

REASONS AND MOTIVATION

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I—Derek Parfit

As rational beings, we can ask:

What do we have most reason to want, and do?

What is it most rational for us to want, and do?

These questions differ in only one way. While reasons are provided by the facts, the rationality of our desires and acts depends instead on what we believe, or—given the evidence, ought rationally to believe. When we believe the relevant facts, these questions have the same answers. In other cases, it can be rational to want, or do, what we have no reason to want, or do. Thus, if I believe falsely that my hotel is on fire, it may be rational for me to jump into the canal; but I may have no reason to jump. Since beliefs aim at truth, and to be rational is to respond to reasons, it is the first question that is fundamental.

This question is about *normative* reasons. When we have such a reason, and we act for that reason, it becomes our *motivating* reason. But we can have either kind of reason without having the other. Thus, if I jump into the canal, my motivating reason was provided by my belief; but I had no normative reason to jump. I merely thought I did. And, if I failed to notice that the canal was frozen, I had a reason not to jump that, because it was unknown to me, did not motivate me.

Though we can have normative reasons without being motivated, and vice versa, such reasons are closely related to our motivation. There are, however, very different views about what this relation is. This disagreement raises wider questions about what normative reasons *are*, and about *which* reasons there are. After sketching some of these views, I shall discuss some arguments by Williams, and then say where, in my opinion, the truth lies.¹

1. Given the size of this territory, my map will have to be rough. I must make some claims which, unless further qualified, could not have a hope of being true. In writing this paper, I have been helped by several people, especially Bernard Williams, Jonathan Dancy, John Broome, Jeff McMahan, Ingmar Persson, Roger Crisp, Julian Savulescu, Brad Hooker, Jerry Cohen, Susan Hurley, Tim Scanlon, Jonathan Bennett, Philippa Foot, David McNaughton, Sigrun Svaravsdottir, Mary Coleman, Ken O'Day and Sophia Reibetanz.

I

Following Williams, we can distinguish two kinds of theory.² According to

Internalism about reasons: All normative reasons are in this sense *internal*: for it to be true that

(R) we have a reason to do something,

it must be true that either

(D) doing this thing might help to fulfil one of our present intrinsic desires,

or

(M) if we knew the relevant facts, and deliberated rationally, we would be motivated to do this thing.

Our desire for something is *intrinsic* if we want this thing for its own sake. Facts are *relevant* if our knowledge of them might affect our motivation. We can be *motivated* to do something without being moved to do it. But, for us to be motivated, it must be true that, given the opportunity, and in the absence of contrary or competing motivations, we would do this thing.

Many Internalists believe that, if either (D) or (M) is true, that is not only necessary but also sufficient for the having of a reason. Though my remarks will often apply to this simpler view, I shall not say when that is so. Similarly, though (D) could be true while (M) is false, and vice versa, I shall here, like Williams, set (D) aside.

According to *Externalists*, at least some reasons for acting are not internal, since they do not require the truth of (M). Suppose that I have borrowed money from some poor person. This fact, some Externalists would claim, gives me a reason to return this money. In calling this reason *external*, they would not mean that I am not motivated to return this money. They would mean that I have this reason whatever my motivational state.

Consider next one of Williams's examples. Suppose that, by taking a certain medicine, someone could protect his health against

2. Williams drew this distinction in his 'Internal and External Reasons', henceforth *IER*, reprinted in his *Moral Luck* (Cambridge University Press, 1982). He returned to it in 'Internal Reasons and the Obscurity of Blame', henceforth *IROB*, in *Making Sense of Humanity* (Cambridge University Press, 1995); and again in *World, Mind, and Ethics*, henceforth *WME*, edited by J.E.J. Altham and Ross Harrison (Cambridge University Press, 1995) pp. 186–194 and 214–16.

some illness in the further future. According to Internalists, if this person did not care about his further future, and his indifference would survive any amount of informed and rational deliberation, he would have no reason to take this medicine.³ Most Externalists would disagree. On their view, we all have reasons to protect our health, and to prevent our own future suffering, and these reasons do not depend on whether, after informed and rational deliberation, we would care about these things.

There is now a complication. Many Externalists would claim that, if we knew the relevant facts and were fully rational, we would be motivated to do whatever we had reason to do. This claim is not, as it may seem, a concession to Internalism. According to these Externalists, if

(R) we have a reason to do something,

that entails that

(E) if we knew the relevant facts, and were fully *substantively* rational, we would be motivated to do this thing.

To be substantively rational, we must care about certain things, such as our own well-being. If Williams's imagined person were fully rational, these Externalists would claim, he would be motivated to take the medicine that he knows he needs. That could be true even if, because he is not fully substantively rational, no amount of informed deliberation would in fact motivate him.

Internalists hold a different view. On their view, more fully stated, for it to be true that

(R) we have a reason to do something,

it must be true that

(M) if we knew the relevant facts, and deliberated in a way that was *procedurally* rational, we would be motivated to do this thing.

To be procedurally rational, we must deliberate in certain ways, but we are not required to have any particular desires or aims, such as concern about our own well-being. If Internalists allowed such further requirements, then, as Williams writes, ‘there would be no

3. Williams discusses this example in *IER*, pages 105–6. (To make the case more plausible, I have added the reference to the further future.)

significant difference between the internalist and externalist accounts', since Internalism would allow 'anything the externalist could want'.⁴

Given the difference between (E) and (M), the distinction between these views is deep. Most Internalists describe deliberation in partly normative terms. But, since their conception of rationality is procedural, it is an empirical, psychological question whether claims like (M) are true.⁵ Thus we might be unable to predict whether, if Williams's imagined person were procedurally rational, he would be motivated to take the medicine that he knows he needs.⁶ When Externalists appeal to (E), their claim is not empirical. It is a normative question whether, if this person failed to be motivated, that would make him less than fully rational.

There is a related difference in the way the inferences run. According to Internalists, if (R) is true, that is *because* (M) is true. The psychological fact described in (M) is, or is part of, what makes (R) true. According to Externalists, (E) is merely a consequence of (R). What gives us reasons for acting are not facts about our own motivation, but facts about our own or other people's well-being, or facts about other things that are worth achieving, or—some would add—moral requirements. Internalists derive conclusions about reasons from psychological claims about the motivation that, under certain conditions, we would in fact have. Externalists derive, from normative claims about what is worth achieving, conclusions about reasons, and about the motivation that we ought to have.

If we turn to morality, there is a similar pair of views. According to

Moral Internalism: We cannot have a duty to act in some way unless (M) is true.

This view restricts the range of those to whom moral claims apply. According to Moral Internalists, if informed and rational deliberation would not lead us to be motivated to do something, it cannot be our duty to do this thing. Those who were sufficiently ruthless, or amoral, would have no duties—and, some Internalists conclude,

4. *IROB*, p. 36.

5. More precisely, while it is a normative question which kinds of deliberation are procedurally rational, it is an empirical question whether, if we deliberated in such a way, we would be motivated to act.

