

7. SELF-RESPECT AND RESPECT FOR OTHERS:
ARE THEY INDEPENDENT?

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The question, "Are self respect and respect for others independent of one another?", should of course not be asked in a blankly vague way. A start may be made toward reducing the vagueness if one asks

(i) Can a person lack self-respect in some or other degree without at all lacking respect for others?

(ii) Can a person lack respect for others in some or other degree without at all lacking self-respect?

It seems clear that one may be slightly lacking in self-respect and yet unqualifiedly respect others, and likewise that one who is slightly lacking in respect for others may unqualifiedly respect himself. The issue is therefore whether a notable or complete lack of self-respect is compatible with unqualified respect for others, and whether a notable or complete lack of respect for others is compatible with unqualified self-respect. I have, however, argued elsewhere that persons who literally lack all self-respect are hard to imagine and may indeed be unimaginable.¹ So only the following questions remain:

(1) Can a person notably lack self-respect and unqualifiedly respect others?

(2) Can a person who is not at all lacking in self-respect notably lack respect for others?

(3) Can a person not at all lacking in self-respect completely lack respect for others?

¹ See "How to Distinguish Self-Respect from Self-Esteem," *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, vol. 10, no. 4 (Fall 1981), pp. 346-60.

Specifically asking these three questions does, I believe, reduce somewhat the vagueness of the overall question of the mutual independence of self-respect and respect for others. Still, it may be complained that the three questions themselves are too vague. It may also be complained that they are overschematic and thereby unrealistic. Neither complaint is unreasonable. The vagueness of the questions is of course largely due to the apparent unclarity of the notions of self-respect and respect for others. This defect, I trust, will be remedied in the discussion to follow — as I proceed I shall try to characterize several principal features of both self-respect and respect for others. The other objection, namely that concerning the schematic, unrealistic aspect of the three questions, can be mitigated by a simple expedient: instead of adhering to such confining phrases as "unqualified self-respect" and "total lack of respect for others," I shall explicitly use or implicitly intend less strict ones, e.g., "unqualified or almost unqualified self-respect" and "total or nearly total lack of respect for others." With these provisos in mind, it is, I submit, reasonable to think that the three questions roughly capture what is of interest and concern to us about the overall question. Can self-respect and respect for others be independent of each other?

On the other hand it may be thought that once the overall question is resolved into the three questions there is little left to discuss. In particular, the first and second questions may strike one as rhetorical. Thus it may be felt that not just the possibility but the fact of some persons being notably deficient in self-respect though unfailing in their respect for others is all too familiar; that, indeed, to say so is merely to acknowledge a truism. Likewise as regards the second question: it may seem truistic not merely that persons can, but that some persons do unqualifiedly or almost unqualifiedly maintain their self-respect while notably lacking respect for others.

My procedure in this paper is to determine whether these seemingly truistic responses to the first and second questions are actually truistic. (I take up the third question only to facilitate discussion of the second one.) So, then, are the following two claims truism? (I) For persons to be notably deficient in self-respect and unfailing or nearly so in their respect for others is not just a possibility, but often the fact. (II) Persons scarcely or not at all lacking in self-respect can be, and some in fact are, notably lacking in respect for others.

I take it that diverse religious doctrines hold out a selfless hope of a spiritual condition that, among other things, would approximate what is alleged to be a fact in the first claim. Many of us, no doubt, find this aspect of those doctrines repugnant. I also take it that many a reader of Nietzsche is likely to be repelled by his advocacy of social conditions that approximate what is alleged to be a fact in the second claim. In trying here to determine the truistic character or lack thereof of (I) and (II), I do not view them in any religious perspective or in a fantastical perspective such as Nietzsche's.² Instead I view them in what may be called a parochial perspective. I refer to that perspective in "How to Distinguish Self-Respect from Self-Esteem"³ when I speak of our pre-analytic comprehension of and concern for self-respect. Here I discuss (I) and (II) throughout in terms of our pre-analytic understanding of and concern for both self-respect and respect for others.⁴

² See Philippa Foot, "The Brave Immoralist", *The New York Review of Books*, Vol. 27, No. 7, (May 1, 1980), pp. 35-7.

³ See footnote 1.

⁴ An understanding and concern that, in good part, are quite recent in human history, sparsely distributed in human space, and not likely to survive.

