

DOES MORAL MOTIVATION VIOLATE
THE STANDARD BELIEF-DESIRE THEORY
OF RATIONAL ACTION?



UNIVERSITY OF LONDON

MPHIL THESIS

IN PHILOSOPHY

submitted by

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A B S T R A C T

In chapter I, I bring out the three relations to which a theory of moral motivation may be said to stand to a standard model of rational action. I also stipulate what is to count as a moral matter.

In chapter II, I develop the standard with recourse to the belief-desire complex (II i). I guard against conflating two distinct uses of reason, motivating and justifying (II ii). I bring out the sense in which the standard may be attributed to Hume (II iii). I advance the instrumental conception of reason as the moral outlook that naturally allies itself with the standard (II iv).

In chapter III, I examine Nagel's attempt in *The Possibility of Altruism* to secure a non-Humean rational basis to ethics. I bring out an ambiguity in the notion of motivated desire (III ii) and examine the validity of Nagel's critical thesis (III iii). I reconstruct his positive proposal (III iv).

In chapter IV, I examine McDowell's conception of the virtuous agent with respect to its non-Humean credentials.

In chapter V, I reconstruct Dancy's anti-Humean cognitivist proposal as it surfaces in his *Moral Reasons*. I acknowledge his internalist intuition (V i 1); review forms of moral misdemeanor (V i 2); criticise Dancy's attempt to convict the hybrid theories of Nagel and McDowell of incoherence (V i 3); and distinguish Dancy's pure desire from the other recognisable options by recruiting a distinction between independently existing and independently intelligible desires. I examine Dancy's two-representation motivational alternative and his reply to the problem of accidie (V ii).

In the final chapter, VI, I summarise the thesis and suggest an anti-Humean amendment to Dancy's pure theory by defending a teleological conception of causation.

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I. METHOD

Embarking upon a short thesis on a topic that has generated a good deal of debate in contemporary moral philosophy I have inevitably had to be selective in my use of scholarly material. One consequence of the restriction is that I have perhaps been unable to devote sufficient attention to the historical underpinnings of the subject. Such attention allows us, for instance, to trace the lineage of ideas that have dominated contemporary thought on the subject, equipping us with additional meanings by which to assess the terms of the debate. I suspect that a reconstruction of some of Hume's passages may help us here. But, on the whole, I have concentrated on a critical evaluation of work of key contemporary theorists, notably, on the work of Jonathan Dancy.

I've framed the thesis by way of a question, "Does moral motivation violate the standard belief-desire theory of rational action?" That question will help us to bring into focus the terms of a debate on moral motivation and rational action. As it stands, the question certainly contains some contestable concepts. Should we find ourselves unable to fix one of these at the outset we will be without a frame of reference.

Our questioner seeks guidance on the relation between moral motivation and a theory of rational action. The thought is that there does persist some standard theory of rational action against which moral motivation can be assessed. Or, more strongly, that there is some truth about the way in which moral judgment motivates human agents and we need to establish whether the standard theory of action is able to capture that truth. No doubt the standard theory has intuitive appeal, independent of its implications for a conception of moral motivation. However the appeal stands, the standard theory makes a claim about how things actually are with respect to human action, moral action as well as any other kind of action. We will want to ask whether it is adequate with respect to moral action in particular.

Our theory of moral motivation may bear one of three relations to a standard conception of action. Either

- It is wholly compatible with and explained in terms of the standard model.
- It juxtaposes with but is not itself explicated in terms of the standard model.
- It construes motivation in such a way that it replaces the standard model.

Suppose there are as many theories of moral motivation as there are theories of moral value. What it is right for an agent to do in a given circumstance will then depend upon how the agent sees her action as connecting up with sources of value. A good example of this methodological assumption is to be found in Bentham's utilitarianism. What is right is to maximise the good and what is good is production of pleasure and reduction of pain. Good figures in a substantive relation to rightness and right action takes centre stage in moral theory. To the extent that my question—Does moral motivation violate the standard belief-desire theory of rational action?—stresses the importance of acting rightly it carries the same emphasis. If goodness has implications for motivational theory, we should tease out its point and place when the opportunity arises.

We are not ready to confront—partly through lack of space—the worry that moral value, if it is to have utility in moral explanation, will first have to be legitimated with recourse to an argument in metaphysics. The kind of argument I have in mind purports to prove that value is part of the fabric of the world.¹ The idea is that settling the issue either way has implications for acting out of the end (say) of value maximisation. If value does not exist—the implication goes—What justification can I have to act out of it (or a simulacrum of it)?

We won't need to confront the worry because our progress depends on granting priority rather to thought about right action. We ask not what would be the implications for falsity of a belief in realism about value on the conception of right action, but rather what would be the implications for action on the basis of mere belief in the subsistence of value. Belief is as efficacious for action as justified belief or justified true belief or knowledge.² Therefore we can assume that knowledge obtains, for the sake of argument.

Comparing rival theories of moral motivation will also help us to formulate ideas about value. (We can contend that pooling together such ideas as we may have must anyway precede any concerted attempt to settle the ontological issue.)

In the course of examining one or other moral theory we will naturally wonder what is to be said for one over the other. We have an implicit understanding that most moral theories are mutually incompatible. No doubt utilitarianism and deontology, say, do compete in just this way. They purport to be fighting over the same moral phenomena and offering mutually exclusive explanations. However—a further promissory note—we cannot be so ambitious. We will be content to survey the terrain without recourse to settling the definitive issue of a moral theory's superiority. What we do begin with though is the idea that there is a standard model for rational action, one pervasive enough to be guaranteed a place in moral motivation as one prospective feature a theory cannot afford to ignore, if not in fact to deploy (at least if it will stand a chance of competing for theoretical superiority). The standard model will form a point of reference throughout.

Another difficulty we face is to clarify the concept of the *moral*. It's an open question for some moral philosophers what is the content of the field that moral theory takes into its purview.³ Suppose we are interested in actions and agents and states of affairs. Is it part of moral philosophy's remit to take in the whole of human activity? If not, what makes an action distinctively moral? I submit that what makes an action moral is nothing less than one's capacity to view it in a way that it makes sense to say that it matters to one. This is vague. But it is not unhelpful. What matters to someone is generally a question of his taking something seriously and this will include both social and private *matters*—say, the way he treats a stranger, or a neighbour, or himself. This is quite a large field. But I do not think it would do to restrict it for the sake of a neat professionalisation of the subject. It may be that the way I treat another—who is my neighbour? a central preoccupation of Judaeo-Christian narrative—does stand firm as a going concern of moral example, but this need not preclude us from including self-regarding action as well.⁴ On this view the moral gloss which I seek will not be difficult to attain.

To be sure, we will be preoccupied with moral matters as they pertain to reasons for acting. Moral thinking happens at more than one level. We are not routinely confronted by matters of life and death (unless our job demands it of us). When so faced, though, we may feel obliged to call upon our critical resources. We will seek to justify our action. Even in the more mundane of cases—whether to help that blind man find the door—thinking may be going on. It may be that—what we have yet to discover—what typifies moral action is spontaneity of sorts, accompanied by a meagre level of deliberation. Either way, our aim is to make such behaviour intelligible, and we will have to resort to mental types to do that.

So what counts as a moral matter? I won't be able to pursue the thesis without a little more comment, if only stipulative. We find some useful ideas in Samuel Scheffler. He identifies some features that he takes to be central to morality. They also happen to be central to morality as it pertains to action, so let me pick up on just two of them. (1) Pervasiveness. The idea that all voluntary human conduct is in principle morally assessable. (2) Overridingness. The idea that it can never be rational knowingly to do what morality forbids.⁵

The two ideas are independent of one another. The idea that morality is pervasive neither entails nor is entailed by the idea that morality is overriding. Notice also the retention of moral notions. The explications still deploy terms such as *morally* assessable or *morality* forbids. When we do examine concrete cases purported to generate practical claims we may be able to factor these out. One might think of the theories of moral motivation as attempts to do this, and so we'll be given the opportunity to enlarge our understanding.

In what follows then I explicate, in chapter II, our standard model for rational action. I also identify the account of moral motivation that allies itself with the standard as instrumental in nature. This corresponds to the first relation in the schema of possibilities given at the outset. In chapters III and IV, I examine candidates for our second relation to that standard by identifying features of moral motivation that have been thought to create trouble for a rational conception that allies itself with the

standard. In chapter V—corresponding to the third and final relation—I examine a recent attempt by Jonathan Dancy to offer up an alternative to the standard model. In chapter VI, I propose a revision.

II. STANDARD MODEL

i. *Belief-desire complex*

I've been referring, in the indefinite article, to "a" standard model. I don't doubt that there's a consensus as to what that model consists in but we should be duly cautious against selecting as standard some variant into which a theorist has imputed a greater degree of sophistication than we are seeking. After all, we wouldn't want to privilege a view which already had an in-built tendency towards certain deliverances about moral motivation.

I also spoke as though the class of rational and the class of human action is co-extensive. That is not necessarily so, since the former is likely to be subject to some normative condition, or judgmental constraint, that serves to delimit it in a way that the latter is not. However, if we take a piece of behaviour to count as rational only when it meets this condition we run the risk of leaving too much out of the standard model. Therefore, in so far as I think the model applies with generality I take rational action to mean human action not subject to especially rational strictures. In that case we can think of human action as being rational in so far as it is performed by species *Homo sapiens*—it would be natural to add that "man is a rational animal"—without thereby precluding from the account behaviour judged by someone to be irrational. The stipulation might have required additional support had one insisted on equating *rational action* with *practical rationality*, what with the moral connotation the latter sometimes carries. What then is the standard model?

The standard account of human action takes there to be psychological states of two sorts, beliefs and desires. Beliefs are representations about how the world is; desires are representations about how one wants the world to be. The idea is that when an agent is motivated to act, what is driving him is a complex that consists of both a belief, or set of beliefs, and a desire. When motivation is forthcoming, we also accept there is no countervailing consideration, such as an incompatible desire for instance.⁶ Both features of the complex are necessary—one might add, causally

necessary—for the action to be generated. Yet, for all that, the role of belief, on the one hand, and desire, on the other, in contributing to what makes the complex a complete motivating state—what makes the state sufficient for action—is not the same. We might say that the relation between belief and desire is asymmetrical. The lack of symmetry manifests itself in the following way. It is true to say of a desire (considered in isolation for the moment) that it is in its nature to move an agent to action; that it is part of how we would specify its content that it be essentially motivating. However, it is not true of a belief, taken in isolation, that it is part of *its* content to direct an agent to action. The account construes belief such that it is not essentially motivating in the way desire is.⁷

By describing only desire as *essentially* motivating we do risk a potential misunderstanding. Since a belief is necessary for a complete motivating state to be brought into existence, isn't the belief also essentially motivating? Only in the sense that motivation is dependent on it, but not—what is at issue—in the sense that belief is inherently motivating. The thought is that only in desire does there inhere a special motivating potential, we might call it. So, desires are essentially motivating, and beliefs are contingently motivating—which registers the point that motivation depends upon belief, but not in the same way.

A metaphor helps us to capture the distinction between the forms of motivating potential at harness in the standard belief-desire theory. The metaphor says, first, of the content of belief, that it has the mind-to-world direction of fit; meaning that it is out to fit the world, factually so to speak. Second, desire has the world-to-mind direction of fit; meaning, conversely, that its content is out to get the world to fit it. In either case, the second term in the relation is the content which the state takes as fixed; and the first term in either relation is what must be got to change in a way dictated by the second term. With mind and world thought of as distinct entities in this way—one able to impact upon the other so far as the informational content of one's psychological states are concerned—it is only in the nature of desire's content to have as its remit to set about causing a change in something

external to it. It is in the remit of a desire to bring about a change in the world, to make its content materialise.

The picture is non-reductionist with respect to mental types. We are not prepared here to reduce our mentalistic vocabulary to locutions understandable only as manifestations of behavioural output. We may have recourse to functionalist explication of mental states, but that need not preclude us from positing further features. Specifically, our analysis is compatible with holding that psychological states have intrinsic character or that they possess phenomenal feel. A good way of capturing the non-reductionist bent is to speak of these mental items as having independent existence.

What remains contentious is whether, on this view, it is correct to accord causal efficacy to psychological states. The exact nature and importance of causal issues in moral motivation we can expect to have sufficiently disentangled only by the end of the thesis. But at this juncture it is worth noting the *prima facie* plausibility of the idea that in order for a reason to generate a movement, some feature of that reason must be causal—at the point at which the reason is put into service as a source of motivation that cause manifests itself. The idea is clearly congenial to Davidson’s picture of action explanation in “Actions, Reasons, and Causes”.⁸ There Davidson tries to do justice to the idea that in the explanation of an intentional action in terms of an agent’s motives or reasons, we do relate reasons to actions as cause to effect. The thought is that an indispensable mark of a reason being serviceable as an explanation of an agent’s act is that the agent performed the action *because* he had the reason. And that *because* brings into direct employ a causal role in motivation.⁹

Even now, whilst putting into employ the idea that a reason can be used to explain an action, the reader may have detected an ambiguity in the notion of reason.

ii. Motivating and justifying reasons

There is a tendency in the philosophical literature on action explanation—not just within moral philosophy—to conflate two distinct senses of what would constitute a reason for action. These senses, and their uses, have been distinguished by Dancy,

One of the very many distinctions influential in moral theory is that between motivating and justifying reasons. *According to this distinction there is a difference between the reasons why an action is or was right and the reasons why the agent did the action.* As a distinction, this is quite uncontentious. It is perfectly obvious that the reasons why an agent did the action may not be reasons why it is right, either because it was not right or because, though it was right, the reasons why it was right were not the reasons why the agent did it. (1994, p. 1, my emphasis)

Let us adumbrate. If I say that your reason to send her a Valentine's card is that it would make her happy, that is plainly a sense in which your act could be justified. But that reason could easily fall short of what *caused* you to send the card—the reason which, once identified, would locate the motivation for your action in your psychological disposition, to be sure. These two reasons could come apart if your sending the card was in fact done out of spite for one of her friends. In such a case, neither the recipient of the card nor her friend will have felt that your action was right.

The bipartite distinction surfaces out of a more exhaustive tripartite one. The explanation of an action could be (1) causal without being rational, (2) rational without being causal, or (3) causal and rational at the same time. We are not particularly interested in species (1)—should it even make sense—since we should not, by hypothesis, thereby be in command of a reason why the action occurred that did not relegate the class of action to the domain of its merely physical manifestation. On this account agency would be left out of the picture because we would thereby be in possession of a mere bodily movement, say, not answerable to our commonsense conceptual scheme. Actions done, we might add, by *Homo sapiens* are surely minimally rational even if they are irrational. Species (2) would, I take it, be

paradigmatically of the justifying kind, or—in an attempt to stress its noncausal role—we might dub it *rationalising*. There is a suggestion in Dancy 1994 that a reason could be both justifying and motivating, yet motivating without being brutally causal. Dancy makes this claim by invoking a non-Humean psychology. But on the standard conception, only given species (3) would we be able to construct the motivating reasons that were deemed to be worthy of the prima facie condition relating a reason to action as cause to effect.¹⁰

A final word about this tripartite distinction—of which we are concerned mainly with the contrast between (2) and (3)—before continuing with the characterisation of our standard model. I've said that justifying and motivating reasons are easily conflated. I can lend that contention further support by drawing upon the idea of self-deception as adumbrated by Kurt Baier,

Rationalisation consists in so explaining one's behaviour that it will not be open to any sort of criticism, when in fact it is. It is a form of unconscious hypocrisy. We all know cases of behaviour which do not stand up to criticism, whether from the point of view of morality or etiquette or law. We then sometimes choose to explain it in such a way as to make it look respectable, well mannered, in accordance with the law. Now sometimes we do this sort of thing without being aware of departing from the truth. We are then rationalising. (1958, p. 163)

Although Baier does not so distinguish, we can reason as follows. Rationalisation is a species of explanans (2); therefore it is not capable of getting at the underlying causation of the action or piece of behaviour in question. To be sure, it does tell us what would have been the cause of the action had the agent recognised it as her reason and acted on it as such. But had the agent recognised and acted on it as such, it should have been a motivating reason of kind (3), a reason well-suited to tell us why the agent did in fact do what she did. We see, therefore, that when we rationalise our actions—in the pejorative which interests Baier—we are unaware of “departing from the truth” because we are misguided about our actual reason for so acting, namely, that reason which also gives us the action's motive. Departing from the truth, then, would be to attribute a cause to our action other than the actual one.

iii. Hume

Let us continue with our standard model. It is clear that we are in command of a story with some appeal. It is arguable, for instance, that it finds its ancestry in Hume's *Treatise*. It will be worth our while then to take the trouble to extract his position.¹¹

First we must be clear how reason is related to its counterparts:

Reason is the discovery of truth or falsehood. Truth or falsehood consists in an agreement or disagreement either to the *real* relations of ideas, or to *real* existence and matter of fact. Whatever, therefore, is not susceptible of this agreement or disagreement, is incapable of being true or false, and can never be an object of our reason. Now 'tis evident our passions, volitions, and actions, are not susceptible of any such agreement or disagreement; being original facts and realities, compleat in themselves, and implying no reference to other passions, volitions, and actions. 'Tis impossible, therefore, they can be pronounced either true or false, and be either contrary or conformable to reason. (1739/40, p. 458, italics original)

As clear a statement as one will find in Hume about the difference in kind between reason—considered a deliberative process taking as its objects things susceptible of truth and falsity—and “passions, volitions, and actions”—incapable of being taken as such objects since lacking content evaluable as true or false. On the basis of introspection, Hume wants to say of passions and such like that they are original existences, “compleat in themselves” and without “reference” to other existences. Making out a rough semantical account of the matter, on Hume's behalf, we might say that if truth is correspondence, there can be no truth or falsity in respect of a mental content without a directedness to some object or other. So we are presented with a dialectical opposition of sorts—between passion and objects of reason—the one nonconformable with the other.