6. As Williams writes: 'I take it that insofar as there are determinately recognisable needs, there can be an agent who lacks any interest in getting what he needs. I take it, further, that lack of interest can remain after deliberation' (*IER*, p. 105).

could not be held to be acting wrongly. *Moral Externalists* reject these claims. On the simplest version of their view, moral requirements apply to all of us, whether or not (M) is true.

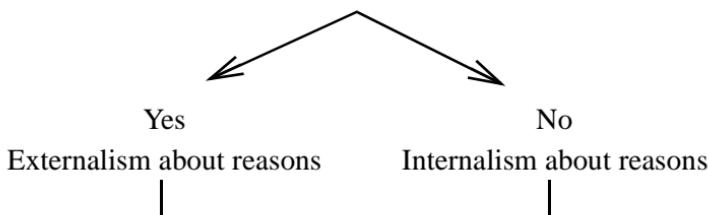
We should also consider a view, not about the motivational implications of reasons or morality, but about moral reasons. According to

Moral Rationalism: Moral requirements always give, to those to whom they apply, reasons for acting.

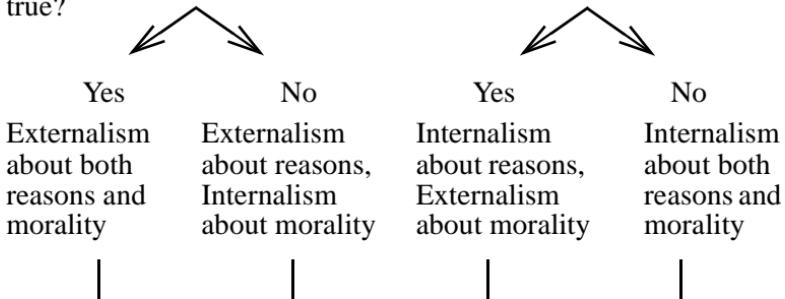
According to those who reject Moral Rationalism, people who do not care about morality might have a duty to act in some way without having any reason to do so.

The relation between these views can be shown as follows:

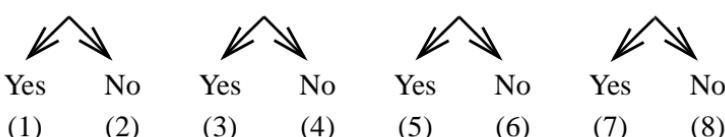
Q1: Could we have a reason to act in some way even if (M) were not true?



Q2: Could we have a duty to act in some way, even if (M) were not true?



Q3: Could we have a duty to act in some way, without having a reason to do so?



If we are Externalists about both reasons and morality, we may believe that we always have a moral reason to do our duty. This is view (2), or Externalist Moral Rationalism. On a stronger version of this view, if some act is our duty, that makes it what we have most reason to do.

Though Double Externalists can be Moral Rationalists, they do not have to be. According to some writers, for example, though self-interest provides external reasons, morality does not. Such people accept view (1).⁷

If we are Double Internalists, we are likely to be Moral Rationalists, accepting (8) rather than (7). On this view, we cannot have a duty to act in some way unless (M) is true, and we are likely to believe that (M)'s truth would, in such cases, give us a reason for acting. We would then conclude that we always have a reason to do our duty. This version of Moral Rationalism is weaker than the Externalist version, since it restricts morality to those who have moral motivation.

Even if we are Internalists about reasons, we may believe that moral requirements apply to everyone. We shall then combine Internalism about reasons with Externalism about morality. On this view, we cannot be Moral Rationalists. We preserve morality's scope at the cost of denying its reason-giving force. Though we believe that people can have duties whatever their motivational state, we must admit that, on our view, people may have no reason to do their duty. Since this view implies (5), (6) is untenable.

The remaining views are (3) and (4), which combine Externalism about reasons with Internalism about morality. Though not incoherent, these views are too implausible to be worth discussing.

Consider now, not our *having* some reason for acting, but our *believing* that we have some reason. According to

Belief Internalism: Beliefs about reasons necessarily involve motivation. We cannot believe that we have a reason to do something without being motivated to do this thing.

Belief Externalists reject this claim. More commonly appealed to is another, more restricted view. According to

7. This view was suggested, for example, in Philippa Foot's 'Morality as a System of Hypothetical Imperatives'.

Moral Belief Internalism: Moral beliefs necessarily involve motivation. We cannot believe some act to be our duty without being motivated to do it.

On a stronger version of this view, we cannot have a moral belief without being moved, if the opportunity arises, to act upon it.⁸

Consider next some views about motivation. According to

the Humean theory: No belief could motivate us unless it is combined with some independent desire.

Such a desire is *independent* when it is not itself produced by our having this belief.

As Nagel and others claim, we can reject this theory.⁹ When we come to have some belief—such as the belief that some aim is worth achieving—that might cause us to have some wholly new desire. Such a belief could not all by itself cause us to have this desire, since we would have to be *such that*, if we came to have this belief, that would cause us to have this desire. But this disposition may not itself be a desire. On a variant of this anti-Humean view, whenever a belief moves us to act, we can be truly said to have wanted to act as we did; but this desire may not be a distinct mental state, since it may consist in our being moved by this belief. In either of these ways, reason might have the power that Hume denied. By giving us such beliefs, reason might motivate us without the help of any independent desire.

Humeans might retreat to the view that, for beliefs to motivate us, they must be combined with desires, even if these beliefs themselves produce these desires. But, with this revision, the Humean theory would lose most of its significance. According to Hume, reason is, and must be, wholly inert or inactive, as must be anything that reason alone could produce.¹⁰ We could not claim that reason cannot be active on the ground that, though it might

8. In drawing these distinctions, I follow Stephen Darwall, *Impartial Reason* (Cornell University Press, 1983) p. 54.

9. *The Possibility of Altruism*, Oxford University Press, 1970, Chapter V. Of the other authors who challenge this theory, I have learnt most from Jonathan Dancy, *Moral Reasons* (Blackwell, 1993) Chapters 1 to 3, and 'Why there is really no such thing as the Theory of Motivation', *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, 1995, pp. 1–18; and Francis Snare, *Morals, Motivation, and Convention* (Cambridge University Press, 1991) Chapters 1 to 5.

10. In Hume's words, 'an active principle can never be founded on an inactive', *A Treatise of Human Nature*, edited by L. A. Selby-Bigge, (Oxford University Press), p. 457.

motivate us, it could do that only by producing some new desire. That would be like claiming that some bomb cannot be destructive because, though it might destroy us, it could do that only by producing some explosion.

Consider finally two Humean arguments. According to some non-cognitivists:

- (A) If we have some moral conviction, we must be motivated to act upon it.
- (B) If moral convictions were beliefs, (A) could not be true.

Therefore

- (C) Moral convictions cannot be beliefs.

In defending (B), these non-cognitivists appeal to the Humean theory. They might say: ‘If moral convictions were beliefs, they could not motivate us without the help of some independent desire, so it would be conceivable that we might have some moral conviction without being motivated to act upon it. Since that is inconceivable, moral convictions must themselves be desires, or pro-attitudes.’