I

Of the two claims the first, I believe, may seem the specially obvious and plausible one. Surely some of us have been close to or party to relationships in which one person self-effacingly defers to the wishes of the other, or others; in which the one tends to regard the other's wishes as demands that are of course to be met as best he can meet them, but who tends to put forward his own wishes as merely idle unless and until they pass the test of the other's will or indifference.

Self-effacement of this sort no doubt manifests a lack of self-respect; but does it exhibit unfailing or all but unfailing respect for another, or others? This question should at least seem an open one, for nothing has yet been said about why the self-effacing person defers to the other in the way he does. What if his self-effacement is an instance of some familiar excess of devotion or sexual attachment; or is to be understood in terms of awe or of intimidation; or by way of any of several mixtures of these?²⁵

This list of possibilities is hardly exhaustive. But were any of them actually to account for the self-effacing person's deference, it would indeed be doubtful that his deference signified any respect whatever for another person or persons. (Once one puts pieties aside, one can at times discern in adoration or love or awe not respect for another but subjugation to him — discern it perhaps as easily as in intimidation or in lust or in other obvious kinds of dependence. In such subjugation, of course, both parties may be complicit.) Then too, among other possibilities, there is the slavishness to another, at times overt, at times disguised, that is due to the fear of loneliness or the loss of one's place or material deprivation, or the threat of one or more of

these. Is the deference of that slavishness respect for another? What, too, of the deference which can leap out from an abiding sense or fear of shame? To be sure, the possibilities are still not exhausted.

Already, though, it is tempting to say of at least many such deferences that they are cases of *too much* or *too great respect* for another. Doubtless at times we say exactly that about them; we may perhaps say it out of kindness. But even if we say it out of kindness, we seldom if ever say it solely therefrom. For any of those sorts of deference will likely extend itself well beyond what respect for another would yield. Since to enable, or depending on the case, not to impede, another's attainment of his wishes — barring good reason for not facilitating or for obstructing his attaining them — is, I take it, fundamental to respect for another; and since the sorts of deference in question show themselves in anxious and even avid efforts to enable others' wishes, they of course tend to yield behavior more compliant to those wishes than respect for others would yield by itself. This, I suggest, largely or wholly explains our inclination to say of those deferences that they are cases of *too much* or *too great respect* for another.

Now, despite what we at times say and why, if I am right, we say it, should any such deference be viewed as respect for another? Think of the varieties of deference thus far mentioned; as I have indicated more than once, it is tempting to deny that they, or any that are akin to them, are truly instances of respect for others. And surely we ought to give way to this temptation. That is, we should deny that any of those deferences is respect for another; and affirm, moreover, that insofar as respect for another is coupled with, or complicated by, any of them, respect for another is not thereby added to or heightened in any degree. Why? Because, whatever respect for another may be, it is certainly neither a passion nor any passionate attachment to him. And the category, so to put it, of the sorts of deference in

²⁵ Institutionalized awe and intimidation, so to put it, largely account for the mores of servility.

question is: self-effacing deference expressive of a passionate dependence upon or attachment to another.

That a passionate attachment to or dependence upon another is in no case identical with respect for him, is plain; that it can in several ways be inimical to respect for him, a commonplace. One needs no sophistication or subtlety to know that a passion can counterfeit respect for another; or to know that there is plenty of mimicry of respect for another that gets drafted into the service of the passions. Rather ironically, in recent philosophical literature on respect, there is talk of "obstacle respect." It derives from such idioms as "a healthy respect" for, say, one's opponent, or for the boa constrictor one houses, or for threatening obstacles that lie in one's path; out of those idioms, which are in good part ways of speaking of anxious caution or cautious fear, a type of respect is constructed. There are glimpses in that literature that this so-called type of respect is not, or is not even part of, respect for another. What is not clearly seen there is that the passions, especially fear — and prudence, which is not a passion — are all alike distinct from respect for another.⁶

Respect for another is no passion; nor is it prudence. Moreover, any seeming respect for a man, insofar as it derives from or manifests one or another kind of passionate attachment to some other person to whom he is related — his father or employer, say — will of course not actually be respect for him. Incidentally, whatever difficulties we may think to find in the *command* to love one another, there could not be a divine *command*, obedience to which was respect for one another.⁷ Indeed, treatment of an-

other that derives from faith or hope (or is an instance of charity⁸) could not be a matter of respect for him.

