act occurs, but since corruption is in general not regarding a commitment as a sufficient reason for acting, and in this case it was not so regarded to the extent of a decision to do otherwise, this seems to show some corruption and we

may agree with Aristotle that 'choice is thought to discriminate characters better than actions do' (Nic.Eth.III.2). Of course, he who repents is less corrupt than he who is simply prevented or forced, for there is good reason to think that he regards commitments more seriously.

So far I have considered only the man who, having undertaken a commitment in all good faith, decides later to break it. But the formulation applies equally well to various arch villains, such as Pope Alexander VI, Madame de Merteuil in *Les Liaisons Dangereuses*, Uriah Heep etc. These do not simply break commitments, they undertake them with the intention of breaking them. Thus for example Madame de Merteuil wins the trust of a young girl and her mother in order to do them harm; she undertakes to serve their welfare precisely in order to destroy it. The settled choice and carrying out of such a project shows a disregard for the binding force of commitments far greater than he who undertakes a commitment in good faith and then breaks it. But we may still use the failure or refusal to regard a commitment as a sufficient reason (or as any reason at all) for acting as the criterion of corruption.

What about those who undertake a commitment without the intention of keeping it? They do not, like the previous lot, undertake to do x precisely in order to get the opportunity to do not-x. Simply, agreeing to take on the commitment seems to them the thing to do and they give no thought to keeping it. The fact that they have made the commitment makes them no more inclined to do what they are committed to than they were before making it. For example, the following argument (quoted by Messrs. Jacka and Marks and Mrs. Cox in their recent book 'Rape of Reason' p.53):

Anyone who wants a job must sign a contract. Therefore acceptance of this contract is not freely decided upon; there is only the 'negative Choice' of refusal. 'Where there's no say there can be no responsibility except the practical one of not getting caught'. The contract need not be kept.

This is according to my criterion corrupt; a contract is undertaken with no acceptance that this is any reason, let alone a sufficient

one, for keeping it. It will be kept only so far as it suits the contractor.

But, it may be objected, this is not supposed to be just the announcement of a decision to break a contract, but a justification for contract-breaking; if justified, how could it be corrupt? Perhaps my criterion is too strong. As it stands this argument doesn't provide a convincing justification; it would seem to undermine all bargains and presumably frees the employer from the obligation to pay the employee since you can't get someone to do a job without promising to pay him for it. However let us strengthen the argument with a particular context (I suspect something like this was what the perpetrator of the above had in mind). A totalitarian government will only permit jobs to go to those who take an oath of loyalty to the Party. The alternative is near starvation and complete outcast status. The party line is unjust, illiberal and mendacious. Might one not be justified in making a commitment without the intention of keeping it? Or, to return to an earlier case, suppose a judge or public servant is confronted by a blackmailer who threatens to ruin not the man himself but some other person, let us suppose innocent, unless the man agrees to hand over the building contract, acquit the prisoner or whatever. (Perhaps one might introduce a threat from the mad scientist with the deadly virus). Might not these beleaguered souls be justified in failing to fulfil their commitments?

The answer to the question about justification doesn't answer the question about corruption. It may be that on some occasions the deliberate abandoning of a serious commitment presents itself as a necessary thing to be done. Possibly it is justified if all the alternatives are worse. One doesn't need to be a utilitarian to generate such situations; even if there are some things one will absolutely not under any circumstances do, it is easy enough to find situations not involving these things where the choice is between breaking or insincerely undertaking a serious commitment and something in some way worse. One

may justifiably say: I had to. However there is no reason to conclude from this (and good reason not to) that corruption is avoided. After all, in the situations described the circumstances in which the decision must be made are engineered by evil men. It should be no surprise in such situations that the best one can do is bad. These are situations not where the necessity cancels the corruption, but where one is required to sacrifice one's integrity; when all the alternatives are evil, integrity may become a luxury and insisting on preserving it impermissible pride. In corrupt situations it may not be possible to avoid corruption. Bruno Bettelheim in the piece quoted at the end of the last chapter emphasised the importance of distinguishing the two questions, what must I in this situation do, and, is it good, bad or indifferent. Here again there are obviously degrees of corruption. One who commits one corrupt action under this kind of severe necessity but who continues outside such situations to regard commitments as providing a sufficient reason for acting is far less corrupt than one who abandons this standard and regards commitments as breakable at will. But the possibility of such unavoidable conflicts is one thing which makes forgiveness an essential ingredient of the moral life and not an optional extra for saints.