Relating this finding to our standard model—the objects of our reason we may satisfactorily take as our beliefs, susceptible of truth and falsity as they are. Relatedly, desire we depict as analogous to the role of “passion, volition, and action” in the procurement of action, individuating the latter as Hume does with respect to their motivational standing—what he takes to be essential to them, to be sure.

I hesitate to say that desire is anything more than *analogous* to volition because though they may be construed as alike in kind, I take them to differ in character at least in so far as the former may be of a more fleeting or ephemeral nature. This need not tell against the prior distinction that Hume here motivates. However, the analogy between desire and volition will come under renewed pressure when we come to consider McDowell's virtuous person.

Do we say something trivial, or worse false, about action here? Notice how we deployed a Humean class of entities, "passion, volition, and *action*", in the explication of the relation between desire and action. How can desire be analogous to "action" in the procurement of action? For we claim that desire is causally necessary but not sufficient (in so far as it must match up with a correlative belief) for action, so how can the part (desire) be to the whole (action) as a whole ("action") is to the whole (action)? The answer is that Hume is using "action" here in a perhaps misleading, narrow sense in which he wants only to consider it in its qualitative aspects as a drive rather than in its intelligible respects. So, at worst, we are equivocating between action considered in its motivational aspect (scare quotes) and action considered as an event, say. All this does purport to be informative. We will not need to dwell on this ambiguity because Hume returns to the more central case, passion.

A further problem for Hume's account surfaces when we seek to discern what must be the relation between the distinctions reason/passion and ideas/impressions. If, in the case of the latter, ideas are to be traceable—ontogenetically—back to their impressions as correlates, to be distinguished simply in virtue of their being relatively less forceful and vivacious, this seems to render doubtful the acuity of the reason/passion divide—since naturally taking as their objects ideas and impressions, respectively.

Hume continues,

Actions may be laudable or blameable; but they cannot be reasonable or unreasonable: Laudable or blameable, therefore, are not the same with

reasonable or unreasonable. The merit or demerit of actions frequently contradict, and sometimes controul our natural propensities. But reason has no such influence. Moral distinctions, therefore, are not the offspring of reason. Reason is wholly inactive, and can never be the source of so active a principle as conscience, or a sense of morals. (1739/40, p. 458)

Reason is nothing so active that it should be charged with ultimate responsibility for our actions; “reason is wholly inactive”. In this way Hume relegates the role of reason in moral judgment and action—that it lacks motivational force, so to say. By Hume’s own admission, however, this result could be deemed paradoxical,¹² so he tempers it by providing us with a more constructive account of the role of reason:

A person may be affected with passion, by supposing a pain or pleasure to lie in an object, which has no tendency to produce either of these sensations, or produces the contrary to what is imagin’d. A person may also take false measures for the attaining his end, and may retard, by his foolish conduct, instead of forwarding the execution of any project. These false judgments may be thought to affect the passions and actions, which are connected with them, and may be said [on that account] to render them unreasonable, in a figurative and improper way of speaking. (1739/40, p. 459)

Begrudgingly, Hume explains how it is possible that reason may affect action by directing the passions. In this sense alone would it be fair to say that reason had a constructive side in practical action—that by which we set about policing the satisfaction of our ends in so far as the means by which we so arrive at them may be conditioned by false or erroneous judgments—our taking things to be other than in fact they are (say)—these judgments happily admissible as suitable contents of belief and thereby objects of reason.¹³

iv. Instrumental reason

We are now in a position to advance, as promised, a theory of moral motivation that allies itself with this conception.

The moral theory in question accepts the standard account of action and expects of it no special derivation for the practice of morality. Rather, moral

motivation is explained *in kind* with nonmoral motivation. Moral action is manifest when a set of beliefs about what is the case is accompanied by a corresponding desire to change that state of affairs, to bring about a new one.

The rational analogue of this conception is instrumentalist. Instrumental rationality is what it is for a human being to be disposed to act in such a way that it adjusts its means towards the most effective attainment of some end. As already outlined, a reason for action is sufficiently explained, on this view, once the requisite belief-desire complex of the agent has been cited. In so far as reason legitimates action it does so by reference to the agent's desire, which is what determines her end.

The position is vulnerable to the charge that it does not accord objectivity to moral judgment, since when an agent justifies her action she may make ultimate recourse to an independently existing sentiment, emotion, or other pro-attitude. It would seem then that her justification for acting could be no stronger than howsoever strong her reason for acting on the desire is. It seems that acting out of a moral reason consists of nothing further than acting instrumentally out of a desire to perform a moral act. Our standard model says that nothing can count as a reason for a person to act in a certain way unless it is able actually so to motivate him, to do which it would have to be *internalised*.¹⁴ In so far as the model says nothing about which desires an agent is allowed to have, the agent's reasons for acting are equally open to selection. In so far as an agent has reason to do what morality demands of her, those reasons must ultimately derive from her existing psychological set, in particular—the essentially motivating part—her desires.

Now, let's utilise the two criteria we gleaned from Scheffler; that morality sees itself as both pervasive and overriding. What would it take, on the instrumental conception of rationality, for the claim of overridingness to be met? Since it would not be rational for a particular moral dictate to be ignored on a particular occasion—given the claim of overridingness assumption—that would require that the existing desires of an agent best be satisfied by morally acceptable conduct. But, as Scheffler puts it, “this seems like a staggeringly implausible empirical supposition, [given which views] the claim of overridingness is almost certainly false,” (1992, p. 61).

There are two responses to this challenge. We could argue—using the conclusion to drive a *reductio ad absurdum*—that given that the claim of overridingness is in fact true, the instrumental conception of rationality must be false. But that surely does not mean—what we have already argued—that people do not in fact act out of desires and contrary to the dictates of morality. Correctly interpreted, we must say that instrumental rationality is not always the rational course of action. It then becomes a task of moral theory, for some, to legitimate moral reasons—in our preferred idiom, call them justifying reasons—by showing, standardly, that instrumental reason properly understood—or given a suitably enlightening species of it more likely—converges with the dictates of morality. When our interlocutor asks, Why should I be moral? he is typically pressing for just such a legitimation. He is asking the moralist to show him why he should do something, given his existing desires, he does not desire to do. Even getting the question off the ground in this way supplies us with two conceptions of reason, justifying and motivating, the former to be rationalised in terms of the latter.

The second response says of pervasiveness that it does not hold, allowing us to drive a wedge between that conduct which is morally assessable and that which is not. In fact this is more like the line I have already taken. I said earlier that moral motivation is explained in kind with nonmoral action, and that presupposes that there are actions for which morality has nothing to say. And so it is our first disjunct which creates the greater problem. We want to show how to make a justifying reason a motivating one, and in so doing we put the very idea of instrumental rationality to which moral reasons must be answerable under pressure. Or, more accurately, we do not uncritically accept that moral reasons must be so answerable. And—if they are not—we will want to see what the conception of moral motivation that sets itself up as a rival has to recommend it.

Before testing the standard model out against its rivals, we can usefully explicate some further distinctions that will allow us to plot the contenders' relations to one another. The standard view of motivation is a form of *non-cognitivism* because—with respect to the objectivity of morality—it refers us back to independent

mental items which are by their nature non-factual in content, desires. The theory of moral motivation that—in respect of factual content—naturally contrasts with this conception is *cognitivism*—that moral judgments are fact-stating—coupled with the view either (1) that beliefs are internally motivating or (2) that they are not. We may call the first species cognitivist internalism, the second cognitivist externalism. Generally speaking, internalism establishes a connection between a psychological state—either belief or desire, but not both—and the action-guiding character of morality. It says of that state that it is in its nature to motivate. On the standard model only desires are internally motivating. However, a cognitivist account of morality that is still dependent on desire in its explanation of all—including moral—action may properly be called *externalist* since the choice of action would not be wholly determined by the moral fact of the matter as given by the belief. A cognitive externalist, in this sense, says that beliefs carry objective moral content without carrying the correlative motivating potential. He is an externalist with respect to the efficacy of motivation coming from a place other than the site of the said moral content. Efficacy of motivation defers to desires as internally motivating. See the grid overleaf for assistance.

Next we examine cognitivist internalism.

JUDGMENT TYPE FEATURE	NON- COGNITIVISM	COGNITIVIST INTERNALISM	COGNITIVIST EXTERNALISM
Are there MORAL FACTS?	NO	YES	YES
Is BELIEF an internally motivating state?	NO	YES	NO
Is DESIRE an internally motivating state?	YES	(YES) ⁺	YES

TABLE: COGNITIVE POSITIONS

⁺ Since cognitivist internalism is mainly a thesis about belief, allowing for the accommodation of a second internally motivating state, desire, might cause complications. Hence, with respect to overall epistemology, the possibility of “hybrid” accounts. A cognitivist internalist might want to close off this possibility however, and I suspect we could not deny him his title even if he did.

III. NAGEL'S INTERNALISM

i. Possibility of altruism

I bring out some of the key ideas of Thomas Nagel's attempt to secure a rational basis to ethics in his *The Possibility of Altruism*. One implication of the book is that altruism, the promotion of the good of others, captures all or most of what is important in moral practice. However, this position comes under pressure, and undergoes subsequent tempering, in the author's later work, especially Nagel 1986. The qualification is that self-regarding action also generates moral reasons, the content of some of which are such that one could not reasonably be expected to want to promote them in everyone else. We shan't dwell on this complication because I take there to be merit in discussing what many take, and of course Nagel at the time took, to be a central case of moral obligation.¹⁵

Nagel starts with the idea, by now familiar to us, that "if the requirements of ethics are rational requirements, it follows that the motive for submitting to them must be one which it would be contrary to reason to ignore" (p. 3). Ethics presents us with claims, what I have called claims of overridingness. On the Humean model, I may act in defiance of such claims without thereby forfeiting my claim to rationality, conditioned as the action will be by inclinations of an idiosyncratic, ambivalent, self-interested, selfish, or simply defiant sort. Since the inclinations are not open to rational criticism, they are not answerable to the dictates of morality. Nagel well understands the hold that this conception has on us, and the problems it presents for the claim of overridingness. The book is basically an attempt to empower the moralist by persuading us, or the moral sceptic in the hard case, that the claims of morality occupy a more privileged position in our rational-conceptual scheme than instrumental rationality could allow. If you consider yourself a reasoned amoralist—so the dialectic might run—thinking that you could defy the dictates of morality whilst retaining your rational credentials, Nagel gives you further reasons in favour of moral behaviour that he thinks you will be unable to disregard. Thus, Nagel sums up,

I have tried to discover what the persuasiveness of moral considerations depends on, and to show that it is something whose abandonment constitutes a more radical step than a moral sceptic may have anticipated. I have tried to show that altruism and related motives do not depend on taste, sentiment, or an arbitrary and ultimate choice. They depend instead on the fact that our reasons for action are subject to the formal condition of objectivity, which depends in turn on our ability to view ourselves from both the personal and impersonal standpoints, and to engage in reasoning to practical conclusions from both of those standpoints. (144)

Nagel's thesis contains both critical and constructive elements. Critically, he examines the role of desire in ordinary talk and thought and makes a distinction that he takes to undermine much of the Humean conception's claim to generality.¹⁶ This leaves room for his more positive proposal—taking reason, as against desire, to be internally motivating—to explicate the “formal condition of objectivity” that reason contains. He does this by developing a reason-guided conception of prudence; then, by analogy, using this to buttress a reason-guided conception of more specially moral behaviour. In all this, the place and point of desire is limited. We shall reconstruct both critical and positive arguments in turn.

ii. Motivated desire

If Nagel is right, there is a distinction in the offing, potentially damaging to the Humean theorist of motivation.¹⁷

The assumption that a motivating desire underlies every intentional act depends, I believe, on a confusion between two sorts of desires, motivated and unmotivated. . . [M]any desires, like many beliefs, are *arrived at* by decision and after deliberation. They need not simply assail us, though there are certain desires that do, like the appetites and certain cases of emotion. (29)

According to Nagel the claim that a motivating desire underlies every intentional act is an assumption that rests on a confusion. The confusion amounts to a conflation of two distinct sorts of desire. Where we once thought there was only one sort of

desire—the Humean, motivating sort—we must now see that there are actually two possibilities. Either possibility may have been actualised in the action in question, and so we must be on guard against assuming that every action involves a motivating desire when it could in fact have been a motivated desire. Nagel advances a distinction between *motivated and unmotivated* desires. Motivated desires are arrived at by decision and after deliberation. Unmotivated desires typically assail us, like appetitive ones. It does seem obvious that what Nagel has in mind when describing unmotivated desires is what we had in mind when invoking motivating desires, Humean desires, in other words. I suspect, we can reasonably surmise that the classes of motivating and unmotivated do match up in large part, since in either case we do allude to the same dispositions to characterise them. So, there is a *prima facie* case for thinking that these two terms will refer to the same mental item, regularly though not necessarily invariably. This much, I submit, can be gathered from the passage above, and is the most natural and literal reading of it.

A potential controversy surfaces when we try to characterise the motivated species of desire further. Nagel tells us that these are typically arrived at by decision. Could they have been arrived at by decision and yet be the very same kind of desire-like state that we have in mind when invoking motivating desires? I do not see how this could be so, nor that Nagel could intend such a reading, given both his general contention that there is a second species of desire in the offing, and his more specific contention that some desires need not simply assail us. I think we should understand by the denial that we may be assailed by some such desires the claim that such desires are not essentially motivating; that it is not in their nature to provide the agent with a push. That reading would certainly bring out a contrast between the two renditions of desire, motivated and unmotivated. In addition, since we were prepared to compare unmotivated desires to standard, motivating Humean ones, might there not also be a likeness between a motivated desire and an unmotivating state? That is to say, is all there is to being a motivated desire—what might merit our terminological shift in emphasis here—that it is an essentially unmotivating state? A little further on, Nagel seems to suggest that this is indeed the case. He writes,

The claim that a desire underlies every act is true only if desires are taken to include motivated as well as unmotivated desires, and it is true only in the sense that *whatever* may be the motivation for someone's intentional pursuit of a goal, it becomes in virtue of his pursuit *ipso facto* appropriate to ascribe to him a desire for that goal. But if the desire is a motivated one, the explanation of it will be the same as the explanation of his pursuit, and *it is by no means obvious* [my emphasis] that a "desire" [my scare quotes] must enter into this further explanation. (29)

Nagel is trying to undercut the Humean account of motivation by showing us how qualified we must make it before it can do its duty as an account that exhausts the field of motivating species. It can do this only at the cost of triviality, because the Humean claim applies to *every* (the exhaustive aspiration) intentional act *only if* (the qualification) we include motivated desires as well as unmotivated ones. Nagel provides us with a further clue as to how we should think about—to wit, individuate—the motivated species of desire, namely, that they are the kind of state that become appropriate to ascribe to someone simply in virtue of his pursuit of a goal. This surely renders the pretensions of the Humean claim to be exhaustive somewhat trivial—more strongly, simply false—because the Humean simply did not intend by his thesis the admission of a desire-like state that was not essentially motivating. He did not think himself open to the charge that a *mere* motivated desire may have been implicated. When Nagel writes that it is *by no means obvious* that a "desire" must enter into the explanation that makes recourse to motivated desire, he effectively castigates the motivated desire as a mere one because the implication is that (1) motivated desires will not satisfy any felt need for a Humean rendition of motivation, and hence (2) that they are not essentially motivating. There is, admittedly, an ambiguity in the notion of "desire"—desire conspicuous in its absence, and deemed to be redundant in an explanation that counts as full in this circumstance. If "desire" is the self-same desire that we are ascribing—a motivated desire—then this makes the ascription doubly trivial—firstly, just explained, in the sense that it is not essentially motivating, and secondly—that the form which motivation takes does not even require motivated desires out of logical necessity. If "desire"—perhaps more

charitably to a proponent of motivated desires—is understood as a standard Humean desire, then since it is not necessary for a complete explanation to be given (so the Nagelian contention) nor does it qualify as exhaustive of the class of action explanation. All of which goes to undercut the standard Humean model.

