

RECONCILING REALISM WITH HUMEANISM

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It is widely accepted by philosophers that a broadly Humean account of moral motivation is correct. Roughly put, the Humean account of moral motivation says that an agent is motivated to act in some fashion that she believes is right, just, virtuous, etc., only if that agent desires to act in that fashion—where the desire in question is distinct from, and not entirely generated by, any belief that that agent has.¹ A growing number of moral realists, however, have rejected this Humean account of moral motivation. Many of these philosophers defend a moral psychology according to which motivational states are fundamentally cognitive states. According to these philosophers, an agent's believing that acting in some fashion is morally right, just, virtuous, etc., can *itself* motivate that agent to act appropriately, or can at least give rise to desires in that agent to act appropriately.² The central purpose of this essay is to consider some of the more prominent reasons why realists have rejected the Humean theory of motivation. I shall argue that these reasons are not persuasive, and that there is nothing about being a moral realist that should make us suspicious of Humeanism. Let me immediately add a caveat to this, however: my central purpose here is not to show that anti-Humean—or as I shall hereafter call them, 'Rationalist'—views of moral motivation are false. In fact, I think some are rather plausible. Nor, might I add, is my purpose to offer grounds for believing that the Humean theory of motivation is true. Rather, my central aim is the more modest one of providing reasons for thinking that the moral realist is free to combine her moral ontology with a Humean theory of motivation. However modest the aim of this essay might be, it is also, I think, important. For if the realist really is free to combine her theory with the Humean theory of motivation, then it cannot be complained that moral realism is suspect because it is incompatible with this widely accepted view.

This, I claim, is the central purpose of this essay. But the essay also has an auxiliary aim. I want to suggest that, when understood aright, questions of motivational psychology do not really have an important bearing upon the moral realist/antirealist debate. The common assumption to the contrary, I propose, is mistaken.

¹ I call this view the 'Humean' position, but I do not claim that it faithfully represents Hume's own view. (The realist moral ontology that I maintain is compatible with this view is certainly not one that is ordinarily attributed to Hume.) I should also note that I shall be exclusively concerned with *cognitivist* versions of the Humean view.

² Recent defences of this view are found in Bond [3], De Paul [9], Dancy [10], [11], [12], [13], Darwall [14], Garrard and McNaughton [16], Jackson and Pettit [22], Little [25], McDowell [26], [27], McNaughton [28], Nagel [31], Platts [34], Scanlon [38], Scheffler [39], Smith [42], Sprigge [43], and Wiggins [48].

I. Two theories of moral motivation

The debate I am interested in exploring is one that concerns the sources and constituents of moral motivation. Accordingly, it is important that we clarify at the outset the nature of a *motivational state* or a *motivational reason*.³ For our purposes here, let's say that a person's motivational reason to \emptyset consists in her being inclined to intentionally try to \emptyset , and her believing that she can \emptyset .⁴ Thus understood, motivational reasons are *what* motivate agents to act. But it is worth emphasizing that when I speak of motivational reasons as what motivate agents to act, I do not mean to claim that (in the ordinary case) they are the *objects* of propositional attitudes. That is, I do not mean to claim that (in the ordinary case) a person's motivational reason to act is the consideration in the light of which that agent sees that action as desirable, sensible or required.⁵ Rather, as I've indicated, motivational reasons are *states* of being motivated to act. Humeans and at least some Rationalists agree that, thus understood, motivational reasons are comprised of beliefs and desires (where desires are understood broadly enough to encompass various sorts of pro-attitude). But this agreement is often of a superficial nature, for Humeans and Rationalists often understand the nature of beliefs and desires and their relations to one another rather differently. So, our first task is to trace the central features of the Humean and Rationalist views, and to ascertain how each view understands the elements of motivation and the relations these elements bear to one another. The sketch I provide of both Humeanism and Rationalism will be in many respects overly simple and incomplete. But it will suffice to bring out the issues that divide them.

The Humean theory

Humeans hold that beliefs and desires are both propositional attitudes of a sort—though different sorts of propositional attitude that play different kinds of functional role. One prominent way of marking the difference between beliefs and desires, as Humeans conceive of them, is to think of beliefs and desires as having different 'directions of fit'.⁶ Put roughly, the Humean holds that beliefs are propositional attitudes that 'aim' to

³ I shall use the terms 'motivational state' and 'motivational reason' interchangeably. My own view is that the habit of calling motivational states 'reasons' (and not specifying what *kind* of reason they are) has engendered considerable confusion. But I shall continue to so call them in deference to what is common practice among philosophers. Moreover, unless the context indicates otherwise, when I speak of motivational reasons and beliefs, I shall not think of them as dispositional states, but as the manifestations of such states. That this is the way in which they have been thought of in the current literature on moral motivation is evidenced by Svavarsdóttir [46], Smith [42] and Shafer-Landau [41].

⁴ Cf. Noggle [32], p. 87. I am aware that the present account ignores various nuances that a more nearly adequate account of a motivating reason would address (e.g., the fact that motivation comes in degrees). I should also note that (unless the context indicates otherwise) I will use the term 'motivational state' to denote mental states that do not include relevant means-ends beliefs.

⁵ This is how Dancy [10] glosses the concept of a motivational reason. I shall have more to say about Dancy's view later in this essay.

⁶ By availing myself of the metaphor of direction of fit, I am gliding over some deep controversies about what the metaphor amounts to. For discussion of the matter, cf. Schueler [40], Humberstone [20], and Smith [42]. My own sympathies on the issue lie with Zangwill [52].

represent or ‘fit’ the world. As such, a belief is ‘satisfied’ just in case the world fits the content of that belief. The idea that beliefs have the aforementioned direction of fit is sometimes spelled out by attributing to beliefs a certain kind of functional profile. According to the Humean view, if a person believes that *p*, then that person tends to be surprised when she learns that *not-p*, tends to believe propositions that she takes to follow from *p*, and so forth. Desires, by contrast, do not ‘aim’ to represent or fit the world; rather, they ‘aim’ to change it. Accordingly, a desire is satisfied when the world changes to fit *it*. So, as the Humean sees things, if a person desires that *p*, she will not tend to be surprised if *not-p* is the case, and her desire that *p* will often persist in the face of the evidence that *not-p* is the case. In any event, fundamental to the Humean account of desire is the conviction that desires are motivationally ‘pushy’ states; if a person desires that *p*, then (all other things being equal) her desire that *p* tends to issue in her implementing one or another appropriate action plan to satisfy her desire given the proper circumstances.

Let me now clarify an additional feature of the Humean position to which I have already alluded. Constitutive of the Humean view is the thesis that beliefs are not identical with, nor do they generate by themselves, desires or motivational states. As Hume puts it, ‘reason is perfectly inert’. I shall call this the Humean’s ‘Inertness Thesis’.⁷ I shall, moreover, call those desires that are not generated by beliefs themselves ‘Humean’ desires. The Inertness Thesis is sometimes supplemented with additional claims. For instance, it is sometimes said that, on the Humean view, if an agent’s moral belief motivates that agent, there must be some desire antecedently present in that agent’s ‘subjective motivational set’ that combines with that belief to motivate that agent.⁸ Some philosophers even appear to suggest that this further claim—what we might call the ‘Background Claim’—is implied by the Inertness Thesis.⁹ In what follows, I will maintain that the Humean who accepts the Inertness Thesis needn’t accept the Background Claim.