What these cases seem to show is that we cannot sustain the strict connection of corruption both with the breaking of commitments and with the imperative to act. The first has been the subject of my argument so far. The second, the connection with action, has not been made explicit, but in our talk and thought about corruption surely there is something of the following: if action A is corrupt it must never be performed. The argument based on the two cases uses this by saying: in these cases commitment-breaking is not forbidden but may even be required. Therefore in these cases it is not corrupt. This follows quite strictly and we cannot keep both the conclusion and my criterion. I have argued that it is the invariable imperative which must be abandoned. Maybe sometimes we must do something which we ought not to do.

I now raise the case of Saul of Tarsus. He had an undertaking

to persecute Christians which, as a result of whatever happened on the road to Damascus, he deliberately broke. It cannot be said that in undertaking to persecute Christians he was betraying some prior commitment, as Judas was. 'Persecute' is a perjorative word - the story is told by the Christians - but whatever one's attitude to liberal toleration it cannot be maintained that it is a commitment which everyone has whether he likes it or not, as I argued was the case for truthfulness and loyalty. Even John Stuart Mill allows that Marcus Aurelius's persecution of the Christians was an act of integrity. Saul may well have felt that his commitment to the old religion and its values required him to do his best to prevent the spread of the new sect, correctly regarded as subversive of them. On my account, then, it seems that Paul's change of heart is corrupt. Yet not only do we not view it in this way, but his altered course seems evidence of integrity. How can I explain this?

This was a matter of conscience. Conscience makes a certain claim to override all other commitments. Why should this be? I take conscience here to be a fundamental moral conviction that something is or isn't to be done, that to omit or to do it would be evil. It is a moral belief of a deeply compelling kind. Aquinas both explains and justifies the fact that conscience is felt to be binding even when it is 'objectively' mistaken. Conscience is a form of judgment, presenting a certain act or omission as evil. If one disobeys conscience one is accepting this character of evil in the act one does. But we cannot think of a man as good if he ^{is} willing to do evil.

My claim then is that while Paul had no prior commitment not to persecute Christians, he had a prior commitment to follow his conscience. When his conscience underwent radical change, the path of integrity was to follow it on its new course. He did have a prior commitment but there was a change in what fulfilling this commitment amounted to. He was committed to persecute Christians primarily on grounds of conscience, and when his conscience changed so did his obligation. His agreement with

* Summa Theologiae 1a 2ae Pt. 5

the Chief Priests^e was of his own seeking; nothing depended on it for them and it was clearly overridden by his conversion. Thus our conviction that Paul was not corrupt is compatible with my claim that failing to regard a commitment as a sufficient reason for fulfilling it is sufficient for corruption, if we add the condition that this failure is not the result of a conviction that some other moral commitment is more binding.

But we may have some doubt as to whether this solution will apply to all such cases. The binding force of both Paul's anti-Christian and his Christian commitment rested on his own religious conviction, therefore when he lost his earlier conviction the binding force of the commitment no longer remained. But a man might have a commitment to other people which he himself has made of the most binding kind. Let us suppose that he then has a change of conscience which convinces him that he must break this prior commitment. This doesn't remove the prior commitment, and however binding the new conviction of conscience, it may not prevent the breaking of the ^{prior} commitment from amounting to treachery. The following might be an example. A man belongs to a group of freedom fighters bound together by the closest ties of personal loyalty. He comes to believe that either their methods or perhaps their cause itself is deeply wrong, and moreover that it is morally essential for him to stop them from doing something they propose to do. Newspapers provide us with a choice of possibilities as to what this might be. The only way he can stop them is by betraying them. This in my view amounts to treachery and therefore corruption, whatever his moral conviction. Again, it may be that corruption cannot always be avoided. But it will make a difference to its degree whether treachery is the result of fear or greed, or the result of such a moral conviction.

