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*The Rationality of Military Service (1981)**

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The aim of this discussion is twofold. First, I shall scrutinize certain prevailing rationales for enlisting for military service and show that these justifications are inadequate to meet the military's recruiting needs. Larger numbers of enlistees who are fully equipped, both in technical skills and morale, for combat readiness are in great demand, but the arguments used to recruit potential enlistees are self-defeating. I shall show how and why they attract volunteers who are rendered singularly unfit to meet these demands by those very arguments themselves.

I shall also suggest that these justifications are deficient in failing to satisfy certain elementary conditions that any adequate justification for action must satisfy, and that this second deficiency at least partly explains the first. Thus my second aim will be to adumbrate briefly these unsatisfied conditions and to show how careful attention to them can change our thinking about who should serve in the military and why.

Two rationales for military service will be described. I shall argue that their deficiencies, both in logic and in strategy, arise out of a misleading conception of what rational justification consists in. An alternative model of rational justification and two arguments in its defense will follow, and the model will be applied to the questions: Who should serve in the military? Why? And under what conditions? I shall conclude that advantaged Americans rationally ought to enlist in the military for patriotic as well as self-interested reasons and that these reasons would equally justify their conscription.

I. Two Justifications for Military Enlistment

Two sorts of considerations are typically proffered in favor of military service. The first group mentions that one's country must be prepared to repel the threat of invasion; that its institutions, values, and way of life must be defended vigilantly; and that its allies and/or its essential economic interests in other countries must be protected. These considerations presuppose that the country in question, its institutions, values, way of life, political and economic interests, and so on, are worth protecting. Let us refer to them as *patriotic considerations*.

* I am indebted to the CASH Collective (University of Michigan), Robert Fullinwider, Allan Gibbard, and Peter Railton for helpful comments on sections of earlier drafts of this essay.

A second group of considerations frequently cited refers to the specialized technical training offered by military service; the range of professional and career opportunities available; the chance to see unfamiliar parts of the world; the opportunity to gain the training that builds endurance, self-reliance, and self-discipline; and so on. These considerations have been invoked frequently in military recruiting; they appeal to features of military life that certain individuals may find personally attractive or rewarding. We can refer to these as *self-interested considerations*.

These two kinds of considerations are often addressed to different audiences. Patriotic considerations are commonly invoked by and addressed to policymakers and to those whose support can be expected to make an impact on the formation and enforcement of social policy: representatives of business and government whose economic, political, or diplomatic interests would be advanced by military defense; their constituents; and the large segment of the American public whose ways of life are sufficiently valuable to them that they feel an allegiance to the institutions that promote them and to the values and standards embodied by such institutions.

Patriotic considerations are addressed less frequently to those who are to be convinced to enlist in the All-Volunteer Force itself. To those young men and women who are adjudged to be most capable of making a contribution to this country's welfare through their military defense of it (rather than, say, through their technical or professional skills within the civilian sector, their roles as parents, or their anticipated roles as educated and productive citizens upon completion of their civilian education), appeal is more often made to self-interested considerations. These considerations represent military life as the most attractive option available for pursuing personal aspirations.

Patriotic and self-interested considerations *may* not be mutually exclusive. Some individuals may hold strong convictions both that (a) this country, its civilian institutions, and the civilian ways of life they offer are worth defending; and that (b) time spent in the military is a more attractive option for personal and professional advancement than any available in the civilian sector. Both considerations might be compatible, for example, under the more general presumption that the career and personal opportunities offered through military service embody the same liberal-democratic values embodied in the civilian institutions of this country and are to be comparably evaluated. This presumption regards the military way of life merely as one among many others, all equally advanced by liberal-democratic institutions, and all providing equal opportunity for the pursuit of individual aspirations.

This general presumption is surely false. The military is not an "equal opportunity employer" in *this* sense. It requires of a potential enlistee, in exchange for the personal and professional opportunities it offers, a readiness

to risk his or her life and safety in the event of a war – a war, moreover, about whose purpose or significance he or she may have serious doubts. In addition, it requires an abdication of personal autonomy to military superiors whose primary commitment is to winning a current or anticipated war, rather than to protecting his or her life or ensuring its comfort. The primary activity of a peacetime military is the achievement and maintenance of combat readiness, and personal career goals and aspirations are perforce sacrificed to this end.¹ Equal opportunity to advance one's life prospects in the military is purchased by sacrificing the right to autonomous self-preservation, in the service of ends whose worth one may have reason to question. Civilian recipients of the benefits of liberal-democratic institutions are not expected to pay this price.

These facts seem to differentiate military service from superficially comparable high-risk jobs in the civilian sector, such as fireman, coal miner, or construction worker. These jobs one can quit if one believes that the risk to life is not worth the goal to be achieved. But it is not easy to withdraw from the military, in the event of war, without incurring a court martial or dishonorable discharge, or the shame and dishonor that attend a refusal to defend one's country in times of need.

Perhaps, however, these considerations do not in fact distinguish military service from apparently comparable civilian jobs. It may be argued that economic need or social disadvantage forces workers in high-risk civilian occupations to retain their jobs and to abdicate autonomous self-preservation for the sake of controversial ends, just as the threat of military discipline or social disapprobation forces enlistees to retain theirs. To the extent that the

¹ "Much of the dissatisfaction that exists among volunteers is based on the lack of adequate information to prepare the new enlistee for military life. The major piece of information missing is: the U.S. Army is a military organization with the specific mission of fighting.... In many instances the jobs assigned to soldiers may be boring, demeaning, or repetitious. A spirit of dedication and sacrifice is expected from all soldiers. This spirit of sacrifice and dedication combined with proper discipline is essential for wartime service when it is imperative that soldiers unswervingly perform their duties." From J. L. Reed, "An Analysis and Evaluation of the United States Army (*The Beard Study*)," appendix to *Status of the All-Volunteer Armed Force, Hearing Before the Subcommittee on Manpower and Personnel, Committee on Armed Services, United States Senate, 95th Congress, 2nd Session, 20 June 1978* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1978), pp. 254-55. Subsequently referred to as *The Beard Study*.

"Even though the majority of enlistees had or were learning and practicing with equipment and language of combat, few seem to have given any serious thought as to how they would feel or behave given the need to enter a combat situation" (David Gottlieb, *Babes in Arms: Youth in the Army* [Beverly Hills, Calif.: Sage Publications, 1980], p. 77).

comparison holds, the same reservations about the general presumption apply as well to these high-risk civilian occupations. We may certainly question whether any such employment is compatible with liberal-democratic institutions that purport to offer equal opportunity for improving one's life prospects, when the price of equal opportunity in these cases is a readiness to abdicate those life prospects in order to promote ends of controversial worth. In this discussion, however, we will be concerned only with military service.

Alternately, both patriotic and self-interested considerations might appeal to individuals who are personally attracted to the glory and honor attendant upon successful military service, precisely because of strong underlying patriotic feelings. These patriotic feelings, and the identification of their personal interests with those of their country, can be an important source of self-esteem for individuals who may encounter frustration in other areas of life. Such feelings may arise as well from a deeply internalized disposition to regard oneself as part of a larger group and to respond naturally to its imperatives, independent of the compensatory benefits of doing so. Individuals for whom this is true do not form the primary targets of recruitment efforts, and so I ignore them in the following remarks but will return to them in Section IV.