We are now in a better position to understand the Humean theory of moral motivation. Put succinctly, the Humean holds that a person *S* has a moral motivational reason *M* to \emptyset if (i) *S* believes that she morally ought to \emptyset ; (ii) *S* has a Humean desire to act in a morally appropriate fashion; (iii) *S* believes that she can \emptyset by implementing some action plan *A*; and, (iv) these beliefs and this desire combine in the appropriate fashion. So, for example, on the Humean account, Margaret has a moral motivational reason to lend Sam five dollars if she (i) believes that she ought to lend Sam five dollars; (ii) has a Humean desire to act in the morally appropriate fashion; (iii) believes that she can lend Sam five dollars by reaching into her wallet, or going to the bank teller, etc.; and, (iv) these beliefs and this desire combine in the appropriate fashion. It will be noticed that the Humean needn’t be very specific concerning what the content of ‘desiring to act in a morally appropriate fashion’ consists in. In the case of Margaret, her desire may be one that says that she ought to act virtuously, or treat friends kindly, or treat Sam well, and so on.

⁷ Radcliffe [36] argues that Hume himself adopts this claim. Nagel [31] also understands Humeanism to incorporate the Inertness Thesis.

⁸ Cf. Stroud [45], Wallace [47], and Korsgaard [24]; Mele [30] argues for something similar.

⁹ E.g., Stroud [45].

The Rationalist theory

What I am calling ‘Rationalist’ views are united by their unanimous rejection of the Humean’s Inertness Thesis.¹⁰ The position comes in at least four strains. The most radical form of the view, recently defended by Jonathan Dancy, rejects the thesis that motivational reasons are psychological states.¹¹ What motivates Margaret to give five dollars to Sam, on this position, is the mere fact *that Margaret ought to give Sam five dollars*. A somewhat less radical position (also defended by Dancy at an earlier stage) says that it is the propositional content of an agent’s moral belief that motivates her to act apart from the presence of any desire.¹² On this view, it is the content of Margaret’s belief that she ought to give Sam five dollars, together with her belief that she can give him five dollars by, say, reaching into her wallet that motivates her to act. A third strain of the position is found in the writings of John McDowell, Thomas Nagel, and David McNaughton, who claim that, when moral beliefs motivate agents, desires are *present*, but motivationally inefficacious.¹³ Desires on this view are ‘consequentially ascribed’ or epiphenomenal. According to this position, it is Margaret’s belief that she ought to give Sam five dollars, together with the appropriate means-end belief that motivates her to act. Insofar as Margaret is moved to give Sam five dollars, this view says that we can consequentially ascribe a desire to Margaret to act in the morally appropriate fashion. The least radical Rationalist position from a Humean perspective, defended by E. J. Bond, Frank Jackson (and, I think, Michael Smith), maintains that moral beliefs can themselves give rise to desires that are motivationally efficacious.¹⁴ Some proponents of the view claim that the relation here is one of entailment; others claim it is causal. In any event, what the proponent of this view claims is that Margaret’s belief that she ought to lend Sam five dollars itself gives rise to a morally appropriate desire, and that this belief and desire combine with the appropriate means-end beliefs to move Margaret to action.

II. Against the combination: four arguments

Moral realists such as W.D. Ross and H.A. Prichard believed that we could combine the Humean theory of motivation with a robust realist ontology.¹⁵ Rationalists have argued that Ross and Prichard were mistaken about this. But where exactly is the mistake supposed to lie? Rationalists have offered several suggestions. I begin by considering one

¹⁰ In what follows, I shall more or less ignore the fact that Rationalist views come in strong versions according to which all cases of moral motivation fit the Rationalist paradigm, and weak versions according to which only some cases do.

¹¹ Dancy [10]. Dancy does not claim that psychological states are irrelevant to motivation, only that they are not a proper part of an explanation of why an agent is motivated to act in some fashion.

¹² Cf. Dancy [11].

¹³ Cf. McDowell [27], Nagel [31], and McNaughton [28].

¹⁴ Bond [3], Jackson [21] and Smith [42]. In order to forestall confusion, I should note that Smith [42] also calls his view a ‘Humean’ theory of motivation. On my taxonomy, however, his position is plausibly characterized as a Rationalist one insofar as it appears to reject the Inertness Thesis. (Cf. Smith [42]), chapter 3, and p. 213, n. 3.)

¹⁵ Cf. Ross [37] and Prichard [35]. Noggle [32] and Stratton-Lake [44] also express sympathy for this view.

of the less fundamental reasons that Rationalists have offered for rejecting the realist-Humean combination, and then move on to consider three of the more central ones.

The first objection

The first objection I want to consider is one that has been widely expressed in the literature.¹⁶ The objection says that the Rationalist theory of motivation offers us a phenomenologically more accurate explanation of certain cases of moral motivation than does the Humean theory. Hence, it is claimed that any moral realist should prefer Rationalism to Humeanism.

Stephen Darwall offers us a particularly vivid example of this argument in his book *Impartial Reason*.¹⁷ Darwall asks us to consider a putative case of moral conversion in which a young woman, Roberta, has grown up in a sheltered suburban setting. Because of her *naïveté*, Roberta has no general desire to alleviate the suffering of others. But when Roberta attends university, she sees a film that vividly presents the plight of textile workers in the southern United States. She discovers that these workers suffer from a high incidence of brown lung, earn low wages, and so forth. Roberta is shocked and dismayed by what she learns. As a consequence of having witnessed the unjustifiable suffering of the textile workers, Roberta decides to donate a few hours every week to promote a boycott of goods produced by disreputable textile companies.

Darwall invites us to conclude that the standard Humean explanation of Roberta's being motivated to promote the boycott is 'implausible'. Roberta 'may have no desire prior to viewing the film that explains her decision to join the boycott' and that 'whatever desire she does have after the film seems itself to be the result of her becoming aware, in a particularly vivid way, of considerations that motivate her desire and that she takes as reasons for her decision: the unjustifiable suffering of the workers'.¹⁸ If this is right, then cases such as Roberta's throw the plausibility of the Humean's Inertness Thesis into doubt. Some cases of moral motivation appear to be more plausibly explained by the mere fact that an agent perceives certain morally salient facts in a particularly vivid way.