If we are cognitivists about morality, and wish to deny (B), it would not be enough to show that we can reject the Humean theory. Even if moral beliefs *could* motivate us without the help of some independent desire, that would not explain how such beliefs *necessarily* involve motivation. To reject (B), we might appeal to

the Platonic theory: Moral knowledge necessarily motivates.

Or we might claim that, unless we cared about morality, we would not be able to have moral beliefs. But, for cognitivists, both claims are hard to defend and explain.¹¹

We may find it easier to question (A), or Moral Belief Internalism. Or we might try to show that, in the sense in which (A) is true, it does not support non-cognitivism. Thus we might claim that, while moral beliefs are not called ‘convictions’ or ‘sincere’ unless they involve motivation, those who lack such

11. We would also need to extend the Platonic theory so that it covered even false moral beliefs.

motivation might still know that their acts were wrong. Such knowledge may imply belief in the sense that cognitivism requires.

According to another Humean argument:

- (D) When moral convictions motivate us, they can do that without the help of any independent desire.
- (E) No belief could have this property.

Therefore

- (C) Moral convictions cannot be beliefs, but must themselves be desires.

This argument is weaker. Unlike (A), (D) has little intuitive appeal.¹² And, to deny (E), it is enough to reject the Humean theory.

My description of these views differs from those that are sometimes given. Several writers, for example, conflate my four versions of Internalism. That leads them to overlook important possibilities. Consider next what Korsgaard calls

the internalism requirement: ‘Practical reason claims, if they are really to present us with reasons for action, must be capable of motivating rational persons.’¹³

My Externalists could accept this requirement. Some would make the stronger claim that, if we believe that we have a reason to do something, and we are fully practically rational, we *must* be motivated to do this thing.

Korsgaard also says that, according to externalists, an act’s rightness is not a reason for doing it.¹⁴ Several other writers make such claims.¹⁵ This use of ‘externalist’ conflicts with mine. It is my Double Externalists who can most easily be Moral Rationalists, since they can regard morality as always giving everyone reasons for acting. Why do these writers claim that, if we are externalists, we shall deny that an act’s rightness is a reason for doing it? They may assume that, even if we are Externalists about morality, or

12. Though it might be claimed that (D) is implied by (A).

13. ‘Skepticism about Practical Reason’, *The Journal of Philosophy*, Volume 83, No 1 (January 1986) reprinted in Christine Korsgaard, *Creating the Kingdom of Ends* (Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 317.

14. *Creating the Kingdom of Ends*, p. 43.

15. See, for example, David Brink, *Moral Realism and the Foundations of Ethics* (Cambridge University Press, 1989) pp. 37–43, and Michael Smith, *The Moral Problem* (Blackwell, 1994) pp. 62–3.

moral beliefs, we must be Internalists about reasons.¹⁶ Or they may conflate normative reasons and motivating states.¹⁷

We can now draw some more distinctions. According to Internalists, for it to be true that

(R) We have a reason to do something,

it is necessary—and, some add, sufficient—that

(M) if we deliberated on the facts in a procedurally rational way, we would be motivated to do this thing.

This view can take at least three forms:

Analytically Reductive: When we assert (R), what we mean is (M).

Non-Analytically Reductive: Though these claims do not mean the same, when (R) is true, that normative fact is the same as, or consists in, the fact reported by (M).

Non-Reductive: The facts reported by (R) and (M) are very different. While (M) is psychological, (R) is an irreducibly normative truth.

Reductive Internalism is a form of naturalism. Non-Reductive Internalism is a form of non-reductive normative realism.

There is another form of Internalism that is, in a weak sense, non-reductive. According to some non-cognitivists, since (R) is a normative claim, it cannot be, in a strong sense, true. If we claim that (R) requires (M), we are expressing some kind of attitude.¹⁸

Similar remarks apply to Externalism. Thus, according to most Externalists,

16. Thus David McNaughton writes that, according to externalists, ‘someone who has no concern for human welfare may still recognize that inflicting unnecessary suffering on others is morally wrong. But that recognition is held not to be in itself sufficient to give him a reason to desist from causing such suffering. If he lacks the appropriate desires then he has no reason to act in accordance with moral requirements’, (*Moral Vision* (Blackwell, 1988) pp. 48–9). My Externalists can deny that reasons presuppose desires.

17. Thus McNaughton also writes that externalism regards ‘moral questions as factual ones but distances them from *motivation* in its claim that moral commitments do not, in themselves, provide the agent with *reason to act*'; in contrast, on ‘an internalist account of moral *motivation*', there are facts awareness of which ‘will supply the observer with *reason to act*’ (*op. cit.*, pp. 49 and 105, my italics).

18. Cf. Allan Gibbard, *Wise Choices, Apt Feelings* (Oxford University Press, 1990). I must here ignore such views.

(P) We have a prudential reason to act in some way
if and only if

(S) this way of acting would promote our own well-being.

(P) and (S) might mean the same, or report the same fact in two different ways, or report two very different facts, or this Externalist view might consist in the holding of some attitude.

That completes my proposed taxonomy. I shall now begin to suggest why, as I believe, we should be non-reductive normative realists, and should regard all reasons as external.

II

In the articles that have done most to clarify and to show the importance of these questions, Williams argues that there are no external reasons.

Williams's main objection is that Externalists have not explained what such reasons could be. He considers someone who maltreats his wife, and whose attitudes and acts would not be altered by informed and rational deliberation. If we are Externalists, we might claim that, despite this man's motivational state, his wife's unhappiness gives him reasons to treat her better. In rejecting this claim, Williams asks:

what is the difference supposed to be between saying that the agent has a reason to act more considerately, and saying one of the many other things we can say to people whose behaviour does not accord with what we think it should be? As, for instance, that it would be better if they acted otherwise?¹⁹

We might answer: 'The difference is that, if we merely said that it would be better if this man acted more considerately, we would not be claiming that, as we believe and you deny, he has reasons to do so.'

Williams's ground for rejecting this claim is that he finds it 'quite obscure' what it could mean. As he writes elsewhere, Externalists do not 'offer any *content* for external reasons statements'.²⁰

19. *IROB*, pp. 39–40.

20. *WME*, p. 191, my italics.

Williams may here be assuming Analytical Internalism.²¹ On this view, in claiming that

- (1) this man has reasons to treat his wife better,

we would mean that

- (2) if he deliberated rationally on the facts, he would be motivated to treat her better.

If (1) meant (2), and we knew that (2) was false, it would indeed be obscure what, in claiming (1), we could mean. *Non-Analytical Internalists* would not find our claim so obscure. Such Internalists believe that, though (1) is true only if (2) is true, these claims have different meanings. These Internalists would understand—though they would reject—the view that, despite this man's motivational state, he has reasons to treat his wife better.

Discussing another, similar example, Williams asks:

What is gained, except perhaps rhetorically, by claiming that A has a reason to do a certain thing, when all one has left to say is that this is what... a decent person... would do?²²

This question seems to assume that, if our claim about A does not have the sense described by Analytical Internalists, there is nothing distinctive left for it to mean. We couldn't mean that, despite A's motivational state, A has a reason to do this thing. If we could mean that, there would be a simple answer to Williams's question. We might be saying something that was both distinctive and true.