So far the kinds of corruption examined have been those where a deliberate choice is made to abandon particular commitments. But there are also kinds of corruption which can grow out of the intolerable discomfort of the akratic situation. A common one is hypocrisy. Not the

hypocrisy of Madame de Merteuil and Pecksniff who undertake commitments without any intention of keeping them. But a 'mild' hypocrisy, which makes professions of commitment and the appearance of commitment do duty for the actual keeping of them. This is a fairly clear case: though such a person's professions may not be totally insincere, it is clear that he doesn't regard his having some commitment as a sufficient reason for him to keep it, only for seeming to do so. There is often self deception as well.

A case which deserves more attention is that of the man who retires from the battle. "I feel no remorse for having seduced you; I am an inveterate sensualist and not responsible for my actions". This man, Totsky from Dostoyevsky's 'Idiot', was the guardian of the girl he is speaking to and could be held perhaps to have a commitment not to seduce her. *This* attitude, although perhaps admitting in theory the bindingness of commitments, simply refuses to play. The apparent plea of incapacity is not a description of the situation, it is a deliberate rejection of integrity, of the attempt to keep commitments and to act according to what one thinks best. He is not going to bother to think about what is best any more. The case bears some resemblance to the confirmed akratic, with this difference, that this man has stopped setting his will against his lack of integrity but rather has accepted it. He stops the conflict by giving up the judgment - at least as a judgment which has any effect on his actions - which his desires oppose. This is what happens when we say that a person is corrupted by something - e.g. money, power, luxury. The attachment to whatever it is becomes so great that the judgment no longer operates. It may send a few messages but it no longer directs actions according to what is thought best. He 'thinks he should pursue such pleasures without reserve', or rather, that he is just going to, whatever. Such a person certainly doesn't take having commitments as a sufficient reason for keeping them; there is no overall judgment exercised, and reasons become instrumental. The best reason for acting is that it will achieve the desired object; there

is no assessment of the object itself. This is replaced by strong attachment. This abdication is surely a form of corruption; the abandonment of the attempt to judge what is best is what gives them the name of 'slaves' of whatever they are attached to.

Self deception might seem to pose a problem for my view.

The very deviousness of the self-deceiver would seem to indicate that he does take a commitment as a sufficient reason for acting. I include here the avoidance of knowledge: the project of believing what may well be false, rather than what is false. And the kind of self-deception which raises an issue here is that which prepares the way for an action, rather than that which falsifies the past. I take two examples. First, a simplified version of Lydgate's vote in the hospital chaplaincy affair, in 'Middlemarch'. Lydgate deceives himself as to his motive. He persuades himself that he votes for Tyke because Tyke is the right man; in fact he does so to keep Bulstrode's favour which he needs if he is to be in charge of the new hospital. He fails in loyalty to his friend Farebrother, the other candidate. (This presentation does less than justice to Lydgate but will do as an example). This is a familiar situation of self-deception in a single case. Lydgate's main falsifying efforts go into his own motive, but falsification of the situation itself may also take place. [One may manufacture the belief that the situation is not such as to require action, as John Dashwood persuades himself, in a masterly performance, that his promise to his father to "do something" ^{for} his half sisters doesn't actually require him to do anything at all, though he is rich and they are, for gentlefolk, poor. (Sense and Sensibility).]

These are people whose self-deception gets them out of particular commitments. Bulstrode himself is more thorough. He sets out in life with a commitment to serve God under a Calvinistic banner. He is deflected by the chance of a dubious fortune (in pawnbroking) and reinterprets his commitment to God, so thoroughly that with reasonable servicing the adjustment lasts most of his life, so that it 'requires' him to become as rich and successful as he can (because he will make such good use of

the goodies).

"There may be coarse hypocrites, who consciously affect beliefs and emotions for the sake of gulling the world, but Bulstrode was not one of them. He was simply a man whose desires had been stronger than his theoretic beliefs, and who had gradually explained the gratification of his desires into satisfactory agreement with those beliefs."

Here is another way in which people may become corrupted by money, power, etc.: instead of abandoning judgment, they permit the desire to alter the content of the commitment.