Let us take stock. We have examined two excerpts from Nagel, and I have argued that they purport to show that the Humean thesis, particularly as it pertains to the role of motivating desire, has not discharged, let alone entertained, the worry that there may be another more trivial type of desire to compete with in our understanding of human motivation. The worry must surely manifest itself in an epistemological mode. That is to say, since it must be true of whatever desire we do invoke in action explanation that we are able to ascribe it to an agent, to put it forth as a true description of how things were with the agent at the time of acting, it becomes a further question whether there is any actual motivating desire answering to that ascription, as an independent existence, so to speak. If we are sufficiently alive to the possibility that there need not be any distinct item answering to an ascription in a given circumstance, we will have registered the point about motivated desires.

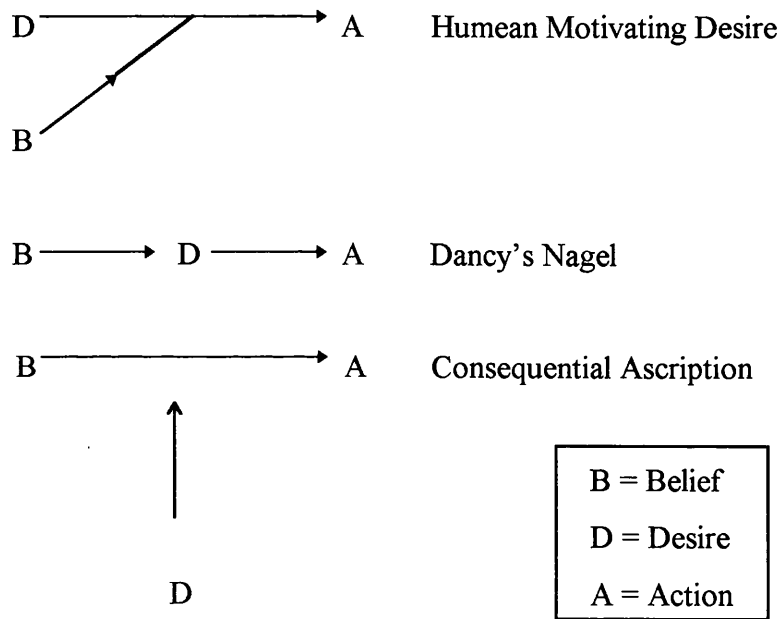
We need to return to the question whether motivated desires can be glossed as simply unmotivating entities, neutral—we might add—with respect to motivating potential. If the gloss works, that would be like recasting the distinction between motivated and unmotivated desires as one between unmotivating and motivating ones, respectively. The distinctions should be serviceable in their own right, given that each consists of a mutually exclusive and jointly exhaustive complement. Furthermore, settling the question of identity for any two terms across the distinctions, should—logically—guarantee a settlement for the remaining terms. I have already suggested that talk of motivating and unmotivated desires may regularly correlate. Co-intensionality would be sufficient for co-extensionality, but it is not necessary. I suspect it would be difficult to argue for co-extensionality without co-intensionality, and I suspect that an inspection of the remaining two terms (motivated/unmotivating) will show us why co-intensionality is quite controversial.

There is a reading of Nagel's motivated desire as a species of desire that plays a causal role in motivation, without being standardly Humean, that Dancy has been sufficiently tempted by to register as Nagel's intention. As I shall go on to argue, I doubt that this was Nagel's intention, but I do concur that the temptation is sufficiently salient to qualify as one strand of an ambiguity in Nagel's characterisation of motivated desire. The ambiguity, which we have already passed over, features at the point of introducing the motivating species as something potentially "arrived at by decision and after deliberation." There are two ways in which we might be said to arrive at a desire by decision.

Faced with a practical dilemma, for instance, you might ask yourself, Which of these two inclinations shall I act on? . . . given that they are incompatible . . . and that only the first will satiate me . . . (and so on). If one of these desires wins out, I suspect it could fairly be said to have been arrived at by decision. It might, after all, have in some sense been shaped or modified by the deliberative process. And then, focusing on the end-point of the train of deliberation (we as observers now), perhaps we could reasonably conjecture that, situated as the agent is in the conclusion to his deliberative activity, he is thereby moved right away to act, in accordance with his consented to aim. And, we might continue to conjecture, it becomes plausible to suppose that when the agent was moved as he was, the form of motivation at issue was not of the standard sort. The desire was modified, hence motivated, and once it came into existence it was more or less determined—by the balance of reasons, as given by the agent's beliefs about his desire states for one, and their respective ranking with respect to one another—what the agent had to do to make the content of the desire true. He had just been deliberating after all. And consequently, we will say of these specialised cases, beliefs were leading desires to make up a complete motivating state, and though the desire was part of that motivating state, it was not doing the work or playing the role that the Humean normally attributes to it. For normally, belief and desire come in at the same juncture to form a complete motivating state. But in the specialised, motivated desire case—the scenario runs—

not only did not the desire enter the picture until motivation had already got under way, but nor did it contribute its usual motivating power.

That's the kind of story I'd be inclined to tell to lend substance to the claim that Nagel's motivated desires are independent existents in the sense Dancy wants to attribute. Dancy writes, "The first [motivated desire theory] is one which allows there to be a desire present, as an independent existence (in Hume's sense), but insists that it is not playing a Humean role. It is motivated, not motivating . . ." (1993, p. 8). I think it will be helpful to reproduce Dancy's schematic¹⁸:



This is how Dancy depicts the three theories of motivation thus far under consideration. The dark arrow head is meant to depict a causal relation. The first, Humean, model is uncontroversial. Belief and desire are each causally necessary for the formation of a complete motivating state. The second two models contain putative interpretations of Nagel's conception of motivated desire. Even Dancy acknowledges that the last model is a going interpretation of Nagel, but since he ultimately holds Nagel to the middle schematic, I refer to this as "Dancy's Nagel".

That last interpretation of motivated desire issued out of a specific rendition of just one claim in Nagel, to do with arriving at a desire by decision and after deliberation. I've said that there is a second way to construe this claim. We can understand the prospect of arriving at a desire after deliberation as a claim about our interpretative practice as regards understanding what moves other people to action, and, at the limit, understanding our own motivations, typically, consequent to the action's performance. The idea is familiar to simulation theorists. Simulation allows us to extend to others modes of attribution and explanation by a process of analogical reasoning. By examining the psychic magnitudes that would be salient or prevalent—hypothetically—in one's own case, in circumstances relevantly similar to that of the agent in question, one thereby attributes similar such mental states to the agent. The reasoning could be more or less explicit, at the less explicit end manifesting itself as a fairly routine social skill.¹⁹

Considerable support is given to this attributive rendition of motivated desire when we acknowledge a further key passage in Nagel aimed at completing the characterisation of motivated desire. To wit,

If the act is motivated by reasons stemming from certain external factors, and the desire to perform it is motivated by those same reasons, the desire obviously cannot be among the conditions for the presence of those reasons. This will be true of any motivated desire which is ascribable to someone simply in virtue of his intentional pursuit of a goal. The fact that the presence of a desire is a logically necessary condition (because it is a logical consequence) of a reason's motivating, does not entail that it is a necessary condition of the *presence* of the reason; and if it is motivated by that reason it *cannot* be among the reason's conditions. (30)

Nagel explicitly says that a motivated desire cannot be among the conditions of the reason that gave rise to the reason itself. But Nagel distinguishes between the *logically necessary* conditions for the reason and the (*per se*) *necessary* conditions for the reason. A desire can be logically necessary without being *per se* necessary. It is clear that Nagel wishes to attend to the dynamic of the reason *as it motivates*, in the present, so to speak. If logical necessity is not sufficient for whatever species of

necessity must be invoked to provide an adequate rendition of what actually took place, we must conclude that whatever issued as a logical consequence—motivated desire, here—has nothing to contribute to what actually took place. That which motivates in the motivating reason does not refer to a motivated desire.

Now it will do to explain why Dancy's interpretation of Nagel's motivated desire cannot ultimately be sustained. The diagram makes out that unsustainability. The middle diagram wants to say that motivated desire plays a role in taking us from belief to action. Obviously the diagram says this, because desire appears as a state in transition from belief to action. The arrow indicates a causal relation. But in what does that causal relation consist? Does it consist of a full-blown motivational power? In fact that would be the most natural understanding of the causal relation, given that the diagram is meant to depict "theories of motivation". If what we seek when we explain a motivating reason is the underlying causation, that would certainly satisfy a *prima facie* condition for a sufficient explanation. If what we seek when we explain a motivating reason is something other than a cause, the appearance of causal relations in the schematic becomes quite curious. No, I think we are quite justified in taking the causal relations to be standing in as candidate motivating relations. That granted, the schematic is surely a falsification of what Nagel has just taught us, that motivated desire is not a necessary condition for the motivation taking place at all. It is only a logical consequence.

Dancy only cursorily attends to this complication. In a footnote, he claims, "The desire is necessary (*causally* necessary), though it does not pull its own weight in the causal story in a way that the belief does in the [Humean] motivating desire theory," (1993, p. 16, note 19). On the one hand, it seems that we can be reassured that what is at issue in a motivating process is a causal power. On the other hand, if the "motivated desire" is then construed as causally necessary, then it must also be understood as causally efficacious in a sense able to do duty to an explanation of how motivation occurs. That is contrary to Nagel's intention. For Nagel, motivated desires are only logically necessary; they are not causally necessary.

As I see it, Dancy could only reply that what counts as causally necessary requires revision, so that the logical consequences of one's pet theory counted as causal conditions in the requisite sense. But, by that stage, the manoeuvre would have become trivially terminological. Nothing could be gained by extending our attribution of causal mechanisms in that way. I will, ultimately, propose a revision to our causal theory of explanation. Presently, though, I do not see that Dancy can succeed in holding Nagel to the middle schematic. Nor was a revision of the causal parameter received from Dancy.

Far better, for Dancy, to concede that the schematic that I dubbed as "Consequential Ascription" (and Dancy dubs "Pure Ascription Theory—Nagel (2)") is more representative of Nagel's position on the role of motivated desires. That picture, as Dancy well understands, limits the role of desire to mere talk. Desire talk is deemed logically indispensable, yet that talk, when it is mere, indicates that there is no independently existing entity answering to that talk.

Let us summarise our dialectic on the standing of Nagel's motivated desire with respect to a theory of motivation. Nagel explicitly indicates that motivated desires do not have a motivating role. Our chief contention issues out of an ambiguity in the characterisation of desire as issuing out of deliberation. On one rendition, motivated desire stands as a causal contributor. On the other, motivated desire plays no such causal role. I argued that, for Nagel, the desire cannot be causal without being motivating; but it is not motivating; therefore, it is not causal either.

We can also complete our terminological quandary into the respective relations between a distinction between motivating/unmotivating desires and unmotivated/motivated ones. Motivated desires can only be construed as motivating on the first rendition of the highlighted equivocation. The second rendition of the ambiguity of meaning supports the unmotivating interpretation. Given that the second interpretation gains support from textual analysis elsewhere, it would be more coherent to admit this as Nagel's official position on motivated desires.²⁰ In so doing, we could also retain the *prima facie* correlation between unmotivated and motivating desires, which would otherwise face intrusion from the first equivocation concerning

motivated desire. Since adherence to the first equivocation involves putting forward a highly specialised picture of action explanation, and since this picture is nowhere clearly explicated by Nagel, it is more plausible to contend that Nagel overlooked the potential equivocation than that he intended only the specialised part of it. Co-relating motivating desires with unmotivated desires helps us to keep the potential equivocation on motivated desires in check by providing us with a further co-relating term—unmotivating—which may be said to be criterial with respect to motivated desires. When referring to Nagel, we will retain his usage, but be advised to keep in mind the co-relating distinction in order to avoid misunderstanding.²¹

iii. Fallibility

We've interpreted Nagel's remarks on motivated desire, but we haven't fully debated their validity. We should re-read the first two sentences in the passage last quoted. We may agree with Nagel that we do find ourselves, from time to time, ascribing to agents desires, consequential to the act's performance. The making of an ascription—a logical consequence of the action—need not itself be made consequent (I mean subsequent) to the action, but that is probably the best case to look at so far as clarifying the issue is concerned. So, let's suppose further that simulation provides a true account of how we go about making ascriptions. Take an example. A student calls out to you in the street. He thinks this gives you a reason to stop, but you carry on as before. Student acquires a belief about your due care and consideration for him based on your passing over the opportunity to greet him. He surmises that you do not desire to greet him, and, when recounting the episode to his companion later, he without hesitation speaks of you in the following terms, "Teacher did not want to see me."

The question we will naturally want to press upon Nagel (though there is scant evidence of this issue in the literature) is whether Student's consequential ascription counts as a motivated desire or not. The remarks in Nagel's passage are not actually very instructive with respect to this question. What we can surely come

to the passage knowing, in advance, is that whenever we can understand why an agent acted as he did, and we happen to be right, we may well have reached that understanding through consequential ascription. So, it seems that, acting on a desire amounts to acting on a desire that can be consequentially ascribed. But does the entailment run in the opposite direction? Does consequentially ascribing of someone a desire guarantee that he was motivated by that desire? (. . . in conjunction with the requisite beliefs, of course; a restriction I take as understood). Palpably not. Is the point not simply then that I may go wrong in the accuracy of my ascriptions, through insufficient knowledge, lack of empathy, or inattention, say? Well, in practice, I should say that that's more or less what the postulation of a motivated desire amounts to, that we could go wrong in taking a desire to be present when it is not in fact present (or was not at the time of acting). Yet, in principle, Nagel surely wants to say more than this. He wants to say that, from time to time, there will be no independently existing desire corresponding to any desire that we might muster up a cogent consequential ascription for. There can be motivation without motivating desires, in other words.

So, whilst it is necessary that a desire we act upon can be consequentially ascribed, it is not necessary that a consequentially ascribed desire be acted upon. Nagel points to that distinction but he does not teach us how to tell the two cases apart. His remarks are stipulative. What is true of a motivated desire is that it is *simply* ascribable. Or, we could capture the thought equally well by describing it as *only* ascribable, and nothing else. That's beginning to sound stipulative.

Nagel wants to convict the Humean theorist of confusion about the exhaustive pretensions of the standard belief-desire theory. The confusion rests upon mistaking our desire talk to be always substantive. It's not just that our Humean ascriptions may go wrong; it's also the case that they just cannot go right, without pain of triviality. (If we think that our ascriptions can always go right it must be in the trivial sense that counts mere desire talk as genuine talk.)

Nagel's distinction is frustrating because even once we have accepted that we are vulnerable to the conflation, we cannot correct for it because we have been given

no independent means of distinguishing genuine talk from mere talk, and, in practice, mere talk is indistinguishable from false talk. Ultimately, there are two distinctions at play here. The distinction between true and false talk cuts across the distinction between mere and genuine talk. The interesting case is when we are wrong not about genuine talk—namely, those cases in which we falsely suppose we have hit upon the correct ascription for a desire that did motivate—the interesting case is when we are wrong about taking talk to be genuine when in fact it is mere—namely, those cases in which there is no independent existence waiting to be ascribed.

We should by now—by right I hope—be wondering whether Nagel has any right to single out desire as especially prone to affliction by mere talk than belief, say. Nagel doesn't give us any independent reason for thinking that talk can be mere. The closest we can get to motivating the distinction between mere talk and genuine talk is by acknowledging that we can go wrong about talk that purports to be genuine. The appearance is the same. We make an ascription and, in some sense, we are mistaken. I suspect that Nagel's distinction, effectively, between mere talk and genuine talk, gains intuitive appeal only by trading on the possibility of fallibility in general with respect to the desire type.

Nagel uses his distinction to undermine Humeanism, and so it will be important to find some additional means of vindication for it, if only of a psychological sort. Support would be psychological in the following way. By raising the probability of fallibility in ascriptions in one domain of discourse (say desire discourse) over another (say belief discourse), we raise the probability (by a simple principle of equity) of taking mere talk for genuine talk (remembering that the appearance is the same). I do think that our interpretative practice naturally extends itself beyond the attribution of desire states to the attribution of beliefs as well and so it will be worth our while investigating whether belief attributions are more, less, or equally prone to error than desires.