We are left, then, with some interesting asymmetries. Patriotic considerations, on the one hand, are addressed to those whose interest in the military defense of civilian institutions is greatest, but whose availability for actual military service is comparatively small. Self-interested considerations, on the other hand, are addressed to those whose interest in the military defense of civilian institutions in their current form is comparatively small, but whose availability for actual military service is greatest. It is noteworthy that patriotic considerations are not generally invoked to justify military service to a potential enlistee, and in the same way self-interested considerations are held in abeyance when attempting to justify increases in military spending in congressional debate: no congressperson would be convinced that we should increase spending for the production of land missiles, or raise the pay scale of the average NCO, to provide career opportunities or technical training to those who were unable to find comparable training in the civilian sector. In both cases, the explanation for the silence is the same: the missing considerations would be irrelevant, unconvincing, and counterproductive to the party in question. So it appears that the most persuasive justification for undertaking military service depends almost entirely on the audience to whom the justification is addressed.

But this relativism is not as neutral as it may first appear; patriotic and self-interested considerations are not, in fact, equally veridical as

representations of the actual purpose and function of the military. It is not true that the function of the military in providing training, experience, and career opportunities to otherwise disadvantaged Americans is just as central or important as its function in providing military defense. The real reason for staffing and training the military is to ensure the readiness and capability for defending the country and its important economic and political interests against attack. The personal and professional benefits proffered function as inducements to enlist for individuals whose interest in military life otherwise would be minimal. With respect to the actual purpose and function of the military, then, self-interested considerations are subordinate to patriotic ones. With respect to the enterprise of persuading individuals to enlist in the military, however, patriotic considerations are subordinate to self-interested ones.

We now see that something is patently wrong, for the enterprise of persuasion seems to require misrepresenting the realities of military life: to obscure the real point of being in the military - i.e., an unconditional readiness for military defense - to convince individuals to join it.² This carries the disturbing implication that it would be a tactical error to represent the true conditions and purpose of military life to those who must be induced to serve, for this representation would fail to convince many potential enlistees to do so.

II. Two Models of Rationality

This conclusion may not seem obvious to one who subscribes to the prevailing model of rational action as the maximally efficient achievement of one's ends, whatever they are, given the constraints on information available: call this the *model of means-rationality*. On this model, that the self-interested

² "Army recruiting is focussed on appealing to enlistees on the basis of employment, travel, and a chance for a college education. . . . overstressing these incentives has created a flow of individuals into the service with high expectations that Army life will be an 8-to-5 job with weekends off, 30 days paid vacation and a life-style comparable to that which might be available in the private sector of U.S. society. My interviews with junior enlisted personnel have indicated that an overwhelmingly large number feel frustrated by not getting the college education that they believe was promised to them. They also feel that the Army was going to be just another job and are very disappointed after experiencing military life. ... When I interviewed recruiters I found that they are under great pressure to meet quotas and readily admit to using any technique to 'sell' individuals on enlisting in the Army" (*The Beard Study*, pp. 135-36; see also 157-59, 165-66, 209-12).

justification of military service depends upon omitting certain facts about military life does not impair its rationality. If, given the information *available* to an agent, military service advances that agent's most important ends more efficiently than any other alternative, it is rationally justified. Thus military service as a means to career advancement would be justified for an agent from whom certain facts were withheld that suggested that his or her interests would be better advanced through organized protest against education and employment inequity in the civilian sector. The rationality of withholding certain information can in turn be shown by demonstrating this tactic to be a necessary means to the end of military recruitment, and this in turn to be a necessary means to the end of military defense.

But note that those to whom the self-interested considerations are intended to justify enlistment are not those to whom the need for military manpower supposedly justifies the tactical use of such considerations in recruitment efforts. Rather, potential enlistees are persuaded to join by a set of self-interested considerations which themselves must be justified by other, partly patriotic and partly tactical, ones that undermine them (i.e., that defense of our country requires discipline, a large degree of personal discomfort, and the sacrifice of personal ambition of a kind that cannot be revealed fully to potential soldiers before their enlistment) and which are therefore proffered not to potential recruits themselves, but to other interested parties. But it cannot be rational for me to enlist in the military if the ultimate patriotic and tactical reasons why I should could not convince me to do so. Such reasons may or may not justify my forcible induction, but they cannot justify my *volunteering* to join. To claim that it is rational to obscure the real point and character of military life in order to get individuals to enlist strongly suggests that it would be irrational for them to volunteer were that information made available to them.

These observations suggest three intuitive criteria of rationality that the model of means-rationality fails to satisfy. One is that if an action is rational for me to perform, then (if I am cognitively and psychologically normal) it must be possible for you fully to justify that action to me. More generally, if it is rational for some group – say, of potential enlistees – to undertake some action, then it must be possible, at least in theory, *for that group* to recognize all the considerations that justify that action as persuasive reasons for them to perform the action. Let us refer to this as the *social viability* criterion. (We shall return to it later in amplified form in Section V.) One implication is that if those targeted by the services as potential enlistees could not be convinced to join by the full patriotic and tactical justification for doing so, then it is irrational for that group to enlist, and the military might do better to target a different group.

A second criterion given short shrift by the model of means-rationality is that the justification of a rational action must depend upon a realistic conception of the action's circumstances. It should invoke relevant considerations and facts recognizable as true by well-informed parties, and should exclude recognizable falsehoods, distortions, or omissions. This criterion too will be spelled out more fully in Section V as the *realism* criterion. One of its immediate implications is that the self-interested considerations favoring enlistment by themselves fail to constitute a rational justification to the target audience. For the persuasive power of the self-interested justification depends largely upon the irrationality or ignorance of potential enlistees, and on the ability of recruitment officers to paint an appealing picture of military life that fails adequately to depict the facts.

A third criterion of rationality largely neglected by the model of means-rationality is what we shall refer to as the *consistency* criterion: the full justification of a rational action must not invoke inconsistent norms. If military preparedness requires enlisted soldiers to sacrifice personal career aspirations, then one cannot invoke the norms both of military preparedness *and* of the satisfaction of personal career ambitions as reasons for enlistment, for they are inconsistent. We will group these three criteria under the rubric of the model of *end-rationality*, for reasons that will become clearer as we proceed.

The first requirement, of social viability, says that the full justification of a rational action must be recognizably rational to the agent who is to perform it. This means that it will not do to bifurcate that justification, offering the self-interested considerations to potential enlistees and the patriotic and tactical considerations to recruitment officers and interested representatives and senators. If volunteering for the military is rational for a potential enlistee, he or she should have access to *all* the reasons why it is rational. Yet the second requirement, that of realism, says that the full justification of a rational action cannot depend upon recognizable omissions, distortions, or falsifications. This means that if the self-interested part of the justification is vulnerable to this charge, this is *prima facie* evidence for calling its rationality into question. And since the third requirement, of consistency, requires that a rational justification not appeal to inconsistent norms, then if the self-interested norms are inconsistent with the patriotic and tactical ones, one set of norms must be dropped. So if the self-interested justification for enlistment proves to be irrational in the ways already suggested, there is a strong *prima facie* case for using some other argument to persuade individuals to enlist in the military, or for dropping the putative appeal to reason altogether.

These last two alternatives may be equally justified by the same considerations, i.e., the patriotic ones. For if there *is* a non-self-interested, rational justification for enlisting, the same justification could be invoked to

support the military conscription of those individuals who failed to recognize its rationality for them, and the patriotic justification just may have this potential. If it is rational for some individuals to serve in the military for patriotic and non-self-interested reasons, then there may be circumstances (e.g., a national emergency, a serious threat to the interests or security of the country) under which it would be rational to force them to serve. Nevertheless, the plausibility of this thesis requires disposing of certain immediate objections, in the next two sections.