It seems that these self-deceivers must believe that a commitment is a sufficient reason for acting; their efforts to avoid the knowledge that what they propose to do is a violation of some commitment seems to show that if they did face this knowledge they would feel bound to uphold the commitment. Nevertheless one can hardly escape an otherwise just charge of corruption by deceiving oneself concerning what one is doing. Self-deceivers have a lot in common with what I have called mild hypocrites: the latter seek to behave corruptly while retaining the respect of others, based on false belief, while the former seek to do as they please while retaining self-respect, also based on false belief.

From the agent's point of view the obligation to keep commitments is the obligation to keep what one believes to be one's commitments. This is what the self-deceiver relies on. He does fulfil what he believes to be his commitments, but his belief about what he is obliged to do is itself corrupt. The point of a belief about what it is right to do is that one should conform one's action to it; the self-deceiver conforms his belief about what should be done to what he wants to do. A man can't escape the charge of corruption if his seeming integrity is based on a corrupt belief. The self-deception is corrupt because it is an instrument for avoiding commitments.

But what is it for a belief to be corrupt? Not falsehood. A corrupt belief might even be true. But if so this will be no thanks to the believer. A corrupt belief is one believed for motives rather than reasons. It is held not as a result of any attempt to investigate evidence

or argument which might support the truth of the belief, but as a result of a desire that it be true. A man's belief is not corrupt simply when he hasn't considered all the evidence or argument which he could find if he tried; this would be a ridiculous standard. It is corrupt when he discounts evidence he already has or avoids considering any lest it give him the wrong answer. Kant in his fierce way gives the example of a lover who believes his beloved has no faults.* The evidence that she has is under his nose, but he doesn't want to know. I call such beliefs corrupt on the same sort of grounds as I gave for holding that there is a commitment to speak the truth: to have a belief is to believe it to be true, but the self-deceiver is prepared to believe what is false to be true.

How does all this fit with my criterion? I suggested, against my position, that the self-deceivers do seem to regard a commitment as a sufficient reason for keeping it, since they so strenuously avoid admitting that they are breaking it. However this isn't a correct account of the matter. The project undertaken is that of avoiding keeping the commitment while retaining the belief that they have done so. A belief that commitments are to be kept could hardly explain this project. The self-deceiver, by compartmentalising his mind or some such device, may succeed in holding, in general, the belief that having a commitment is a sufficient reason for keeping it (he may, like Bulstrode, have a sharp eye for dereliction by others). But the important thing is whether he takes the particular commitment in question as a sufficient reason for keeping it. To this, since he seeks to avoid keeping it, the answer is no. (To avoid keeping a commitment is of course different from trying to avoid having to do what the commitment enjoins by getting released from it. If a man is released in time, there is no longer any commitment to break. The attempt to be released could be explained in part by the belief that commitments are binding, the attempt to break it not).

Self-deception is philosophically difficult. The extent to which the various beliefs and processes of thought are conscious, and if

* *Metaphysical Principles of Virtue Part 2 Book E Chapter 2.*

unconscious what it is to have an unconscious process of thought or project, are not questions I can go into here although a full account of this form of corruption would have to be based on a philosophical account of self-deception. But it does seem that if we allow that such a thing as self-deception happens at all, we have to postulate some 'deeper' belief which conflicts with the engineered surface beliefs and accounts for their formation and also for the maintenance of some kind of barrier against their being destroyed by a perception of the truth. In these cases of corruption there is, at the deeper explanatory level, a rejection of a commitment as providing a sufficient reason for keeping it, since part of the project at this level is avoiding having to keep the commitment.

But this raises a further question about self-deception. I have been claiming only that self-deception cannot save a man from the charge of corruption. But my remarks about corrupt belief raise the question whether self-deception is itself a form of corruption. Is it morally corrupt to have corrupt beliefs?

