

## **Practical Reasons, Practical Rationality, Practical Wisdom**

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There are a number of proposals as to exactly how reasons, ends and rationality are related. It is often thought that practical reasons can be analyzed in terms of practical rationality, which, in turn, has something to do with the pursuit of ends. I want to argue against the conceptual priority of rationality and the pursuit of ends, and in favor of the conceptual priority of reasons. This case comes in two parts. In part one, I argue that for a novel but illuminating conception of ends by which all ends are had under the guise of reasons. I then articulate a sense of rationality, procedural rationality, that is connected with the pursuit of ends so conceived, where one is rational to the extent that one is motivated to act in accordance with reasons as they appear to be. In part two I argue that these conceptions of ends and procedural rationality are inadequate for building an account of practical reasons, though I try to explain why it is that the rational pursuit of ends generates intuitive but misleading accounts of genuine normative reasons. The crux of the problem is an insensitivity to an is-seems distinction, where procedural rationality concerns reasons *as they appear*, and what we are after is a substantive sense of rationality that concerns reasons *as they are*. Based on these distinct senses of rationality, and some disambiguation of what it is to *have* a reason, I offer a critique of internalist analyses of one's reasons in terms of the motivational states of one's ideal, procedurally rational self, and I offer an alternative analysis of one's practical reasons in terms of practical wisdom that overcomes objections to related reasons externalist views. The resulting theory is roughly Humean about procedural rationality and roughly Aristotelian about reasons, capturing the core truths of both camps.

## Practical Reasons, Practical Rationality, Practical Wisdom

Here are two reasonable claims:

1. One is practically rational insofar as one pursues his or her ends.
2. One has reason, and only has reason, to pursue his or her ends.

If both claims are roughly right, then what it is rational for you to do and what you have reason to do amount to (roughly) the same thing. Indeed, some current defenders of sophisticated cousins of (2) try to analyze reasons in terms of rationality and ends, or perhaps more broadly, one's subjective motivational states. I have in mind various reasons internalists of both Humean and Kantian leanings.<sup>1</sup> There is another camp, however, that would deny that reasons can be understood in terms of the rational pursuit of ends, or even the ideally rational pursuit of ends.<sup>2</sup>

Here I place myself in the second camp, arguing for (1), and against (2) and its sophisticated internalist cousins. But I fear that most who take this tack do some question begging by assuming reasons externalism at the outset, which severs the connection between reasons and the rational pursuit of motivational states. Rather than beg any questions, I want to explain why (2) sounds so very plausible (to myself and others), and why versions of reasons internalism enjoy such broad appeal. To do that I begin by defending (1), for once we understand how rationality relates to the pursuit of ends, we can see a gap between what it is rational to do, and what one has reason to do, a gap that is often obfuscated by equivocation between different senses of 'rationality.' In what follows, then, I develop a conception of ends (sections I and II), develop a conception of *procedural* rationality (section III) that comprises norms governing the pursuit of those ends, and then show why it is attractive but erroneous to

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<sup>1</sup> For examples, see Williams (1981, 1995a, 1995b); Smith (1994, 2004); Korsgaard (1996, 1997); Pettit and Smith (2006).

<sup>2</sup> For examples, see Broome (1999, 2004); Wallace (2001); Kolodny (2005); Raz (2005).

move from these roughly Humean conceptions of ends and procedural rationality to some version of reasons internalism (section IV). To sketch the idea, we will see that it is procedurally rational to do what one *sees* most reason to do, where one's ends are determined by what one sees reason to do. So (1) is right when we read 'rationality' as 'procedural rationality,' to be distinguished from substantive rationality, which is, roughly, a sensitivity to normative reasons as they are. Because it is always an open question whether one has reason to do what one sees reason to do, there is a gap between the procedurally rational pursuit of ends (or reasons as they appear), and substantively rational acts that accord with reasons of which one can be ignorant. Once we bring the gap to the fore, it is easy to dispel the appeal of (2) and various versions of reasons internalism, for they are faced with an unbridgeable is-seems gap.

Freed of (2) and reasons internalism, I argue that the best way to proceed is to take reasons as primitive, and analyze a particular agent's reasons in terms of the motivations of his ideally *wise* self, where a practically wise person is not just procedurally rational, but also substantively rational, as I argue in section V. This promises to connect up normative reasons with other normative concepts, like the good, the right, and the virtuous. It is fair to say that the resulting theory is roughly Humean and internalist about practical rationality, and Aristotelian and externalist about reasons.