Williams continues:

it would make a difference to ethics if certain kinds of *internal* reason were very generally to hand... But what difference would external reasons make?... Should we suppose that, if genuine external reasons were to be had, morality might get some leverage on a squeamish Jim or priggish George, or even on the fanatical Nazi?... I cannot see what leverage it would secure: what would these external reasons do to these people, or for our relations to them?

21. As he seems to do elsewhere. Thus he writes: 'I think the sense of a statement of the form "A has a reason to *phi*" is given by the internalist model' (*IROB*, p. 40). See also *IER*, pp. 109–10, and *IROB*, p. 36. In his most recent discussion, however, on *MWE*, p. 188, Williams rejects Analytical Internalism.

22. *WME*, p. 215.

These remarks assume that, for external reasons to make a difference to ethics, such reasons would have to get *leverage* on people, by motivating them to act differently. This conception of ethics is, I believe, too utilitarian. When we believe that other people have reasons for caring, or for acting, we do not have these beliefs as a way of affecting those people. Our aim is, not influence, but truth. Similar remarks apply to morality. Someone might say:

What difference would it make if it were true that the Nazis acted wrongly? What leverage would that moral fact have secured? What would the wrongness of their acts have done to them?

Even if moral truths cannot affect people, they can still be truths. People can be acting wrongly, though the wrongness of their acts does not do anything to them.

After asking what external reasons would do to such people, Williams writes:

Unless we are given an answer to that question, I, for one, find it hard to resist Nietzsche's plausible interpretation, that the desire of philosophy to find a way in which morality can be guaranteed to get beyond merely *designating* the vile and recalcitrant, to transfixing them or getting inside them, is only a fantasy of *resentiment*, a magical project to make a wish and its words into a coercive power.²³

Williams has a real target here. Many philosophers have hoped to find moral arguments, or truths, that could not fail to motivate us. Williams, realistically, rejects that hope.

Note however that, in making these remarks, Williams assumes that claims about reasons could achieve only two things. If such claims cannot get inside people, by inducing them to act differently, they can only designate these people. On the first alternative, these claims would have motivating force. On the second, they would be merely classificatory, since their meaning would be only that, if these people were not so vile, or were in some other way different, they *would* act differently. As before, however, there is a third possibility. Even when such claims do not have motivating force, they could be more than merely classificatory.

23. *WME*, p. 216.

They could have *normative* force. Perhaps these people *should* act differently.

We should remember next that Externalists need not be Moral Rationalists. Some Externalists would agree with Williams that those who act wrongly may have no reason to act differently. These people are Externalists in their beliefs about prudential reasons. Return to Williams's imagined person who needs some medicine to protect his health, and whose failure to care about his future would survive any amount of informed and procedurally rational deliberation. Such a person, Williams writes, would have no reason to take this medicine.²⁴ He might ask:

What would be gained by claiming that this person has such a reason? What would that add to the claim that, if he were prudent, he would take this medicine?

This claim would add what Williams denies. This person, these Externalists believe, ought rationally to take this medicine. He has reasons to care about his future; and, since these are reasons for caring, this person's failure to care does not undermine these reasons. Such claims, I believe, make sense, and might be true.

Williams suggests several arguments against their sense and truth. According to one such argument:

- (A) Normative reasons must be able to be motivating reasons. It must be possible that we should act *for these reasons*.
- (B) Motivating reasons must be internal, since our acts must be in part explained by our desires, or other motivating states.

Therefore

- (C) Normative reasons must be internal.²⁵

If we reject the Humean theory of motivation, we might question (B). Some of our acts, we might claim, are fully explained by our beliefs.

24. *IER*, 105–6.

25. This argument, which Williams may not intend, is suggested by remarks in *IER*, pp. 102 and 106–7, and in *IROB*, p. 39.

We can also claim, that in the sense in which (A) is true, it does not support (C). Suppose that, unlike Williams's imagined person, I care about my future. As Internalists would then agree, if it is true that

(3) I need some medicine to protect my health,

this fact would give me a reason to take this medicine. For (3) to give me such a reason, it must be possible, as (A) claims, that I should act for this reason. That condition would be met if, when asked why I took this medicine, I could truly answer, 'Because I need it to protect my health'. The normative reason provided by (3) could then be said to *be* my motivating reason. But, though these reasons would be in that sense the same, they would still differ in at least two ways. First, for (3) to have given me my motivating reason, I must have believed (3). But, even if I had not had this belief, (3)'s truth would have given me a normative reason to take this medicine. We can have reasons of which we are unaware.²⁶ Second, I would have had this same motivating reason even if my belief had been false.²⁷ But, if (3) had been false, I would have had no normative reason to take this medicine: I would have merely thought I did. So, while motivating reasons require that we have some belief, whether or not this belief is true, normative reasons are provided by some truth, whether or not we believe it.

Return now to the argument sketched above. Perhaps, for (3) to have given me my motivating reason, I must have wanted to protect my health, or had some other relevant desire. That might make this reason internal. But that would not show that my normative reason must have been internal. As we have just seen, normative and motivating reasons are not identical. Though motivating reasons require that we have some belief, that is not true of the corresponding normative reasons. Since an appeal to (A) could not show that, to have some normative reason, we must have some belief, it cannot show that, to have some normative reason, we must have some desire, or other motivating state. Externalists are free to claim that, even if I had not cared about my health, and my indifference would have survived procedurally rational deliber-

26. As Williams would agree. See, for example, *IER*, pp. 102–3.

27. As Williams writes: 'The difference between false and true beliefs on the agent's part cannot alter the *form* of the explanation which will be appropriate to his action' (*IER*, p. 102).

ation, I would have had a normative reason to take the medicine that I need.²⁸

Consider next someone who has no internal reason to act in some way. Let us call this person *Jack*, and this way of acting *X*. Suppose we claim that

- (4) Jack has some external reason to do X.

Williams writes that, if Jack comes to believe (4), ‘he will be motivated to act; so coming to believe it must, essentially, involve acquiring a new motivation. How can that be?’²⁹ These remarks suggest that, if we are Externalists, we cannot explain the truth of Belief Internalism.

There is, I believe, nothing to explain. Belief Internalism is most clearly false when applied to people who accept Reductive Internalism. Suppose that such a person comes to believe that

- (5) if he knew certain facts, and deliberated rationally, he would be motivated to act in some way.

As a Reductive Internalist, this person may conclude that he has a reason to act in this way. But, because he doesn’t yet know these facts, he might not be motivated to do so. People often try to avoid

28. It may be objected that, if I had not cared about my health, and my indifference would have survived such deliberation, it would *not* have been possible, as (A) requires, that I should have acted for this reason. But, in the sense in which (A) is uncontroversial, it means only that, if certain facts are claimed to provide normative reasons, it must be true that ‘people sometimes act for these reasons’ (*IER*, p. 102, my italics). The kind of reason that (3) provides meets that requirement. People sometimes take medicine that they know they need. This last objection takes (A) to mean that, for it to be true that some particular person has some normative reason, it must be possible that, on *this* occasion, and *without* any further change in this person’s motivational state, *this* person should act for this reason. So interpreted, (A) could not support an argument for Internalism, since it would merely restate this view.