The Humean reply is to contest the assumption that the phenomenology of moral motivation really gives any support to the idea that moral beliefs by themselves motivate agents. There are two ways of running this reply. One way of running the reply—the standard way—is to sketch an alternate explanation according to which various desires antecedently present in Roberta's motivational set explain why Roberta is motivated to support the boycott.¹⁹ So, for example, suppose we grant that, before seeing the movie, Roberta had no general desire to alleviate the suffering of others. Nevertheless, suppose we agree with Darwall that, before seeing the movie, Roberta desired not to suffer herself, and not to see her family and friends suffer. We can then conjecture, in good Humean fashion, that seeing the movie functions as an occasion for Roberta to view sympathetically the factory workers as potential selves, friends or family members. We can further conjecture that, as a consequence, Roberta's aversion to her own suffering, as well as to

¹⁶ Variants of the argument can be found in DePaul [9], pp. 155–6; Platts [34]; Scheffler [39], pp. 86–7; Bond [3], chapter 2; and McNaughton [28], pp. 48–9, 22–3.

¹⁷ Darwall [14].

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 40.

¹⁹ Mele [30] adopts this style of reply.

that of her family and friends, combines with her beliefs that (i) the textile workers are in important ways akin to herself, friends and family, and (ii) that their suffering is bad. This combination of new beliefs and antecedent desires then forms a new motivational state not to see these textile workers suffer that (in part) motivates Roberta to support the boycott.

Something like the aforementioned explanation, I judge, is sufficient to undercut the claim that Humeanism cannot plausibly account for certain cases of moral motivation. And I suspect that the Humean will have the resources to reply to any such challenge in a similar fashion. But there is another manner of response to Darwall's argument—a manner of response that goes a long way down the road of trying to honour Rationalist intuitions.

The proponent of this second reply agrees with Darwall that, before seeing the movie, Roberta had no general desire to alleviate the suffering of others. She also agrees with Darwall that none of Roberta's antecedent desires is responsible for her being motivated to support the boycott. Nevertheless, the proponent of the second reply denies that this implies that Roberta's judgement itself motivates her to act. Rather, the Humean claims that, in certain cases, an agent's being aware (in a certain way) of moral reasons, together with her belief that she has reason to act, can trigger a *basic disposition to desire*, which combines with the agent's awareness and belief to form some appropriate moral desire. So, to offer an elaboration of the present case, the Humean claims that what generates Roberta's desire to help alleviate the suffering of these strangers is her becoming aware (in a particularly vivid way) of the suffering of others, her forming the *de re* belief of those strangers that she ought to help them, and her awareness and belief being such that they trigger a basic disposition to desire that others not suffer.

It will be noted this second type of Humean reply is consistent with the Humean's Inertness Thesis; it does not say that beliefs (or awarenesses) themselves generate desires. Rather, it says that beliefs (or awarenesses) combined with basic dispositions to desire generate desires. It is especially important to note that what I am calling 'basic dispositions to desire' are not themselves desires. Desires, by definition, are directed toward a propositional content. Moreover, a person cannot have a desire for something without having a concept of that thing.²⁰ But basic dispositions to desire lack both these qualities. Basic dispositions to desire are not propositional attitudes; rather, they are *dispositions* to form a certain range of propositional attitudes upon having various kinds of experiential inputs. Furthermore, a person can have a basic disposition to desire something while lacking the concept of that thing; I can have the basic disposition to desire to taste caviar even though I lack the concept of caviar. Finally, let me add that, on the Humean view, dispositions to desire are plausibly viewed as contingent tendencies of an agent to have affectional responses—what Hume calls our 'passionate' nature. As such, it may be that two persons with very similar awarenesses and beliefs are moved to act in different ways. Upon tasting caviar for the first time, I desire to eat more; my wife, however, does not.

It may well be that the Humean has to include something like what I call the 'non-standard reply' in her account of motivation if she were to explain the genesis of some

²⁰ Or to put the point more cautiously: since a thing may have different modes of presentation and, hence, may be grasped under different descriptions, a person cannot have a desire for a thing without having a grasp of one of its modes of presentation.

basic desires.²¹ Be that as it may, the advocate of this second reply maintains that there is nothing about Darwall's case, or comparable cases, that militates against the Humean view.

The second objection

Let me turn to what is, in my estimation, a more fundamental rationale for rejecting the Humean theory. Thomas Nagel articulates this more fundamental rationale in the opening pages of *The Possibility of Altruism*. Nagel writes that:

It will in any case not do to rest the motivational influence of ethical considerations on fortuitous or escapable inclinations. Their hold on us must be deep, and it must be essentially tied to the ethical principles themselves, and to the conditions of their truth. The alternative is to abandon the objectivity of ethics.²²

David McNaughton echoes Nagel's thought by claiming that a Humean, or 'belief-desire', account of motivation spells trouble for moral realism:

It is a striking feature of our moral experience . . . that situations in which we find ourselves make moral demands on us; we recognize that we are morally required to act in a certain way. Once we are aware of such a requirement our choice of action seems to be constrained by that recognition. Our response is seen as something demanded by the circumstances in which we are making our choice. In particular, the claims that morality makes on us appear to be quite independent of our desires—they may even conflict with what we want.

On the belief-desire theory no sense can be made of this conception of a moral demand. Moral (or any other) considerations can only provide an agent with reason to act if he has appropriate desires. In the absence of such desires moral constraints will carry no weight with him, nor will we be able to supply any reason why he should conform to them unless we can appeal to some desire that he already has.²³

And before dedicating three chapters of his book *Moral Reasons* to a defence of a Rationalist theory of motivation, Jonathan Dancy articulates his reasons for rejecting the Humean view:

What we are learning is that the reason why a cognitivist should adopt internalism in ethics is the same reason as *a* reason for calling moral imperatives categorical; a categorical imperative, in this weak sense at least, is one whose grip on someone who 'accepts' it is not dependent on the presence of an independent desire, so that without the desire one can say that this would clearly be relevant to anyone who cares about that sort of thing, but is not relevant to oneself because one doesn't. We certainly don't

²¹ Radcliffe [36] offers an argument that Hume does as much.

²² Nagel [31], p. 6.

²³ McNaughton [28], p. 48.

want moral reasons to depend on desires in this way, though whether we get what we want here remains to be seen.²⁴

The argument, I take it, is the following. The Humean theory of motivational reasons says that an agent cannot be motivated to act in a morally appropriate fashion without having a desire to act in that fashion. But what sorts of desire agents have is a contingent matter; hence, possibly, an agent might lack a desire to act in a morally upright fashion. It follows that, on the Humean theory of motivational reasons, if an agent does not desire to act in a morally appropriate manner, then she has no reason to act in that manner.

It is now appreciated that the argument rests on a failure to keep separate two types of reason.²⁵ On the one hand, there are what I have called ‘motivational reasons’. Motivational reasons, I have claimed, are mental states of being inclined to implement one or another action plan. On the other hand, there are what are often called ‘normative reasons’. Normative reasons are considerations that *count in favour* of an agent’s behaving in a certain fashion. On a realist view, normative reasons are ordinarily facts of various sorts. The arguments offered by Nagel, McNaughton, and Dancy rest on the assumption that, if we adopt a Humean account of motivational reasons, then we are saddled with the result that an agent’s having a normative reason to behave in a certain way depends on that agent’s having desires of certain sorts. But the assumption is not true. Granted, the proponent of the Humean theory of motivational reasons ordinarily claims that whether an agent has a desire to act in a morally appropriate fashion is a contingent matter. Moreover, the Humean also maintains that an agent’s motivational reasons are belief-desire combinations in which the desire in question is not generated by any moral belief itself that this agent may have. But these two claims do not imply that an agent’s normative reasons depend on that agent’s having desires of any sort—that what makes a particular action *choice-worthy* somehow depends on that agent’s desires. To the contrary, when it comes to normative moral reasons, the Humean is free to claim that (in a wide range of cases) these reasons apply to agents regardless of their contingent desires. So, there seems to be no obvious grounds for thinking that the Humean view cannot make sense of a ‘categorical’ moral demand. That an agent is morally required to bring about some state of affairs regardless of what she may want does not conflict with the Humean theory of motivation.