III. Not All Desired Ends Are Rational

One such objection runs as follows. The thesis implies that one may have good reason to accept military conscription if military enlistment is rationally justified, but one cannot bring oneself to do what one recognizes as rationally justified. To this it might be objected that one cannot have sufficiently good reason to do something if, when all the facts are in and one is fully ambulatory, one is not *motivated* to do it. The objection assimilates the concept of having a sufficient reason to do something to that of there being sufficient cause for something's occurring. It supposes that reasons are always causes and that a consideration that strongly favors some course of action must automatically motivate one to perform it. But this supposition is in turn based on the further mistaken supposition that one important class of causes of action, namely desires, are always reasons for action. The objection assumes that any good (or sufficient) justification for doing something must include as a reason that performing the action will satisfy some desire of the agent. Therefore, it is concluded, there can be no sufficiently good reason for doing something that does not motivate the agent to do it.

It is not true, however, that the presence of a desire to do or achieve something always provides a *prima facie* reason for doing or achieving it. The supposition that it does depends upon the further controversial assumption that the pursuit of self-interest is inherently rational. The reasoning appears to be that since the self has a *prima facie* self-directed interest in satisfying its desires, and since the self-directed interests of the self take rational precedence over any other interests, any such interest of the self in satisfying one of its desires has a rational claim to fulfillment.

But it is not obvious that the self-interests of the self take precedence over all other interests, e.g., of the larger community or the nation. Certainly they may in the view of any arbitrarily selected self, particularly if its psychology is individualistically inclined. But whence comes the authority of this point of view over others? To conclude that it is rational for any self to give

precedence to the pursuit of its self-interests would be to beg the question of whether or not the pursuit of self-interest is, in fact, inherently rational.

To require, as the social viability criterion does, that a rational action be fully justifiable to the agent who is to perform it is not to require that appeal be made to some self-interest of the agent in order to justify its performance. To show me that it would be rational for me to enlist in the Army does not necessarily require a demonstration that some self-interest of mine would be served by doing so. If I am strongly enough committed to my country, or feel sufficiently hostile toward its enemies, it may be rational for me to enlist even if my self-interest must be sacrificed, as long as the three suggested criteria of rationality are met.

If the reasons given for a rationally justified action need not include an appeal to the pursuit of self-interest, and if desires hold a prima facie claim to satisfaction because they fulfill self-interest, then the presence of a desire is not necessarily a reason for satisfying it. Of course other arguments may favor the satisfaction of a desire – based, for example, on the independent worth of the end desired. But not just any desired end will constitute a prima facie reason for action, simply in virtue of being a desire the agent wants to satisfy. Thus some desired ends are irrational, even if they satisfy the constraints on the model of means-rationality.

Major Kurtz's desire for absolute and divine dominion in *Apocalypse Now* seems to illustrate such a case. It is hard to imagine a rational justification of his actions, much less how it would resolve the normative inconsistencies between his desire for absolute dominion and control, and the slaughter of those over whom he had control; or between his desire for absolute reverence and submission from his subjects, and his fear of their revenge or rebellion. Kurtz may have attained his ultimate desired end, and perhaps even in the most efficient way possible, given the information available to him. But this does not make his desire rational.

Hence if one's desires are irrational, there may be no connection between what one has good reason to do – i.e., what it is rational for one to do – and what one is motivated to do. What it is rational for one to do may be completely independent of the actual ends one happens to desire. So it does not follow from the fact that one is not motivated to join the military that one has no sufficiently good reason to do so. That one lacks motivation to enlist may show no more than that one's motivations are not necessarily determined by rational considerations – an observation that scarcely needs belaboring.

IV. Not All Rational Ends Must Be Objects of Desire

Military recruitment policymakers seem to suppose that most individuals can be persuaded to enlist in the All-Volunteer Force only by a demonstration that military service is the most efficient means of satisfying their desires for training and education, travel, and career opportunities. Such policymakers presuppose the model of means-rationality. It has already been suggested that this model is deficient on at least two counts: first, it validates as rational a justification of military service that depends upon omitting certain information that would, in all probability, alter an agent's choice if it were made available; and second, it supposes that any instrumentally efficacious action is rational, regardless of the ends it promotes, although ends like those of Major Kurtz call this supposition into question as well.

But even more problematic, the model of means-rationality assumes that an action can be justified to a fully rational and autonomous individual only by demonstrating that it promotes the efficient satisfaction of *some* desire the agent has.³ For even if the end one happens to have is rational in the suggested sense, it is not obvious that one must have a *desire* for such an end in order to recognize that end as rationally justified for one to pursue. It is easy to imagine cases in which I adopt and pursue ends, not because I have a desire for those ends, but because they instantiate normative principles or values to which I am deeply committed.

Thus, for example, I may regularly wait for the green light when crossing the street. I do so intentionally, deliberately, and consciously, but not because I have any occurrent *desire* to do so. Indeed, no consequences of importance to me at all may turn on whether or not I cross at the green (suppose no traffic is to be seen). I cross at the green out of an internalized disposition to conform to the norm that one ought to cross at the green, not in between.

Another example: I may contribute time or money to Amnesty International, in order to help restore the civil rights of certain political prisoners. But not because I want to, nor even from any benevolent desire to increase the well-being of the prisoners involved. Indeed, their convictions and attitudes toward life may represent values I deplore and would actively discourage if they were in the position to promulgate them. Nevertheless, I may find their torture or imprisonment morally unacceptable, regardless of my desires with respect to them, and act to prevent it out of sheer moral indignation that their civil rights are being abridged. These feelings constitute

³ See, for example, Philippa Foot, "Reasons for Action and Desire," *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, Supp. Vol. 44 (1972): 189-210; and "Morality as a System of Hypothetical Imperatives," *Philosophical Review* 81 (1972): 305-16.

a motivationally effective state. But they need not make me *want* to aid them. They may simply make me do so.

In neither case is an intervening desire required to explain my behavior. All that is required is a motivationally effective disposition to conform to normative principles – of public behavior or of the inalienability of individual civil rights – which is deeply enough felt to motivate certain responses under certain circumstances.

These examples are both mundane cases in which I perform rational actions intentionally, but without any necessarily concomitant desire for their ends. There are others: must I *desire* to brush my teeth every morning in order to do so? Or to say "Hello" each time I answer the phone in order to say it? Evidently not. I just do these things reflexively.

These actions, and others like them, are also relatively unproblematic from the point of view of motivation. Typically, the process of human socialization includes instilling a broad range of normative social dispositions to action deeply enough so that the mere recognition of the kind of behavior required under particular circumstances elicits that behavior more or less automatically. Deeply instilled dispositions to such behavior shape our character, not by motivating us to *want* to do a certain act, but by motivating us to *do* it.

This is not to argue that there are no individual desires. Desires express important aspects of personality. Rather it is to argue, first, that individual desires are not the only kind of motives to action; second, that for most people in most situations, they are not even predominant. Third, it is to suggest that even where such desires are present, they are usually determined by prior, deeply instilled social norms to which they conform.