## **I. Ends and Attitudes**

As I've indicated, I think that procedural rationality has to do with the pursuit of ends, where one's ends are determined by one's psychological makeup. This statement of a roughly Humean position needs further refinement before we have a convincing theory of practical rationality, and the place to start is with a clear idea of psychologically determined ends. A crude, Humean line holds that all and only desires are end setting. Let us begin there and call

this the *desires as ends* thesis. How plausible is it that it is rational (at least procedurally) to pursue and satisfy our desires, and irrational to shirk the pursuit?

Under a functional-dispositional analysis, desires are those mental states that prompt action under certain circumstances. When paired with the right beliefs they tend to prompt actions that make the world conform to them. In short, desires are mental states with a mind-world direction of fit.<sup>3</sup> But if that is what desires are, then the *desires as ends* thesis requires modification, for there are many mental states with a mind-world direction of fit that do not contribute to one's ends. Consider Al, a self-acknowledged alcoholic who has been trying to kick the habit through various programs and self-discipline. Fortunately, he has been doing very well, but let us imagine that on this particular occasion Al is tempted by a gin and tonic that sits before him. Though Al is motivated to take the drink, and so has a requisite mental state with a mind-world direction of fit, that particular mental state makes no contribution to Al's ends. Al's motivation to drink the gin and tonic stems from an addiction that he completely disowns, and because of this it is not one of his ends to satisfy this particular thirst. The *desires as ends* thesis is not quite right.

Contrast Al with another agent, Ginny, who is in similar circumstances. She is also thirsty for a gin and tonic and there happens to be one sitting in front of her at the moment. If there are no other relevant considerations in the scenario—in particular, if Ginny's desire does not stem from addiction or some other suspect mental state—then her thirst gets to contribute to Ginny's ends. What the cases of Ginny and Al show is that an agent's ends are not determined

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<sup>3</sup> See Smith (1994, Ch. 4) for a full discussion of the view.

by just any of his or her contingent desire states. We need a better theory of *end-setting attitudes*.<sup>4</sup>

There have been various attempts to distinguish the desires that are relevant to ends and those that are not. Following Harry Frankfurt (1971), one suggestion is to appeal to one's higher order desires to determine which lower order desires get to count as end-setters. On this account, Al's addiction does not contribute to his ends because he has a higher order desire not to have the lower order addictive desire. Unfortunately, this view will only settle our question to the extent that people have sufficiently reflected on their lower order attitudes and have thereby generated higher order attitudes about them. But often we want to deny that a kind of desire-type attitude is end setting without regard to whether or not the target agent has a higher order attitude about it. In fact, the higher order account seems to get things backwards. The reason one would form a higher order, disapproving attitude toward the lower order desire is because one sees that the lower order desire is not end setting in the first place, and there is no good reason to pursue it. Rather than multiply levels of desires to solve our problem, it is better to distinguish the various desire-type attitudes from one another at the lower level. Some are wishes, hopes, fears; others are addictions, impulses, depressions, etc. Perhaps it is the distinctive character of these kinds of desire-type states that determines whether they contribute to one's ends.<sup>5</sup>

Along these lines, another suggestion is to call the desires that are relevant to our ends pro-attitudes, or evaluative attitudes. However, these terms are too broad for our purposes.

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<sup>4</sup> Korsgaard (1997, pp. 220-34) makes the similar claim that Humeans cannot distinguish one's ends from what one actually pursues, and so cannot violate the instrumental principle to take the means to your ends. She then argues that a principle that cannot be violated cannot be normative, which I address in section III-B below.

<sup>5</sup> Insofar as some theories speak in generalities, as Humeans might use the blanket term 'desire' and Kantians might use the term 'inclination,' they are not yet sensitive to the nuances of what I have been calling desire-type mental states, and so they overlook the possibility of isolating some subset of these states as the ones directly relevant to one's ends.