It is the failure to distinguish motivational from normative reasons that lends a *prima facie* plausibility to another kind of argument that is sometimes leveled against the Humean theory. The proponent of this argument claims that the Humean view deprives moral reasons of their ‘practicality’, ‘action-guidingness’ or ‘intrinsic relation to conduct’. Consider, for instance, the following passage from Jonathan Dancy. Using W. D. Ross’s Humean position as a foil, Dancy says:

Ross . . . accepted the Humean view that our motives (our reasons for action) are our beliefs and our desires. The beliefs are inert representations of the world, and cannot comprehensibly be what drives us to action. What move us are our desires, which are *pushy* states. We have a desire (for an orange, say) which is channeled by a belief that

²⁴ Dancy [12], p. 4.

²⁵ Cf. Smith [42], Parfit [33] and Hampton [19].

there is one in the larder so as to get us to stir ourselves in that direction. Now for Ross our moral attitudes are beliefs, and so depend on the existence of a suitable desire if they are to motivate us to action. So if our moral opinions are to make any difference to how we act, there must be present also in us something like a general desire to do the good—a desire which we might comprehensibly have lacked. And if we had lacked it, we would still have been able to tell what is right and what is wrong; we would merely have found in the distinction between right and wrong nothing that makes any difference to how we felt called on to behave. Morality, being purely factual, is thus deprived of any intrinsic relation to conduct in a way that critics found it easy to ridicule.²⁶

The Humean will remain unmoved by this line of argument. The proper response lies in distinguishing between two senses in which an entity can be ‘practical’ that corresponds to the distinction between motivational and normative reasons. In one sense of ‘practical’, a thing is practical insofar as it is *motivationally efficacious*. In another sense of ‘practical’, a thing is practical insofar as it is *action guiding*; that is, that thing is practical insofar as it tells us what we ought to do. What the Humean claims is that normative reasons are practical in the sense of being action guiding, but they are not practical in the sense of being motivationally efficacious. Or more precisely: what the Humean claims is that normative reasons are practical in the sense of being action guiding, but not in the sense of being the sort of thing that by themselves motivate agents to act. So, by the Humean’s lights, it is misleading to say, as Dancy does, that, on the Humean view, moral reasons don’t make any ‘difference to how we felt called on to behave’ or lack ‘any intrinsic relation to conduct’. As the Humean sees things, normative moral reasons by definition have an intrinsic relation to conduct: they tell us how we *should* behave, and thus, they may make a great difference to how we feel called on to behave. However, the Humean denies that (in a wide range of cases) motivational reasons, i.e., states of believing and desiring, are practical in the sense of being action guiding. Rather, motivational reasons are practical in the sense of being motivationally efficacious. But that is as it should be. States of believing and desiring are (in a wide range of cases) not the sorts of thing that tell us what we should do.

The third objection

If what I have argued thus far is correct, it is only by conflating these two senses of ‘reason’ and ‘practical’ that one might be led to believe that the Humean theory deprives morality of its objectivity or practical force. But it might be wondered: has the Humean sacrificed anything of importance in insisting on this distinction between motivational and normative reasons? Has the Humean unintentionally compromised the force of normative reasons?

At first glance, it seems not. After all, Rationalists themselves don’t ordinarily say that normative reasons themselves are motivationally efficacious. Rather, they typically maintain that a person’s *believing* or *apprehending* that she ought to act in a certain manner is motivationally efficacious, not that the normative reason *that one ought to act*

²⁶ Dancy [13], p. 414.

in this particular manner is itself motivationally efficacious. More importantly, by distinguishing between normative and motivational reasons, the Humean has not thereby abandoned the realist claim that normative moral reasons can have an unconditional claim on us. As I've emphasized, the realist can insist that normative moral reasons of certain kinds have an unconditional claim on us insofar (and only insofar) as they recommend or *demand* of us certain types of response regardless of our contingent goals or desires. Notice that this is a very natural view of the nature of moral reasons for a moral realist to adopt. Consider, in this regard, a parallel with epistemic reasons: a realist account of epistemic reasons tells us that epistemic reasons have an unconditional normative claim on us.²⁷ On a realist view of epistemic reasons, the fact *that I have two arms* counts in favour of my believing as much, and does so regardless of whether I care about attaining knowledge or true belief, or whether grasping this reason occasions the appropriate belief in me. The present account of what it is for a moral reason to have an unconditional claim on us, then, is not idiosyncratic or out of step with the manner in which realists think of other sorts of reason.

But initial appearances can be deceiving. In his recent work, Jonathan Dancy has formulated several arguments designed to show that the distinction between motivating and normative reasons, and the use to which the Humean puts it, is not as benign as it may seem. So, let me turn to what Dancy says on this matter.

The best way to approach Dancy's arguments is to begin by considering two maxims or constraints that Dancy recommends us to accept.²⁸ The first constraint is what Dancy calls the 'explanatory constraint'. The explanatory constraint tells us that a normative reason must be capable of contributing to the explanation of an action that is done for that reason.²⁹ The second constraint is what Dancy terms the 'normative constraint'. The normative constraint tells us that, if something motivates an agent to act in some fashion, then that thing must be the sort of entity that can count in favour of that agent's acting in that fashion. Dancy runs two sorts of argument against Humeanism by appealing to these two constraints. The first argument says that the Humean theory of motivation falls foul of the explanatory constraint. The second argument claims that it falls foul of the normative constraint.³⁰

Begin with the first argument. In his Presidential Address to the Aristotelian Society, 'Why there Really Is No Such Thing as the Theory of Motivation', Dancy writes:

Let us start by taking it as a maxim in the theory of practical reason in general that reasons must be at least potentially explanatory of actions. A reason must be something for which someone could have acted, and in any case where someone does act for that reason, the reason contributes to the explanation of her action.

²⁷ I am thinking of epistemic reasons as, roughly, considerations that favour certain kinds of response insofar as those kinds of response increase the likelihood of attaining knowledge, true belief, understanding, and the like.

²⁸ Dancy [10], pp. 101, 103.

²⁹ Dancy [10], p. 101. Something similar is defended in Korsgaard [24], Williams [49], and Garrard and McNaughton [16]. Hampton [19] offers a detailed reply to the various strands of Williams' argument.

³⁰ Oddly, Dancy claims that these two arguments are the same (cf. Dancy [10], p. 103). I take it to be evident that they are not.