Suppose the following: you love one person or are devoted to him or stand in awe of him, or again, you are intimidated by him or shamed before him. Suppose, too, that you self-effacingly defer to his wishes out of one or more of these passionate attachments to him. And, further, that out of that same passionate attachment or dependence, you self-effacingly defer to the wishes of his children or of other connections of his. Once more, you would as such not be manifesting respect for others; but you would be exhibiting a failing in self-respect.

I should here emphasize that I have not denied, but in fact implied, that many passionate dependences and attachments — inimical as some are to respect for others — can coexist with that respect. Similarly, they can be inimical to, but also coexist with, self-respect. My discussion of them has been limited to cases where they account both for failures in self-respect and a mere appearance of respect for others. These cases fall under the heading: self-effacing deference to another which manifests a lack of self-respect. They are by no means the only sorts of cases that fall under that heading. They are, however, cases that are likely to be thought to give support to the seeming truism: persons sorely deficient in self-respect can be unfailing or nearly unfailing in their respect for others. I have tried to show that they give it no support whatever.

Before leaving these cases, one more observation about them. I shall put it very abstractly. Some of those passionate dependences and attachments, in their very efforts to enable another person's wishes, may go so far as to promote themselves, trying

⁶ See, e.g., Stephen Hudson's often helpful piece, "The Nature of Respect" in *Social Theory and Practice*, Vol 6, No. 1 (Spring 1980). In some relationships "obstacle respect" may simulate respect for another.

⁷ I assume that any divine command can be obeyed solely for the sake of obedience to the divine being who commands it. It should be noted that a divine command enjoining special attention and care as regards respect for certain persons (e.g., one's parents) is of course possible. See "How to Distinguish Self-Respect from Self-Esteem," p. 357, n. 5.

⁸ You give charity in compassionate response to the neediness of another. But if you persist in trying to give it though convinced that his wish is to refuse it, you are likely to evince a lack of respect for him. (Another condition for charity: that you have reason *not* to give it; you may of course have no inclination not to give it.)

to use the other person to do so. They may thus work against the other's self-respect. They will then be directly at odds with respect for another; this is one notable way in which they can be inimical to it.

I shall now sketch certain other sorts of cases: cases, again, of self-effacing deference, which also, again, exemplify a lack of self-respect, but which are not accounted for by any passionate connections to others.

Toward the end of "How to Distinguish Self-Respect from Self-Esteem" I speak of a man doing something such that he is thereafter not able to respect himself. I go on to claim that, despite his having thus lost his self-respect, nothing follows about how concerned or relatively unconcerned he either will or ought to be in regard to matters that bear on his self-respect. I then try to dispel the air of paradox that clings to this. Nothing of the kind does follow and there is no paradox. Still, in point of fact, it sometimes—though only sometimes—happens that such a man will become less concerned about matters affecting his self-respect. If that occurs, he loses not only the self-esteem which was predicated upon his self-respect; his self-respect diminishes. That loss and that lessening are alike his reaction to seeing himself in a certain way. That is, he comes to see himself as having taken up and engaged in conduct fundamentally lacking in self-respect; and his more or less enduring reaction to this, besides the loss of self-esteem just mentioned, is a pervasive lowering of self-respect.⁹

To what will that amount? It will amount to his wishes, his effectiveness in trying to attain them, his rights, his being used or manipulated or exploited or degraded, together with his opposition to these kinds of treatment—it will amount to much or all of this meaning less to him than it did before. Accompany-

ing this, there may well be, I suggest, a tendency on his part to defer to the wishes of others in ways that show a lack of self-respect.¹⁰ But, I further suggest, with an important exception: there will be notably less chance of his so deferring to those whom he views as very much like himself. (His sense of those among his acquaintance whom he sees as quite like himself can prove astute—even if he bluffingly exaggerates their number.)

The suggestions just made reflect some of my sense of the lives of certain persons; perhaps these suggestions will not ring true or even seem plausible. In any case, people very seldom completely fit the description of the man I have sketched. These suggestions may, however, become more credible if one considers cases that are far less uncommon. These are cases of persons who are sensitive to and uneasy about their habitual and serious failings in self-respect. A wide range of examples of this sort is to be found among persons marked by ineffectuality; among persons, that is, who are conspicuously ineffective in attaining or trying to attain their wishes—perhaps particularly some of their ardently held wishes. (Heartfelt and long-held wishes, it just may be worth noting, are often very mundane ones.)