One's pro-attitudes and evaluative attitudes can be directed at all kinds of objects, including the behavior and character of others, and states of affairs that one has no control over. Suppose you have a pro-attitude toward the writing of the great American novel. You know you cannot be the one to write it (you have meager writing skills and little worldly experience), but you would prefer a world where someone writes the great American novel, other things equal. This kind of pro-attitude has too little bearing on how you are going to conduct your life—it does not enter into any of your actions, plans, projects, or intentions—to count as one of your end-setters. It is fair to say that these kind of impersonal preferences, though they might be desire-type attitudes of a sort, are not the attitudes that fix one's ends.

Are we then left with sorting through the different desire-type states, categorizing them as end setting or not? Addictive states, depressive states, and obsessive and compulsive states are plausible examples of desire-type states that (typically?) fail to be end setting. Cares, concerns, plans, goals, wants and personal preferences, are good candidates for end-setting attitudes. But categorizing attitude types as end-setters is an imperfect strategy. The list approach lacks any theoretical unity and integration.

I think the best way to capture end-setting attitudes has been suggested by Tim Scanlon's treatment of what he calls "structural irrationality."<sup>6</sup> In discussing rational norms, he discusses instances where individuals *see reasons*, or take themselves to have reasons, to act. Setting rational norms aside for the moment, here we have a candidate for a kind of desire-type attitude that can be constitutive of ends: attitudes through which we see reasons, or perhaps more precisely, attitudes through which we take certain considerations to favor our attitudes and

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<sup>6</sup> Scanlon (forthcoming).

actions.<sup>7</sup> Just as Humeans distinguish between ultimate and derived ends, we can say that an agent's ultimate ends are those things she sees ultimate reason to do, and an agent's derived ends are those things she sees derivative reason to do (including constitutive and instrumental acts and activities to the ultimate ends).

This way of looking at end-setting attitudes requires us to revisit the question of how different desire-type states, such as addictions, contribute to ends. Alan Gibbard (1990, p. 165) has introduced the difficult case of an anorexic who does not value a body plump enough to sustain life. She would rather starve than have an adequately nutritioned body. To many of us this will look like a pathological state, a certain kind of addiction, that normally would not contribute to one's ends. Nonetheless, we must admit that it is possible for our anorexic to sincerely see reason to maintain a rail thin physique. It is at least conceptually possible that an end-setting attitude has this kind of content, no matter how much we disapprove of it, and if the right circumstances hold we must admit that this desire-type state is an end-setting attitude for her. More generally, we should not yet restrict the possible contents of end-setting attitudes, for agents can see reason to do all sorts of things.<sup>8</sup>

The case is even harder if the anorexic also sees reason not to be anorexic any more. With this conflict in mind, we should not be so quick to dismiss her anorexic state as end setting, for it is not only possible but common to have conflicting ends and hard choices to make

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<sup>7</sup> To be precise, when I say that one sees reason R to  $\Phi$ , or judges that she has reason R to  $\Phi$ , R is best understood as a consideration that favors  $\Phi$ ing. We could limit our use of the term 'reason' to refer to the whole relation between the favoring thing and the thing favored for the agent in particular circumstances, in which case I should say that one sees a consideration F as favoring  $\Phi$ . But it is common usage to call the favoring consideration a reason so I will tend to use 'is a reason for,' 'favors,' and 'provides a reason for' interchangeably.

<sup>8</sup> At this point not much follows from this. In the case of our anorexic I still leave open the possibility of criticizing her end-setting attitudes. Perhaps our anorexic is irrational, or, what I think more likely, fails to judge reasons aright. But there is no reason to argue that she *can't* have bad ends.

between those ends. So some addictive states might be end setting, though perhaps outweighed by conflicting end-setting attitudes.

We can describe Al's case to differ from the anorexic case. In virtue of his addiction, Al might initially see reason to drink—drinking looms large in his phenomenology—but just a bit of reflection on Al's part would lead him to reject the contents of his addictive state as reason providing. Thus end-setting attitudes must have a certain modicum of *stability* in the considerations they present as reason providing. This should not be confused with those situations, perhaps more common, where addictive states remain end setting because, even under moderate reflection, they remain stable as states through which one sees reasons for action.

This view has the advantage of separating out beings with ends and beings without ends (and, as I argue later, beings subject to rational norms and being not subject to rational norms) by appealing to an important difference between the two: beings with ends see reasons for action, while beings without ends do not. That seems right. It is a necessary condition on having ends and being subject to rational appraisal that one have a normative perspective on the world, and that amounts to seeing considerations as reason-providing.