It may seem that my question is already answered by the parallel between lying and corrupt belief. Indeed the case is stronger for belief. For speech carries only the implicature that what is said is true; it is offered as being true, but there is no contradiction in lying. To have the belief that p, however, just is to believe p to be true. The fact that self-deception is possible renders it not pointless to decide to try as far as possible to believe only what is true. But whereas speech, involving as it does a tacit assumption which others are invited to rely on but which may be violated, can without difficulty be seen as inviting moral assessment, the very inseparability of belief and truth may seem to make it a matter of rationality rather than morality. Kant, whose moral system includes duties towards oneself, claims that truthfulness is such a duty; if it is a duty to oneself which deception violates it is reasonable to include self-deception as well as lying as an offence.[†]

* Kant. *op.cit.*

But such a solution would have little bearing on my argument concerning corruption, and the considerations I offer must be less conclusive. I have argued that self-deception is corrupt when it is adopted as a tool to facilitate corrupt behaviour. Now let us consider a man who doesn't retreat into self-deception on some particular occasion when his commitments demand more than he is prepared to supply, ^{but} who is simply inclined to deceive himself because it is more comfortable that way. The desire to live in a more pleasing or comfortable world is surely a major motive for self-deception. I claim that such a person cannot be a person of integrity; he has unfitted himself. He may not have taken to self-deception in order to evade commitments, but one who has retreated to comfortable fantasy is not going to recognise commitments if they require something too uncomfortable. He has the device for avoiding them ready to hand; he has abandoned reality for fantasy for reasons of comfort and there is no ground for thinking that commitments, when disagreeable, will hold him to reality. The case for calling such a person corrupt is that, even if he hasn't yet broken a commitment and has no plan to, he has left no room in his character for any operative conviction that commitments are binding. And a lesser self-deception might be corrupt in a lesser degree in so far as it approaches towards this state. Self-deception would then be corrupt still because it involves the absence of the required attitude to commitments, even where this absence didn't motivate the self-deception in the first place.

But not all self-deception is of this kind. Consider the mother who refuses to believe that her son is dead. This self-deception may be undertaken in order to make the world more comfortable - or indeed tolerable at all - but does not seem to involve a rejection of commitments. It doesn't look much like corruption because it has no tendency to spread. This has to do with the reason why it is undertaken, which is here not a general desire that the world accommodate her. The same may be said of one who from charity or affection falsifies the motives and behaviour of those around him in their favour. This may make the world more pleasing

to him, but does not seem to make him likely to break commitments - perhaps indeed the opposite.

Finally there is the queer case of St. Francis. St. Francis, we are told in the *Fioretti di San Francesco*, took the belief that he was the most sinful of men to be a necessary part of humility, and further he thought that this essential virtue required him to do all in his power to make sure that he had this belief. Since, being a virtue, it couldn't require him to try to become the most sinful of men, this could only be for him an exercise in self-deception. Now although we may feel that St. Francis, as presented, had made a serious mistake about the requirements of humility, it is undeniable that so far from trying to avoid his moral commitments he was doing his best to keep them, according to his understanding of them. Such self-deception hardly amounts to moral corruption.

To sum up, I would claim tentatively that there is a certain kind of self-deception which amounts to corruption by making integrity impossible to him who engages in it. But not all self-deception is of this kind, and I am unable to give a clearer characterisation of the corrupt kind than is contained in my description of it on the previous page: roughly, that it is motivated by a general desire that the world be comfortable. But this is unlikely to prove an adequate distinguishing characteristic.

I now summarise the main conclusions of this chapter. I characterised the corrupt man as one who does not take the fact that he has a commitment to be a sufficient reason for keeping it, ^{though corruption is excluded} where there is a more binding commitment (including the commitment to obey one's conscience) which conflicts with it. This includes among the corrupt both those who deliberately break commitments and those who make them without intending to keep them. It has the consequence that on certain occasions it may be impossible to avoid corruption. An important kind of corruption is that where a man elevates a desire to the status of 'ruling passion' at the expense of any attempt to judge

what is best to be done. Self-deception was held to be corrupt when undertaken for the purpose of avoiding commitments and, more tentatively, when it makes impossible the operative acceptance of commitments as binding.

From time to time I have spoken of degrees of corruption. Two things seem relevant to the determination of a person's degree of corruption:-

1. The extent of the person's rejection of commitments as binding. Perhaps he only rejects one; perhaps all. There is an enormous range here, from the man who resolves to break a commitment on one occasion and repents before doing so, to the man who is completely unmoved by such obligations.