Much more needs to be said about motivating reasons. Such reasons can be acceptably regarded in two ways. On the *psychological account*, motivating reasons are beliefs and/or desires, when these explain our decisions and our acts. On the *non-psychological account*, motivating reasons are *what* we believe and/or *what* we want. Thus, when asked, ‘Why did he jump?’, we might truly claim: ‘Because the hotel was on fire’, or ‘Because he believed the hotel was on fire’, or ‘To save his life’, or ‘Because he wanted to save his life’.

Since both accounts are acceptable, we should accept both, and should thus conclude that there are two kinds of motivating reason: one kind are mental states, the other are the contents or objects of these states. These two kinds of reason always go together. For some purposes, especially normative discussion, the non-psychological account is more natural; for others, such as causal explanation, we must appeal to the psychological account. The acceptability of both accounts can, however, cause confusion. On one account, motivating reasons are the true or apparent normative reasons belief in which explain our decisions and our acts. On the other account, motivating reasons are motivating states. Since *motivating* reasons can thus be regarded *both* as normative reasons *and* as motivating states, that may suggest that *normative* reasons are motivating states. That, I believe, is a grave mistake.

29. *IER*, p. 108.

learning certain facts because they want to avoid the motivation which, as they predict, that knowledge would arouse in them.

Externalists need not claim that, if Jack came to believe (4), that would guarantee that he would be motivated to do X. But they might claim that, if Jack were rational, his coming to have this belief would motivate him. For that to be so, Williams writes, (4) ‘will have to be taken as roughly equivalent to, or at least as entailing’, the claim that

- (6) if Jack ‘rationally deliberated, then, whatever motivations he originally had, he would come to be motivated’ to do X.

But, if (4) entails (6), Williams continues,

it is very plausible to suppose that all external reason statements are false. For, *ex hypothesi*, there is no motivation for the agent to deliberate *from*, to reach this new motivation.

If Jack did become motivated to do X, as a result of such deliberation, Jack’s new motivation would have to have been reached *from* some earlier motivation. But ‘in that case’, Williams objects, ‘an *internal* reason statement would have been true’.³⁰

If we are Externalists, we could give three replies. First, this objection seems to assume the Humean theory. As I have said, we can reject this theory. When Jack comes to believe (4), that might produce in him some wholly new desire.³¹ For that to happen, Jack would have to be such that, if he came to believe (4), he would develop this new desire; but that disposition may not itself be a desire, or other motivating state. Since Jack would not be deliberating *from* some earlier motivation, it is doubtful whether, before he developed this desire, he would have had an internal reason to do X.

Second, even if Jack would have had such a reason, that would not show it to be false that

- (4) Jack has some external reason to do X.

(4) does not imply that Jack has no internal reason to do X. (4) means that Jack has a reason to do X that is not provided by, and

30. *IER*, p. 109, my italics.

31. Williams himself writes that ‘reason, that is to say, rational processes, can give rise to new motivations’ (*IER*, p. 108). The argument that we are now discussing must, however, assume that Jack could not rationally become motivated to do X except by deliberating from some earlier motivation. Without that assumption, (4) might both entail (6) and be true.

does not require, the motivational fact—(M)—to which Internalists appeal. Jack may have this external reason even if, because (M) is true, he also has an internal reason to do the same thing.³²

Third, when Williams refers to *rational* deliberation, he uses ‘rational’, as we have seen, in a procedural sense. For our deliberation to be procedurally rational, we must avoid ‘errors of fact or reasoning’, and we must meet certain other conditions; but there are no substantive requirements on the motivation with which we begin. If that is the sense of ‘rationally’ used in (6), Externalists can deny that (4) entails (6). On that reading, the claim that (4) entails (6) assumes Internalism; so it cannot be an argument for this view. And if this entailment seems plausible, Externalists can say, that is because (6) has a different reading. (6) could be taken to mean

- (7) If Jack deliberated on the facts, and were fully substantively rational, he would be motivated to do X.

To be substantively rational, we must want, and do, what we know that we have most reason to want and do. If what (4) entails is (7), it is irrelevant whether, after informed and procedurally rational deliberation, Jack would be motivated to do X. What (4) would entail is that, if Jack were substantively rational, his awareness of this external reason would motivate him. This claim, which Externalists could happily accept, is not challenged by the argument that we are now discussing.³³

Williams sometimes appeals to a weaker form of Internalism. On this view, for it to be true that we have a reason to do something,

32. As before, Williams himself notes that claims about internal reasons do not conflict with claims about external reasons (*IER* p. 108). This suggests that I am misinterpreting the first full paragraph on *IER* p. 109. Williams’s argument may instead be this:

- (i) Since (4) entails (6), Jack cannot have an external reason to do X unless it is true that, if he rationally deliberated, he would become motivated to do X.
- (ii) Jack could not rationally become motivated to do X unless he were deliberating from some earlier motivation.
- (iii) In that case, Jack would have had an internal reason to do X.
- (iv) *Ex hypothesi*, however, Jack had no such reason.

Therefore

- (v) Jack cannot have an external reason to do X.

As I have just implied, and shall argue further below, we can reject (ii).

33. As Williams points out, (4) could not always entail (7), since what Jack has reason to do may in part depend on facts about him that would not have obtained if he had been fully substantively rational (*WME*, p. 190).

it need not be true that, after a certain process of deliberation, we *would* become motivated to do this thing. What is required is only that, by deliberating in this way, we *could rationally* come to have such motivation.³⁴

When stating this view, Williams often applies it, not to our becoming motivated, but to our deciding to act. For such a decision to be rational, as Williams notes, we must believe that we have *most* reason to act in some way. According to what we can call

Weak Internalism: For it to be true that

- (A) X is what we have most reason to do,

it must be true that

- (B) there is ‘a sound deliberative route’, starting from our ‘existing motivations’, by which we could rationally decide to do X.

According to the rival view, which we can call

Strong Externalism: If it is true that

- (A) X is what we have most reason to do,

it must be true that

- (C) we could rationally decide to do X, for this reason, *whatever* our existing motivations.³⁵

In rejecting Strong Externalism, Williams calls it ‘unattractive’. What objection might he have in mind?

Strong Externalists assume that, given certain ways of specifying X, (A) could be true whatever our existing motivations. Williams would reject this assumption, since he believes that, for (A) to be true, (B) must be true. But, since this belief assumes Weak Internalism, it cannot provide an argument for preferring Weak Internalism to the rival, Strong Externalist view.

34. *IER*, p. 105, and *IROB*, p. 35.

35. I take my description of these views from *WME*, pp. 186–7. The phrase ‘we could rationally’ here means ‘it would not be irrational for us’.