If a man sees himself as marked by ineffectiveness in the pursuit of his wishes, he does so by way of contrast to the usual case. By the usual case I mean the majority of persons known by him to have wishes more or less comparable to his own. Of this majority he knows that they—though little better, if not worse, equipped and situated than he is—realize their wishes more often and more effectively than he does his, or come closer to realizing them than he does to realizing his. He knows too that this is a matter of the efforts they make, efforts which he sees as contrasting with the weaker if not derisory ones he makes.

⁹ A reaction of this sort inevitably expresses feelings antagonistic to oneself. Moreover, one who has it is likely, much of the time and in more than one way, to be self-deceived concerning it.

¹⁰ Also, out of the resentment of envy, he may at times unreasonably obstruct others' wishes. Similarly, when he enables them, he may do so with a hostile reluctance.

When a man is sensitive to and uneasy about his habitual ineffectuality; when he perceives it as due to his lack of resolve or tenacity or even, at times, of courage; if, as is also possible, he sees it reflected in his unusual and unnecessary dependence upon others for the attainment of some of his wishes—when a man is sensitive to and uneasy about much or all of this, then he is likely to act in a way which, although it may not be expected, at least often ought to be. He is likely to render or at least to volunteer tribute, so to say, to those of his associates in comparison to whom he perceives himself as inferior—to those, that is, to whom he sees himself as inferior by way of his unusual and habitual ineffectuality. The homage, as it were, that he offers them involves a self-effacing deference, a deference in itself expressive of—and thus a compounding of—his lack of self-respect. For the tribute or homage he offers them will take the form of self-deferring attempts to facilitate wishes of theirs, of self-abnegating efforts to support and improve their efforts. Ironically but not surprisingly, he may thus exert himself particularly in regard to efforts of theirs of the very sorts he conspicuously and unhappily fails to make, or fails to make to nearly the same extent, on his own behalf. Understandably, responses of these kinds are sometimes reluctant, and on occasion grudging. At times, in paroxysms of ambivalence, they are withheld.

Psychological speculation about the psychological phenomena just described would not be in point here. What is in point is that persons of the sort just delineated do not extend themselves in the same or similar ways to those among their associates whom they take to be as faltering in agency as they themselves are.¹¹ And this indicates what may already have been suspected, namely, that the self-effacing and self-abnegating types of deference just sketched are by no means a matter of respect for others, but, instead, of esteem for them.

¹¹ There will be exceptions; but they will be *exceptions*, and have to be accounted for separately.

The cases now in view are familiar ones. They are, I trust, clear enough to reflect some light on the special and perhaps obscure case of the man who, largely out of self-disesteeming revulsion from a grievous failing in self-respect, proceeds to throw away, so to put it, much of his self-respect. For in this special case and in ones approximate to it, as well as in the familiar cases just described, there is a real likelihood of the asymmetry of response I have been emphasizing. To generalize the asymmetry: there is, on the one side, self-effacing deference toward persons whom one regards, in contrast to oneself, as having kept their self-respect relatively intact, one's deference expressing esteem for them on just that account; there is, on the other side, the absence of any such deference towards those whom one disesteems, as one disesteems oneself, for a comparable lack of self-respect.

These diverse instances, then, of self-effacing or self-abnegating deference are doubly revealing of a lack of self-respect. Like the cases of passionate dependence and attachment, they too may appear to be instances of respect for others, and even viewed as excesses of it. But since esteem for others or, more particularly, esteem for others rooted in self-disesteem, is obviously not respect for others, these seeming instances are only masqueraders. Although at times linked with passionate connections to another, they are distinct from them. For the territory of the passions these masqueraders inhabit is that of feelings adverse to oneself. My point about them is that, like the cases of passionate dependences and attachments, these cases too can at most be disguised as respect for others; and, once more, they also manifest a lack of self-respect. It is evident then that they also provide no support for the seeming truism: persons sorely deficient in self-respect can be unfailing or nearly so in their respect for others.

In hopes of finding unqualified or all but unqualified respect for others, we cannot look to cases of self-effacing or self-

abnegating deference that derive from either esteem for, or a passionate connection to, another. Yet what I noted about cases of passionate connection should also be noted about these cases of esteem: it is *possible* for them to coexist with respect for others. Indeed, it should be added, they can coexist with unfailing respect for others. That is, even where self-disesteem due to the recognition of a failing in self-respect yields a mere appearance of respect for others—even there one may also find authentic respect for those others. Likewise, again, with the self-effacing deference exacted by passionate connections: there too, besides the mere appearance of respect for others, genuine respect for them may be found. So after all, the seeming truism, though of course not its status as a truism, may be given support by some instances of both of these kinds of cases.¹² So far as we have gone, then, what is the moral? The moral is two-fold: don't be taken in by the appearances, but don't be overly put off by them.