2. The depth of the commitment rejected. Clearly in assessing degrees of corruption, fundamental commitments are going to count more than relatively trivial ones. But there are two scales on which depth must be assessed. The first is a subjective one. In a person's own moral standpoint, some commitments to values or undertakings to others are more embedded than others. For example, telling this lie to this friend may be a minor matter while telling that lie to that friend may be gross ^fteachery. Kant, in his discussion of lying, has a charming example:

"An author asks one of his readers, "How do you like my work?" To be sure, the answer might be given in an illusory way inasmuch as one might jest concerning the captiousness of such a question. But who always has his wits about him? The slightest hesitation with the answer is already a mortification for the author. May one flatter him, then?"*

Between some two people it may not matter, it amounts to no more than politeness to give the book a good word, while between two other people with a different sort of friendship it may be a betrayal of assumptions on which their friendship rests to prevaricate or lie about such a thing, however great the sensitivity of the author. One test of embeddedness must be how many other elements of the man's life depend on the commitment. In the first case here, nothing much, in the

*Kant. loc.cit.

second a whole friendship. I cannot give a full account of what it is for a commitment to be embedded, but I think it is intuitively clear that this is something a commitment can to a greater or lesser extent be.

But the objective scale is also necessary. Madame de Merteuil may think nothing of betraying the confidence of a young girl but her behaviour remains highly corrupt. One test of objective depth is the amount of damage which results from breaking the commitment. Another might be how deeply embedded the commitment is in the public realm; the corrupt judge breaks a commitment of fundamental public importance. A third test might be the extent to which giving the commitment has induced others to rely on one; how much trust is being betrayed? (Again, complicated. Number of trusting people times importance each puts on the trust perhaps; but this sounds like one of those impossible utilitarian multiplications).

The extent of the corruption of a person will be determined by a combination of the extent of his disregard of commitments and the depth of the commitments he disregards. This gives no very precise measure and will not always decide the question of which of two people is the most corrupt. Such sums are anyway of dubious practical and even more dubious moral value. But it does validate the sort of judgments we make about relative corruption, such as that a person is slightly corrupt, totally corrupt, more corrupt than he was ten years ago.

There may be other kinds of corruption; I claim that what I have described is at least one important kind. I have ignored (except for some brief remarks in Chapter Two) a very interesting aspect of moral corruption: the corrupting of people by the purveying to them of corrupt moral values. (As, for example, in the Nazi Youth Movement). My account shows what it might be for such people to be corrupt; it doesn't undertake to say what a corrupt moral value is.

It might be thought that an account of corruption should make more of the connection between corruption and certain desires, for example, those involved in ambition or jealousy. On my account a person

isn't corrupt simply on account of having such a desire. It doesn't allow for the possibility that, for example, it might be corrupt just to have the envious desire that harm befall another. According to my criterion a man may be corrupt if such a desire achieves a certain prominence in his life, at the expense of his commitments and of his judgment of what is best. Desires which a man accepts as 'ruling passions' may constitute the internal mechanism of corruption: that which removes him from the sound state. But his corruption consists in his being so removed by whatever (internal) mechanism from that state of soundness concerning commitments.

Chapter Five. Conclusion

Let us see, finally, what are the parallels between natural and moral corruption, the naturally sound state and the morally sound state.

The naturally sound state was said to be the state in accordance with a thing's natural development, that state into which it will develop if left to itself to fulfil its natural tendencies. I did not undertake to show that men have a natural tendency to be morally sound. But there turned out to be a normative element in the identification of the sound state of a creature, and in what constituted its natural development. The sound state was closely connected with welfare: it was a state in which a creature was capable of pursuing its typical activities efficiently, and of surviving. Thus a creature in a sound state was a good example or specimen of its kind. Corruption was a departure from and destruction of this sound state by an internal process; nothing corrupt could be thought of as good of its kind.

Turning to morality, I identified integrity as at least a necessary ingredient of the sound state. Corruption was a deliberate violation and abandonment of integrity. Again the idea of a standard was found to apply. In both the moral and natural cases, the notion of soundness provides a minimum standard. It is not a standard of excellence, it is a qualifying condition for being a good man or a good specimen of one's kind. The man without integrity is, like the natural object in an unsound condition, a poor specimen. The corrupt man, like the corrupt natural object, is a bad specimen - both are proceeding away from the sound condition, rather than simply failing to reach it.