It may be observed that it is often much easier for us to act immediately on the recognition that one ought to, e.g., cross at the green, or say "Hello" when answering the phone, than it is to respond reflexively to the recognition that it is appropriate to, for example, help those in need even at some personal cost, or to respect those whose values, lifestyle, or appearance differ radically from one's own. But it seems to me that this fact reflects the social inefficacy of those institutions that attempt to instill moral norms, and the social efficacy of those that implicitly oppose or undermine them. This may also mean that some moral norms are not realistic requirements to impose on human behavior. But these differences do not reflect any qualitative difference between norms of conventional behavior and moral norms that would force us to the conclusion that desires are motivationally necessary in the latter case, but not in the former. For individuals often do perform moral actions naturally and reflexively, even when this conflicts with their desires or interests. If the structure of our social institutions encouraged a wholehearted commitment to moral norms of behavior to the extent to which

it encourages a wholehearted commitment to norms of etiquette and conventional social behavior, there is little reason to doubt that our response to the recognition of what is appropriate would be as immediate and reflexive in both cases.

Thus to stipulate some desire or interest that necessarily intervenes between the recognition of what it is appropriate to do and the resulting action seems both counterintuitive, from the point of view of commonsense introspection, and methodologically messy. It seems that the stipulation of such a desire as necessary in all cases is based on the self-fulfilling hypothesis that a desire must have been present in order for one to act at all: i.e., that action not motivated by the self-directed interest in satisfying one's desires is a conceptual impossibility. But if my performing the action makes it true *by definition* that I desired its end, and yet I find no evidence of such a desire when I examine my own motives, then the concept of a necessarily motivating desire must be relegated to the explanatory status of a "theoretical entity" that does no explanatory work at all.

Hence views that suppose us to need a *desire* to conform to motivationally effective social norms in order to conform to them are equally mistaken. If the norm of concern for others is motivationally effective, then to perceive that someone is in need of help, support, or comfort is to be motivationally disposed to help, support, or comfort him or her, regardless of any desires or inclinations one may have.

Given the workings of actual social institutions, military service is not necessarily of a piece with the cases just enumerated, but it may be. In West Germany, for example, all able-bodied young men are required to serve for two years in the Deutsche Bundeswehr directly upon completion of high school or professional training. This is an effective and stable social practice of relatively long standing that has a high degree of acceptance in West German society. This practice can be rationally justified by invoking circumstantial considerations concerning Germany's recent history, its geographical location, the nature of its diplomatic relations with Eastern Bloc countries, and so on. And often, young prospective soldiers will invoke such considerations *exclusively*, in order to explain their compliance with this stable social convention. They will make no mention of their desire to defend the fatherland, or of their interest in avoiding imprisonment for draft evasion, or of their desire to avoid social disapproval.

The correct inference, it seems to me, is that they are motivated to serve in the Bundeswehr by a deeply instilled, wholehearted *commitment to the principle* of active readiness to come to West Germany's defense, if it should be necessary, quite independent of any desires or interests; and that this commitment is realized by fulfilling the requirement of military service. To

insist that some desire or interest must be present to explain their behavior (or, more implausibly, their commitment to this principle) is to beg the question of whether it is necessary to postulate the existence of such a desire or interest in the first place. In the cases just discussed, it seems clear that a deeply instilled commitment to principle plus a set of appropriate beliefs and perceptions of the given circumstances suffice to do the job.

V. Outline of a Model of End Rationality

The conclusions of the two preceding sections lend support to the suggested model of end-rationality proposed in Section 11.⁴ If desires are not, in fact, necessary variables in a rational justification of action, we are free to appeal exclusively to the more general normative considerations we actually do invoke in determining an action's rationality; irrespective of the desires we happen to have: its value in our scheme of ethical convictions, how it affects individuals and groups to whom we are loyal or opposed, its pragmatic worth in realizing ends to which we are committed, general facts about how the world works, and so on. We are free, moreover, to examine critically those general normative considerations according to the criteria we actually use in ascertaining their rational status: how psychologically palatable the considerations would be to the agents involved, the degree to which the considerations demonstrate a realistic grasp of the situation, and whether the considerations are consistent with our other beliefs and values. That is to say, we are now in a better position to make use of the suggested criteria of the model of end-rationality earlier introduced.

Consider some features of the conventional practice of justifying an action. First one attempts to persuade another that some action is worth undertaking. This feature calls attention to the intersubjective character of rational justification: assuming we are both cognitively and psychologically normal, the aim of my behavior is to obtain your agreement that my (or your, or an) action is worthwhile. I attempt to make my action rationally intelligible to you by citing the final end at which the action aims and demonstrating that this action is the best way of achieving that end: the most efficient, perhaps, or the most honorable, or the least socially disruptive. But the success of this enterprise requires that you and I agree on the value of such things as efficiency, the preservation of virtue, or the minimizing of social disruption. Most important, it requires that we agree that the final end itself is worth

⁴ The topic of this section is a large one, for which I can do scarcely more here than indicate, very roughly, the outline of my own views. For a fuller treatment, see my "A New Model of Rationality" (Ph.D. dissertation, Harvard University, 1981).

achieving. No matter how eloquently I argue that pursuing a career in research dermatology is the most efficient, honorable, and socially harmonious way of discovering a method of turning my skin permanently green, you will fail to be convinced of the rationality of my behavior if you have trouble accepting the notion of having permanently green skin as a worthwhile final end.

This shows that ends of action embody different values, some of which are intersubjectively shared and some of which are not. Having permanently green skin or absolute divine dominion over one's social environment are among those idiosyncratic ends that fail to justify actions taken to achieve them because they do not embody intelligible and intersubjectively shared values, and because it is hard to imagine a human community that might share them. The general point can be expressed by describing ends of actions as instantiating social norms. By a *norm* I mean a principle, practice, ideal, value, or convention, with its attendant beliefs. Anything that has normative force, i.e., that can be translated into a recommendation or prescription for action, will count as a norm in this broad sense. This characterization of a norm makes it clear that norms can always be understood as *rules* of action. Hence I will often speak of normative *principles* or *practices*. My claims will apply equally, *ceteris paribus*, to ideals, values, aspirations, etc., unless otherwise indicated.⁵

An end *instantiates* a norm if the norm can be invoked by the agent to explain why the end is worth pursuing. We may say that the norm *explicates* the values, beliefs, and expectations that are implicit in the end. For example, suppose I aspire to be a lieutenant general in the U.S. Army. The end *instantiates* the norms that military service is an honorable occupation, that the role of lieutenant general is crucial in the testing of military strategy, that one's first duty is to defend one's country, that self-interest should be made to coincide with patriotic duty as far as possible, and so on. These norms

⁵ Hence I include both so-called "consequentialist" and so-called "deontological" prescriptions for action under the rubric of a norm (for reasons that are clarified in "A Distinction Without a Difference," *Midwest Studies in Philosophy*, Vol. VII: *Social and Political Philosophy* [Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982]). In that discussion I neglected to speculate upon the sense of freedom from moral regulations and prohibitions one might experience upon adopting a consequentialist stance, after having been raised in an environment highly structured by such regulations and prohibitions; and the sense of security and certitude one might experience upon adopting a deontological stance, having come from an environment in which moral regulations and prohibitions were ineffective, ambiguous, or altogether absent. For the overly conscientious, consequentialism may be a liberation; for the intemperate or undisciplined, deontology may be a refuge.

explicate as *values* military service, self-discipline, honor, military strategy, patriotism, the coincidence of duty and self-interest, the defense of one's country, and so on. They also explicate the *beliefs* and *expectations* that as lieutenant general one can have a significant impact on military strategy, that women who aspire to become lieutenant generals stand a reasonable chance of doing so, that one's personal career choice will have an effect on the defense of one's country, that one will be due to receive honor for one's military service, and so on. Together with such beliefs and expectations, these values can be translated into recommendations or prescriptions to realize them under certain circumstances; this is what shows them to be norms. The task is now to explain what a *rational* norm is. The three criteria of end-rationality explicated earlier are intended to answer this question.