Nonetheless, the extent to which one can be taken in by those appearances should be stressed. As with the very efforts to enable another person's wishes when one is passionately dependent upon or attached to him, so too with the same sort of efforts when they are impelled by recognized failings in self-respect: they tend to be inimical to respect for the other person. Once again, I shall put the point abstractly. He who self-effacingly, even self-abnegatingly, enables another's wishes may try to aggrandize himself thereby. For at least in some cases there is a disposition to usurp the other's agency. To give that disposition rein is to work against the other's self-respect, and so once more to act directly at odds with respect for him.

The asymmetry of response I sketched a few paragraphs ago may raise a number of questions besides those I have tried to

answer. Notably, I have said little about the "underside" of the response; about, that is, the relations—in terms of respect—between a man and others whom he disesteems, as he does himself, because of failings in self-respect. Those persons may include some whom he judges to be as unworthy of esteem, or indeed as contemptible, as himself, and others whom he judges to be either more or less contemptible than himself. He is also somewhat likely to perceive them as carrying, although perhaps not in proportion to his judgment of the different degrees of their failings in self-respect, heavier or lighter burdens of self-contempt. What, in terms of respect, will his relations be like with his companions in the contemptible and in self-contempt?

In answer to this large question I shall make only a few observations that pertain to the man's self-respect. Once again, his inclination to defer to those who, as he sees them, are situated above the circles of his companionship in contempt will be a more or less ambivalent inclination. Preconsciously or reflectively, intermittently or often, he is likely to sense, and painfully sense, the self-abnegation in it. But in the fellowship of self-disesteem and self-contempt he will be free of that inclination. For missing from that company is what, together with his self-disesteem, based on his failing in self-respect, impels the deference that adds to that failing. Absent, that is, from that company are persons whose self-respect he sees as importantly intact. To be sure, in that company he recaptures relatively little self-respect; moreover, each of his companions will mirror, with more or less distortion, his deficiency in it. But mirroring often goes unnoticed, and, in the way I have tried to indicate, he can in that company enjoy the measure of self-respect he possesses.

Thus far I have discussed two kinds of failing in self-respect likely to be coupled with conduct that may appear to manifest respect for others. About both kinds I have claimed that any such appearance is misleading: self-effacing or self-abnegating deference that issues either from passionate connections to

¹² Esteem for others along with self-disesteem, when they together are traceable not to the recognition of some failing in self-respect, but, say to some recognized disadvantage, are of course *compatible* with self-respect and respect for others. (The compatibility with self-respect may be limited by the type of recognized disadvantage.)

others or from self-disesteem together with esteem for others should not be taken to signify respect. One way in which I initially and roughly contrasted the first kind of failing with the second depended on the direction, so to say, of the feelings that account for them. By now it ought to be clear that, while in the first kind the self-denying deference stems from a passionate attachment to or dependence upon another, in the second kind that deference, though it stems from adverse feelings toward oneself, also requires the impetus of feelings of esteem or admiration for those who do not lack self-respect—at least in the way one oneself lacks it. The adverse feelings toward oneself help to generate those feelings of admiration.

On a number of scores I have refrained from general formulations. As regards passionate connections to others, I focused on one particular failing in self-respect to which they can give rise, namely, a disposition to disregard one's own wishes in favor of another's wishes or desires. As regards self-disesteem, which can be due to, among other things, any important failing in self-respect, I singled out one of those failings, that is, marked ineffectuality in attaining one's wishes. It may be wondered why I have fixed on these two failings in self-respect. In part, of course, I fixed on them because they are prominent, familiar kinds of cases about which it is fairly easy to see that they can lead to specious appearances of respect for others. And, again, seeing that should diminish appreciably the appeal of the idea that it is a truism that persons who are sorely deficient in self-respect may well be unfailing or nearly so in their respect for others. In part, however, I fixed on those two sorts of deficiency in self-respect because no other sort could be more basic. The salient notion, alike for self-respect and for respect for others, is that of individual agency; and any self-imposed serious limitation on one's agency, in the absence of good cause for it, constitutes a fundamental failing in self-respect. It is no exaggeration to claim that to be disposed to disregard one's own wishes

is to truncate one's agency, to nullify to some extent one's existence as an agent; nor is it overstrong to claim that when, due to faults of character, one is importantly ineffectual in pursuing one's wishes, one is aborting one's agency.¹³

What I have said thus far is indeed insufficiently general on another score: one pertaining to the very notion of a loss of self-respect. To become clear about this, it will be helpful to note some points about the relations of abasement, objection to abasement, and self-respect.