Should there be no principled ground by which to discriminate beliefs from desires with respect to the surety of our ascriptive intentions, that should give credence to the more general observation that we may be going wrong in our

ascription of reasons construed more wholly.²² And this has already been admitted when we highlighted the possibility of rationalisation, the idea that sometimes an agent, in an attempt to justify his behaviour, will not be aware that he is departing from the truth in his ascriptions.

But I think we can single out desire as especially vulnerable to false talk. We could admit, say, that the criteria by which we individuate belief states and make their correlative ascriptions are better entrenched than in the case of desire. The idea would be that when we render an agent's behaviour intelligible to ourselves by postulating a motivating reason, the attribution of desires calls for more speculation than does that of beliefs. When Student calls for me to vacate my seat, say, it is likely plain that she shares with me a belief about how the furniture is arranged within our immediate vicinity, that I am poised at a personal computer, and that I have access to that computer in virtue of my proximate relation to it. Our salient beliefs in this case are facts about the state of affairs which is our relation to various objects in our immediate environment. These are beliefs we can share since there are publicly accessible standards which disclose to us the nature of our surrounds. Assuming we are agents equally well endowed with sensorial equipment, we arrive at comparable beliefs with only a rudimentary level of perception. The ascription of desires, however, invites more speculation. Probably she would like to use the computer. But maybe she would like simply to stop me using the computer? Her motives are open to more or less charitable interpretation long after I have settled the issue of belief. The ascription of belief in cases like this becomes superfluous. The ascription of desire however is complicated by the fact that I cannot examine the content of her salient desire in the way that I can her salient beliefs. I can look at "how things are" in the case of the latter, but I cannot look at "how things are as she wants them to be" in the case of the former, at least, that is, not without employing further imaginative resources.

So, I submit, ascriptions of beliefs and desires are individuated with respect to criteria—respectively—more or less publicly accessible. Nagel may have assumed some such differentiation in data-processing. But since he has not made it explicit,

and given the subsequent work he expects the distinction between motivated and unmotivated desires to be put to, we can provide him with a more arguable basis for it.

Note that, even by Nagel's lights, the postulation of motivated desires does not in itself dispose of the idea that there may not be some underlying unmotivated desire doing the motivating. For how could a failure of knowledge affect the actual existence of that which is unknown—existing, if it will, independently of our ability to discern its presence? Thus Nagel concedes,

Although it will no doubt be generally admitted that some desires are motivated, the issue is whether another desire always lies behind the motivated one, or whether sometimes the motivation of the initial desire involves no reference to another, unmotivated desire. (29)

To this issue Nagel does not give any very satisfactory treatment. Perhaps it is not actually possible to devise an argument to show the non-existence of some such unmotivated desires as one may be tempted to postulate beyond appeal to simulation. Given that Nagel has raised a doubt concerning the status of some of the desire ascriptions we ordinarily do make, and given that none of those considerations as yet afford us the means of discerning the motivated from the unmotivated species of desire, we might think we had sufficient reason to start looking elsewhere for another species of motivating reason, one not so dependent on the postulation of desires. I submit that Nagel has not answered the issue he himself raises above, but that he does find himself sufficiently vindicated to enter into dialogue with an alternative motivational proposal. We turn to this positive account.

iv. Practical standpoints

Nagel would like to put into service a cognitive theory of motivation. Understand by cognitive the idea that the content of a cognitive state is of or pertains to facts. We know that such species of state as belief, but not desire, are suited to this role. The

relevant facts for Nagel are justifying reasons. It is by attending to their reasonableness that Nagel aims to convince us of their motivating efficacy. Is it that the presence of a justifying reason in itself will procure us to action? Nagel at one point entertains this hypothesis,

The names “internalism” and “externalism” have been used to designate two views of the relation between ethics and motivation. *Internalism is the view that the presence of a motivation for acting morally is guaranteed by the truth of ethical propositions themselves* [my italics]. On this view the motivation must be so tied to the truth, or meaning, of ethical statements that when in a particular case someone is (or perhaps merely believes that he is) morally required to do something, it follows that he has a motivation for doing it. Externalism holds, on the other hand, that the necessary motivation is not supplied by ethical principles and judgments themselves, and that an additional psychological sanction is required to motivate our compliance. (7)

Internalism with respect to moral facts claims that there is a connection between the said fact obtaining, being recognised as such by the agent, and that agent acting in accordance with the said moral fact. At one point Nagel makes the strength of that connection sound stronger than we could reasonably expect it to be. Is the presence of the motivation guaranteed by the ethical propositions themselves? That sounds like the claim that when an agent is confronted by a scene in which—and if we are ethical realists we will want to say—a moral feature obtains—and, for the sake of argument, supposing that that moral feature is practically relevant—not only will the agent find himself morally obligated but the mere presence of that obligation will suffice for the agent’s acting in accordance with it. But surely that would be psychologically unrealistic, hence implausible?²³

Well, there’s no doubt that the internalist claim is going to challenge our conception of psychological reality, however strong we make it, since it is after all concerned to do justice to claims of ethical reality which will invariably compete with Humean inclinations in the agent’s space of reasons from time to time. The point is, what would count as a realistic internalist aspiration? The thought that a moral truth could by its very nature determine a bodily movement would be the strongest claim, but seems to leave out the possibility of mediation. The remark I italicised does

encourage that reading. A more realistic internalist aspiration could retain the direction of explanation but reduce its strength so that mediation by the agent becomes a necessary condition. Nagel does register this internalist persuasion in the following way,

But if one wishes to tie the requirement of motivational influence to the truth-conditions of moral claims, with the consequence that if someone recognizes their grounds, he cannot but be affected accordingly, then a stricter motivational connection [than Humeanism allows] will be required. (9)

Nagel here acknowledges that *recognition* is paramount. Nagel steers us in the direction of a cognitive proposal by creating a space of motivating reasons for the postulation of motivating desires to be wrong about, what I called the critical element of his thesis.²⁴ We reconstructed that criticism in the last section. Granted that this creates an opportunity for installing motivation of a different kind, Nagel supposes that leaves the motivational efficacy of a reason to be derived either (1) from conditions for its existence (excepting desire for candidature) or (2) “the principle which governs the derivation of reasons from those conditions” (p. 32). He says of (2),

In the latter event, the motivational efficacy of reasons for action would be due only to the *system* by which they are derived from their conditions. This would be explained by a connection between the *structure* of a system of reasons and the structure of human motivation. In that sense it would still be true that a reason is necessarily capable of motivating. That is the possibility which I shall pursue. (32, my italics)

It is difficult to register Nagel’s point. Talk of system and structure prevails. Perhaps the suggestion is that form rather than content is doing the motivational work? But then it remains to be understood how we can get a grip on the reason why something is capable of motivating. Isn’t it true, after all, that form and content come together. What could it mean to apprehend the form of a reason in isolation from its content? We can search around for other locutions by which to express this inextricability. Try (a) the attempt to extricate *what* a reason is telling us from *how* it goes about telling

us, or (b) extricating the abstract from the empirical. But still it will be difficult to emphasise one at the expense of the other. Indeed, if anything, the odds are stacked against debunking content in favour of form, for it does seem that we cannot approach understanding without content.²⁵ And—I submit—in so far as he aims at persuasion, Nagel cannot finally extricate the two. He seems bound to find no way of talking about structure without entering into dialogue with content, what the structure is an imposition or ordering upon. Thus,

My argument has not depended on an appeal to intuitions, except where I have tried to show that the consequences of adopting a system of objective reasons are not hopelessly at variance with intuition. (144)

I would argue that Nagel's argument precisely *does* depend on intuition, if it is to afford any means of critical assent or appraisal. Removing from his monograph all appeal to example and commonsense would leave only the bare bones of an argument, strung together as it would be with the kind of passage I cited penultimately. If Nagel resolves to show that the consequences of his system are "not hopelessly at variance with intuition", and he succeeds in that, it is not clear that there would be anything more we could expect or demand of him.

I should say that Nagel's method is one of reflective equilibrium, not that he admits this explicitly or perhaps even thinks of it in those terms. Profession might have distracted us from Nagel's purported explanation.²⁶ Nagel has some ideas about the form that practical reason takes in the case of prudence and altruism. He goes about testing these ideas by providing us with intuitions which a principle of practical reason is said to support. There is one principle for prudential rationality and another for altruism. Why enter into considerations about prudence at all, altruism being—as it will be—independently examinable? Here, if at all, formal conditions have a chance of making a unique contribution. They could help us to identify a criterion—ostensibly neutral with respect to what it cuts across—serving to relate the two principles of practical reason. And this is what Nagel offers up at one point, that by which prudence is analogous to altruism,

The essential parallel between the two arguments is that each relies on a distinction between two standpoints towards the world and oneself—one [of the standpoints, in either argument] expressed with the aid of token-reflexives and the other [correlative standpoint, in either argument] not. The latter standpoint is temporal neutrality in the argument for prudence, impersonality in the argument for altruism; and it is those standpoints which require timelessness and objectivity, respectively, in the reasons for action which they are able to accommodate. Ethics is a struggle against a certain form of the egocentric predicament, just as prudential reasoning is a struggle against domination by the present. (100)

I tease out the content of this statement, to which this statement forms a summary in Nagel. Regarding prudence, Nagel's claim is that there is a principle of rationality attached to it—better say, a principle under which acts of prudence can be rendered both salient and intelligible—a principle which discloses to us a conception of action in which one's present situation is viewed as merely a stage in a temporally extended life.²⁷ The idea is that this form of reason is capable of transmitting its influence in the present no less than in the future because it is neutral between the present and the future. This accords with our intuition that prudence consists in paying due regard to the interests of one's future self. Time is that with respect to which reason is neutral in this case. In the parallel case of altruism—so the contention—that with respect to which reasons are neutral is the reality of persons. So, the principle of altruism is connected with a conception of oneself as merely one person among others: "It arises from the capacity to view oneself simultaneously as "I" and as *someone*—an impersonally specifiable individual" (19).

Probing these ideas a little further, we might say that a principle of prudential rationality generates a reason for my taking an interest in a stage of my life in so far as it can be viewed independently of the time at which it will occur or has occurred.²⁸ In the case of altruism, the standpoint that the principle of altruistic rationality requires is one of impersonality, a kind of detachment from the subjective point of view. What isn't obvious though is whether prudential guiding maxims cannot be swallowed up by altruistic ones, so to speak. A prudential reason is still a subjective one. It concerns oneself. And if we took such a reason as input to a principle of

altruistic conduct we should get as output a reason to promote others' future selves. A fortiori we would not have a prudential reason. The consequence, I take it, is that though our principles may be credited with the content of sharing a certain form—the criterion of a token-reflexive standpoint made neutral—it is not clear that they sit well with one another in practice. In order for prudence not to be transcended by altruism we should have to be in possession of some further principle—a principle of comparison or weighting, say—but that looks like an unhappy epistemology, and the attempt has not even been made.

The case of altruistic conduct will in any case get more attention from us. I said that the kind of formal reason Nagel provides stands or falls with the test of intuition. If the impersonality requirement accords with our way of thinking about altruistic matters, it carries prima facie plausibility. It would serve to explicate our intuitions.

The altruistic intuition upon which Nagel depends is that when I take a reason for me to be a reason for somebody else to act on my behalf this is because the reason for me is actually a reason for everyone. The reason for me gets its normative force from the fact that it exemplifies an absolute good. For example, if my headache is a reason for you to stop shouting, commitment to the idea that it would be a reason for *anyone* to stop shouting for *somebody* with a headache, makes it appropriate for you to stop shouting because the contribution that I make to its being bad for me is simply corollary to the fact that it would be bad for anyone, including yourself. In imagination, it would become appropriate to reverse the positions, to ask for instance, "How would you like it if someone did that to you?"²⁹

The idea is that, in the case of specially moral reasons, not only would you not like it if someone shouted in spite of your pain, you would resent it, and such resentment is indicative of the normative force that *his* reason to stop has, derived as it will be from the reason that *anyone* has to stop. This is what Nagel means by deriving a *subjective* reason, one indexed to a particular individual, from an *objective* reason, a standpoint of neutrality with respect to the reality of persons. His claim is

that altruism is achieved when we can act out of the two standpoints simultaneously, to render coherent two practical standpoints.³⁰

v. *Remit*

Where does this leave us with respect to our stated remit? We were interested in finding a conception of moral reason that could be motivational. We are examining rival theories of moral motivation, concerned to locate a place for the action-guiding content of moral judgment, using the instrumental conception of rationality and the philosophical psychology it endorses as a point of comparison. Nagel located his practical theoretic aims on the side of cognitivism. The place of rationality was pivotal in validating contested claims to moral truths' hold on us. Nagel tried to bring untutored intuition about prudence and altruism into line with principles of practical rationality.

Let's accept that altruism can be defended by appealing to principles of rationality. If we have a complaint against Nagel, it is that altruism—somewhat stubbornly—remains a mere *possibility*. Once one is in the grip of a moral injunction, and that injunction overrides other considerations, isn't the aspiration that moral action flow by *necessity*. But isn't such an aspiration—as it pertains to our constructing a theory of motivation—naive? For time and again, we run up against the facts of our make-up, a theory of motivation to be constrained by the facts of psychological realism. And we are drawn, inevitably, into a non-cognitive account. In order to make the practical appeal to moral objectivity we seemed forced to challenge the aspirations of the Humean theorist.

Ultimately then, even Nagel works within this psychological straight-jacket, that to which his being in the grip of a moral injunction remains answerable.³¹ It might happen that when I somehow act in accordance with an altruistic principle I do so only when it concurs with an inclination.

We must examine another cognitivist proposal in order to enrich our conception of moral motivation, to question the imposition of desire as a

psychological restraint. I turn to a paper by John McDowell, "Virtue and Reason".³² I shan't directly address the question the extent to which Nagel and McDowell are compatible on these issues. Nagel brought to bear constraints governed by a metaphysical conception of the self. McDowell's project is altogether more epistemological. Focused as he is on the problem of moral knowledge, internal—as well knowledge may be—to our conception of ourselves and our reasons for acting, perhaps McDowell will be better placed to explain the connection between belief and action.

IV. MCDOWELL'S COGNITIVISM

i. View from within

McDowell is an uncompromising thinker with a distinctive voice. And he gives the impression in his paper of concern. The sense of a thinker's attachment is not incidental to the persuasive power of McDowell's piece in particular. For the lack of detachment could be regarded as McDowell's means of helping us to see the virtuous person aright, not from without but from within,

My aim is to sketch the outlines of a different view, to be found in the philosophical tradition which flowers in Aristotle's ethics. According to this different view, although the point of engaging in ethical reflection still lies in the interest of the question "How should one live?", that question is necessarily approached *via* the notion of a virtuous person. A conception of right conduct is grasped, as it were, from the inside out [rather than from the outside in].
(331)

McDowell expresses reservation about the prospect of grasping a conception of virtue from a more detached perspective, namely, from *without*. Appreciation of the within/without dichotomy is vital to understanding McDowell's project. We can render the dichotomy less metaphorical by considering a prime example of the detached perspective. On the detached perspective it is natural to conceive of ethics, says McDowell, "as a branch of philosophy related to moral theory [a discipline seeking to formulate acceptable principles of conduct] . . . rather as the philosophy of science is related to science." The contention is, when we use the detached method our interest in the concept of virtue is affected by our means of observation. We won't get at the essence of the practice. It becomes secondary, just as (the analogy goes) our going in for the philosophy of science makes of science an object of study rather than an object actively pursued.³³

And perhaps the analogy isn't quite strong enough even. It is possible to think of the view from within, McDowell's approach, as somehow more stubbornly internal than even science could be from within. For ethics takes in minded subjects in a way

that science readily abstracts from them, and so doing ethics from within is likely to grant greater emphasis to our perspectival intuitions.³⁴

Having said this much about McDowell's methodological bent, we shall have to extract from his paper what is vital in it, thereby adopting a kind of critical perspective not wholly congenial to his sensitivity to the subject matter.