First, a rational norm is one whose values, beliefs, and expectations are socially viable. A *socially viable* norm is one that *could be* operative within the community of human beings whose behavior it is supposed to regulate. It need not be in fact, but it must closely enough express the dispositions and capacities that characterize human beings so that it could be adopted and practiced by a human community under some material human circumstances. Thus it must be psychologically palatable to those agents in the sense described in Section II.

An example of a norm that would *not* be socially viable in this sense, presumably, would be one that required members of a human community to spend each day in research devoted to the enterprise of turning their skin green as a final end, or communicating solely in barks, grunts, and squeaks, or hoarding useless rubbish. Some seriously advanced and believed moral norms may be of this kind as well, e.g., Christian norms of extreme self-denial. These norms would not be socially viable because human beings are not characteristically disposed to do such things. And the material circumstances of human existence do not naturally favor the development of such dispositions.

One reason for requiring that a rational norm be socially viable depends on the argument made in Section IV, that it is part of the process of socialization to internalize many social practices so deeply that they become dispositional traits of character. It was claimed that one's awareness of social circumstances of various kinds then evokes these dispositional responses almost automatically, without the necessary intervention of a desire on the part of the agent.

Clearly, human beings are not infinitely malleable, and we could not internalize just *any* norm or practice indifferently. Perhaps some idiosyncratic individuals could be trained, for example, to obliterate themselves for extended periods of time à la Howard Hughes, or everything else in their environment à la Major Kurtz. But one way of imposing constraints on our

conception of the broad range of dispositions and capacities that characterize human beings is to require that the behavior or desire in question conform closely enough to human capacities that it *could* be instilled as part of the process of socialization into some human community, so that one's commitment to it could indeed motivate one to action. A practice that refused to adapt to the limitations of human physiology and psychology in this way could hardly be rational for human beings to act on. Thus the requirement of social viability ensures that the norm in question could be motivationally effective in the way that our conventions of dress, hygiene, and socially acceptable behavior are.

Social viability alone, however, does not exhaust the criteria a norm must meet in order to count as rational. We can imagine cases in which bizarre but socially viable norms arise, say, through the ingestion of hallucinogenic drugs, or through the covert inculcation of irrational ideological beliefs, or in other suspect ways. In such cases – Jonestown, Guyana, is an example – it makes sense to describe a whole community as irrational.

A norm must satisfy two further criteria in order to count as rational. First, it must be internally consistent within a system of such norms, i.e., logically consistent with all the other norms a fully rational and autonomous member of a human community adopts. This is important because logical consistency is an obvious, necessary (though insufficient) condition of rational justification. If I attempt to persuade you to join the military on the grounds that we all have a duty to defend our country, but refuse to join myself because military life is too risky and distasteful, you have good reason to suspect me of holding mutually inconsistent norms, and therefore to question my rationality or sincerity.

But even the combination of social viability and internal consistency does not suffice to identify a norm as rational. The ritual of sacrificing a calf to the gods in order to propitiate their wrath and thereby ensure victory in battle was both socially viable for human beings and also internally coherent within a certain historical and cultural setting. But if a group of Pentagon generals in present-day Washington, D.C., practiced this ritual, we would have good reason to call them irrational. Their behavior would seem to ignore salient features of the present-day environment that reveal such behavior as highly inappropriate. We would describe them as, at the very least, "out of touch with reality." That the norms an action instantiates seem to lack a veridical awareness of the surrounding environment is good grounds for refusing to call that action rational.

Thus the third (and for purposes of this discussion, final) criterion that a rational norm must satisfy is that it must be *realistic*.⁶ That is, a rational norm must explicate values, beliefs, and expectations that can be interpreted as socially adaptive to some veridically perceived material and social environment. More precisely, the values and expectations explicated by a rational norm must be such that they could be explained *as though* they were valid inductive inferences from a series of trial-and-error attempts to adapt human needs and dispositions to the veridically perceived constraints and resources of the social and material environment.

A *rational action*, then, is one whose ends are rationally intelligible to suitably placed others and which therefore justify the action in question. An end is rationally intelligible if it instantiates norms whose values, beliefs, and expectations are socially viable, internally coherent, and could have arisen from a realistic conception of the surrounding environment. Hence a rational action is one that can be justified with reference to the circumstances of its performance. If an action aspires to realize normative values that are recognizably worth achieving, that are consistent with other values one may have, and that are appropriate to the constraints and resources inherent in the action's environment, that action is rational.⁷

VI. Self-Interest and Military Enlistment

To see how the suggested conception of end-rationality might work in practice, reconsider the self-interested justification originally cited in favor of enlisting in the All-Volunteer Force. The self-interested justification for joining the military depicts it as a means to education and technical training, career advancement, and personal development superior to the means available in the civilian sector. Let us provisionally describe individuals for whom this is true as *disadvantaged Americans*, reserving for later a discussion of why this terminology is apt.

It is true that military service may offer training in technical professional areas that is unavailable to disadvantaged Americans in the civilian sector, and that this training may brighten one's future prospects considerably in

⁶ Other, commonsense criteria of rational norms, i.e., that they should allow one to achieve more rather than fewer of one's valued ends, that they should permit a hierarchical ranking of ends, and so on, can be accommodated easily to this account.

⁷ It may be noticed that this conception of rational action makes no mention of the efficient achievement of ends, nor of their maximization. This is because both of these are instrumental ends, i.e., means for realizing final ends, that may but do not necessarily satisfy the criteria just enumerated.

later civilian life. Moreover, the military contains a hierarchy through which one can advance just as far, in theory, as in a large civilian corporation. These and other such personal benefits of military service help to close the gap between the perceived social predicament of many disadvantaged Americans and that vision of the United States which forms the foundation of a wholehearted patriotic commitment to it. The more one feels like a valued and productive member of society, the more one feels able and entitled to take advantage of available social opportunities, and the more one will value the institutions and way of life that make them available. In this way military service may complete the integration of disadvantaged Americans into American society as productive, self-respecting, and patriotic citizens. By ameliorating the deplorable social conditions of which most civilian institutions have apparently washed their hands, military service may have further positive consequences for society at large.

Before we discuss the value of this particular consequence, the self-interested justification must be considered on its own merits. Only when these merits have been determined will it become clear whether or not this particular consequence is, in fact, a positive one.

Relative to the self-interested justification addressed to potential enlistees, the end of enlisting in the military instantiates the following *norm* (among others):

(A) Military service is valuable as a way of promoting individual interests.

(A), in turn, explicates the following *values*:

- (i) Military service is worthwhile as an instrumental or subordinate end;
- (ii) The promotion of individual interests is worthwhile as a final end.

(A) also explicates the *expectations* that

- (iii) Military service will, in fact, promote individual interests;
- (iv) The individual interests promoted by military service will be recognized as having social worth and be treated accordingly.

This list of values and expectations explicated by (A) does not aim to be exhaustive. It will be sufficient for purposes of illustration if application of the model of end-rationality to some of the assumptions contained in the self-interested justification of military service yields rather different conclusions from those of the prevailing model of means-rationality, but conclusions that

make an equal claim to plausibility. A norm's *degree* of rationality can then be calibrated by the number and importance of its values, expectations, and beliefs that satisfy or violate the suggested criteria of rationality.