Such an argument must allow us to suppose that, whatever our existing motivations, (A) might be true. The argument must claim that, even if we come to believe truly that

- (A) X is what we have most reason to do,

that, by itself, would not make it rational for us to decide to do X. For such a decision to be rational, we must have reached it by a deliberative route that appealed to some motivation that we already had.³⁶

There seem to be two ways to defend these claims. Weak Internalists might say that, even if (A) is true, we could not rationally come to believe (A) except by deliberating from some earlier motivation. Or they might say that even if, in some other way, we have rationally come to believe (A), that would not make it rational for us, whatever our earlier motivations, to decide to do X.

Both these claims can be plausibly denied. If it is true that we have most reason to act in some way, it could be rational to come to believe that truth by some process of deliberation that did not start from facts about our existing motivations. When we consider certain other facts or arguments, we may rationally change our view about which aims are worth achieving, and we may thus be rationally led to some new belief about what we have reason to do.³⁷ And, if we believe both rationally and truly that we have most reason to act in some way, that must make it rational for us, whatever our earlier motivations, to decide to act in this way. That is an understatement. If we know that we have most reason to act in some way, it would be irrational for us *not* to make that decision.

Weak Internalists might now reply that, if we decide to do X because we come to believe (A), we must have been deliberating *from* one of our earlier motivations. Williams includes, among what he counts as motivations, ‘dispositions of evaluation’.³⁸ Since our deliberation has led us to believe (A), and to decide to do X, we must have been such that, given such deliberation, we might

36. The argument might then claim that, if (A) doesn’t entail (C), we should drop our assumption that, even if (B) is false, (A) might be true.

37. For what may be a different view, which appeals to a ‘non-rational’ change of mind like that involved in ‘conversion’, see John McDowell, ‘Might there be external reasons?’, (*MWE*, pp. 72–8).

38. *IER*, p. 105.

come to reach that belief and make that decision. We must, that is, have had a disposition to reach this evaluative conclusion. And that might be held to show that, as Weak Internalists claim, any rational decision to act must be reached by deliberation from some pre-existing motivation.

Williams would not, I believe, give this reply. It would achieve nothing. No Externalist would mind conceding that, if our deliberation leads us to make some decision, we must have been such that our deliberation might lead us to make this decision.³⁹

Return now to Williams's objections to the weaker form of Externalism. Williams suggests one other argument against this view. Externalists might say, he writes,

that the force of an external reason statement can be explained in the following way. Such a statement implies that a rational agent would be motivated to act appropriately, and it can carry this implication because a rational agent is precisely one who has a general disposition... to do what (he believes) there is reason for him to do.⁴⁰

Such a claim, Williams objects,

merely puts off the problem... *What* is it that one comes to believe when he comes to believe that

[(1)] there is reason for him to do X,

if it is not the proposition, or something that entails the proposition, that

[(2)] if he deliberated rationally, he would be motivated to act appropriately?

We were asking how any true proposition could have that content; it cannot help, in answering that, to appeal to a supposed desire which is activated by a belief which has that very content.⁴¹

Since Williams believes that (1) could be true, and that (1) either means or entails (2), the problem that he mentions cannot be how

39. Suppose that we are *not* such that, if we deliberated in this way, we might come to believe (A), and for that reason decide to do X. According to Weak Internalists, (A) would then be false. According to Strong Externalists, (A) might still be true. Strong Externalism might here be claimed to violate the principle that 'ought' implies 'can'. Though I believe that this objection is unsound, I have no space to argue that here.

40. *IER*, p. 109.

41. *IER*, pp. 109–110 (I have substituted 'do X' for 'phi').

propositions with that content could be true. But his objection may be this. If we claim that (1) means (2), and we use ‘rationally’ in (2) in Williams’s preferred procedural sense, that gives (1) a determinate content. It is an empirical question whether, if someone deliberated in this way, he would be motivated to act. But, if (2) is to give the content of a claim about some *external* reason, it would have to use ‘rationally’ in the other, substantive sense: the sense in which, to be fully rational, we must be motivated by our awareness of any reason. On such a view, in claiming that

- (1) someone has a reason to do X,

we would mean that

- (3) if this person deliberated on the facts, and he would be motivated to do whatever he knew that he had a reason to do, he would be motivated to do X.

This account would be vacuously circular. It would be like the view that, in claiming

- (4) We have a duty to do Y,

we mean

- (5) Y is what, if we always did our duty, we would do.

Even Kant needed to assume more than that.

Externalists can reply that, even if (1) entails (3), that is not all that (1) means. Return to Williams’s imagined person who does not care about his further future, and whose indifference would survive any amount of Internalist deliberation. When we claim that such a person has reasons to care about his future, and to take the medicine that he needs, we do not merely mean that, if he were fully rational, he *would* care, and *would* take this medicine.

What, then, *do* we mean? We are back with Williams’s main objection. As he later wrote: ‘I do not believe... that the sense of external reason statements is in the least clear.’⁴²

III

Williams’s objection has great force. It is not, however, an objection to Externalism. Some Externalists hold analytically

42. *IROB*, p. 40.

reductive views. For example, they might say that, in claiming that this person has a reason to take this medicine, we mean that he needs this medicine, or that it would promote his well-being. Such proposed analyses are as clear as the one that Williams suggests.

Williams's objection applies to all views that are not analytically reductive. Some Internalists hold such views, since they believe that, even though claims about reasons must be supported by claims about the agent's motivation, that is not what they mean. If we hold such a view, and we were asked what 'reason' means, we would find this hard to explain. Reasons for acting, we might say, are facts that *count in favour* of some act. But 'counting in favour of' means 'giving a reason for'. Or we might say that, if we have *most reason* to act in some way, that is what we *ought rationally* to do, or—more colloquially—what we *should* do. But we could not understand this use of 'should' unless we had the concept of a reason.

These two concepts—that of a normative reason, and the concept that is expressed by this use of 'should'—cannot I believe be helpfully explained, since they cannot be explained in non-normative terms. This fact is not surprising. Normative concepts form a fundamental category—like, say, temporal or logical concepts. We should not expect to explain time, or logic, in non-temporal or non-logical terms. Similarly, normative truths are of a distinctive kind, which we should not expect to be like ordinary, empirical truths. Nor should we expect our knowledge of such truths, if we have any, to be like our knowledge of the world around us.

To defend such a view, we must answer several objections, and we must show that other views are, in various ways, inadequate. I hope to do that elsewhere.⁴³ I shall end, here, with some brief and oversimplified remarks.

Reductive Internalism, as I have said, is a form of naturalism. According to analytical naturalists, normative statements mean the same as certain statements about natural facts. That cannot be true, Moore argued, since we could believe the latter but intelligibly question the former. Analytical naturalists rightly reply that some definitional truths can be, because they are not obvious, intelligibly questioned.

43. In my *Practical Realism*, Oxford University Press, in preparation.

Non-analytical naturalists reject Moore's argument as irrelevant. Such writers often appeal to analogies drawn from science, such as the discoveries that water is H₂O or that heat is molecular kinetic energy. These identities were not implied by the existing concepts of water and heat. In the same way, these writers claim, though normative and naturalistic statements do not mean the same, some pairs of such statements may turn out to refer to the same properties, or to report the same facts.