Consider the following Moorean paradox, which reinforces the claim that end-setting attitudes are the attitudes through which agents see reasons for action:

I have end E, but I see no reason to pursue constitutive or instrumental means M to advance E.

Setting aside the possibility that this involves a semantic contradiction, the claim rings paradoxical; that is to be expected if seeing reasons for action is partially constitutive of having



an end, as opposed to having some other state with a mind-world direction of fit, or being acted upon by some other force.<sup>9</sup>

Further support for the view comes from the phenomenology of one who is influenced by different desire-type states (those with a mind-world direction of fit). Only some of these states seem to the agent to be the pursuit of ends. Ginny, for instance, sees gustatory delight, or certain social participation with others around her, or a pleasurable buzz as a reason for drinking the gin and tonic, or as we might put it, she sees these considerations or one among them as counting in favor of her drinking. Al, on the other hand, does not consider the contents of his addiction as reason-providers, (though he might see the same considerations—gustatory delight, social participation, a pleasurable buzz—as reason-providing through other attitudes of his). While Al feels a certain motivational pull toward the drink, he does not see his addictive need for the drink as favoring drinking, for as we have described his case, any presentation of the features of drinking as reason-providing succumb to Al's better judgment under moderate reflection.<sup>10</sup> The first case would feel like the pursuit of ends, and the second would not.

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<sup>9</sup> When discussing what he calls the “High Brow” view, according to which action and choice constitutively aim at the good, Railton (1997, p. 64) considers whether the following claims are paradoxical:

I believe I have reason to choose act *A*, but I can't see anything good about it.

Act *A* would be good, but that's no reason for *me* to choose it.

These claims link evaluations of goodness and acknowledgments of reasons to act, so they are related to our endeavor by bringing evaluations into the fold. Whether these sentences have the flavor of a paradox depends on how one interprets the word ‘good.’ If the speaker uses the term to pick out acts *conventionally* considered to be good, then there is no paradox, but if the speaker is being sincerely evaluative of the goodness of the acts, then these statements strike me as more paradoxical.

<sup>10</sup> Just to cover bases, let me acknowledge that there are attitudes through which we see certain considerations as *disfavoring* action, or reasons *not* to engage in action. Most of us consider the fact that an action would cause pain as a reason not to do it, and these attitudes would also get to count as end-setting attitudes.

Before turning to norms of rationality let me address some problems for the view I'm suggesting.

### A. The Guise of the Good, the Guise of Reasons

Here I am advocating a variant of an old theory according to which desires aim at the good. Railton (1997) calls such views "High Brow," and Velleman (1992) uses a helpful phrase—desires are had "under the guise of the good"—to characterize the traditional position. Perhaps it would be more appropriate to say, in accordance with the revised view I prefer, that ends are had under the guise of reasons. Indeed, this revision can avoid some traditional difficulties for the High Brow view.

The deepest concern for High Brow views comes from possible cases where one desires X without thinking that X (or his having X) is good in any sense. Velleman, for instance, asks us to consider Satan and his desires for bad or genuinely evil things.

Consider, for a particularly vivid example, the figure of Satan in *Paradise Lost*, who responds to his defeat with the cry "Evil be thou my Good." Satan is here resolving to desire and pursue evil, and hence—as he himself puts it—to regard evil as good. But he cannot reasonably be interpreted as adopting new estimates of what's valuable—that is, of resolving to cease judging evil to be evil and to start judging it to be good. If Satan ever loses sight of the evil in what he now desires, if he ever comes to think of what he desires as really good, he will no longer be at all satanic; he'll just be another well-intentioned fool. The ruler of Hell doesn't desire what he wrongly thinks is worthy of approval; he desires what he rightly thinks isn't.<sup>11</sup>

Indeed, Satan desires things *because* they are bad or evil, so his possible psychology provides a counterexample to the view that all desires are had under the guise of the good.

However, the guise of reasons account makes no claim about desires as such, considered broadly as mental states with a mind-world direction of fit. I can be neutral on the question of whether there are desire-type states that involve non-evaluative attitudes and non-evaluative

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<sup>11</sup> Velleman (1992, p. 18).

content (though I think there are such states), for my claim focuses on end-setting attitudes. Secondly, and more importantly, I am claiming that end-setting attitudes are attitudes through which we see reasons, or more precisely attitudes through which we see various considerations as favoring our actions and attitudes. So the guise of reasons account can make sense of the claim that Satan sincerely wants to do things because they are bad or evil – Satan sees considerations that we generally regard as disfavoring action as favoring his action, and considerations that we generally regard as favoring action as disfavoring his action. While individuals might<sup>12</sup> have an end to acquire X and see nothing good about X, as Satan seems to do, I submit that they cannot have an end to acquire X yet see no reason to acquire X.