One assumption that comes under immediate fire is the expectation expressed in (A.iii). (A.iii) seems to violate the second criterion of rationality, that a norm must be logically consistent within a system of rational norms, and hence (A) violates it as well. (A.iii) seems to violate the second criterion because it is inconsistent with the following norm (which I shall assume to be unproblematic for purposes of argument):

(B) Military service is a valuable means for promoting the national interest,

which itself includes the expectation that

(i) Military service will, in fact, promote the national interest.

Of course this is not to claim that the promotion of individual interests is always inconsistent with promoting the national interest. But unfortunately, the invisible hand is incapable of providing a stable organizational structure within the military, given its overriding purpose. When promoting the national interest requires the enlisted ranks to be prepared to sacrifice self-interest for the defense of their country – as it does in the military context – (A.iii) is inconsistent with (B.i).

One may object that for enlistees to be *prepared* to sacrifice individual interests does not automatically entail that they must *in fact* sacrifice individual interests; and that, in particular, in a peacetime force the probability of having to mobilize for active combat is low enough to warrant taking the risk to obtain the personal and professional benefits that the military has to offer.

This objection seems to be misplaced, on three counts. First, it has already been pointed out (in Section I) that having to be *prepared* to risk one's life in military combat is a major concession that the military exacts from enlistees in exchange for the promise of training, professional advancement, travel, etc. It is hard to see why disadvantaged Americans should have to pay this price for social and professional opportunities that are freely available to most civilians. They already have had to forfeit the more equitable distribution of social and economic resources that our sense of justice seems to demand, in order merely to obtain that relative paucity of resources with which they must in fact make do. They thereby have had to accept considerably reduced prospects of personal, social, and intellectual development without which the formation of long-range plans and aspiration's is difficult, and the effective

utilization of resources in the service of those plans and aspirations even more so. These sacrifices have conferred upon other, more fortunate Americans correspondingly larger shares of social and economic resources. These, in turn, have better equipped them to take advantage of the social and professional opportunities our civilian institutions purport to offer all American citizens equally. Thus the sacrifices of disadvantaged Americans have had as a consequence that more advantaged, better equipped citizens will be more overridingly able and disposed to utilize those "equal" social and professional opportunities in the service of their own goals. Disadvantaged Americans have paid this price merely to have access – however remote – to these "equal" opportunities at all. It is hard to see why they should be prepared to risk their lives to obtain them as well. But if there is no further reason why disadvantaged Americans should have to pay this price for social and career opportunities to which others have free access, then it is irrational to exact it from them.⁸

Second, the basic requirement of a peacetime military, that troops achieve and maintain readiness for active combat mobilization, is given greater urgency by the very real possibility of conflict outbreaks in a number of unstable areas where the interests of the United States are vulnerable (of which the Persian Gulf area, Eastern Europe, and El Salvador are only the most sensitive at the moment). These circumstances reduce considerably the probability of pursuing without interruption any career-oriented course of training. Under these circumstances, it is far from obvious that the training and career opportunities promised by the Army – and we should remember that it promises only the *opportunities*, not the actual training or career – are worth the risks involved.

Third, we have already seen that even under present, peacetime conditions, the military's attempt to approximate civilian training and

⁸ It may be protested that no one is exacting or extorting anything from anyone. For we are considering only voluntarily undertaken military service, not military conscription. And disadvantaged Americans may rationally choose to pursue opportunities and benefits where they are available, whether in the military or anywhere else. But whether and to what extent the decision of a disadvantaged American to undertake military service can be viewed correctly as a choice, when the alternatives are between service in the military and considerably fewer prospects than most others have in the civilian sector, is surely controversial. And if the decision to undertake military service is not, properly speaking, a choice, it is a *fortiori* not a *rational* choice. I am indebted to Charles Tilley for valuable discussions on this topic. See, further, Jules Coleman, "Liberalism, Unfair Advantage, and the Volunteer Armed Forces," Chapter 7, this volume.

employment institutions as additional incentives for enlistment has failed.⁹ It does not seem possible to maintain the necessary degree of military discipline, uniformity, and commitment and at the same time to fulfill the promises of individual advancement that characterize civilian prospects in a liberal-democratic society. It seems to be a hard truth that military service, whether in peacetime or in war, requires subordination of individual interests to the national interest. That is, military preparedness requires, to a large extent, the actual sacrifice of self-interest; therefore the expectations that

(A.iii) Military service will, in fact, promote individual interests

and that

(B.i) Military service will, in fact, promote the national interest

are incompatible. The same considerations strongly suggest that (A.iii) is unrealistic as well. And if (A.iii) is irrational on these grounds, so is (A.iv).

It might be argued that military service can be shown to serve the individual interests of disadvantaged Americans, in a wider sense. For although disadvantaged Americans often have little cause for optimism about their life prospects in the civilian sector, they would be even worse off were this country to be invaded or defeated in war. This fact, it is claimed, gives them a self-interested motive for defending their country through military service.¹⁰

But this conclusion does not follow. That is, it does not follow from the fact – if it is a fact – that disadvantaged Americans are better off in the civilian sector under this set of social and political institutions than they would be under any realistic alternative that they therefore have good reason to defend militarily this set of institutions. Perhaps they may have good reason to prefer to see this set of institutions defended or preserved by *someone*. But they have good reason to defend it *themselves* only if they are sufficiently better off that they are willing to risk the possibility of death or injury to maintain their current situation. This is not, in fact, the case. Apparently, some disadvantaged Americans *are* willing to risk death or injury in order to improve their current situations (although I have suggested that this is ultimately irrational); that is, they prefer to take that risk *rather than* remain where they are. But the conclusion in question requires that disadvantaged

⁹ See notes 1 and 2.

¹⁰ I am indebted to Allan Gibbard and Thomas Holt for insisting on the importance of this point.

Americans choose to take that risk *in order to* remain where they are; and this would presuppose a far greater attachment to their current situation in the civilian sector than they have any reason to hold. Hence, even if they are better off in civilian life than they would be under any alternative arrangements, it is by no means obvious that they are sufficiently better off to make these institutions worth risking their lives to defend. This must be shown, not presupposed. So the enlarged conception of the self-interests of disadvantaged Americans is no more successful in justifying their military enlistment than was the original one. (A.iii) remains irrational.

Next consider (A.ii). The rationality of (A.ii) is questionable because it seems so clearly to be an unrealistic response to the social and material environment of the military. It is hard to imagine attempting to promote the above individual interests as socially adaptive behavior, given the constraints and resources inherent in the military environment. The concerted attempt to inculcate uniformity, discipline, obedience to and respect for authority, a sense of mission, and a collective identity through the conditions of basic training and the rigors of military life, plus the emphasis on personal sacrifice and readiness to fight, combine not only to make the promotion of those interests practically difficult, but also to diminish the actual value of promoting individual interests under those conditions. Appeals to the promotion of individual interests are addressed to recruitable but self-interested civilians. Actual military life attempts to extinguish both the force of such appeals and the prominence of self-interested motivations in the psychology of the soldier.

It is easy to see why this must be so. The constraints and functions of military defense require the subordination of self-interest to the other considerations already described. A military whose primary commitment was to the college education, professional training, or personal enrichment of its soldiers would fail to be identifiable as a military institution at all. This suggests that (A. ii) is not only unrealistic, but lacks social viability as well.