I believe that we should reject all forms of naturalism. Though we cannot helpfully explain what normative concepts mean, we can sufficiently explain what they do not mean. And we can thereby show that, if there are normative truths, these could not be the same as, or consist in, natural facts. These two kinds of fact are as different as the chairs and propositions that, in a dream, Moore once confused.

It may seem that, by appealing to claims about normative concepts, we could at most refute analytical naturalism. Since non-analytical naturalists do not appeal to claims about meaning, their views may seem immune to this kind of argument.

That, I believe, is not so. Reductive views can be both non-analytical and true when, and because, the relevant concepts leave open certain possibilities, between which we must choose on non-conceptual grounds. But many other possibilities are conceptually excluded. Thus it was conceptually possible that heat should turn out to be molecular kinetic energy. But heat could not have turned out to be a shade of blue, or a medieval king. In the same way, while it may not be conceptually excluded that experiences should turn out to be neurophysiological events, experiences could not turn out to be patterns of behaviour, or stones, or irrational numbers.

Similar claims apply, I believe, to Reductive Internalism, and to all other forms of naturalism. Since normative facts are in their own distinctive category, there is no close analogy for their irreducibility to natural facts. One comparison would be with proposed reductions of necessary truths—such as the truths of logic or mathematics—to certain kinds of contingent truths. Given the depth of the difference between these kinds of truth, we can be confident, I assume, that such reductions fail. There is a similar difference, I believe, between normative and natural truths.⁴⁴

44. For strong objections to both of these reductive views, see Thomas Nagel, *The Last Word* (Oxford University Press, 1996).

Compare, for example, these two claims:

- (1) There are acts that maximize happiness.
- (2) There are acts that are right.

According to Reductive Utilitarians, even if (1) and (2) have different meanings, they report the same fact. One objection to this view is that it makes morality trivial. We already knew that some acts maximize happiness; and it could not be significant that this fact could be redescribed by calling these acts right. For morality to be significant, it must claim that, when acts have certain natural properties, something *else* is true: these acts are *right*. These must be *different* properties, and *different* facts.⁴⁵

Return next to Reductive Internalism. Suppose that, because my hotel really is on fire, I know that

- (A) Jumping into the canal is my only way to save my life.

Given my rational desire to live, I decide to jump. According to Reductive Internalists, if I accepted their view, my practical reasoning could be this:

- (B) Jumping is what, after rationally deliberating on the truth of (A), I am most strongly motivated to do.

Therefore

- (C) As another way of reporting (B), I could say that I have most reason to jump.

On this view, I believe, normativity disappears. If there are normative truths, they could not be facts like (B). When I believe that I have most reason to jump, I am believing that I *should* jump, and that, if I don't, I would be acting irrationally, or making a terrible mistake. That, if true, could not be the same as the fact that, after such deliberation, jumping is what I most want to do.

Reductive Internalists, or other naturalists, might give the following reply. When we claim that we have some reason for

45. Note that, for this objection to be good, it need not assume that there *are* any moral truths. It assumes only that, *if* there are such truths, they could not be in this way trivial. (Nor does this objection assume that moral naturalism is trivial. If morality were trivial, that fact would not be trivial.)

acting, what we appeal to is very often some natural fact. Thus, in our example, my reason to jump might be the fact that

(A) jumping is my only way to save my life,

or—less plausibly—the fact that

(D) jumping is my only way to get what I most want,

or—least plausibly—the fact described by (B). If any of these facts *is* my reason to jump, that reason, naturalists might claim, is a causal or psychological fact.

Such facts can indeed be claimed to be reasons for acting. But, if that is all we say, such claims are seriously misleading. They suggest that, in believing that there are normative reasons, and normative truths, we can avoid any commitment to non-natural properties and facts. That, I believe, is not so. We must distinguish between the fact that

(A) jumping is my only way to save my life,

and the fact that

(E) the truth of (A) gives me a reason to jump.

Though (A) has *normative significance*, (A) is not a normative fact. The normative fact is (E), or the fact *that* (A) has such significance. That is not, like (A) itself, an empirical or natural fact.

Naturalists would now reply that their view sufficiently preserves normativity. Thus, when discussing Analytical Internalism, Williams writes:

It is important that even on the internalist view, a statement of the form ‘A has reason to do X’ still has what may be called *normative force*. Unless a claim to the effect that an agent has a reason to do X can go beyond what that agent is already motivated to do... then certainly the term will have too narrow a definition. ‘A has reason to do X’ means more than ‘A is presently disposed to do X’.⁴⁶

Williams’s point may here be this. When we say that you have a reason to do something, we intend to be giving you advice. If our claim merely meant that you were already disposed to do this thing,

46. *IROB*, p. 36.

that would hardly be advice. Things are different if we mean, not that you are *now* disposed to do this thing, but that you *would become* so disposed if you knew certain facts. As Williams later writes, in saying what someone has reason to do, we are allowed to correct this person's factual beliefs, and 'that is already enough for the notion to be normative'.⁴⁷

That, I believe, is not so. On this view, if we claimed

(F) You have a reason to jump,

we would mean

(G) If you believed the truth, you would want to jump.

(G) could indeed be used to give you advice. You may rightly assume that, if (G) is true, you must have a reason to jump. But that does not make (G) normative. (G) is like

(H) This building is on fire,

which could also be used to give advice. These cannot be normative claims, since they do not even use a normative concept.

It may be said that, though (G) is not explicitly normative, this claim has normative *force*. Have I not just admitted that (G) could be used to give you advice? But this fact does not, I believe, answer this objection. In claiming (G), we may be implying that you have a reason to jump. But, for such advice to be implied, it must be able to be explicitly stated. We must be able to think about what we have reason to do, or what we ought rationally to do. To be able to think such thoughts, we must understand the normative concepts *ought* and *reason*. And, if (F) meant (G), the concept of a reason would not be normative. If we had no concepts with which we could directly state or understand normative claims, we could not imply such claims by making other non-normative claims, even ones with normative significance.

Williams's own view appeals, not to mere knowledge of the facts, but to *rational* deliberation. On his proposed account, statements about reasons are explicitly normative. But, as I have begun to suggest, they are still not *relevantly* normative. On this view, the fact that

47. *IROB*, p. 36.

(R) we have a reason to do something

is the same as the fact that

(M) after informed and procedurally rational deliberation,
we would be motivated to do this thing.

However we answer the normative question of which kinds of deliberation are procedurally rational, (M), if true, is a psychological fact. Though such facts can have normative significance, they are not normative facts. And, if these were the only kinds of fact to which our view appealed, we could not understand their normative significance. Similar objections apply, I believe, to all forms of normative naturalism, including those that are not analytically reductive.

These objections, which I shall try to defend elsewhere,⁴⁸ assume a certain view about normativity. Many people, I should admit, hold very different views.