### **B. Judging Reasons and Seeing Reasons**

There is still the objection that the High Brow view is too high brow. The worry here is that the account of ends is too intellectualized because they require us to form beliefs about the reasons we have, which we seldom do. Consider Kolodny's (2005) principles of rationality, which are couched in terms of beliefs about reasons:

C+: If one believes that one has conclusive reason to have A, then one is rationally required to have A.

C-: If one believes that one lacks sufficient reason to have A, then one is rationally required not to have A.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> This is similar to the issue raised in footnote 9 with respect to reasons and value. To the extent it seems possible to see reason to do something that is in no way valuable, the notion of value one has in mind is conventional value (whereby one uses terms like 'valuable' and 'good' in their so-called inverted commas sense). This seems to be what Satan does. He sees what others regard as valuable as failing to provide him with reasons for action. It would be entirely different if he actually values something and yet sees no reasons to adopt certain attitudes and actions toward it.

<sup>13</sup> Kolodny (2005, p. 557). For similar claims about rational responses to beliefs about reasons see Scanlon (1998, p. 29-31); Parfit (forthcoming, Ch. 4).

On his account, whether or not people have ends depends upon whether or not they think in terms of reasons. Because people rarely form explicit beliefs about their reasons, this view would exclude most people from the category of end-pursuing agents. That is an unacceptable result, or so the objection concludes.<sup>14</sup>

However, the guise of reasons view is not committed to this intellectualist requirement. When I say that we “see” certain considerations as favoring action I do not have in mind an overblown, intellectualized judgment that a consideration is a reason. Instead, I suggest that there is a class of our attitudes, not occurrent beliefs and not simply desires, such that we see their contents as favoring our actions and other attitudes. Just as we usually lack explicit judgments about what beliefs we have, we usually lack explicit judgments about what reasons we have. Nonetheless, we have many beliefs, and their character is best brought out by noting their attitudinal stance, content and dispositional features; likewise we have many end-setting attitudes that are also best brought out by noting their attitudinal stance, content and dispositional features. Our character Ginny, for instance, probably never forms the explicit judgment that gustatory delight is a reason for drinking. Nonetheless, the quality of her attitude toward gustatory delight differs from other kinds of desire-type attitudes that she could have, and it is this distinctive attitude that is best described as one through which she sees reason to drink.

I have tried to bring out this attitude and its content via a Moorean paradox and phenomenological evidence. Let me say some more about their dispositional features, which as

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<sup>14</sup> In addition, I doubt that mere beliefs about one’s reasons rationally requires anything. If you believe that you have reason to  $\Phi$ , but do not see any particular consideration favoring your  $\Phi$ ing, you are normally not rationally required to  $\Phi$ ; instead, it seems most rationally appropriate to search for the reason-providing considerations that would justify your belief that you have reason to  $\Phi$  and act on those.

a bundle help to distinguish them from other desire-type attitudes.<sup>15</sup> In the case of Ginny, she would come to explicitly judge gustatory delight as favoring her drinking were she to reflect on the matter sufficiently. Even when she does not form the reflective, full-blown judgment about her reasons, functionally and dispositionally she still treats the contents of her end-setting attitudes as reasons in her thought and action, for this particular desire-type attitude would engage her decision-making processes when they are functioning normally. Lastly, were she to conclude that she has no reason to drink, her desire to drink would tend to extinguish. So a functional-dispositional account would find that these attitudes give rise to explicit judgments about reasons upon reflection, they are normally sensitive to other explicit judgments about one's reasons, and in tandem with non-normative belief-type inputs they normally engage intentions and decision processes to produce behaviors.

Al's end-setting attitudes, as we are imagining him, would not tend to generate the reflective judgment that addictive need is a reason for him to drink, and he does not treat the contents of his addictions as reasons for action. They would tend to persist in the face of explicit judgments about the reasons he has, and so they are not the right kind of desire-type states to qualify as end-setters despite the fact that they can feed in to decision-making processes (though this might not be an instance of the normal functioning of decision-making).