Thus some of the most important values and expectations contained in (A) are irrational, and this makes (A) itself irrational. Let us describe such a norm, when invoked in the attempt to justify action, as a *pseudojustification*.

One may accept this conclusion but nevertheless attempt to justify rationally the self-interested pseudojustification itself as a necessary means to the end of military defense, and this in turn as a necessary means to the end of military defense, as does the means-rational tactical argument described in Section II. Thus the end of deploying the self-interested pseudojustification instantiates the following norm:

(C) (A) is the best available means of promoting military enlistment, which in turn is necessary for military defense.

(C) explicates the following *values*:

- (i) The self-interested pseudojustification is a valuable means to the end of increasing military enlistment;
- (ii) Increasing military enlistment is valuable as a further instrumental end in order to increase our capacity for military defense.

(C) also explicates the *expectations* that

- (iii) The self-interested pseudojustification will, in fact, increase military enlistment;
- (iv) The increased military enlistment resulting from the promulgation of (A) will, in fact, increase our capacity for military defense.

Let us begin by examining (C.i), that the self-interested pseudojustification is the best available strategy for recruiting an All-Volunteer Force. Now, it has already been observed that recruitment efforts are addressed to those disadvantaged Americans for whom even meager advances in personal and career prospects in the Army are preferable to those available in the civilian sector. This requires that these individuals view dimly their prospects for individual advancement in the civilian sector, i.e., the opportunities there are remote for completing their education or obtaining a higher one, for skill or career training, and for employment in a satisfying job promising individual achievement, financial security, and advances in professional status. For these individuals, the civilian institutions of this country offer no attractive or realistic opportunities for improving their overall life prospects, and this is why military service can be made to seem attractive. This is also why it is apposite to think of them as disadvantaged Americans.

A few moments' reflection indicates that (C.i) is not socially viable because it could not be adopted by that segment of the community to whom the self-interested pseudojustification was originally addressed. Potential military enlistees could not be expected to acquiesce in advance to being duped in order to get them into the military; the very idea is incoherent. In particular, disadvantaged Americans can hardly be expected to accept the proposition that they must be deceived about where their individual interests lie in order to seduce them into an environment that does not, in fact, serve their individual interests at all. For either they have motivationally effective patriotic dispositions, in which case they would reject the assumption that

such deception is necessary; or else they are moved by the above-described individual interests, in which case they would reject the claim that they should be herded into an environment that does not serve them.¹¹

Now consider (C.iv). (C.iv) is unrealistic, if "military enlistment" is understood to refer to that activity whose policies are purported to justify the self-interested pseudojustification. For as we have already seen, (A) is designed to appeal to disadvantaged Americans; for whom military service most often represents their last chance to complete or obtain further education. Thus these recruits enter the military with educational disadvantages and inadequately developed intellectual skills that they are led to expect the military to ameliorate.¹² They are understandably disappointed and demoralized when these expectations are left unsatisfied.

The failure of the military to deliver on its promise of remedial or higher education and training results in a force that is inadequately prepared to handle the highly complex weaponry of today's military.¹³ This, in turn, reduces considerably the readiness level of active combat units to mobilize rapidly and engage in active combat with any degree of confidence in the outcome.¹⁴ These facts indicate that the expectation expressed in (C.iv) is unrealistic. And if (C.iv) is unrealistic, then it is equally unrealistic to view this brand of recruitment as a valuable, important, or essential means of military defense (C.ii). Hence (C) is irrational: the self-interested pseudojustification is no more rational as a means to military defense than it is as a reason for disadvantaged Americans to enlist in the military.

¹¹ Of course we could envision a social community in which a large segment was trained from infancy to be highly specialized warriors, and programmed to believe that the best life of all consisted in military combat and risking one's life for the sake of military honor; and that the best death of all was on the battlefield. We could imagine the rest of the community collaborating in the perpetuation of this ideology among the warrior class in order that they would in fact risk their lives in defense of the rest of the community's right to continue enjoying its social benefits. But it is much harder to imagine successfully perpetuating (C.i) itself among the warrior class and continuing to receive its compliance. To inform soldiers that they were being deceived and used solely to defend benefits that other citizens enjoyed, but to which they themselves had no access, would be to invite rebellion. This means that those who did the fighting would have to be excluded from the community that adopted (C.i).

¹² See *The Beard Study*, p. 137.

¹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 137-38, 140.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 212; and Gottlieb, *Babes in Arms*, p. 94.

Is there any reason at all for disadvantaged Americans to enlist? Perhaps there is. For recall the *patriotic* justification in support of military enlistment, i.e., that

(D) The present civilian institutions of the United States should be defended against attack.

Upon reflection, however, it would seem that (D) is neither internally consistent nor socially viable. For it has already been observed that many disadvantaged Americans seek their fortunes in the AVF because they correctly regard civilian institutions as inadequate and unresponsive to their personal and professional aspirations. They enlist because they are dissatisfied and disappointed with the current state and functioning of civilian institutions and find no reason to continue to participate in them. But if this description more or less correctly identifies the conscious alienation of many enlistees from civilian institutions, then it would be inconsistent for them to adopt *both* (D) and the norm that

(E) The present civilian institutions of the United States should be radically reformed.

(D) and (E) are inconsistent because any concerted attempt to conform to (E) – through organizing, consciousness-raising, protest-marching, striking, passive resistance, civil disobedience, etc. – involves some form of attack on civilian institutions. It requires that alienated, discouraged, or disillusioned citizens refuse to continue to participate in the institutional process by which they are demoralized. It requires that they refuse to adjust downward the expectations generated by those very institutions to conform to their *de facto* inadequacies, and instead take active steps to adjust upward the quality and functioning of those institutions to conform to those expectations.

Certainly it seems possible that these institutions could be attacked on one front, through internal reform, and simultaneously defended on another, from external threats to their existence, and hence that (D) and (E) are compatible. But the distinction between internal and external fronts is not clear enough to justify this possibility. It is not implausible to suppose that the Army as well as the National Guard might be called upon to quell a strike or protest of sufficient magnitude, nor to suppose that, say, patriotic American businesspeople might ally themselves with international commercial concerns in order to effect changes in the structure of American political and economic institutions. And so it appears that one cannot adopt both (D) and (E), upon pain of inconsistency.

In fact, it is unlikely that those enlistees whose sentiments about the current conditions of American civilian institutions are expressed by (E) could be supposed to adopt (D) as a norm.¹⁵ Those for whom the military's career development-oriented recruitment campaign has the greatest appeal tend to enlist for reasons of self-betterment; they are motivated not to defend civilian institutions, but rather to reject them. This is the sense in which (D) fails to be socially viable. Thus if there *is* any good reason for disadvantaged Americans to enlist in the military, we have yet to learn what it is.

VII. Patriotism and Military Conscription

If disadvantaged Americans have no rational justification for enlisting in the service, for whom might the patriotic justification contained in (D) prove rationally compelling? I shall argue that advantaged Americans would be rationally justified in enlisting, for patriotic as well as self-interested reasons; and therefore the failure to recognize the rationality of so doing would justify their conscription.

Let us begin by considering a qualified version of (D):

(F) The present civilian institutions of the United States should be defended by advantaged Americans.

(F) explicates the following *values*:

- (i) The present civilian institutions of the United States are worth defending for advantaged Americans;
- (ii) Advantaged Americans should defend them.

(F) also explicates the *expectation* that

- (iii) Advantaged Americans can, in fact, successfully defend these institutions.