Early on in "How to Distinguish Self-Respect from Self-Esteem" I speak of sacrificing a measure of one's self-respect. There are those who balk at this notion. They say, in effect: "I conceive of self-respect as opposition to what abases one;" and they ask, "How can one *sacrifice* a measure of that?" (Perhaps what lies behind this question is the sound thought that although a person may come to object less to being abased than he had theretofore, or come to alter to some extent his views about what is abasing, there would be nothing in either such case that could be termed *sacrificing* some of one's self-respect.)

To be sure, objection or opposition to what abases one is integral to self-respect,¹⁴ and a strongly held, stable opposition to its suffices for a considerable measure of self-respect. But it is certainly not all that is integral to self-respect. For in many circumstances and situations one can incur a loss of self-respect where one's objection or opposition to being abased remains unshaken. Consider, for instance, persons, who, for the sake of self-preservation or for some minimum of well-being, subject themselves to degradation or to the exploitation of their labor,

¹³ The phenomena of *akrasia*, which Aristotle stressed in his reflections on the estimation of human character and personality, do not fall under the heading of dispositions to disregard one's own wishes; they should be seen as a range of more or less extreme instances of ineffectuality, including limiting cases thereof.

¹⁴ Objection to it either as regards oneself or, roughly, those with whom or that with which one can rightly be identified—where rightly being identified requires having "one's own say."

or to the arrogant—or what may be worse, the complacent or unthinking—flouting of their rights. Imagine further that, as they undergo any or all of this, their opposition to it does not waver: they do not become inured to it; they are not self-abasing. But they perceive and object to their enforced condition as an *abasing* loss of self-respect—however deeply they also resent the dis respect of them by others to which it is due. (In point of commonplace historic fact, persons thus situated often do not blink their condition of abasement; for them, although they know their impotence is effected by others, it is nonetheless impotence.)

Objection to what abases one, then, despite its undeniable importance for self-respect, is not identical with it.¹⁵ Consequently, the complaint that the notion of a sacrifice of self-respect is an incoherent notion—if the complaint is grounded on the alleged identity of self-respect and objection to what abases one—is unwarranted.

In fact there is no reason why some persons cannot truly say that, for the sake of a minimally tolerable existence for themselves or others for whom they are responsible, they have had to surrender some of their self-respect, surrender it in that they have had to subject themselves to being abased. An enforced surrender of some of one's self-respect is not, however, a sacrifice of self-respect; for the notion of a sacrifice strongly suggests, if it does not imply, a voluntary undertaking. There are, however, voluntary undertakings that may appropriately be termed sacrifices of some of one's self-respect. Thus in some cases a benevolent concern for the betterment of those dependent upon one or allegiance to the advancement of a cause one supports can

prompt one to accept exploitative and even degrading conditions of labor or to engage in morally repugnant conduct. In such cases, insofar as one's objection to those conditions or conduct does not waver, one will not, to that extent, abase oneself; moreover, one's very motivation may be to remove or ameliorate practices or circumstances that threaten abasement or are abasing for those who depend upon one or those whose cause one has joined. Even so, insofar as the undertaking is voluntary, one will be abasing *oneself* and, consequently, sacrificing some of one's self-respect.

It is important to realize that to allow for these kinds of cases—cases that range from enforced surrenders to voluntary sacrifices of some of one's self-respect—is to allow for losses, diminutions, of self-respect that are not instances of failings in self-respect. One will not have an adequately general grasp of the notion of a loss of self-respect if one supposes that the notion includes only failings in self-respect.

This completes my reflections on the first alleged truism: that persons can be and at times are sorely lacking in self-respect but unfailing in their respect for others. I have tried to strip away much of its pretension to being a truism. But, again, I have not denied that it is at times true.

II

Briefly, now, is the following a truism: persons scarcely or not at all lacking in self-respect can be, and some in fact are, grossly lacking in respect for others? To help answer this question, it may be useful to take it up together with (3): is the conjunction in one person of unqualified self-respect and total lack of respect for others possible?