Though sometimes we form explicit judgments about what reasons we have, such intellectualism is not required for us to *see* considerations as reasons in the end setting sense.

### **C. The Humean Face**

The guise of reasons account is Humean in some respects because our end-setting attitudes are in some sense given to us. No doubt we choose to pursue some ends and not others,

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<sup>15</sup> Cf. Scanlon (forthcoming).

but we do not directly choose to have some ends and not others because we do not choose whether or not to see a certain consideration as reason-providing. (We might, however, choose to place ourselves in certain situations in the hopes of cultivating new end-setting attitudes, as an atheist might start going to church regularly if he saw practical reasons to believe in God). That does not mean that there are no rational limits on our end-setting attitudes. One rational requirement of procedural rationality might be that occurrently thought and contradictory *ultimate* ends must be resolved. However, there is no similar requirement on merely incompatible, conflicting ultimate ends. In those cases we must merely choose to pursue one end and not others; we need not rationally cease to see ultimate reasons for doing incompatible things.

The Humean line can be taken too far, and if we couch ends in more Humean terms we risk confusion. For instance, the Humean might prefer to articulate ends not in terms of seeing reasons, but in terms of valuing or desiring. This is an unwelcome suggestion, not simply because valuing and desiring are too coarse grained to isolate ends. When an individual values or desires something, it sounds like the agent himself does the favoring, in which case the favoring relation flows *from* the agent *to* features of the world. This is not the case, however, when an individual has an end-setting attitude toward some E. In that case the agent sees some consideration as favoring various of his attitudes or actions. The favoring flows from the world to the agent. We often think that things valued for their own sake, or intrinsically, supply reasons for action, but notice that we are not brutally favoring some thing, but rather we are

seeing that thing as supplying ultimate reasons for us – we are seeing that thing as a favorer and not as a favored.<sup>16</sup>

A more Humean way of putting things might also make it sound as though we only see reasons to *satisfy* our end-setting attitudes. That is not quite right. From the first-person perspective, agents normally see the *contents* of their end-setting attitudes as reasons, or favoring considerations, and not the satisfactions themselves. Ginny, for example, sees the prospect of gustatory delight as a reason for her to drink; she does not see, except perhaps elliptically, that drinking would satisfy her desire for gustatory delight as a reason for drinking. To take less trivial examples, my ends are to have a successful career in philosophy, to have a fulfilling family life, to treat others with respect, etc.; my ends are not to satisfy my desire to have a successful career in philosophy, to satisfy my desire to have a fulfilling family life, and so on.

Of course, one could come to see the satisfaction of a desire as a reason to act. If I have the nagging feeling that I've left the oven on and feel impelled to check it (despite the fact that I'm pretty sure I turned it off), I might decide to double check it just to satisfy the nagging feeling so it won't bother me anymore. In that case the satisfaction of a desire is a reason to act. In most cases, however, it is not that these attitudes or their satisfactions are reasons, but that they present other considerations as reasons.

In closing this discussion of ends and attitudes I would like to emphasize that all positions about the substance of our ends, and whether we ought to have certain ends, are still on the table. Whether individuals' ends are only for pleasure (psychological hedonism), or for their

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<sup>16</sup> Speaking of moral phenomenology, Terry Horgan and Mark Timmons (2006) comment that we often see situations as “calling for” particular actions, and this also seems to get the direction of flow right: the situation favors some attitude or action of ours. I think we have attitudes like this outside of moral cases, and indeed these are the attitudes that characterize ends more generally.

own well-being (psychological egoism) is left open, as is the question of whether individuals see ultimate reasons only to bring about outcomes, or whether they also see ultimate reasons to engage in variety of actions, plans, and activities as well.

Moreover, the guise of reasons account of ends is silent about whether agents necessarily have reasons to be prudent or moral, or whether one's reasons solely depend on one's contingent ends. In short, I have said nothing about what people *actually* have reason to do. Most likely most of us see non-hedonic reasons to pursue the well-being of others, and later I argue that there are reasons to do so even if one does not see such considerations as reasons. But before that I want to articulate some norms of rationality that govern ends (i.e., procedural rationality). To do that it will behoove us to keep in mind three different kinds of reasons.