This maxim is already in conflict with the account of the distinction between motivating and justifying reasons that I outlined above. For the maxim appears to say that justifying reasons must be capable of being motivating ones, and this is directly denied by the claim that motivating reasons are beliefs and desires, while justifying reasons are truths. The categorical difference between truth and psychological state means that no one thing could be a reason of both sorts.³¹

If I understand it correctly, Dancy's argument runs something like this:

- (1) All motivational reasons are psychological states (asmp).
- (2) All normative reasons are truths (asmp).
- (3) The Explanatory Constraint: a normative reason must be capable of contributing to the explanation of an action that is done for that reason (asmp).
- (4) So, normative reasons must be capable of being motivational reasons (from 1, 2, 3).
- (5) But nothing can be capable of being both a psychological state and a truth (asmp).
- (6) So, normative reasons are not capable of being motivational reasons (from 1, 2, 5).
- (7) So, normative reasons are, and are not, capable of being motivational reasons (from 4, 6).

Dancy's conclusion is that the theorist who espouses the distinction between motivational reasons and normative reasons, as well as the explanatory constraint, is committed to an inconsistent position. It follows that, if moral realism requires us to say that normative reasons are facts (or truths), and Humeanism requires us to claim that motivational reasons are psychological states, then one cannot at once embrace moral realism, Humeanism, and the explanatory constraint.

The argument does not hit its mark, however. Indeed, the most puzzling feature of the argument is how (4) is supposed to follow from (1), (2) and (3). The only premise that would appear to make the inference from (1), (2) and (3) to (4) valid is the following:

- (3') A normative reason must be capable of contributing to the explanation of an action that is done for that reason in the very same manner in which a motivational reason contributes to the explanation of that action.

Only if normative reasons must explain actions in the same way that motivational reasons do might we be tempted to think that normative reasons must be capable of being motivational reasons.

But I do not think we have any good reasons for believing (3'). What the Humean should say is that both normative and motivational reasons explain actions, although in different ways. Hence, I doubt that the Humean who is a moral realist has any compelling

³¹ Dancy [11], p. 4.

basis for surrendering the explanatory constraint, or the distinction between motivational and normative reasons.

Of course this still leaves the Humean with the task of explaining how both normative and motivational reasons explain action, and how the two types of reason are related. Interestingly, Dancy himself furnishes some of the materials for the Humean reply. What the Humean who is a realist embraces is what Dancy calls the ‘three-part story’.³² The three-part story tells us that normative reasons partially explain motivational reasons and thereby partially explain action done for those reasons. Here is one way to run the story: a partial explanation of why Sam believes that he ought to visit his friend Margaret in the hospital is that Sam apprehends the fact *that he ought to visit his friend Margaret in the hospital*; had there been no such fact, Sam (being a reliable moral agent) would not have believed this. But Sam’s believing that he ought to visit Margaret in the hospital is a partial explanation of his visiting Margaret in the hospital; this belief state is, as we have seen, a component of Sam’s motivational state. But if that is right, then the normative fact *that Sam ought to visit his friend Margaret in the hospital* is a partial explanation of why Sam visits Margaret in the hospital. This is because partial explanations of states of affairs are, at least in many cases, transitive. If A partially explains B, and B partially explains C, then (all other things being equal) A partially explains C.³³

There are other ways to run the three-part story. But rather than explore these ways, let me also point out that invoking the three-part story is not the only manner in which the Humean can show that her theory satisfies the explanatory constraint. A number of philosophers, Dancy included, have argued that normative reasons can explain action teleologically.³⁴ Return to the example of Sam and Margaret for a moment. Sam learns that his friend Margaret is sick and in need of the comfort of a friend. Sam correctly discerns that he ought to go visit Margaret in order to comfort her, and goes to visit her for this reason. Here we have a state of affairs, namely, *Margaret’s being such that she ought to be comforted*, which functions as a normative reason for Sam to act in a particular manner. What the advocate of teleological explanations maintains is that this state of affairs explains, in part, why Sam visits Margaret: Sam visits Margaret *in order* to satisfy this obligation. The satisfaction of this normative reason functions as a goal; it is *that for which* Sam acts.

I realize that there are live controversies as to whether explanations of this type are ultimately reducible to causal explanations or are a legitimate form of action explanation. However, my purpose here is not to argue that this sort of explanation is irreducible to causal explanation or is in fact legitimate. I wish to claim only that it is significant that

³² Cf. Dancy [10], p. 101. As will become evident momentarily, what I am calling the ‘three-part story’ differs in certain respects from the view that Dancy has in mind.

³³ Dancy claims that ‘it is actually quite rare for a belief to be explicable by appeal to things being as they are believed to be Suppose I act as I do because I believe it to be my duty. Is it at all convincing to suggest that my belief may itself be explained by appeal to the fact that it is my duty? More convincing explanations seem to be available, such as my moral upbringing. That things are as I take them to be does not seem likely to enter into *these explanations*’ (*ibid.* p. 112). I find this passage puzzling. As far as I can see, there isn’t any obvious sense in which the latter explanation that Dancy offers is more convincing than the former. Moreover, if both explanations are not intended to be complete (as the Humean would not intend them to), there is no reason to adopt one at the expense of the other.

³⁴ Cf. Dancy [11], Wilson [50] and Smith [42].

there is no obvious sense in which the Humean theory is incompatible with teleological explanations, and that the Humean can appeal to teleological explanations to show why her theory does not violate the explanatory constraint. The Humean can be a pluralist about the ways in which normative reasons explain action.

I now turn to the second of Dancy's arguments. Whereas the first argument is supposed to show that Humeanism fails the explanatory constraint, the second argument is supposed to establish that it fails the normative constraint. Here is Dancy's statement of the argument:

The three-part story fails the normative constraint in a very blatant way, for it renders us more or less incapable of doing an action for any of the reasons that make it right. It makes it impossible, that is, for the reasons why we act to be *among* the reasons in favour of acting. If I am trying to decide what to do, I decide which action is right, noticing (we hope) the reasons that make it right; and then I act in the light of those reasons. They are the reasons why I do what I do (my motivating reasons). According to the three-part story, this is impossible. For the three-part story announces that motivating reasons are psychological states and that normative reasons are quite different, including even such things as normative facts about the world. The three-part story has set itself up in such a way that it is bound to breach the normative constraint; which is to say that it has introduced far too great a gap between the explanatory and the normative. And this makes the three-part story paradoxical at its core.³⁵

In its most simple form, the argument says this:

- (8) The Normative Constraint: if something is a motivational reason, then that thing must be the sort of entity that can count in favour of an agent's acting.
- (9) On the Humean view, motivational reasons are belief/desire pairs.
- (10) Belief/desire pairs are not the sort of thing that can count in favour of an agent's acting.
- (11) So, the Humean view is false.

I want to offer a three-pronged response to this argument.