I said that the criteria for reaching this minimum standard, and for being corrupt, might be different in the two cases. I claimed that we could not think of as good a man who made no attempt to live a life which he thought of as worthwhile. And a worthwhile life was one which in principle could be offered to others for their validation as

creatures also having a standpoint from which to judge of goodness or otherwise in the world. I am claiming that just as soundness is necessary if something is to be considered as a good example of a natural kind, so moral soundness, identified in part as integrity, is necessary if someone is to be considered a good moral specimen - a good man. In addition, the notion of a worthwhile life, and the good man as the man who tries to live such a . . . life, gives us the beginnings of a reason why we should consider moral soundness a necessary (though not sufficient) condition for the good life in its fully ambiguous sense, in which virtue and human flourishing are united in the idea of human excellence. I have, however, given no reason why a man should attempt to live a life which he thinks of as worthwhile, rather than one which he thinks of as jolly good fun. (These two may not be mutually exclusive. But it is noticeable that those who, like Epicurus, have wanted to identify them, have often given quite a solemn twist to 'good fun').

We saw in the natural case a close connection between soundness and survival, corruption and extinction. A corrupt natural object was on its way to non-existence. I remarked rather dismissively that a man would be unlikely to die of moral corruption; this outcome has to be carefully engineered by novelists who are determined that the wicked shall not prosper. But it would be a mistake to expect such a thing. However naturalistic our ethics may be, there will always be a distinction between biological standards of goodness and moral ones - where the moral life is taken in a wide sense not as opposed to amoral or immoral behaviour but as meaning a man's life as seen, directed, judged by himself. The same being may live these 'two lives' , in which case the ending of the biological life will also be the ending of the moral life. But different standards there will always be for the excellence of the two and it would be a confusion to think that the badness of moral corruption must be judged according to its tendency to end biological life.

Nevertheless we find in the words of Bruno Bettelheim (quoted on page 44) a connection of a non-biological kind between integrity and

survival, corruption and extinction. He actually contrasts biological survival and extinction with some other kind of survival and extinction. The force of what he says can only be felt by one who is concerned to live a life which he thinks of as worthwhile. The kind of survival and extinction which he contrasts with the biological is hard to characterise. What is feared seems to be the disintegration of the personality when its 'raison d'être' is removed. A man directs his life according to a judgment of what is good. His various judgments of goodness, his values, make up his own personal standpoint from which he directs his life in accordance with these judgments. If he not merely fails to live up to his values but violates his judgment of what is good and what is bad to the extent where he can no longer claim that his life is in any way directed by it, he loses this standpoint and his ability to live his life rather than simply let it happen to him. His life is then no longer worth living; not just in the sense of personal despair but in the sense of a judgment that his life is not, and cannot in the future be, worth anything. We see an example of this in George Orwell's '1984', when Winston Smith, faced with a cage of rats, says "Do it to Julia, not to me". This is the ultimate betrayal which destroys him as a man who directs his own life. From that moment he ceases to live his life in any active sense, and becomes the tool of others who use his continued biological existence for their own purposes. We can see that this has nothing to do with what a man could help. There are grounds for saying that he couldn't help it and that it was excusable. Nevertheless it is so deeply corrupt that he doesn't survive it. Corruption here does end in what may be called moral extinction, like the corruption of a living system by which it destroys itself.

I turn to another complex of features which we find in natural corruption. A corrupt piece of natural stuff is unreliable. You cannot expect from it what you would expect from its sound counterpart. It is in a state of disintegration and is weak for its kind. It will not bear the weight which a sound piece will bear. There is a clear parallel

here with the morally corrupt man. He cannot be relied upon; if a person puts trust in him (as he invites him to do) he will be let down. Moreover this is not because men are, like spider-webbing, a weak kind of thing. From a sound man one can expect more, one can expect to be able to rely on him in certain respects. This is parallel with the fact that rotten beams will not hold up a house but sound ones will. We wouldn't use wood if it were a weak kind of thing.