First consider (F.i), which certainly appears to be socially viable. Disadvantaged Americans may concur in the observation that advantaged Americans have been the prime beneficiaries of civilian institutions and so

¹⁵ The remarks contained in this paragraph are based upon informal interviews with enlisted soldiers in Heidelberg, West Germany, in the winter of 1978.

have good reason to view them as valuable. Similarly advantaged Americans themselves will conclude that the particular ways of life, benefits, and opportunities that make their lives individually worth living depend upon the particular social and political institutions that make these things possible. They need not hesitate, therefore, to extend the same worth they ascribe to their individual life circumstances to the institutions that provide them. Clearly, ascribing a positive value to American civilian institutions is consistent with taking a critical and highly qualified attitude toward them.

Second, (F.i) is realistic. It could have been formulated as an adaptive and veridical response to the salient features of the American social and material environment. For advantaged Americans, this would require little more than a disinterested survey of the resources and constraints on the achievement of individual ends that characterize this environment and an informed comparison with possible alternative institutions. Of course the conclusions of such a survey would be to a certain degree self-fulfilling. Since this environment determines, almost uniquely, the valued ends that advantaged Americans tend to adopt, it stands to reason that they would find this environment best suited to their achievement.

But it would be wrong to suppose that these hypotheses apply only to egoistic or personal ends. Precisely such institutionalized values as individual rights and liberties, autonomy, self-fulfillment, and so on encourage many reflective advantaged Americans to be dissatisfied with the current capacity of American civilian institutions to improve the lot of the less advantaged so as more adequately to reflect these values. But to voice such a criticism within the constraints of these institutions, and to work, similarly within these constraints, for their improvement, seems clearly to presuppose the view of institutionalized norms and procedures described in Section IV. And just as clearly, the estimated worth of such institutionalized procedures reflects on the worth of the institutions that generate them. Hence, advantaged Americans themselves have good reason to find American civilian institutions worth defending. For disadvantaged Americans the realistic formulation of (F.i) requires merely a disinterested survey of the conditions and attitudes of advantaged Americans. This conclusion strongly suggests that (F.i) is not only socially viable, but also realistic. In the absence of any strong arguments to show that (F.i) is inconsistent within an advantaged agent's system of norms, we are justified in supposing that (F.i) is rational.

Next consider (F.ii). It has already been argued that disadvantaged Americans rationally ought not to defend these institutions. On what *realistic* basis can it be argued that advantaged Americans ought to?

First, (F.ii) is realistic because advantaged Americans have the strongest *de facto* commitment to the institutions and values that characterize this

country. They also have obtained sufficient benefits from it so as to bring to its defense a large variety of needed skills and resources, including intellectual skills, professional and technical training, and a broad understanding of the purpose and function of the rigors and necessities of military life. Above all, as the major beneficiaries of American values and institutions, advantaged Americans are in the position to contribute the most concrete and well-grounded appreciation of those values and institutions as well *worth* defending, for they would have the most to lose from their demise. These considerations suggest the realism of (F.iii) as well.

To these arguments three objections might be raised. First, it might be claimed that the norm that

(G) Advantaged Americans should be exposed to the possibility of combat and risk of death

is inconsistent with (B) and (B.i), in particular. For it is in the national interest to preserve and protect them as well as the institutions they uphold. If it were not for our doctors, lawyers, parents, judges, professors, politicians, psychiatrists, corporate businesspeople, engineers, and scientists, the quality of American society would deteriorate considerably.

Yet it is logically inconsistent to claim, on the one hand, that the United States is eminently worth defending because of its plethora of valuable human resources, and on the other, that the business of defense is not important enough to entrust to those best able to do the job, nor to those with the greatest interest in seeing the job well done. To view military defense as the highest social priority, while worrying that those to whom military defense is entrusted are too immature to adjust to military discipline, are incapable of operating complex military equipment or of rapid mobilization in case of a national emergency, or lack sufficient patriotism, is to overlook the obvious. This is that if this country really is worth defending because of the high level of human resources it has nurtured, then an adequate and successful military defense of it requires mobilizing those same resources on its behalf. Hence (G) is *prima facie* consistent with other norms we have rational grounds for accepting.

Second, it might be claimed that (F.ii) is not socially viable and hence not realistic, since advantaged Americans personally stand to lose too much by being exposed to the risk of military combat to be willing to undertake military service. It is instead in their interest to let other, less advantaged Americans do the fighting and dying, so that they themselves may continue to enjoy the social and economic benefits they have received.

First, the general conclusion does not follow. That is, it does not follow from the fact that a norm is socially nonviable that it is therefore unrealistic (for example, a norm prescribing free-rider behavior might be realistic, but could not be socially viable). Second, it is not true that (F.ii) is not socially viable. It has already been argued (in Section IV) that what one is rationally committed to doing may well be independent of what one has a desire to do, or a personal interest in doing. It has also been suggested (in Section III) that it is not necessarily rational to pursue self-interest. If we are entitled to assume that most human beings at least try to behave as rationally as they can, then if we can marshal persuasive reasons why advantaged Americans rationally ought to be the first to defend their country, there is no reason to suppose *in advance* that such individuals could not be moved to do so, just because a sacrifice of self-interest or personal gratification would be required. It would be sad indeed if the patriotic justification for military service turned out to be nothing but a rationalization for self-interested and cowardly impulses that advantaged Americans could scarcely justify to themselves, much less to others. On this controversial question of the psychology of advantaged Americans, let us be unpleasantly surprised if we must, rather than unduly pessimistic when we needn't be.

Third, the norm on which this objection is based,

(H) Other, less advantaged citizens should risk their lives in defense of the right of advantaged Americans to continue enjoying the social benefits and opportunities which disadvantaged Americans lack,

is not socially viable, for the same reasons that (C.i) was not. The norm cannot be made viable without circumscribing the social community so as to exclude those members of the community on whom the burden of defense is to be placed. And as we have seen, there are no coherent or realistic grounds for this policy.

Finally, it might be argued that even if these considerations support the rationality of (F.ii), they do not even begin to establish the realism of (F.iii), and hence fail to establish the rationality of (F). For in fact it is not correct to claim that advantaged Americans can participate in military defense in any full-blooded sense, if they are sufficiently persuaded by the two preceding objections that they lack all motivation to do so. If advantaged Americans strongly prefer enjoying the benefits and opportunities of American civilian institutions to defending them, or believe that it is not in the national interest for them to risk their lives in its defense, then in a certain sense they may be thought to be incapable of moving themselves to its defense.

But of course the sense of "can" in which it is relevant to inquire whether (F.iii) is realistic has to do with the capacities, skills, and training such individuals would contribute to military defense, and not with their motivation. And in this relevant sense of "can," it becomes more difficult to doubt that (F.iii) is, indeed, realistic.

Furthermore, it has already been suggested that it is not obvious that self-interested but irrational considerations of the kind just described would predominate as motivationally effective in all cases. If any group can be expected to recognize their rational obligation to defend their country, one would certainly hope and expect that advantaged Americans might do so.

Of course it is possible – or perhaps even likely – that self-interested considerations might weaken advantaged Americans' commitment to rational behavior, and thus render them insensitive to the rationality of the proposal that they should be the first to undertake the military defense of their country. If this turned out to be true, patriotic considerations would rationally justify subjecting them to military conscription.

The necessity of putting into practice such a policy might increase our sensitivity to the actual stakes involved in war and reduce somewhat the bellicose enthusiasm of our leaders for waging it.