In summary: McDowell describes how the virtuous person behaves and tries to render plausible an identification of the capacity that issues in virtuous behaviour with knowledge. He considers, following Socrates, what makes it attractive to say that virtue is knowledge. Moral knowledge for the possessor of virtue is intimately related to virtuous action, as we will examine. But the stringency of the relation calls for a review of how that capacity functions in our overall epistemology—so the noncognitivist will contend. McDowell's innovation lies in his indictment of the noncognitivist aspiration for a system of rational codification that the virtuous perspective just will not admit of. On that question, McDowell brings to bear Wittgensteinian rule following considerations in an attempt to unsettle the "deep rooted prejudice" he takes as shaping the noncognitivist demand. I review these points.

ii. Virtuous person

The point about having a virtue is that its possessor will have a standing disposition to act in the way directed by the virtue when and only when the situation demands it. And yet this is not all, exactly, for a particular virtue does not occasion in an epistemological vacuum. Rather it works in tandem with a sensitivity to do the right thing when and only when that is called for, and possibly in the light of other virtues as well. So, when we speak of someone displaying the virtue of, say, kindness or courage, we expect her to show compassion or strength towards another on each and every occasion that calls for it, occasion calling for it only when it is the right thing to do. All this is essentially McDowellian. He writes,

[A] straightforward propensity to be gentle to others' feelings would not lead to right conduct. If a genuine virtue is to produce nothing but right conduct, a simple propensity to be gentle cannot be identified with the virtue of kindness. Possession of the virtue must involve not only sensitivity to facts about others' feelings as reasons for acting in certain ways, *but also sensitivity to facts about rights* as reasons for acting in certain ways; and when circumstances of both sorts obtain, and a circumstance of a particular sort is the one that should be acted on, a possessor of the virtue of kindness must be able to tell that that is so. (333, my italics)

But doesn't this have an air of writing everything that-it-is-well-to-behave-as into an account of the virtuous disposition? Yes. And what kind of explanation does it leave us with? It tells us that when there is reason to do the good or right thing, morally conceived, the virtuous person will do the right thing. After all, following McDowell, we've just admitted that genuine virtue "produces nothing but right conduct". This doesn't tell us how the virtuous person got that way and though we may well wonder how she got that way, McDowell doesn't pretend to have canvassed an answer to that. By implication he does think there is something to be said about the inculcation of a moral outlook. It doesn't just find itself rooted in oneself without prior instruction.

And so, though we may individuate virtuous traits as if they were isolable, they do not show themselves without the accompaniment of the trait of fairness, a disposition to act aright. The virtuous man has cultivated a peculiar sensitivity to the facts of the situation. He sees the injustice of situations, and this seeing is a kind of judging, which calls forth a righteous action coupled with a certain kind of temperament, recognisable as a particular virtue. We conceive the operation, from the agent's seeing that things are thus and so unjust to putting things aright, as a seamless activity, spontaneous and self-styled, though likely modest. In highlighting the seamlessness of virtuous action, the separation of capacities into elements does not readily capture its richness. The capacity from which action issues resembles more of a unity, a manifold of perceptual capacities, interdependent as such.³⁵

We build up a picture, I hope, of what it means to act out of virtue. It would perhaps be putting it too strongly, just yet, to say we were in command of a picture

of mind. But, I submit, a picture of mind is pretty much what is in the offing once McDowell has dealt with his complainant.

I've hinted at the identification of virtue with knowledge. That identification requires that we move away from attention to a particular sensitivity—necessary though not sufficient as well that may be for virtuous conduct—towards a holistic conception of the possessor's abilities.³⁶

By acknowledging that a person can be in mind of the salient features of a situation, certain factual matters, how can we secure the needed behavioural link from recognition to action? Identification of virtue with knowledge commits one “to denying that a virtuous person's perception of a situation can be precisely matched in someone who, in that situation, acts otherwise than virtuously” (334). We did, after all, write into the account the premise that action routinely follows recognition. If action was inappropriate, then (on this rendition) recognition could not have been what we supposed it was. There is an air of bootstrapping about this. Virtuous reason makes a justifying reason into a motivating one without exception or remainder. If the man did not act when he should have, he is not virtuous. Relatedly, if the man who did not act we know is virtuous, we can infer that he was right. The way to embrace the commitment is to deny that the perceptual scene of a putative amoralist (let us call him) precisely matches that of the virtuous agent. The denial could take one of two forms. (1) A supposition, of Socratic inspiration, that the amoralist is ignorant of the matter in hand. We play up the criterion of success in our claim to knowledge, but imply that “failure to act as the virtuous person would cannot be voluntary” (334). Or (2), failure occurs only because one's perception is “clouded”. McDowell owes this solution to Aristotle. If my perception is clouded, what stops me acting upon a reason of virtue is the impact of a desire to do something else. It is the possibility of clouded judgment that sets the merely continent person apart from the virtuous person. This is McDowell's favoured solution,

The distinction [between virtue and mere continence] becomes intelligible if we stop assuming that the virtuous person's judgment is a balancing of reason for and against. The view of a situation which he arrives at by exercising his

sensitivity is one in which some aspect of the situation is seen as constituting a reason for acting in some way; this reason is apprehended, not as outweighing or overriding any reasons for acting in other ways which would otherwise be constituted by other aspects of the situation (the present danger, say), but as *silencing* them. (335, my emphasis)

The notion of silencing puts more graphically a familiar point, that reasons of virtue, when operative, exhaust the space of reasons for action. A reason of virtue does not leave room for other motivating considerations. Other desiderata do not even find themselves weighed against the former. Even though a virtuous reason might have won out if challenged by a different reason, that competition does not even get off the ground. The idea is that a virtuous reason is always a superior reason. And it is a reason whose significance can hardly be overstated. It is superior not because it ranks first in a scale of reasons but because it occupies a scale which transcends common or garden reasons for action, the Humean sort.

iii. Uncodifiability

There are two further problems to be encountered. The first is the suspicion, granted the agent's perception may typically be unclouded, that perception could not of its own suffice for action. The thought is that perception per se constitutes at most *part* of a reason for acting, the remainder to be provided by an appetitive part. This is the spectre of noncognitivism in Humean guise come to haunt McDowell. Granted that we can assimilate the perceptual recognitional side to the cognitive part of the standard psychological model, Hume supposes that at the seat of action is an additional factor, will conditioned by a state of want or desire, only together with which can cognition procure action.

And the relation of this noncognitivist stance to the other problem? Noncognitivism goes hand in hand with a certain sort of demand for rational codification of behavioural practice. Does virtue admit of a like codification? Could a particular point of view be related back to a more general principle, there instantiated, and deductively issue forth a conclusion? The conclusion would be the agent's

motivating reason. Instrumental rationality fares well by this picture, “Knowledge of the major premise . . . is none other than the disposition of the will which is required . . . as a further component in the relevant reasons for acting, and hence a further component in virtue, over and above any strictly cognitive state” (336). The major premise, thought of as a noncognitive extra, allows us to render intelligible the pieces of behaviour that fall under it. Suppose the major premise is an appetitive state such as hunger. My movement towards a piece of chicken can be recognised, from outside so to speak, as behaviour which aims at the gratification of hunger. And—the complaint runs—in the case of virtuous behaviour there is nothing to take the place of the major premise that could render its practice intelligible.

Notice what McDowell does not make sufficiently explicit, that the type of explanation we seek is not a motivating paradigm. Behavioural explanation that can be assimilated into a practical syllogism emphasises the role of intelligibility. The belief takes as its content the way things were with respect to my relation to a piece of chicken, and the desire faces re-construction as an over-arching type. Emphasising intelligibility, we move further away from the adequation of a description that professes to be both justifying and motivating. McDowell, we have established, writes justification into motivation at the outset. Therefore, we should not expect a reason of virtue to be susceptible of any further motivational explanation. It is not simply that a reason of virtue does not *require* a further explanation; more than this, it does not *allow* it. After explaining why he did something and explaining why it was right, and knowing, in the case of virtue, that the reason why it was right is the reason why he did it, there does not remain any further reason to administer. So analogously, in the same way that a virtuous reason silences a Humean reason, knowledge of virtue undercuts the search for Humean intelligibility. To continue the analogy, A superior reason overwrites a standard reason, and a rich perception surpasses the call for a Humean rationale.

This result could have been deployed by McDowell to discharge the request for a noncognitive rendition of virtuous behaviour. McDowell, more thoroughly,

discharges the noncognitive call for a syllogistic codification by attacking the aspiration more directly.

McDowell aims at dislodging the picture of the mental which underwrites the noncognitivist aspiration by appealing to Wittgensteinian rule following considerations.³⁷ The point of the appeal is to challenge our conception of the “ground” and “nature” of our cognitive practice, to make out that our practice does not depend upon the psychological mechanisms that the noncognitivist postulates. McDowell seeks to falsify the picture without disrupting our confident expectation that our practice will go on as before. McDowell’s rendition of Wittgenstein’s example, that of following a mathematical series—governed by the rule add two, say—says that if, whilst adding two each time, we suddenly came adrift from the prior pattern we had followed (if we suddenly added three, say) we could not appeal to the rule to gauge the extent of our departure. What’s more, we couldn’t discern our own coming adrift.

This is an illusive argument. I’ve had trouble evaluating it. McDowell insists that the result is not an admission of scepticism. It is not simply the claim that I could not know whether I had come adrift. Rather, as I understand him, the idea is that there is nothing to which our serial enunciation remains answerable by which we could practically attend to the possibility of error.

McDowell wants to draw an analogy between the absence of any external gauge to which our practice remains assessable and a lack of any rational reconstruction to which the virtuous agent must remain intelligible. He uses metaphor. The idea is that “there is nothing but shared forms of life to keep us, as it were, on the rails” (339). This conception aims at discrediting the rule-governed picture of thought. Psychological processes must be referred back not to an abstract entity different in kind, but to a realm more akin to itself, namely, “a congruence of subjectivities, with the congruence not grounded as it would need to be to amount to an objectivity” (339).

The postulation of a law-like mechanism as the bearer of such particular psychological moves that we make is a mistake because that posit transcends the

grounds upon which it could be constructed. In so mistaking, we belie our bias in favour of the adoption of an external viewpoint. We come back to McDowell's methodological predilection, the idea that our understanding must impact from within, not without.

We have observed, in two chapters, opposition to the noncognitivist proposal. The opposition made out that belief was the key player in motivating theories. But neither theorist took steps to exclude the Humean machination outright. They focused on the central case of moral motivation. Since they remained silent on the extent to which recourse could be made to the Humean model to explain other forms of behaviour, we are led to accept the presence of two types of motivational state in our overall epistemology. The position might warrant of improvement. In the next chapter, we examine Dancy's attempt to improve upon it.

V. PURE COGNITIVISM

Jonathan Dancy ushers out the Humean theory of motivation in *Moral Reasons* (1993).³⁸ We shall be concerned with his first three chapters. Dancy constructs a cognitive theory of motivation for purposive action in general. Called the *pure theory*, it aims to capture the truth about moral action as well as any other species of action. Dancy argues that “beliefs are capable of motivation without the sort of support from desires that Humeanism normally supposes necessary.”³⁹ Dancy seeks to dispense of the epistemology on offer from the extant species of cognitivist internalism by eliminating all recourse to standard motivating species.

i. *Four-pronged argument*

Dancy works up the pure theory on four fronts.

1. *An internalist intuition.*

Dancy starts with the internalist intuition that morality is essentially practical. It would be odd for someone to say, “This action is wrong but I don’t see that as at all relevant to my choice” (4). This is correct, I think. And the problem is in detailing the stringency of the connection. It is not enough to acknowledge the intuition by admitting that it would be incoherent to say something to the effect, “I know abortion is wrong, but I’m going to go ahead with it anyway!” Ignoring the intuition does not confine itself to a mere defect of moral thought. Rather it extends to policing our moral practice. The connection must be tight enough to make a difference in practical terms. The moral judgment is meant to limit the will of the agent who subscribes to it. But we must guard against making the fit too stringent, “Internalism never undertook to show that we always actually do what we know we ought” (7).

In practice, I should say it is difficult to set these two strengths apart, tested as the weaker thesis is by our intuitions regarding the stronger. Dancy seeks to

accommodate psychologically persuasive cases of moral failing, without having to embrace an internalism that is unsatisfyingly weak. Nor does Dancy want to build into the notion of rationality a Kantian injunction that makes of an agent who queries the status of a universal maxim an irrationalist. Rather failure to act on a moral reason should make available the potential explanation not that the agent was necessarily irrational but that (say) she succumbed to a defect of character.

2. Amoralism, evil, accidie.

Grant the importance of the moral intuition. Dancy's second front of argumentation is that for internalism to be true it should also be true that certain forms of moral defect or moral appraisal be ruled out.⁴⁰ Consider amoralism, evil doing, and accidie,

Amoral people . . . can tell the difference between right and wrong well enough; it just doesn't concern them at all. Evil people are those who are attracted by evil for its own sake. They can tell the difference between right and wrong well enough too; but they take the wrongness of an action as a reason for doing it and the rightness of an action as a reason for leaving it undone. People who suffer from accidie are those who just don't care for a while about things which would normally seem to them to be perfectly good reasons for action; this is so whether the reasons are moral reasons or more ordinary ones. Depression can be a cause of accidie. (4-5)

The existence of these people is supposed to create trouble for internalism. More or less self-governed agents, in varying states of moral discernment, still are not moved by morality. In none of these cases is the agent's moral discernment sufficient for action and this result might lead a moral theorist to embrace moral externalism with respect to the connection between the truth of ethical statements and the source of the subsequent motivation. These cases suggest that the truth can be registered by an agent without facilitating his due practical compliance. Dancy thinks that the externalist agenda that surfaces from the first two cases can be put down.

The amoralist, Dancy argues, is not someone who in fact *assents* to the moral judgment he makes. Assent would issue in paradox because it would not leave room

for practical *dissent* from the content of the judgment. The thought is that an amoralist knows merely “what judgment would be made by others” (5). Does this rescue attempt work? Actually, I submit, we met a similar argument schema in the discussion of Nagelian rationality. We ascribed a lack of moral imagination to someone who knew what would be in his interests if the roles were reversed, yet failed to act on the other’s interest. Dancy escapes the externalist’s paradox by identifying a similar defect in the moral thinking of an amoralist. The amoralist does not see that the judgment he acknowledges would be made by others should also be made by him. A first and third personal asymmetry accounts for the defect in either case.

What about the case of an evil agent? Can an internalist dismiss the externalist rejoinder here as well? There are various ways in which one might do evil. First, the outcome of your action might turn out to be worse than anticipated, and ultimately, bad. But even though the action was self-governed and voluntary, if the intention was good, we would not call you bad. Unless, perhaps, your ignorance of the evil you might cause was negligent.⁴¹ But this brings us, second, to a purer form of evil, cases in which the agent does evil for evil’s sake. If the outcome of your action was bad and you anticipated this result then we would, I suspect, call you evil. (Grant also that for evil properly ascribed, as a trait of character, this kind of action would have to be habitual of its agent. But here let’s consider the evil in isolation.)

The question is, whether someone can do evil. Internalism ties the truth of the claim to action, and it is obviously taken as understood that the sort of moral properties at issue are ones that procure *right* action. If someone can act on an evil plan, that clearly undermines internalism, because he would then be acting in spite of the good. (One might, though we shan’t pursue it here, want to take issue with the claim that acting in the light of evil involves knowledge of the pursuit of the good which it is an act of defiance towards. If doing evil doesn’t implicate our standing with respect to knowledge of the good, the contention is that doing evil doesn’t tell us anything about internalism either. That would rule out the externalist rejoinder as irrelevant.)

Suppose the externalist rejoinder is relevant. Dancy has to rebut it by showing that evil is not done for evil's sake. Here lies further ambiguity. One quite popular preoccupation questions the reality of evil agency by ruling out the very possibility of acting out of evil. We might call it a transcendental understanding of evil, ably articulated by Peter Winch,

When I am horrified at the way somebody is behaving, at his cruelty to another person, say, I may sometimes say to him "You can't behave like that" (which seems to assume that he does understand what he is doing). But in some cases I may address him differently and ask "Don't you understand what you are doing?" That is, I may take his not understanding the nature of *what* he is doing as itself a criterion for his not understanding the nature of *what* he is doing. Remember Christ's moving words on the cross (*Luke*, 23): "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do". (1987, p. 32)

The contention is that I cannot knowingly do wrong, that no one can knowingly do wrong. If you knew what was the true nature of what you were doing, you could not conceivably choose so to act. This conception makes absence of evil a condition of human agency by writing knowledge of moral truth conditions into fully autonomous action. Even if—what we cannot deny—evil transpired, no body could have taken the burden of evil upon his shoulders in full knowledge.

For the transcendentalist, you can not do evil by knowing the evil that you do. That is not the claim that one can not do evil for the sake of evil out of ignorance of the evil that one does. But it is the claim that action done with intent is action done in full knowledge. Therefore, you can not do evil. I suspect that, though it shan't preoccupy us here, the transcendentalist is simply reconstruing the internalist intuition. A fortiori, his conception manifests the intuition and so cannot be an argument for it.