## **II. Three Kinds of Reasons**

The foregoing psychological framework allows us to differentiate three<sup>17</sup> different kinds of reasons. One kind of reason is a *motivating reason*. Motivating reasons are just the desire-type attitudes we use to explain someone's behavior. If Ginny acts on her desire for the gin and tonic and drinks it down, then her desire to drink was a motivating reason for her – it explains why she did it while remaining neutral as to whether that was a good reason for doing it. Perhaps more precisely, she desired the gustatory delight it would bring, or the social participation, or the pleasurable buzz, or what have you, and she believed that she could satisfy her desire by drinking the liquid, and that explains why she drank. If Al took the drink based on his addiction, we could also say that the motivating reason he took the drink was to satisfy his

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<sup>17</sup> It is now customary to distinguish two different kinds of reasons: motivating reasons and normative reasons. See, e.g., Smith (1994, pp. 94-97). I prefer the tripartite distinction to preserve an in-between kind of reason, where agents act on what they think are normative reasons. These can be thought of as a special kind of motivating reason.



desire. Again, his desire explains why he did it, but is silent on whether it was a good reason for doing so.

Things look different from the first-person perspective. If we were to ask Ginny why she drank she would probably not explain her behavior in terms of a belief-desire complex. Instead, she would cite the particular favoring considerations as she sees them, and as determined by her end-setting attitudes. She might say “The reason I drank was for the gustatory delight” or “to be sociable” or “to get a buzz.” In other words, she would cite what she took to be the considerations that counted in favor of drinking. Let me call these *perceived reasons*. Al might not have perceived reasons for drinking if from his point of view it seems like he was impelled or drawn to the drink for no good reason, though he might also have a conflicted mind about the situation, trying to understand why he drank by pointing to some ostensive favoring considerations.

The third and last kind of reason we might talk about is the real deal: a *normative reason*, or a consideration that actually does count in favor of an agent’s action in certain circumstances. Gustatory delight, social interaction, and pleasurable buzz might all be genuine, normative reasons for Ginny to drink. In Al’s case, it’s hard to say whether these are outweighed favoring considerations, or whether they cease to be favorers given his situation. In any event, we can draw a distinction between what people take to be reasons (perceived reasons) from good reasons for acting. In Gibbard’s case of the anorexic, if she sincerely values the life of starvation and that is an end-setting attitude for her she will see a the attainment of a rail-thin body as a reason to engage in certain eating habits. If we ask her why she engages in these eating habits she might cite her perceived reasons – to be thin, or to have a certain appearance, or whatnot. Yet achieving a rail thin body is not a good reason to starve oneself.

Perceived reasons are perceived normative reasons. Putting things this way should not beg any questions against the various substantive views about ends, such as whether some of them are rationality obligatory, or whether we have reasons that are independent of our ends. It could be that our ultimate ends, as attitudes through which we perceive reasons, determine what we actually have ultimate normative reason to pursue (this would qualify as a constructivist account amenable to Humean and Kantian varieties), and the only reasons everyone has are means-ends reasons: reasons to take the means to our particular, contingent ends. As a matter of fact, I think there are reasons for adopting ends, and so our end-setting attitudes can get this right or wrong depending on whether our perceived reasons are genuine normative reasons. I also think that this is not a matter of procedural rationality, to be discussed presently – we do not necessarily have reason to do what we would do if ideally rational in the procedural sense. In holding these positions I consider myself somewhere in the Aristotelian camp. Let me start defending that camp by addressing the link between ends and rationality before turning to normative reasons, rationality and wisdom.

### **III. Perceived Reasons and Rationality**

Perceived reasons, and so end-setting attitudes, are intimately connected with ordinary, garden-variety, bounded and procedural rationality of the sort you and I are capable of. What I call “procedural rationality” has something to do with the pursuit of ends in light of beliefs. The belief limitation is fairly uncontroversial, and it can be illustrated with a modification of the Ginny case, suggested by Bernard Williams (1981). Ginny is sitting on a couch relaxing, and before her is what she believes to be a gin and tonic. She is thirsty and believes she is capable of drinking it (with little effort and no compromises in her other ends we can assume). Unfortunately, and unbeknownst to Ginny, the glass is full of petrol and tonic. If Ginny drinks it

she will at the very least get quite sick, and avoiding serious illness is another one of her ends. In this case, what is actually conducive to Ginny's ends differs from what she believes to be conducive to her ends. Nonetheless, our judgments about her rationality follow her beliefs and not the objective facts. We might be relieved if she fails to drink the liquid, but she would nonetheless be irrational in failing to do what she sees decisive reason to do.