At the outset of this essay, I indicated that we can think of the concept of a motivational reason in two ways. In one sense of the term, a motivational reason is that in the light of which an agent acts; it is the object of a propositional attitude. In the other sense—the sense in which I have used the term—a motivational reason is a belief/desire state that motivates an agent to act; it *is* a combination of propositional attitudes, and not the object thereof. In his elaboration of the present argument, it is clear that Dancy is working with the first understanding of the concept of a motivational reason. Of course this is a perfectly acceptable way of using the term. But it is not the way that the Humean uses it. The consequence is that Dancy's argument fails to make contact with the Humean

³⁵ Dancy [10], pp. 103–4.

position. In fact, if we adopt Dancy's gloss on the concept of a motivational reason, a Humean need have no quarrel with the normative constraint. The Humean can agree that, thus understood, motivational reasons are states of affairs and have to be the sort of thing that can count in favour of (or the sort of thing that an agent could wrongly take to count in favour of) an action. But the Humean will deny that any reasonably complete story of motivation will cite *only* what we believe as what motivates us. It must also appeal to the beliefs themselves, and the ways in which Humean desires intersect with them.

Suppose, however, we understand the occurrence of 'motivational reason' in premise (8) to pick out a psychological state. Should the Humean reject the claim that psychological states can be the sorts of thing that count in favour of acting in certain ways? Not obviously. Consider a homespun case: a very good writer finds herself, for reasons she cannot articulate, with a felt inclination, or desire, to revise a passage she has just written. As it happens, this writer takes these felt inclinations very seriously. And for good reason: in a wide variety of cases, felt inclinations of just this sort have reliably acted as *signs* or indicators that a given passage needs rewriting, or that a sentence needs rephrasing, etc. Suppose we adopt an account of evidence according to which some mental state counts as evidence for the formation or maintenance of another mental state if it tends to confer positive epistemic status on the formation or maintenance of that other state.³⁶ Then we can say that our agent's desires count as evidence in favour of her believing that she ought to act in certain ways. And on the plausible assumption that, if something is evidence in favour of another thing, it is a reason of a sort, then mental states of certain kinds are reasons.

Now consider an analogue in the moral sphere: suppose a virtuous person finds herself—for reasons she cannot articulate—with a felt inclination, or desire, to accept (and the belief that she should accept) the proposition that she needs to be more patient with a somewhat moody colleague. Our virtuous agent takes inclinations of this sort very seriously. As well she should: in a wide variety of cases, inclinations of just this sort (coupled with certain kinds of belief) have proved to be reliable indicators that she should conduct herself in certain ways. So, the following conclusion suggests itself: in some cases, belief/desire pairs can act as signs and, thus, evidence in favour of forming propositional attitudes. In this latter case, I have suggested that a belief/desire pair is evidence in favour of *accepting* a proposition. And since accepting a proposition (in contrast to believing one) is plausibly thought of as a voluntary mental act,³⁷ we have a case in which a motivational state can count in favour of acting in a certain way. But if that's right, then the Humean can accept the claim that belief/desire pairs are the sort of thing that can count in favour of (or the sort of thing an agent can wrongly take to count in favour of) acting in certain ways.³⁸ So, even on the Humean's preferred understanding of

³⁶ A view of this sort is defended in Greco [18].

³⁷ Cf. Cohen [5] and Alston [1] for more on the distinction between acceptance and belief.

³⁸ If the case I have described is accurate, then it would be incorrect to say (as Dancy does) that all well-formed desires are 'reason-based', i.e., are the upshot of having apprehended that something is good in some sense (cf. Dancy [10], p. 36). Rather, desires of certain kinds can function as signs that something is good and can *occasion* the apprehension that something is good rather than being *based* on such an apprehension. I have offered a richer elaboration of such cases and their significance in moral epistemology in Cuneo [8].

a 'motivational reason', we have a case for thinking that motivational reasons thus understood satisfy the normative constraint.

But suppose this latter type of response is wrongheaded, and the Humean is forced to reject the claim that belief/desire pairs can satisfy the normative constraint. Is there anything particularly problematic about this? Not that I can see. There's nothing incoherent about a position that denies that belief/desire pairs are normative practical reasons but nonetheless claims that they motivate agents to act. Now it is a fair question to ask why we should think of belief/desire pairs as motivational reasons if they are not the sort of thing that can count in favour of an agent's acting. The answer is that the Humean understands motivational reasons to be *explanatory* reasons. It is insofar as belief/desire pairs explain action—*causally* explain action—that they are a type of reason. Notice that understanding motivational reasons in this manner does not imply that they are incapable of being normatively assessed. The Humean can claim that motivational states can be assessed as being apt or the sort of thing that ought to incline an agent to act in a given fashion. It might be, for example, that a person ought to believe that she should act in a certain way and should desire to act in that way given that a properly functioning or virtuous person would so believe and desire.³⁹

I have claimed there is conceptual space for a Humean view that rejects the claim that motivational states satisfy the normative constraint. Dancy finds this a deeply unsatisfying position. According to a Humean view of this variety,

[t]he agent's beliefs, now, are causes of his actions, but they in no way represent the light in which he acted or chose to do what he did. This seems incoherent to me. The only way that those beliefs could act as causes is by being the light in which the agent acted, and if that is what they are doing, they are back in the business of reasons-explanation whether they like it or not.⁴⁰

This is perplexing. I myself am unaware of any grounds for thinking that the only way in which belief/desire combinations could be the cause of action is by being that in the light of which an agent acted—the object of a propositional attitude. In fact, it would seem that we should say precisely the opposite. Psychological states are not the object of propositional attitudes; propositions (or states of affairs) are. And it is precisely because beliefs and desires are mental states, and not the abstract contents of such states, that belief/desire pairs seem to be the right sort of thing to contribute causally to action.⁴¹

³⁹ Dancy says in one place that, 'when I ask myself what one would naturally mean by talking of a good motivating reason, the answer seems to be one that one ought to be motivated by. But there are, according to this strategy [the view which makes motivational reasons psychological states], no such things as beliefs that one ought to be motivated by' (Dancy [10], p. 119). The Humean, I say, is not committed to this latter claim.

⁴⁰ Dancy [10], p. 169. In this passage, Dancy is supposing that, if psychological states are motivating reasons, then they are beliefs (and not belief/desire pairs). On a different note, let me point out that there is clearly a sense in which, on the Humean view, an agent's beliefs *represent* the light in which he acted. I thus read Dancy to use the occurrence of 'represent' in this passage to mean 'are'.

⁴¹ Cf. Audi [2]. Dancy [11], p. 14 expresses similar sentiments.

The fourth objection

This brings me to the final objection to the Humean view I want to consider. In order to appreciate this objection, however, it will first be necessary to draw several distinctions.

Suppose we understand ‘Strong Motivational Internalism’ to be the view that:

(SMI) Necessarily, for any agent S, if S believes that she morally ought to \emptyset , then S is motivated to some degree to \emptyset .

And suppose we take ‘Weak Motivational Internalism’ to say that:

(WMI) Necessarily, for any agent S of kind K, if S believes in way W that she morally ought to \emptyset , then S is motivated to some degree to \emptyset .