Dancy's assessment of evil is not transcendental. He allows, in principle, that one can knowingly do evil. Only by making the doing of evil conceivable, could it make sense for Dancy to enter into considerations to ascertain whether people do do evil. Dancy's account is *empirical* because it aims to dislodge the externalist rejoinder by arguing that evil is not *in fact* done for evil's sake. The nub of the appeal consists of a reconstruction of our intuitions about evil doing as actions done not for the sake of evil but, from the

point of view of the agent, under some species of good. When you do evil, therefore, you act under a conception of your good. We must conclude, I suppose, that since the action was not in fact good, but evil, the agent's conception of his good was faulty. (We indict the action, by all means, but not the agent.)

With regard to the third moral misdemeanour, *accidie*, Dancy concedes that the externalist challenge cannot be met on its own terms. The idea is that depression can and does deprive one's moral beliefs of their normal motivational force. So, doesn't this jeopardise either moral internalism or moral objectivity? Yes, it is true that, on externalism's terms internalism is defeated. But it is also true that, on Dancy's terms, moral objectivity can be retained. With sufficient ingenuity, we can retain objectivity by adopting a more specialised motivational framework, Dancy's *pure* conception. If the pure conception can accommodate the phenomenon of *accidie*, whilst retaining moral objectivism, then it will be the only cognitivist theory in the field able to do so. That is Dancy's professed explanatory edge over his cognitivist rivals.

3. *Hybrid Theories.*

I said that Dancy's argument carried four prongs. We've covered two. The third emphasises the pure theory's namesake, its purity with respect to the motivational kinds it overall admits of. The charge against the other cognitivists is that they present us, usually by default, with two forms of motivation, cognitivist internalist in the case of moral motivation, and noncognitivist in the case of the remainder.⁴² Let's not worry about drawing a line to mark where moral motivation should begin and where the remainder leaves off. More important, of concern to Dancy, is the possibility of two types of motivation at either end of the spectrum. Dancy's complaint about a hybrid account of philosophical psychology goes,

It [a hybrid account] holds that sometimes beliefs need the independent contribution of desire, and sometimes they don't. This seems to mean that there are two sorts of beliefs, Humean and non-Humean. But that cannot be

quite right, because the very same beliefs which on one occasion need an independent non-cognitive supplement if there is to be an action, can elsewhere figure in a state which needs no such supplement at all. Beliefs are not carved up into two sorts, those that can motivate alone and those that need some help. It is the same sort of belief all the time. But in that case how is it that the extra provided by a desire can on other occasions be provided by a belief? (21)

Dancy tries to indict hybrid theories of inherent instability. The instability issues out of an incoherence of the very idea of a single type, belief, being charged with a dual role. I think Dancy has overlooked a more charitable construal of the hybrid theorist's position. But before recommending that, we need to clarify Dancy's complaint.

The complaint is that I represent to myself facts, as a hybrid theorist, mediated by the same type, belief, yet sometimes belief is sufficient for action and other times it requires a noncognitive extra. If something is of the same type how can it participate in such radically distinct roles?

What Dancy seems to have overlooked is that there need be no incoherence once we attend to the features that are responsible for the respective difference in roles. These features are essential to making the beliefs what they are because in their absence it is not clear what could remain of the beliefs. I am thinking of course of the belief's content. A belief without a content is hardly a belief. Yet Dancy's reference to "type" only works by abstracting from the particular contents of beliefs. Once we remove content from belief, sure, we cannot anticipate any role differentiation, but nor, I submit, can we anticipate any belief.

It is in the nature of beliefs to particularise themselves. Beliefs belonging to the same agent hardly carry the same content, after all. If somebody believes that p, he does not manufacture a multiplicity of beliefs that p by which to carry that content. One belief is sufficient; and a second would be redundant, even if it were conceivable. Therefore, no two beliefs carry the same content. Beliefs particularise themselves.

Particular beliefs may be as different, with respect to content, as one likes (though the principle of non-contradiction may serve as a policing mechanism here). A diversification of content allows for a diversification of role. Cognitive internalism makes use of this feature because it argues that there are special situations which call

for action. But, in such cases, it is not the belief per se that is doing the causing, it is the belief's content being as it is that is doing the causing, that is making the difference, in other words.

The indictment begins to look even less sustainable when we notice that in order to get his complaint to run Dancy must appeal to a collective entity, to wit, "the very same beliefs", speaking in the plural. The example is too equivocal to sustain a complaint so unequivocal. It is not at all obvious that the very same belief_, in the singular, is participating in different roles on different occasions. The man of virtue, for instance, could resist that conclusion. He could resist it, in part, by contending that the belief on one occasion was not the very same belief on the other, and he would do this by recourse to specification of content duly resisting codification.

So, the hybrid theorist has a right to complain that he has been misrepresented. Dancy has not shown that belief cannot retain its identity as a distinct class. Nor has he shown that the very same belief_ takes up two distinct roles on different occasions—what would constitute a more substantial worry for the hybrid theory. It can be conceded that two different beliefs take different contents, but then a difference in role can be accounted for by a difference in content rather than by a difference in mental type. To bolster the charge of incoherence Dancy would need to explain why belief type should be individuated with respect to role, with role understood broadly enough to include what mobilisation is being facilitated by belief. But, I suspect, that would be to individuate type too capaciously. It seems more accurate to describe belief as a facilitator for content, rather than as a facilitator for either mobilisation or immobilisation. Mobilisation or immobilisation varies with the content but not with the belief per se.

If we tie belief individuation too closely to the content of content, so to speak, we risk a proliferation of hybridised mental types. For even the homogenous Humean will be affected. The Humean, and only Humean, theorist forced to individuate mental type with respect to content of content will have to say that a "belief" that takes as its content "six times six is thirty-six" is not the same type as a "belief" that takes as its content "there's the bed"—not, that is, in the following circumstance—

Either belief may co-exist with a desire for rest but only the second will act as a facilitator for action, I take it. (In fact, the Humean may be in an even worse position than the hybrid theorist here, because he will have to say that when beliefs do get involved in a complete motivating state, they just do. Also, since we already know that the content of content of belief is not the key player in Humean motivation—the desire is—the differences in function of the respective beliefs puts even greater strain on our habit of individuating them with respect to the same type.)

Since Dancy's argument against the hybrid theorist can be generalised in this way, across both his stated target and his non-targets, we cannot indict the hybrid theorist of any greater instability than the hybrid theorist's competitor, the Humean. Nor, more damagingly, do I think the argument accurately represents our implicit conception of belief individuation.

4. *Pure desire.*

I called Dancy's strategy four-pronged. Thus far, he seeks to (1) retain an internalist intuition; (2) accommodate a moral misdemeanour that normally creates trouble for internalism, accidie; and (3) indict hybrid theories of instability. I've cast doubt on the project to indict hybrid theories of incoherence. Hybrid theories, I have argued, can lay claim to the same type of belief on either side of the disjunct for moral or standard behaviour; they simply play different roles as determined by their content. Doesn't anything remain of the complaint about hybridity though? I don't think it's anything more sinister than the familiar thought that there are some things that can motivate us as a matter of fact and that this might not be psychologically realistic. But if we want to contest that role we should do so more directly, by attending to the putative moral facts and asking at what point can we demonstrate that moral facts leave off and mental types take over. Fortunately, Dancy does address this issue head on. He wants to dispense with all extant versions of desire type, to propose a new type.

We've already encountered Dancy's interpretation of Nagel's motivated desire in the chapter on Nagel. I think Dancy has made a mistake in taking the more

controversial (so I argued) interpretation to have been Nagel's intention.⁴³ Motivated desires, on Dancy's interpretation, were discrete entities playing a causal role in motivation. But Nagel says that his motivated desires are only logically necessary postulates, consequentially ascribed, and I took that to mean that they were not discrete entities.

Notwithstanding the exegetical issue, Dancy does register a place in the space of desires for the consequentially ascribed type, and our view over their constitution does compare favourably with his rendition of them. The postulation of this type is important for Dancy because he uses it to develop his new postulate, the pure desire.

Altogether then, there are four options for the desire theorist: Humean desires, Dancy's Nagel⁴⁴, Consequentially ascribed, and pure. Dancy does invoke a distinction by which to separate his Nagelian interpretation from the consequentially ascribed type of desire. If the distinction is good it should help us to keep apart all four desire options. Let us recruit his distinction in an attempt to do this:

The key to keeping these two interpretations [of Nagel's motivated desire] apart is to see that there is an ambiguity in the notion of an "independent desire". In talking of independent desire, we may either mean desire as an independent existence or desire as independently intelligible. On neither interpretation is the relevant desire independently intelligible, but on the former [Dancy's Nagel] it is an independent existence while on the latter [our Nagel] it is not. (9)

Dancy is drawing attention to the fact that we could mean one or both of these things when attending to the said independence of a desire. If something has independent existence one suspects that must mean simply that it is a discrete item, independently persisting in psychic space, say. In fact, I suspect we are going to have trouble individuating this feature of desire unequivocally, because it is already going to be controversial to what extent mental items have discrete existence.

If, for instance, you are an eliminative materialist about the mental then that could jeopardise an aspiration to accord independent existence in the first place. Let's suppose, for the sake of argument, that standard desires *can* be individuated with respect to their being or non-being. Then Dancy's motivated desires do possess

independent existence and consequentially ascribed ones do not. Recall that the latter—consequentially, and only consequentially, ascribed—are indicative of *mere talk* of desire. So far so good.

As for independent intelligibility, this is more precarious. Dancy says that on neither interpretation is the desire independently intelligible, yet later he wants to convey the suspicion that, “the sense in which . . . desire is not independently intelligible is *stronger* [my emphasis] in the pure ascription theory [for consequentially ascribed desire] than in the motivated desire theory [Dancy’s Nagel]” (9). So, we must understand by this that intelligibility is not an all or nothing matter, it is not simply a qualitative characterisation (as we might have hoped), but admits of degree, is also quantitative. That will likely complicate our conferral of such a mark upon desire. Do we have any further clue as to how to confer the property of independent intelligibility?

Since, according to him, Dancy’s motivated desire is an independent existence but not independently intelligible that must mean that independent existence is not sufficient for independent intelligibility. Let us add to Dancy’s distinction a characterisation of a desire’s causal role. Dancy’s motivated desire has this role but consequentially ascribed ones do not. So, deploying this three-way characterisation, what of the other desire types?

A standard, Humean desire has independent existence and plays a causal role. This much is uncontroversial. Is Humean desire independently intelligible? We understand, from examination of Dancy’s motivated desire, that existence is not sufficient for intelligibility. Therefore it is not obvious that Humean desire is independently intelligible. It is not independently intelligible simply in virtue of the fact that it is a discrete entity, in other words. Ultimately, I suspect the question has no very hard edge. The best way I can find of construing the requirement is to say, of something that is *not* independently intelligible—it is—“That without which the theory of motivation, *inter alia*, would not make sense.” That construal also sounds much like the claim that something is logically required (by the theory). The problem now, though, is that given that our enterprise into the postulation of desire types is

already fraught with contention, it is not clear either that anything will fail the test of being logically required by the theory (from the self-same theorist's point of view, he'll argue that it's an explanatory requirement of his theory, after all), or—the converse claim—it's not clear that anything (any discrete part of one's theory) will pass the test of being independently intelligible (when judged from the point of view of an impartial adjudicator, reluctant to confer upon any one of the competing accounts a privileged status).

The conferral of independent intelligibility, then, becomes a rather precarious exercise. In personal communication, Dancy has suggested to me that Humean desires *are* independently intelligible.⁴⁵ I don't think we can make sense of that claim if Humean desires are understood as being indispensable from the point of view of the intelligibility of the overall standard theory. Since Humean desires are indispensable from some such point of view, Dancy must be invoking yet another sense of independent intelligibility. Perhaps he just means that we can think about Humean desires separably, as we do in our thought, talk, and philosophy? That sounds quite intuitive, but then it remains to be considered why Dancy's motivated desires do not meet that requirement; they are after all independent existences, and that should help rather than hinder us in thinking about them independently. But then again, we've already learned that the former sort of independence is not sufficient for the latter. No, It certainly sounds like an equivocation has entered into the conferral.

Before entering into dialogue with Dancy's favoured type, the pure postulate, let us enter our results into a table, in an attempt to keep the four options apart. (I also pre-empt, in the table, what I will go on to say about the pure desire.)

I've cast doubt on the serviceability of independent intelligibility, which is why it appears in the final row, and with one entry left undecided. But consider the first two criteria. The Humean and Dancy's motivated desire come out with shared desire-type features (which is a good result, since they are meant to be quite alike). We can only distinguish them, as Dancy attempts, by debating the exact point of entry of desire into the causal story in the case of the putative motivated desire (recall our schematic on page 24). The other two desires can be distinguished on the basis of the

first two criteria alone, not only from each other but from the first two desire types taken together. So clearly Dancy's postulate is a distinct option in the space of theoretical desires. But is it a live option? What is the pure desire theorist committed to?

DESIRE TYPE FEATURE	HUMEAN	DANCY'S NAGEL	CONSEQUENTIALLY ASCRIBED ⁴⁶	DANCY'S PURE ⁴⁷
Does it play a causal role?	YES	YES	NO	NO
Does it have independent existence?	YES	YES	NO	YES
Is the desire independently intelligible?	UNCLEAR	NO	NO	NO

TABLE: FOUR DESIRE OPTIONS

(By developing Dancy's conception of pure desire here, before stating his pure theory of motivation as a whole, we do not follow the order of his text. But we lose nothing by clarifying the pure desire first, whilst we have the desire options in mind.)

Dancy's cognitivism will be examined in a moment. We've already indicated that, whatever it is, "belief will be capable of motivation without the sort of support that Humeanism supposes necessary." Dancy undermines Humeanism, his fourth prong, by leaving standard desire out of the motivating explanation.

Pure desire differs from Humean desire in that it is not part of the causal story taking us from belief to action. And it differs from the consequentially ascribed desire in that it does have independent existence. What are we left with? I suggest we are left with a desire in some respects Humean (it exists) but in more respects anti-Humean. Hostility to Humeanism emerges once we deny the pure desire's potential for motivating. Whilst Hume's desire was essentially motivating, Dancy's desire is not. It has the character of a kind of free-floating state, *identified* with "the agent's being motivated by certain conceptions" (20). But this identification is hardly expressive of motivational agency, it is expressive rather of motivational occurrence. What does the motivating is something else, yet the state of being motivated can still be identified with a pure desire, since, under these circumstances, the state is a state of affairs.

What is clever about the picture which is beginning to emerge is that Dancy can retain desire talk, retain the possibility that there is something answering to that talk (since pure desires are discrete entities), and say that some such desires do have phenomenal feel (which he could not have recommended had he accepted the position on mere talk that the consequential ascriptivist is committed to).

ii. Pure cognitivism

Pure cognitivism takes its name from homogeneity with respect to motivational kinds. Cognitivism says that these kinds are fact-stating. Dancy attempts to re-write

cognitive theory in a sub-Humean framework. Firstly, he must dissect the framework, so that he might retain what is favourable in it,

Hume's argument . . . comes in two stages. The first stage suggests that a complete motivating state must have two elements, labelled "belief" and "desire". The second stage tells us something about the differences between those elements. It is only at the second stage that it becomes necessary for Hume to put forward his specific conceptions of belief and desire, as explanations of what he found at the first stage. At the first stage various conceptions are still possible. (13)

Dancy is not referring to the historical Hume of course. But he is contending that Humean theory construction takes its compass from a two-stage framework, in which at the first stage certain explanatory constraints are recognised. Only at the second stage are mental types postulated as consistent with these constraints. Dancy drives a wedge between these stages of construction. He wants to leave the Humean postulates behind by advancing his own postulates, equally consistent with the first-level constraints. Dancy has more to say about these first-level constraints,

[T]here need to be two distinct "representations" in the agent. The first of these will represent the world as it now is, and the second will represent the world as it will be when and if the action is successfully completed. We can see that the first representation is necessary because without it agents would have no idea of the circumstances in which they are acting . . . [T]he second representation is necessary first for the same reason, and second because without it agents would have no idea what they are trying to achieve. (13-14)

Dancy attempts to describe the indispensable features of a theory of motivation. The result is a statement of form, conditions necessary for theory construction. What are the most basic components that any adequate theory must respect? First, we will say, there must be two representations. Each representation reports what is true from the agent's point of view, and since motion implies change, and change takes place across time, we cannot make do without two representations. One of these representations, it is said, will depict how things are with the agent and his surrounds at the time of acting, and the other will depict how things will be when the action has

transpired, a future-tensed statement in other words. The second representation reports what is true from the agent's point of view in a sense more complicated than the first, which can simply refer to the present scene. The second representation is complicated by the fact that it cannot represent what there will be as a future tense statement alone, namely, it cannot take as its content simply a future tense statement made in the present tense, for then the agent need anticipate no action on his part. (The second representation, without his anticipation, would be more like a belief in his destiny.) No, the second representation, if it is to have any chance of succeeding in being descriptively cogent, must in addition index itself explicitly to the agent. The representation already makes implicit reference to the agent, because it is self-reflexive, of course. But it must also encode for the transposition of the future tense scenario being mediated by the agent himself. Without that factor, the agent could report something was going to occur, without the need for his involvement. At least that is Dancy's claim about what is minimally required.