Contemplate the following specifications for what I shall call “a monster of agency.” He is a man who is always, in whatever

¹⁵ This conclusion can be reached by other routes. For instance, consider again the man who, because of a faulty character, is notably ineffectual in the pursuit of his wishes. This failing of his in self-respect may or may not derive from or issue in anything abasing or self-abasing. So not even every *failing* in self-respect is a failure to oppose what abases one. Self-effacement and self-abnegation do not have to be self-abasing.

relationships he has, without the least inclination to disregard or ignore his own wishes. In the pursuit and realization of his wishes he is extraordinarily effective, summoning up as if by first nature the qualities needed for his unusual effectiveness: the so-called "executive" virtues of courage and temperance, as well as shrewdness and tenacity. He fends off, with an all but preternatural alertness and antagonism, being used or manipulated, exploited or degraded. Moreover, his social circumstances and physical good fortune, together with his other gifts and strengths, permit him to live unusually free of exigencies that might exact a surrender or sacrifice of some of his self-respect. Finally, his pride in the enjoyment of his agency is narcissistic; he luxuriates, as it were, in his unblemished possession of self-respect.

Of course he will have a certain inhumanity; and a hint too of vulnerability: no collection of virtues, talents, and social and physical good fortune can completely insure him against a jarring of the excessive if understandable pride he takes in *having his pride*. But an idealization like this, somewhat inhuman and peculiarly vulnerable, does not deserve to be labeled a monster of agency. The degree of hypertrophy, so to put it, is insufficient. (Even so, some persons will be taken aback when they notice that he never has, in any of his relationships, the slightest inclination to put aside his own wishes.)

Contemplate, now, an additional specification. There is no case in which another person's wish or will—as such—has any weight for him. To be sure, out of diverse sorts of motives, for instance, out of fondness or kindness or a sense of what befits him, he may gratify another's appetite, respond to someone else's need, further another's will. There is, however, the constraint upon his motives that they be consistent with the specifications I have mentioned; consistent, above all, with the last one: that he count as *nothing or as a mere trifle*, concerning anything whatever, that it is another's *wish* or *will*. Cherishing, charity,

noblesse oblige—by their promptings and others he may be moved to enable or at least not impede the wishes of other persons. But when he is moved in any of these ways, it is never for him an independent reason to be so—on its own it is for him no reason or next to none—that the wishes he knows to be those of others are their wishes. Likewise, were he to obstruct or frustrate others' wishes, the fact that he did so—however he might weigh the consequences for himself or them—would not in itself matter an iota to him; or, if it did, just an iota.

For him, that something is his wish is a reason for it to be honored; that attitude is basic to self-respect. What makes him a monster of agency is his holding that attitude unsparingly together with the attitude that no other person's wish or will, by itself, is something that he *ipso facto* has a reason to honor. If others' wishes are not also *his* wishes, it is not in his character to enable or merely to accede to them; nor does he suppose it should be. His view of others' wishes is: let them press for them as best they can!

This monster of agency egoistically and basically lacks respect for others. Still, it may be asked whether he totally lacks it. For again, he can have altruistic concerns, or a conception of what is beneath his dignity, or other motives that would forestall his using or degrading or otherwise disrespecting other persons. From propriety or prudence or both he may punctiliously observe the rights of others that are definitely fixed by law or custom. Also he will esteem—perhaps as much as he esteems himself—his match in self-respect; and that esteem could conceivably incline him to an otherwise uncharacteristic occasional deference.

Already it ought to be obvious that none of this affects what is in question. In his case, as with others, esteem, scrupulous observance of law and custom, considerations of one's dignity, altruistic concerns, etc., will probably on balance inhibit more

than they induce conduct which *manifests* disrespect for others. But those constraints do not subtract a fraction, however small, from the totality of his lack of respect for others. Insofar as such constraints were relaxed or missing, the evidence of his disrespect for others would be the more gross and visible. Yet that evidence would help one to see him for what he is. What he is, if I am right, is a person who conjoins unqualified self-respect and total lack of respect for others.

The epithet 'monster' suggests but does not imply rarity. And certainly persons who appreciably resemble the monster I have specified are not rare. Therefore persons scarcely deficient in self-respect can be, and indeed some are, sorely lacking in respect for others. That, I believe, is not only true; it is a truism.

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