According to the Weak Motivational Internalist, the reference to ‘agents of a kind K’ may refer to practically rational agents acting in character, virtuous agents acting in character, ‘normal’ agents acting normally, and so forth.⁴² Likewise, the reference to ‘believing in way W’ may refer to beliefs formed in a ‘spontaneous’ manner, or beliefs formed on the basis of vivid presentation of one or another moral reason, or beliefs that presuppose an agent’s holding that she has a reason to \emptyset , and so on.

This division of Internalist views allows us to identify two species of what is ordinarily called ‘Motivational Externalism’. As I shall characterize it, ‘Weak Motivational Externalism’ is simply a denial of Strong Motivational Internalism. The Weak Motivational Externalist maintains that it is conceptually or metaphysically possible for an agent to believe that she ought to \emptyset , and for that agent not to be motivated to any degree to \emptyset . What I shall call ‘Strong Motivational Externalism’, by contrast, is a denial of Weak Motivational Internalism. The Strong Motivational Externalist maintains that it is conceptually or metaphysically possible for an agent of the requisite kind (e.g., a practically rational person) to judge in way W that she ought to \emptyset , and not be motivated to any degree to \emptyset .⁴³

Now for the argument. The argument says that the moral realist should believe that:

(12) Motivational Internalism (of the Weak or Strong variety) is true.

(13) The Humean view is incompatible with Motivational Internalism.

(14) Hence, the Humean view is false.

As an initial response, let me point out that (13) is not true. With enough ingenuity, we could devise a Weak Motivational Internalist view that is compatible with the Humean position. We could, for example, define ‘agents of kind K’ in such a way that they are perfectly virtuous agents acting in character who occupy idealized, ‘glitch-free’ environments.

⁴² Cf. Smith [42], McDowell [27], and Dreier [15], respectively. The modality in question is supposed to be either conceptual or metaphysical necessity. The motivation needn’t be overriding.

⁴³ The present taxonomy, then, allows for the possibility of being both a Weak Internalist and a Weak Externalist.

Admittedly, reconciling Humeanism with Internalism in this way may seem little more than definitional trickery. And no Internalist, to my knowledge, has found such a view interesting enough to defend. Suppose, then, we ignore idealized views of Internalism of this variety and assume that the agents in question are not idealized agents in idealized conditions. Then (13) seems true: the Humean appears committed to both Weak and Strong Motivational Externalism. The Humean is committed to accepting Weak Motivational Externalism because she holds that motivational states are belief/desire combinations. For any given moral belief that an agent has, the Humean holds that it is possible for that agent to lack an appropriate desire in her subjective motivational set (or disposition to desire) with which that belief can combine. Thus, it is possible on the Humean view for an agent to believe that she morally ought to do something and not be motivated to do that thing. More interesting is the fact that the Humean appears committed to Strong Motivational Externalism. For suppose we make the plausible assumption that the Humean will either claim that an agent's moral belief (together with a relevant desire) *causes* a motivational state or *constitutes* such a state. Now suppose we also accept the standard view of causality that says that, for any given case of singular causal explanation in which C causes E, it is not the case that C necessarily brings about E.⁴⁴ It follows that *any* position that claims that an agent's beliefs causally generate desires or motivation is committed to Strong Motivational Externalism. It is always conceptually or metaphysically possible that a given belief will not causally generate a motivational state. The same conclusion appears to follow even if we say that beliefs and desires do not cause but constitute motivations by virtue of their being combined in certain ways. After all, the process of a belief's combining with a desire appears to be causal, or at least temporally extended. There is always the possibility that, even in the virtuous agent, the process in which a belief and desire are supposed to combine breaks down. (Think here of a scenario in which our agent collapses and dies the instant before a given belief combines with a given desire or disposition to desire.)

So, on the present understanding of Internalism, the Humean is committed to rejecting the first premise of this anti-Humean argument. So also are various Rationalists who claim that an agent's beliefs causally generate moral motivations. Although some philosophers would consider this to be an unacceptable consequence, I believe it is not. It seems to me that the type of Motivational Internalism under consideration is an overly strong view that has received little by way of argumentative support.

What I should like to do in the remainder of this section is to go some distance toward neutralizing the fourth objection to the Humean view by showing that the sorts of consideration typically offered in favour of Motivational Internalism are unconvincing. I can't hope to canvass the full range of considerations offered in favour of Internalism here; the literature is just too large. So, I shall confine myself to what I consider to be some of the more central motivations offered for accepting the view by philosophers.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ Cf. Crane [6].

⁴⁵ To my knowledge, the only major argument for Motivational Internalism that I shall not consider is found in Smith [42]. I offer a reply to Smith in Cuneo [7]. Svavarsdóttir [46] offers an intricately detailed and, I believe, decisive, reply to the various manners in which Smith has reformulated his argument.

In a recent article, Linda Zagzebski suggests that Motivational Internalism is ‘implied by our practices of moral persuasion’. According to Zagzebski,

[i]f we want to convince someone to act in a certain way for moral reasons, we direct our efforts towards convincing her of the truth of a particular moral judgment. As long as we can get her to make the judgment unreservedly herself, we think that she will thereby be motivated to act on it . . . we think that all we need do to get her to feel a motive to act on a moral judgment is to get her to make the judgment.⁴⁶

But I doubt that we assume anything nearly this strong. Many of us are aware that people can be cowardly, selfish, traumatized or despondent and, thus, unmoved by the moral judgements that they make.⁴⁷ So, the most we assume, I believe, is that there is a *reliable* connection between getting a person to judge that a particular moral judgement is true and her being motivated to some degree to act appropriately. But positing a reliable connection between moral judgement and motivation doesn’t require us to posit a conceptually necessary connection. Strong contingent connections will suffice.

Or consider the following argument recently offered by Eve Garrard and David McNaughton:

There is clearly a difference between *saying*, perhaps sincerely, that one believes one has a reason to A and actually believing that one has reason to A (for people can be mistaken about their beliefs). In what does the difference consist? It is surely tempting to say that one who does really believe that she has reason to A is inclined to A, care about A-ing, etc. For, given that this is a belief about a practical reason, in what other way could the presence of such a belief manifest itself?⁴⁸

For the reasons adduced above, I believe that this argument does not really support Motivational Internalism either. Moreover, as I’ve been suggesting, if the connection between believing that one has a reason to \emptyset and being motivated to ϕ is causal, that will be sufficient to show that it’s not conceptually necessary that, if a person believes she has a reason to \emptyset , then she is thereby motivated to \emptyset .

Here is another sort of argument. One might believe that the so-called ‘Socratic Intuition’ is true: necessarily, if a person *really* understands what she is doing when she makes a moral judgement, then she is motivated to act on it.⁴⁹ Thus, Weak Internalism of a certain sort is true. But the Socratic Intuition also seems to me a controversial claim at best. A person might understand perfectly well what she is doing when she judges that \emptyset -ing is morally required insofar as it is, say, just, and also see that \emptyset -ing will lead to an extraordinarily humiliating and painful death for herself. I believe that it is not too far-fetched to hold that in such circumstances even a good person might not be motivated in

⁴⁶ Zagzebski [51], p. 1. For a similar line of argument, cf. Smith [42], chapter 3. I am not sure Zagzebski really believes that this argument is sound because later in the same paper she claims that it is only certain kinds of cognitive state that are intrinsically motivating, viz. emotions.