One difference is this. Many people, I believe mistakenly, regard normativity as some kind of motivating force. For example, Korsgaard writes that, if a certain argument ‘cannot motivate the reader to become a utilitarian then how can it show that utilitarianism is normative?’⁴⁹ Railton writes: ‘there is no need to explain the normative force of our moral judgments on those who have no tendency to accept them and who recognize no significant community with us. For that is not a force that we observe in moral practice.’⁵⁰ McNaughton writes that, when externalists deny that moral beliefs necessarily motivate, they ‘deny the authority of moral demands’.⁵¹ Scheffler writes that, even if wrong-doing were always irrational, that would not give morality ‘as much authority as some might wish’, since it would not ‘guarantee... morality’s hold on us.’⁵²

48. In my *Practical Realism*, *op. cit.*

49. *The Sources of Normativity* (Cambridge University Press, 1996) p. 85.

50. Peter Railton, ‘What the Non-Cognitivist Helps Us to See’, in *Reality, Representation, and Projection*, edited by John Haldane and Crispin Wright (Oxford University Press, 1993). Though Railton is here describing what other people might claim, he seems to endorse this claim.

51. *op. cit.*, p. 48.

52. Samuel Scheffler, *Human Morality* (Oxford University Press, 1992) p. 76.

Consider next some remarks of Mackie's. Since Mackie is an *error theorist*, who believes that ordinary moral thinking is committed to peculiar non-natural properties, we might expect that he at least would give a non-reductive account of the normativity that he rejects. Mackie writes that, according to some cognitivists, a moral judgment is 'intrinsically and objectively prescriptive', since it 'demands' some action, and implies that other actions are 'not to be done.' These phrases look normative. But Mackie later writes that, in response to Humean arguments for non-cognitivism, cognitivists might

simply deny the minor premiss: that the state of mind which is the making of moral judgments and distinctions has, *by itself*, an influence on actions. [They] could say that just seeing that this is right and that is wrong will not tend to make someone do this or refrain from that: he must also *want* to do whatever is right.

If cognitivists made such claims, Mackie continues, they would 'deny the *intrinsic* action-guidingness of moral judgments', and they would 'save the objectivity of moral distinctions... only by giving up their prescriptivity.' Mackie here assumes that, in claiming moral judgments to be action-guiding and prescriptive, we mean that such judgments can, by themselves, *influence* us, or tend to *make* us act in certain ways. So, even when describing the view that he rejects—or the 'objectively prescriptive values' that he calls 'too queer' to be credible—Mackie takes normativity to be a kind of motivating force.⁵³

Normativity, I believe, is very different from motivating force. Neither includes, or implies, the other. Other animals can be motivated by their desires and beliefs. Only we can understand and respond to reasons.

Internalists could accept these claims. Some Internalists believe that, when we have some reason for acting, that is an irreducibly normative truth. But, as I shall also argue, we should reject even Non-Reductive Internalism.

If we consider only reasons for acting, Internalism may seem to be broadly right, or to contain most of the truth. But the most important reasons are not merely, or mainly, reasons for acting.

53. J.L. Mackie *Hume's Moral Theory* (Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1980) pp. 54–5. For another discussion of this view of normativity, see Stephen Darwall, 'Internalism and Agency', in *Philosophical Perspectives*, Volume 6, *Ethics*, 1992.

They are also reasons for having the desires on which we act. These are reasons to want some thing, for its own sake, which are provided by facts about this thing. Such reasons we can call *value-based*.

Since Internalist theories are desire-based, they cannot recognize such reasons. On such theories, all reasons to have some desire must derive from other desires. Thus we might have reason to want something to happen because this thing would have effects that we want, or because we want to have this desire, or because we want the effects of having it. But we cannot have reasons, provided by the nature of some thing, to have an intrinsic desire for that thing. Such a reason would have to be provided by our wanting this thing; but the fact that we had this desire could not give us a reason for having it. So, on desire-based theories, any chain of reasons must end with some desire that we have no reason to have.

Such a view, I believe, misses most of the truth. According to many Internalists, all reasons are provided by desires. There are, I believe, no such reasons. It is true that, in most cases, we have some reason to fulfil our desires. But that is because, in these cases, what we want is in some way worth achieving. We can also have reasons that *depend* on our desires, since our having some desire may affect what is worth achieving, or preventing—as when it makes some experience enjoyable or frustrating. But the fact that we have some desire never, by itself, provides reasons.⁵⁴

Why has it been so widely thought that all reasons must be provided by desires, since we cannot have value-based reasons to have these desires?

There are some bad arguments for this view. Thus Hume claimed that, since reasoning is entirely concerned with truth, and desires cannot be true or false, desires cannot be supported by or contrary to reason. If this argument were good, it would show that, since acts cannot be true or false, acts cannot be supported by or contrary to reason. Most Internalists would reject that conclusion. And Hume's argument is not good. Hume assumed that there is only one kind of reason: reasons for believing. He said nothing to

54. For defences of this view, see Warren Quinn, 'Putting Rationality in its Place', in his *Morality and Action* (Cambridge University Press, 1993), and Thomas Scanlon, *What We Owe to Each Other* (Harvard University Press, forthcoming), Chapter 1.

support the view that we cannot have reasons either for caring or for acting.

Of the other grounds for ignoring, or rejecting, value-based reasons to have desires, one is especially relevant here. On Internalist theories, the source of all reasons is something that is not itself normative: it is the fact that we have some desire, or the fact that, if we knew more, we would be motivated to act in some way. On Externalist theories, the source of any reason is something normative. These theories appeal, not to facts about our actual or counterfactual desires, but to facts about what is relevantly worth achieving or preventing. Such alleged normative truths may seem to be metaphysically mysterious, or inconsistent with a scientific world view.

The important distinction here is not, however, between Internalism and Externalism. It is between reductive and non-reductive theories. For Internalist theories to be about normative reasons, they must, I have claimed, take a non-reductive form. Even if all reasons were provided by certain motivational facts, the fact that we have some reason could not be the same as, or consist in, such a motivational fact. Internalists must claim that, because some motivational fact obtains, something *else* is true: we have a reason for acting. In making that claim, they are committed to one kind of irreducibly normative truth. That undermines their reason to deny that there can be such truths about what is worth achieving, or preventing.

According to normative Internalism:

- (A) Some acts really are rational. There are facts about these acts, and their relations to our motivation, which give us reasons to act in these ways.

According to normative Externalism:

- (B) Some aims really are worth achieving. There are facts about these aims which give us reasons to want to achieve them.

(B), I believe, is no less plausible than (A). (B) has metaphysical implications, since it implies that there are irreducibly normative properties, or truths. But the same is true of (A).

Reasons for acting, I believe, are all external. When we have a reason to do something, this reason is not provided by, and does not require, the fact that after Internalist deliberation we would want to do this thing. This reason is provided by the facts that also give us reason to have this desire. We have reason to try to achieve some aim when, and because, it is relevantly worth achieving. Since these are reasons for *being* motivated, we would have these reasons even if, when we were aware of them, that awareness did not motivate us. But, if we are rational, it will.