

XV Identification

FRANKFURT

Frankfurt starts 'Identification and Wholeheartedness' with a discussion of consciousness. He contends that an essential feature of consciousness is self-consciousness. (Is this a sufficient condition or merely a necessary condition?)

More important though is the discussion of the desires with which we *identify*. Identification here should be understood as acceptance, not as essentially linked either to endorsement or what one cares about. (One can identify with a desire without endorsing or approving of it; and one can identify with a desire that one takes to be trivial; see Frankfurt's 'Reply to Watson' in *Contours of Agency*.) In his earlier work Frankfurt had understood this in terms of higher order desires. But it was unclear why a higher order desire would be one with which one specially identified. Later he comes to understand identification in terms of *decisions*. Actually there seem to be two distinct phenomena that he discusses. The first concerns the case of checking a sum over and over. At some point one might arrive at a decisive identification with a certain answer (p. I69). It 'resounds endlessly'. Is it that there is a judgement that no further conflict will be found? Not necessarily. Rather the idea is that we decide that no further checking is warranted; and this can be true even if we think that we may have reason to revise it. However, Frankfurt does seem to think that the decision that no further checking is warranted is one that we do think won't be rejected ('he can anticipate that this view will be endlessly confirmed by accurate reviews of it' p. I68)

But this model doesn't seem to be apt for the second case, which is one where there is inner conflict (either over which desire to act on first, or over which desire to act on at all); here the point seems to be that one makes a decision to embrace one desire rather than another. In the case where it isn't just a question of which desire to act on first, the rejected desire now becomes an 'outlaw' (p. I70). Note though that Frankfurt hasn't given us an analysis of what such a choice amounts to. In particular, he hasn't done it in terms of desires. So we have apparently left the Hobbesian model completely. He does say something about what such a decision involves though: it gives a criterion for coordinating other beliefs (pp. I73–4). Does it matter that he doesn't give a reductive account? Has he shown that the notion is deterministically acceptable?

Frankfurt distinguishes making a decision from making a choice (p. I72). What exactly is at issue here?

Hobbes' etymological speculations: to deliberate is to de-liberate, i.e. to put an end to one's liberty. But this is a false etymology. It is actually from Latin *deliberare*, to weigh well (cf. *libra*, a pair of scales; the prefix *de* here means *completely*, as in *despoil*).

In 'The Faintest Passion', Frankfurt insists that conflicts between first-order desires cannot be understood on this model. First order desires are merely impulses, so if they fight it out amongst themselves there cannot be a decision.

SCANLON

Why are we concerned with identification? Is it that we are morally responsible only for the desires with which we identify? Or is it rather than identification is something that is desirable in itself; something that is, as Scanlon puts it, necessary for our 'psychic health'?

Against the first reading, consider negligence. So it is better understood as important for the second.

Scanlon's three phenomena: seemings, assessings, optings. To desire something is to see it as a reason for acting. But things can seem to be reasons for action without actually be reasons for action. So our initial seemings then need to be weighed against our further judgments about reasons.

Is Scanlon's account, as Frankfurt complains, too intellectualized?