⁴⁷ An elaboration of such cases can be found in Shafer-Landau [41], Mele [29] and Svavarsdóttir [46].

⁴⁸ Garrard and McNaughton [16], p. 53. In fairness to Garrard and McNaughton, they present their argument as ‘persuasive rather than decisive’.

⁴⁹ Cf. Zagzebski [51] for a sympathetic treatment of the argument. Something like this intuition seems to lie behind McDowell’s Internalist view (cf. McDowell [27]).

any fashion to act in the way which morality dictates. To use a concept that John McDowell has introduced in defence of Motivational Internalism: on certain occasions considerations of prudence or fear may not only outweigh considerations of morality, but *silence* them.⁵⁰ Now, it might be suggested, as Linda Zagzebski has, that there are ‘intrinsically motivating’ cognitive states of certain kinds, namely, moral emotions, that involve seeing clearly what’s morally at stake.⁵¹ Maybe so. But even if this is true, moral emotions are not, on the Humean view, mere moral beliefs. Rather, they are *compounds* of beliefs and desires, and thus a special kind of motivational state. But to claim that motivational states are intrinsically motivating is, of course, not in conflict with the Humean view.⁵²

These are some of the more explicit rationales offered in favour of Motivational Internalism. What I suspect is driving many Motivational Internalist views, however, is something different. This different type of rationale surfaces in Allan Gibbard’s book *Wise Choices, Apt Feelings*. Gibbard asks the question what makes normative thought and language normative. The query is answered in the following way: ‘There is such an [normative] element, I am claiming, and it involves a kind of endorsement . . .’⁵³ So, normativity, on Gibbard’s view, involves *endorsing* something. And a person’s endorsing something, one might think, necessarily involves her being *motivated* by her endorsement. The interesting feature of this argument is that it appears to give us a plausible rationale for why there might be a conceptually necessary connection between moral judgement and motivation. And, indeed, it is this very line of thought that one finds in the

⁵⁰ Cf. McDowell [26]. Dancy [12], pp. 51–4 defends the position that prudential considerations can silence moral considerations in a good person.

An anonymous referee has suggested to me that this objection is really no better than the Internalist argument it is designed to refute. Perhaps, it is suggested, a person in the situation I have sketched has *some* motivation to do the right thing, but a much stronger motivation to save his own skin. This would be evidenced by the fact that that agent feels remorse for not doing what he believes he morally ought to do.

This is a difficult matter to adjudicate. Nevertheless, let me point out that the phenomenon of remorse does not really support a Weak Internalist position. Suppose the Weak Internalist claims that:

Necessarily, if S sincerely believes that she morally ought to \emptyset , then S \emptyset ’s or S feels remorse on account of her not \emptyset -ing.

But presumably remorse of this sort is sometimes felt, as it were, after the fact; one fails to \emptyset (or fails seriously to try to \emptyset) and feels remorse about this at some later point. If this is right, then this Internalist position is too strong for reasons I have already indicated: as long as there is a temporal gap between moral belief and remorse, it is possible that S sincerely believes that she ought to \emptyset and feels no remorse (say, on account of her being killed the instant after she forms the belief). Now, a weaker position might claim that:

Necessarily, if S sincerely believes that she ought to \emptyset , and does not \emptyset , then S typically feels remorse on account of her not \emptyset -ing.

But this view is compatible with Strong Externalism and, as far as I can tell, provides no evidence in favour of Internalism.

⁵¹ Zagzebski, *op. cit.*

⁵² Zagzebski, I might note, develops a different account of moral emotions in which the cognitive and affective aspects of an emotion are necessarily fused together. To see an action as, say, rude, in her view, is to be in an emotional state. Her view is an interesting one, and may present a challenge to the standard Humean view. However, I have my doubts about whether this account of the emotions is true. It seems to me possible that a person could see an action as rude, and be offended by it, but not be in any emotional state because she doesn’t *care* about whether she is offended.

⁵³ Gibbard [17], p. 33. Also, cf. Blackburn [4], p. 188.

noncognitivist tradition running from Ayer, Stevenson, and Hare to Gibbard.⁵⁴ It is telling that a very similar type of rationale is explicit in the writings of philosophers in the cognitivist and realist tradition. Consider the following passage from Christine Korsgaard:

According to internalists, if someone knows or accepts a moral judgment then she must have a motive for acting on it. The motive is part of the content of the judgment: the reason why the action is right is a reason *for doing it*. According to externalists, this is not necessarily so: there could be a case in which I understand both that why it is right for me to do something, and yet have no motive *for doing it*. Since most of us believe that an action's being right is a reason for doing it, Internalism seems more plausible. It captures one element of our sense that moral judgments have normative force: they are *motivating*.⁵⁵

But the line of thought present in both Gibbard and Korsgaard, I've argued, rests on a mistake. It involves conflating two senses in which something can have normative force or be practical—the sense in which a thing can have normative force insofar as it *merits* a person's endorsement and insofar as it motivates a person to act. Curiously, the very same line of thought appears to have led some philosophers, by somewhat different means, to reject the Humean view.

III. Conclusion

I have argued that the central reasons offered by Rationalists in favour of rejecting the Humean view of motivation are unconvincing. Nothing about the Humean theory threatens to distort the phenomenology of moral motivation, undercuts the objectivity of moral reasons or their practical force, or compels us to surrender the claim that normative reasons can explain action. The conclusion is interesting because, if it is correct, it establishes that some of the major motivations for being suspicious of Humeanism and developing Rationalist views are unfounded. Furthermore, on the plausible assumption that Rationalist views are coherent and have their own strengths, the conclusion gives us some reason to believe that, when properly understood, issues of motivational psychology do not really have any direct bearing upon the realist/antirealist debate in ethics. Realists can be unabashed pluralists concerning theories of motivation, and can plausibly adopt any number of different accounts thereof. And what this suggests is that there really is no threat to realism that issues from the nature of moral motivation. When defending her view, the realist is better off shifting her attention to the areas of moral ontology and epistemology.⁵⁶

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⁵⁴ However, it should be admitted that Gibbard's view concerning Motivational Internalism is ambiguous, at best.

⁵⁵ Korsgaard [23], p. 43. Cf., also, Nagel [31] and Jackson [21] for similar thoughts.

⁵⁶ I wish to thank Jeanine Diller, Chris Eberle, Dan Howard-Snyder, Steve Layman, Maggie Little, Luke Reinsma, Russ Shafer-Landau, René van Woudenberg, and three anonymous referees for comments on previous drafts of this essay. I also thank Jonathan Dancy for conversation that helped me to understand his view better. Finally, I express my gratitude to the Vrije Universiteit, Netherlands, whose institutional support provided time to finish this essay.

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