Also we saw that natural corruption spreads. So does moral corruption; once begun it has a tendency to spread to ordinary sound members of a community. For example, in Italy there is, or used to be, a tax-law which says that a man may not be assessed for tax at more than three times the income he officially declares. I dare say there is also a law which says you mustn't tell lies on tax returns, but the law quoted shows that people are assumed to be corrupt with respect to it. What is an ordinary citizen to do, faced with this law? The morally strong man may refuse to compromise himself; he will need a strong sense of personal honour, for his telling the truth does nobody else any good and may get him assessed at a ridiculously high figure on the assumption that he is lying. But an ordinary decent man is going to shrug his shoulders and lie. The corruption of the 'system' has infected him.

But these social considerations may be felt to be rather external. In addition, when speaking of unreliability I spoke as though it were just a matter of weakness. This isn't so; corruption involves the spread of disintegration within the corrupt object by an internally maintained process. I also argued that the akratic is not corrupt, yet he is certainly weak, weaker often than the villain.

In the moral case that which corresponds to the internal natural process must be in the first instance the acceptance by a person of lack of integrity. The deliberate choice to break faith is what allows the disintegration of the moral standpoint. This is seen in the case of those who we say are corrupted by money, or luxury, or ambition, or whatever. They become attached, first and foremost, to

money or success and reject anything which would interfere with this.

The corrupt man is not the one who is unreliable and untrustworthy in spite of himself, as is the akratic who sets himself to combat the weakness; rather he is the man who chooses to break faith, who by his own choices is unsound.

The spread of corruption within a man and the weakness it brings can be seen in the case of Bulstrode. I have mentioned his corrupt self-deception, a habit of years. Finally he is faced with a blackmailer who is likely to blow his carefully built reputation to pieces, but who lies seriously ill in his house. He thinks of killing him, tries to resist the thought, and finds he no longer has the strength of mind or of will to do so. It is not just that his will is weak; his judgment, having always been determined by his desires, is too feeble to be extricated from them.

"...through all this effort to condense words into a solid mental state, there pierced and spread with irresistible vividness the images of the events he desired. And in the train of those images came their apology." (Middlemarch).

In spite of his resolve to "keep his intention separate from his desire", his well-trained mind produces lots of good reasons why Raffles would be better dead; he proceeds to murder him in an oblique fashion.

There are a number of factors which promote the spread of corruption. One is the search for consistency and for protection. A corrupt act usually involves deception, and then more deception to prevent inconsistencies from revealing the original one. Another, also to be found in Bulstrode, is a kind of 'slippery slope' effect: once integrity is breached, resistance has a tendency to diminish. It is true that a breach of integrity may produce a reaction, as Lydgate recoils from his dishonest vote, but this is a reaction against the tendency. Similar, or perhaps identical with, the tendency of resistance to diminish, is the tendency of certain pleasures or desires to 'get a hold'. This also happens to Bulstrode; his desires have had it all their

own way and are too strong, have for too long been the directing factors in his life, to be resisted. A person who becomes corrupted by ambition or luxury and begins to subordinate his judgment to them, becomes less and less able to resist the desires, or do without luxury or success. These psychological factors seem to parallel quite closely the physical process by which corruption spreads.

Again, in corruption it was seen that to stop the process one must cut out part of the corrupting material itself. This also has its counterpart. To extricate oneself from corruption one must repudiate the desire or the place it held in one's life. This is not the same as a decision that some other course is better than one which one has been following, which results in a change of policy. For in the corrupt case one is attached to whatever it is, it is part of what one's life consists of. Consider the following piece of invective from Bernard Levin:

"If Mr. Wilson thought it would help him to retain or regain office, he would be perfectly willing to introduce legislation forbidding doctors to practise medicine even within the NHS, let alone outside, and reserving all treatment, including surgery, to members of the National Union of Public Employees, or for that matter the Amalgamated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen."

(Times. 14th October 1975).

I am not concerned with the truth or the justice of this accusation, but with what kind of an accusation it is. It is a charge of corruption; it claims in effect that Mr. Wilson has been corrupted by power or ambition to the extent that he would do anything to keep or regain office. A man in this state will have, if he is to cease to be corrupt, to repudiate the attachment to power or success, and in a case as serious as this is alleged to be, this would mean abandoning an aim close to his heart and intimately woven into - if not constituting - what he takes his life to be. This is, again, a matter of degree; Lydgate is able to regain control over the ambition which leads to his dishonest vote.

Here we may note one merciful way in which moral corruption is more akin to the corruption of living systems as such than to the