The second representation, then, in successfully reporting what there is from the agent's point of view, represents what there is only as a future tense conditional statement. The transposition is conditional on the agent acting. By now we've more or less arrived at the detail required of a second-level construction of theory— Though, I'd speculate that, Dancy doesn't ultimately add much to the initial formalism. This apprehension is created by his sudden acceptance of the theory's completion a little further on. Here's a canonical statement of the pure theory,

What motivates in the case of a purposive action is always the gap between the two representations, and the occurrence of the desire is *the agent's being motivated* by that gap. If we allow this move we could even allow the existence of desires as independently existing noncognitive states, and thus make room for those who are impressed by the nature of some strong desires such as lust.
(19)

One could be forgiven for feeling insecure about the result. The insecurity is surely indicative of an unconscious aspiration for a Humean rendition of motivational proceedings. But Dancy has dispensed of the second-stage trappings of the Humean

story, and with that disposal little of Humean distinction remains. If the insecurity persists we should resist Dancy's revisionary aspiration by contending that something must have been left out of the rendition at the first-level.

Is Dancy's characterisation of purposive action empty? We've accepted that pure desire occupies a distinct position in the realm of desire options. But pure desires don't do any causal work. That must leave the causal work in the hands of the two representations. Is there causal currency between the representations? Certainly there is something *going on* between the representations, sufficiently salient for Dancy to feel obliged to attend to it, as the "gap". But, quite literally, a gap is empty. How can there be causal currency across a void?

Dancy is keen to allay the suspicion that the second representation trades in Humean causal currency. He explicates the said representation as a conditional of the following form, "If I were to act in such and such a way, this would be the result." But Dancy's way of putting things is misleading, "The agent is not trying to make a subjunctive conditional true (there are more ways than one of doing this). He is acting with the intention of making the consequent true" (29). The sense in which the agent is not trying to make the conditional true is that it is false that he is trying to turn into a truth something whose truth is ready-made. The second representation allegedly has the form of a belief, that is, a mind-to-world direction of fit. What follows, accepting this, is that the second representation must have its truth value already fixed, by the way things are in the world. The content is complicated, as just explained, because the-way-things-are-in-the-world in this case takes in a future tense judgment indexed to the agent. We could say that it is nested.⁴⁸

Suppose then that the statement is true taken as a whole, for example, "If I were to stand up, he would stop shouting." There is more than one way of making the conditional true (consider the truth table for a subjunctive conditional). The way that interests Dancy is for the consequent to be made true—naturally, as that would be the end state of affairs postulated by the motivational story.

In order to stop him shouting I stand up. I make the conditional true by making the consequent true in this case. I can act with the *intention* of making the

consequent true without acting on a *motive* as such. According to Dancy, we must distinguish between intention and motive, “Intentions do not motivate according to the pure theory” (29).

[T]wo representations constitute his motive for acting; they are what motivate him. In doing the action which they motivate him to do, he acts with the intention of [having a person shut up (to use my example)]. But that intention is not what motivates him. (29)

The reader might detect a sleight of hand here. The form of the sleight is analogous to that used in the explanation of how pure desire fits into the story. The reader will recall that for Dancy desire just *is* (constitutively) the agent’s being motivated by the two representations. Similarly, intention just is, constitutively, being motivated. If the reader is unhappy about the first postulate, he will likely be equally unhappy with the second. Probably, the conceptions, pure desire and intention, differ simply in their scope. Intention here confines itself to the content of the second representation. Surely it isn’t intention as commonly understood? I think that’s right, it is a specialised conception, a *pure* intention.

It seems to me that Dancy is invoking his original desire postulate at the sub-level. The same kind of work is being done by the pure desire as the pure intention, namely, no causal work is being done. This is an interesting result for me, because I am going to argue in the next and final chapter that we might hope to graft onto the two representation story a different conception of desire. We will retain the cognitivist dimension of Dancy’s proposal, the fact-stating element, but dispense with the pure desire postulate and related kinds.

Before coming to that, there is one feature of Dancy’s story remaining to be explicated. We said, on his behalf, that we would be coming back to the problem of *accidie*. Dancy’s solution does not purport to deny that *accidie* is genuine. Rather the aim is to accommodate cases that generate exceptions for the standard internalist. If Dancy can account for *accidie* within a cognitivist framework he will have an edge over rival cognitivists.

Dancy reviews the cognitivist framework. He traces the tension between accidie and cognitivism to a Cartesian bias in the way motivating states are set up. The Cartesian represents the mind and world as radically distinct entities and says that the world is motivationally inert.⁴⁹ If the world is inert it can do no causal work, which must instead be left to the possessor of motivational capacities, human agents. This motivational asymmetry is mirrored in the conception of direction of fit which the Humean inherits. I can go from a state of the world being as it is to a state of the world being as I am desirous to see it only by participating in a plan of action. Plans of action are encrypted by psychic states located in the only place that it makes sense to locate them, as desires in Humean minds.

This bias is too uncritical for Dancy's taste. He advances a conception of an *intrinsically* motivating state. Such states "can be present without motivating but which when they do motivate do so in their own right" (24). This conception finds no analogue in the standard internalist's vocabulary, although the idea can be reconstructed out of Humean materials. The Humean and the standard internalist quarrelled over the type of state to which motivation had to refer. But they did not question the validity of the assumption that when a state is motivating it is always motivating, the claim that a motivating state is essentially motivating. Dancy questions this assumption, and re-writes the requirement for motivating states as those that, true enough, motivate in their own right, but need not motivate whenever they are present. He achieves this by allowing for the possibility that the world is not inert, that it can contain features capable of interfering with the motivational proceedings. The explanation of accidie is then simple: "The general line is that the ability of a consideration to motivate can be affected by background conditions which are not themselves motivators" (24).

This provision will also help us to characterize my revisionary proposal, to which I now turn.

VI. TELEOLOGICAL PROPOSAL

i. Logical space

We want to retain the persuasive elements in the arguments we've encountered up to now. If we can add something to these elements, something intuitive that may have been missed, taken all together we will have a defence of a teleological conception of action. That is my proposal. What elements of a theory of action will we want to retain? (This will also serve as a good point of summary.)

What we learned, with reference to Dancy, is that the Humean framework is contestable. Dancy delved beneath it in an attempt to isolate the skeletal structure presupposed by the Humean. He worked into that skeletal structure his own cognitivist variant, leached of Humean import. The barest bones of that structure consisted of two representations. I do think that a theory of action will have to admit that both stasis and change enter into the motivational equation as items that will have to be made sense of. I therefore accept this as a good start. What else must enter into the theorist's equation?

We accepted the internalist intuition that moral judgments are essentially practical. That puts pressure on the Humean to explain how it is that agents can be motivated to act independently of their inclination to act aright. Since Hume restricts essentially motivating states to desire type, agents who act aright do so not out of an objectively specifiable motive, but out of an independently existing subjective state. Of course both standard theorists, the instrumentalist and the internalist, refer back to subjective states, in the sense that they restrict the materials for an action explanation to psychological states. But (moreover) the internalist wants to say that we must, and can, do things for reasons which are objective not only in the sense that they can be generalised across persons, but also in the sense that they are impartial reasons, reasons for which an agent can act for another and everyone else in like circumstances. Nagel investigated the objectively specifiable content of moral judgment, and he argued that practical injunctions derive their force from recognition

on the part of an agent of two standpoints, one of which both the agent and recipient could refer to. Detachment from either standpoint indicts the agent of practical irrationality. Nagel is a cognitive internalist because he takes beliefs as fact-stating to be sufficient for practical compliance.

McDowell presented us with a second, novel form of cognitivist internalism. He told us about the virtuous agent and his special capacity for detecting moral saliences.

We defended so-called hybrid theories of action explanation against Dancy's charge of instability. I argued that hybrid beliefs were distinct with respect to their role differentiation but that this did not count against our ability to individuate them as a distinct class. I think we also anticipated, there, Dancy's criticism of the Cartesian bias which informed the extant debate. After all, I said that belief was a mere facilitator of action, and that what was doing the causing in the divergent case was the content. If, in the moral case, content is encoded for by an objective truth, persisting independently of any one's perception of it (yet indexed to one's perception), the world must contain causally contentful powers. That is analogous to Dancy's contention that the world contains features able to interfere with practical agency, which he used to accommodate practical insufficiencies such as accidie.

Internalism put pressure on Humeanism by seeking an exit out of the circle of asymmetrical motivating types. The standard model, by default, had been treated as the psychological strait within which any rival would have to restrain itself. Dancy resisted that pressure by re-writing the asymmetry between mind and world.

Dancy could and should have gone further. I want to say that what is doing the motivational work in the case of the internalist intuition is not the belief per se but its content. Descartes once invoked a principle stating that there must be at least as much reality in the cause as in the effect of that cause (Third Meditation 1640, p. 91). The content of the cause did not cause itself. It was caused by something outside the mind. So, it seems that we can bring out a Cartesian intuition to undercut the "Cartesian bias" Dancy speaks of. We should say that, If belief is a facilitator for that causal power, the cause must have originated in the world. Dancy seems embarrassed

by the prospect of conferring full-blown motivational powers to the world. He gives them a sub-status, allowing them to intervene in but not to be wholly responsible for moral motivation. We should bite the bullet on his behalf.

Biting this bullet will involve a more radical departure from Humeanism than hitherto anticipated. The intuition that is beginning to surface, that we will want to retain at all costs, is the idea that a good action explanation will have to account for the force of the because. (We met this first in connection with Davidson.) Dancy distils this requirement from his first-level skeletal structure. That is why the pure theory is ultimately unconvincing. Sure—one charitable explanation of the failure of conviction is that we are finding it difficult to revise our conceptual equipment, deeply entrenched with Humean postulates (as well it may be). But, I do not think that Hume has any natural claim-right over the use to which the concept of causal explanation is to be put. It is not a Humean postulate. It is not dispensable and as such should have featured at the skeletal stage.⁵⁰

The concept of causation that I am going to resuscitate is Aristotelian in inspiration. It did not feature in the table of desire options. But it could have. It is, in fact, the last remaining option. Recall the table. The most serviceable criteria for characterising desire were “Does it play a causal role?” and “Does it have independent existence?” Straightforwardly there are four positions in logical space. (Two desires featuring in the table did not distinguish on the basis of these two criteria alone; only three of the positions were used up.) The four positions can be identified as (1) Yes, Yes; (2) No, No; (3) No, Yes; and (4) Yes, No. The table of extant desires restricted itself to playing off the first three positions. But we should investigate the fourth. It says that there is a desire type that does not have independent existence but does play a causal role. To pre-empt my argument here, It does not have independent existence because it is not a psychological state. It does play a causal role, a teleological one.

ii. Existential predicament

The aim is to work up the teleological conception of causation. We marshal support from Aristotle and a contemporary theorist of value, Nicholas Rescher, in due course. I say that causation is an indispensable mark of action explanation. We can quarrel over its type, by all means, but we cannot dispense with it entirely. I'll argue that a teleological intuition lurks at the heart of human beings' conceptions of themselves and cannot be dispensed with as such.

Teleological causation is prospective, nonteleological causation is retrospective. Let's set up a quarrel between their proponents. Suppose efficient causation is the form, and the only form, of nonteleological causation.

What does an adherent of efficient causation subscribe to? Consider eliminativist materialism. The guiding idea is that our everyday psychological concepts can be jettisoned in favour of neuroscientific ones.⁵¹ Confinement of causal currency to a neuroscientific order creates trouble for the ontology of mental types. The facility for trading in efficient cause is used to identify what counts as a genuine object in the world. Closure from this realm of causal participation rules out the psychological as a genuine mark of the mental. Even though we may operate (as language users) in psychological terms, those ways of talking are rendered artifactual, in spite of their commonsense appeal.⁵²

But, for good reason, this eliminative nonsense cannot be sustained. Anyone claiming the truth of eliminativism lapses into pragmatic incoherence. The notion of truth and falsity are properties of propositions, underwriting commonsense psychology—the very conceptual scheme deemed dispensable. So, it is not clear how eliminativism could be articulated or practised in earnest. The terms used to couch it fail to refer.⁵³

An enquiry into the character of moral motivation is not idle talk. Even if someone accused us of mere idling, we do not think we are pretending when we go in for practical deliberation. We also believe that we can affect the outcome of our

actions by our thought and talk. These causal transactions depend upon viewing the subject of moral agency as enjoying an irreducible perspective.

Notice what reasons engage us in everyday life. A man smiles in the presence of a debutante. She spots him and seeks an explanation, “Why are you smiling?” To which he replies, “Approximately speaking, deploying locutions that mislead us into thinking we persist as minded subjects, wavelengths of light suitably affected by your dress impacted upon my retina and stimulated the neurones in my visual cortex, which set in train a series of neurophysiological responses.” Even if she were impressed by his grandiloquence, she wouldn’t understand it except as a weird joke. Better explanations trade in subjective responses, “Because I’m keen to see you.” That would constitute a sufficient explanation because expressing some propositional attitude contentful with respect to his potential relation to her—say, his being desirous to be with her. Even if the original remark was contentful with respect to the man’s desires, it would have been because of conversational implicature, not neurophysiological estimation. Commonsense psychology as a resource pervades social life.

Reductive enterprises, such as eliminativism, leave subjectivity unexplained precisely because they do not enter into dialogue with it. What does an explanation of subjectivity amount to? The debutante could have asked, in a moment of despair, “Why am I here?”⁵⁴ The question has a third personal analogue, “Why are *we* here?” The despair is the same in either case. For the question has an existential point.

Why are we here? Reductive enterprises (such as physics) say that we are the product of a train of antecedent causes set in motion ten to the power of n years ago. The story is filled out by appeal to the idea of a “big bang”—an explosion issuing out of a critical mass—and (eventually) a soup of chemical reactions. Never mind the proliferation of contestable posits. (The finer details are not important.) This *type* of explanation is inadequate to the task because it contents itself with turning a live issue into a dead one. The attempt is retrospective and historical. A problem that beset us in the present has simply be relocated into the distant past. The most natural rejoinder is, “Well why did that happen then?”⁵⁵ We are left where we started, the search after

a sense of purpose. Lived experience presents itself as a problem for which significance is sought. This is a fact of life, “What is the meaning of life?” Something so necessary as lived experience seems not to square with the idea of death. Life seeks out an understanding of its rationale—ultimately, the meaning of death.⁵⁶

Call this the *existential predicament*. In the predicament we feel the need for a purposive rendition of our existence. The existential predicament limits us. A human being is from time to time struck by the fact of his existence. A sudden doubt may surface about where his life is going, an earlier doubt may resurface, or he may be beholden by a scene of natural beauty. However it comes about, we are susceptible to such scepticism or inspiration and any appeal to antecedent causation as an explanation will not dispel or contain it. A retrospective reply cannot contain an essentially prospective outlook. Only teleology stands a chance of success here.

iii. Teleological causation

Initially, we characterised teleology as a forward-looking principle of organisation. Physical explanation looks backward, teleology looks forward, and the second is therefore better suited to explain why it is, say, we have hopes and fears. A telos is a goal—that which gives an activity point or purpose.

Aristotle helps us to make the characterisation. He distinguishes body and soul in type animal by drawing an analogy: If the eye were an animal, sight would be its soul and the eye-jelly its body. Here soul is nothing more than matter arranged in such a way that it has the capacity to perform a certain function, that of seeing. Similarly, what it is to have the soul of a body is to be geared towards performing a certain function. A further analogy: “Anger is a kind of movement of a body of the given kind or of a part or capacity of such a body because of one thing and for the sake of another.” Anger is a sort of mental state. To render it we must give two accounts. (1) naturalistically, “anger is a boiling of the blood and hot stuff about the heart.” We can gloss this as a physiological disturbance of sorts. And (2), teleologically, it is a “desire for revenge or something like that.” Thus teleology tells

us what that thing (here anger) is *for* (a desire for revenge), not simply what it is made of (a boiling of the blood).⁵⁷

Can the second rendition—the one that interests us—ultimately be cast in causal terms, but of a type not of the efficient variety? Let's refer to a promising passage in Nicholas Rescher,

From the angle of explanation, a final causality of *value* thus has substantial advantages over a final causality of *purpose*. To be sure, both represent modes of final rather than efficient causality, since in both cases we deal with inherent tendencies towards some prespecifiable condition of things. But these two forms of teleology are altogether distinct. The former explains regularities in terms of their conduciveness to someone's aims and objectives ("he never mixes business with pleasure"). The latter explains them in terms of values such as efficiency or economy.⁵⁸

Rescher offers up two forms of teleology. He calls them modes of final *as opposed to* efficient causality. We risk a proliferation of terms here. So far, in connection with teleology we've met the following: final cause, telos (or goal), what-the-thing-is-*for* (Aristotle), causality of value, causality of purpose. The existential predicament—Why am I here?—could, it seems, be answered in various ways. Someone in the grip of an existential worry might reason as follows.

Why am I here?	Because of the big-bang.
No, you don't understand!	
Why am I here? Or why the big-bang?	You are here in order to think.
Why?	Thinking is good.
Good in itself?	You could say that it's an ultimate value. Or—if you prefer— You could say that it is good <i>for you</i> .
How come?	That is your function.
Why?	That is what-human-beings-are- <i>for</i> . It is in their nature.

Review this dialectic. The first appeal to efficient causation did not work. It wasn't adequate to the worry. The other forms of response all met with some form of diffusion of the challenge. They were an answer to it, and they had the character of appeals to final causation. The appeal to value serves as an end-point of explanation. One cannot go beyond it. The attempt to reach beyond it issued in a further teleological cause, a specification of the inherent condition of human beings. And so the appeal to final causation forms an explanatorily closed sphere, in much the same way that efficient causation in the hands of the eliminativist formed an explanatorily closed sphere. The proliferation of terms is actually to be welcomed; they complement one another to form a mutually explanatory closed set. That's a welcome feature; it means that we do not need to decide between the options that Rescher or others present us with.

Now, we should be in sight of our teleological desire postulate. Remember that it is a desire in name only. After all, the criteria we embraced could well have generated options hitherto unconsidered. In this case, we are identifying the last desire option with the form of teleological causation. When we say that the teleological desire option is not an independent existence, that is just the claim that what is doing the causing here is not a psychological state. What we are in possession of though is the idea that human agency can take its cue from fact-stating representations. The first is a representation about how things stand with respect to the inherent tendency of the agent, that-which-he-is-for, in other words. The second is a representation, factual, about the thing he is acting towards, the value, in other words. What is doing the causing here is recognition of value, but it is the value side of the causal relation that is responsible for causal transfer. Value is that in which the end-point of explanation persists.⁵⁹ It does not exert its causation in the way efficient causation does. No. But, if we wanted to retain a metaphor, we could say that its causal current exerts a pull, rather than a push. If it is in the nature of Humean desires to make their presence felt as a thrust; it is in the nature of values to make their presence felt as magnetic. If, with Dancy, one wants to retain the direction of fit hypothesis with respect to the fact-stating representations, one can do so only in part.

These representations have the mind-to-world direction of fit, as before, but one will want to add that the world is out to get the mind to fit its values—which reverses the direction of causal currency, as far as the agent is concerned.

By so saying, we might try to capture the idea that moral values make claims upon human beings, independently of their inclination to act aright.

NOTES

- ¹ Notably, John McDowell 1985 defends a secondary quality model of moral value against the error theory of moral perception articulated by J. L. Mackie 1977: “[T]he denial of objective values will have to be put forward not as the result of an analytic approach, but as an “error theory”, a theory that although most people in making moral judgments implicitly claim, among other things, to be pointing to something objectively prescriptive, these claims are all false” (1977, p. 35).
- ² These species of belief of course taken to be all distinct, in the light of notorious Gettier-type scenarios. Note, I do not claim that belief, standardly conceived, is per se sufficient for action, of which more later.
- ³ Observe, in this connection, “A most peculiar institution”, in Altham and Harrison (1995). Charles Taylor expresses despondency about the state of the subject. He has an ally in Gaita 1991, esp. pp. 313-335.
- ⁴ Lawrence Blum 1994 and other care virtue theorists would at least not quarrel with me for allowing for a less unitary conception: “I suggest that there can be no final resolution of a dispute over the meaning and criteria of the term “moral.” To a large extent the dispute is a merely semantic one. But one perspective on that term makes it difficult to allow for care virtues as moral and that is the notion that “the moral” points to a unitary phenomenon” (p. 212). However, Blum goes further than the self-other symmetry that I allude to (e.g. n. 30, p. 29).
- ⁵ Paraphrasing Scheffler 1992, p. 25 ff. He also gives a third criterion, *stringency*, “the property of being very demanding [cf. overriding] within whatever domain it applies [cf. pervasive]”. It sounds as though stringency is derivative upon the other two, confining their scope and conjoining them. Kekes 1993 challenges the overridingness assumption by arguing (1) that there is no single moral value and (2) that moral claims can be conditional on nonmoral ones. I do not address these good worries.
- ⁶ What would constitute a countervailing consideration? An incompatible desire for instance. James Griffin 1986 puts it well: “[T]here is at least this link between *desire* and *action*: if a person believes that he can fulfill a certain desire, and he has no desire incompatible with it, then if he has the desire, he will act to fulfill it. This link is in part empirical and part what Wittgenstein calls criterial” (p. 99).
- ⁷ Statements of the belief-desire theory may be found in Dancy 1993 (pp. 3, 13, 23) and Smith 1995 (pp. 7, 115)
- ⁸ Reprinted in Davidson 1980, 3-19.
- ⁹ One might even wonder whether one couldn’t extract some metaphysical guidance from a deconstruction of the word, Be-Cause.
- ¹⁰ On this way of demarcating things, we can capture a distinction made by Phillip Pettit 1986: “On the regularizing picture, action-explanation is a form of cause-giving explanation that *may* happen also to give us a reason [our explanans type (1)]. On the normalizing image, it is a kind of reason-giving explanation which happens, albeit *not just accidentally*, to give us a cause [our explanans type (3)]” (p. 47, my emphases).
- ¹¹ Pertinent to this task, and containing Hume’s clearest statements, will be Section III, “Of the influencing motives of the will”, Part III, of Book II (Passions), pp. 413-418, and Section I, “Moral Distinctions not deriv’d from Reason”, Part I, of Book III (Morals), pp. 455-470, in Hume 1739/40.
- ¹² “Reason is, and ought only to be the slave of the passions, and can never pretend to any other office than to serve and obey them. As this opinion may appear somewhat extraordinary, it may not be improper to confirm it by some other considerations” (p. 415).
- ¹³ Our Humean exegesis need not go any further; we were interested in lending substance to our standard model, and legitimating to some extent the oft-cited claim that it is of Humean origin,

but will not be considering Hume's own solution to moral motivation, in terms of sympathetic identification.

- ¹⁴ This is the main teaching of Bernard Williams paper, "Internal and external reasons", reprinted in Williams 1981, pp. 101-13. He urges that an external reason becomes capable of motivating an agent just in case she is one about whom a true internal reasons statement could be made.
- ¹⁵ Citations in this chapter will be to Nagel 1970.
- ¹⁶ Nagel does not often use the term Humean, but that is clearly what he has in mind. Compare, "The most influential anti-rationalist internalist is of course Hume" (*ibid.*, p. 10).
- ¹⁷ The key section is V.2, pp. 29-30.
- ¹⁸ Dancy 1993, p. 9. I've simply rotated Dancy's picture by ninety degrees, and I think we might usefully think of the left to right axis as depicting the flow of time. But—perhaps this is a contestable assumption? Can we think of whatever takes us from motivating states to action occurrence as not taking place in time? I cannot settle this issue here. But, we should note that, if Dancy's picture is supposed to be atemporal, it becomes very difficult to comprehend in virtue of what we are supposed to be able to distinguish between causal entry points.
- ¹⁹ Simulation issues per se are ably debated in a symposium published in *Ethics* 105 (1995), pp. 709-763.
- ²⁰ This would obviously be more coherent than postulating a three-way distinction amongst desire when Nagel's expressed intention is to highlight a conflation between just two. Dancy's Nagel carries the least textual support and so in order to accommodate it we should have to add it to the other two, more self-evident ones; rather than use one to supplant another.
- ²¹ I suspect Korsgaard has been led astray by the surface semantics of Nagel's terminology. Korsgaard 1993, speaking of Nagel's distinction, says, "An unmotivated desire is one which is simply caused in us; a motivated desire is one for which we give reasons" (p. 37). This is misleading, since (1) it implies that the unmotivated desire is not itself doing any causing (as if its being *simply* caused is the last word on the subject of causation as it pertains to this species), and (2) that the motivated desire has an existence independent of its being consequentially ascribed. This unclarity, I suspect, leads Korsgaard to say something too strong, namely, "[of a mountaineer] But neither does it seem right to say that those who pursue such projects are in the grip of unmotivated desires, or view themselves as being so" (p. 39). This makes it sound as though the sense of motivation at issue is merely instrumentalist. However ambiguous the notion of reason may be—our remit so to dissect—it will not do to make motivation sound more capacious than it is. Korsgaard seems to be using Nagel's terminology the wrong way around.
- ²² Notice that when Nagel says, "it becomes in virtue of his pursuit *ipso facto* appropriate to ascribe to him a desire for that goal", we might equally appropriately have said of the agent that he had *wanted* that goal, thereby inviting ambiguity as to whether reasons or desires were doing the evaluative work. To be sure, I am saying that an objection to Nagel's point is that this less specific ascription may be no more justified than in the case of desire.
- ²³ Dancy 1993 also finds this implausible, p. I.
- ²⁴ Again, "Though all motivation implies the presence of desire, the sense in which this is true does not warrant us in concluding that all motivation requires that desire be operative as a motivational *influence*" (p. 32).
- ²⁵ Similarly, formal logic lacks sense without exemplification or example of sorts, that which allows us to see its gist. One is tempted to say, an "interpretation" is required, and this indeed is a locution not averse to Nagel.
- ²⁶ Notably, in his preface, Nagel does single out John Rawls as one whose "influence on [his] philosophical ideas has been continuous" (p. vii).
- ²⁷ Paraphrasing p. 19.

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- ²⁸ Nagel argues against the suggestion of paradox in the case of past events by pointing out that, though we cannot affect the past and nor do we believe that we can, still the tenseless standpoint allows us to adopt the appropriate attitude towards that past event, such as satisfaction or regret; a kind of rational emotion, we might suppose. See pp. 71ff.
- ²⁹ See pp. 82ff.
- ³⁰ We can now understand Nagel's happiness to associate himself with Kant: "[M]y position resembles Kant's [in] that it assigns a central role in the operation of ethical motives to a certain feature of the agent's metaphysical conception of himself. On Kant's view the conception is that of freedom, whereas on my view it is the conception of oneself as merely a person among others equally real" (p. 14).
- ³¹ Nagel feels unable to dispose of the imposition of psychological realism, for his theory to have any aspirations to the status of a motivational theory: "What can be asserted with some confidence is that in so far as rational requirements, practical or theoretical, represent conditions on belief and action, such necessity as may attach to them is not logical but natural or *psychological*. It is therefore necessary to inquire how they achieve their hold on us. Perhaps the most we can hope is that such principles should apply to us in virtue of particularly deep features of our make-up, features which we cannot alter" (p. 22, my emphasis).
- ³² McDowell 1979. Citations to McDowell in the next chapter will be to this paper.
- ³³ That is, when we do philosophy of science we do not do science per se.
- ³⁴ On the limitations of science, McDowell says, "A scientific conception of reality is eminently open to dispute. When we ask the metaphysical question whether reality is what science can find out about, we cannot, without begging the question, restrict the materials for an answer to those which science can countenance" (346).
- ³⁵ This is my own way of putting things, but, I hope, McDowellian in inspiration.
- ³⁶ McDowell's argument for holism runs, "So we cannot disentangle genuine possession of kindness from the sensitivity which constitutes fairness. And since there are obviously no limits on the possibilities for compresence, in the same situation, of circumstances of the sorts proper sensitivities to which constitute all the virtues, the argument can be generalized: no one virtue can be fully possessed except by a possessor of all of them, that is, a possessor of virtue in general" (333).
- ³⁷ *ibid.*, p. 336-342.
- ³⁸ Remarkably, in the 1994/5 Presidential Address, "Why there is really No Such Thing as the Theory of Motivation," Dancy does advance yet another conception of practical reason, one sufficiently anti-Humean that he is moved to say of his pure theory that it was after all "essentially playing the Humean game," (p. 10). The later theory may well be more hostile to the standard conception, but Dancy's evaluation of his earlier theory strikes me as unduly pacific. We are about to examine the pure theory's anti-Humean credentials, to be sure, but it is clearly a contender. As one reviewer remarks, "Dancy's *radical rejection of the very idea* of a Humean theory of motivation involves arguing for a form of pure cognitivism," (Alan Thomas, *Mind* 104 (1995), p. 629, my italics). Citations in this chapter will be to Dancy 1993.
- ³⁹ Dancy commenting here on the remit of his book in Dancy 1995, p. 10.
- ⁴⁰ Notice the difficulty of pursuing weak internalism without so much as making it answerable to behavioral ascriptions put into unfavorable light because of it.
- ⁴¹ Negligence is an interesting issue. In law, I can act negligently by running over a pedestrian. I may face charges. Although I did not intend to harm, I can be held responsible for not exercising sufficient care and attention. I must have had some implicit obligation therefore.
- ⁴² For instance, it is only left *implicit* in McDowell that Humean motivation can retain some currency. He writes, "[V]irtue, in general, is: an ability to recognize requirements which situations impose on one's behaviour," (1979, p. 333). To single out *situations* must, surely, leave non-

situational settings intact for standard motivation to inhabit for the performance (say) of mere bodily functions.

- ⁴³ Dancy invokes Nagel's intention on p. 9. But I'm not sure how well advised Dancy is to defer either to a different text or to a private suspicion. I went the other way of course, but tried to reason from the text itself.
- ⁴⁴ "Dancy's Nagel" and "Dancy's motivated desire" will be used interchangeably in what follows.
- ⁴⁵ In a written comment on an earlier draft, Dancy submits, "surely Humean desires are independently intelligible," (May 1996).
- ⁴⁶ Dancy calls the theory of which this desire forms a part, the "pure ascription theory".
- ⁴⁷ The requisite information can be gleaned from p. 20.
- ⁴⁸ Though I've been unable to pursue it here, it might be interesting to compare Dancy's second representation with Hampshire's, "Subjunctive Conditionals" in Hampshire 1972. Hampshire is interested in their role in imaginative understanding.
- ⁴⁹ See pp. 20ff.
- ⁵⁰ The point and place of causation is put under further pressure in Dancy 1994. He brings out the key tensions for a motivational theory that aims at being broadly cognitivist. Dancy ends with the suggestion that, "an agent can be motivated by *what he believes* [a metaphysical conception purporting to be psychologically real even if not a psychological *state per se*]," (p. 17, italics mine). But then Dancy queries how such a reason explanation (both justifying and motivating) could be shown to be also causal. He suspects that—logically—causation is ruled out (hence the anti-Humean sensationalism of his 1994 paper title). So, both Dancy's recent cognitivist positions leave causation out, whilst purporting to remain explanatorily viable. I've found, though been unable to develop, an uncanny resemblance between the closing suggestion of Dancy 1994 and Stroud 1977, p. 162.
- ⁵¹ A position formulated by Paul Churchland 1981.
- ⁵² Compare Alex Oliver 1996, resisting naturalistic ideology. "We were looking for a reason to deny that causally inert entities exist. Being told [by naturalists] that such entities have no causes or effects is hardly what we wanted", p. 8. Namely, it would be a circular justification.
- ⁵³ Here I concur with Barbara Hannan 1994, p. 64.
- ⁵⁴ Also, as I understand this, a moral question.
- ⁵⁵ Proponents put so much enthusiasm into their physical interpretation that often, I suspect, the despair is discharged only through negation.
- ⁵⁶ We can all have our own way of putting this fact of life, that's all part of the irreducibly perspectival.
- ⁵⁷ See *De Anima*, 403a 35-403b 32.
- ⁵⁸ Rescher 1984, p. 60.
- ⁵⁹ Notice that, for the noncognitivist, Humean desire forms the natural end-point of explanation. As Ted Honderich once put it (though in a different context, discussing the free will debate)—"For a start, you can't *refute* a desire." Honderich 1993, p. 118.

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