To capture cases like this one let me propose the following principles constitutive of procedural rationality:

M-E reasons: If A has end E, and A believes that  $\Phi$ ing is constitutive or instrumental to pursuing end E, and if A believes she is able to  $\Phi$ , then A sees reason to  $\Phi$ .

M-E motivation: If A has end E, and A believes that  $\Phi$ ing is constitutive or instrumental to pursuing end E, and if A believes she is able to  $\Phi$ , then A is motivated to  $\Phi$ .

These principles are similar to one offered by Jamie Dreier: "If you desire to  $\Psi$ , and believe that by  $\Phi$ ing you will  $\Psi$ , then you ought to  $\Phi$ ."<sup>18</sup> The significant differences are these. First, we must interpret a desire to  $\Psi$  as having an end-setting attitude toward some perceived reason-providing content. Not all mental states with mind-world direction of fit are end setting. Second, we should interpret the ought in terms of the procedurally rational ought, for it simply is not the case that Ginny ought to drink the liquid in any reason-providing sense – unbeknownst to her she actually has most reason not to drink the liquid. This is so no matter what account of reasons we adopt. Both internalists and externalists should capture the fact that Ginny does not have a normative reason to drink the liquid. Third, we must add in the clause concerning beliefs about one's ability to do what is believed to be conducive to one's ends. If one thinks herself incapable of taking some means to an end, one would not necessarily be motivated to take those

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<sup>18</sup> Dreier (1997, p. 93).

means. Though one might see reason to  $\Psi$  (say, learn to appreciate opera),<sup>19</sup> we would not expect one to be motivated to do anything about it without a relevant means-related belief and the belief that one is able to take the believed means. This second, ability oriented belief is often overlooked, but it is crucial to understand how perceived reasons relate to motivation.

Despite these differences the principles retain a Humean flavor. M-E reasons explains why it is that we often see reasons to take the various means to our ends. If perceiving reasons do not flow from ultimate ends to constitutive or instrumental means, an agent is to that extent procedurally irrational. And if an agent is not motivated to do what she believes to be conducive to her ultimate ends (what she takes herself to have ultimate reason to do), she is to that extent procedurally irrational. Means related reasoning is a huge part of what it is to be procedurally rational.

#### **A. Rationality and Executive Functions**

Scanlon suggests that there is a principle of rationality that covers decisions. For him, a decision to A at t is a “commitment to take the fact that doing some action, B, would facilitate one’s doing A at t as a reason for doing B, and to take the fact that doing B would be incompatible with one’s doing A at t as a (normally conclusive) reason against doing B.”<sup>20</sup> More precisely, he thinks that someone who fails to abide this principle is to that extent irrational (thus this principle is not constitutive of deciding itself; it can be violated). According to this principle, the very act of deciding to do some act commits one to take certain considerations relevant to the act as reason-providing. Presumably, prior to the decision, one would not necessarily be rationally required to take such considerations to be reason-providing.

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<sup>19</sup> Many thanks to an anonymous referee for this example.

<sup>20</sup> Scanlon (forthcoming).

I do not think decisions do such work. Without throwing decisions into the mix, one is already rationally required to take the believed constitutive and instrumental means to one's ends as reason-providing. If you take yourself to have ultimate reason to  $\Phi$  you must take your self to have reason to do those things that are needed to  $\Phi$ , as already set forth in the M-E reasons principle above. Deciding to  $\Phi$  does not add to what one already sees reason to do merely in virtue of making the decision. To illustrate, suppose I am trying to decide whether to go to the park for the afternoon or go to a movie. I see sufficient reasons to do either, and I must merely decide which to do. Suppose I decide to go to the park, and so I take a left at the appropriate point and head toward the park and away from the theater. It is not at the moment of deciding to go that I then see reason to do those things that are constitutive or instrumental to going to the park – insofar as I antecedently saw reason to go to the park I already saw reason to do whatever was constitutive or instrumental to doing so. (Incidentally, having decided to go to the park, I can still see reason to go to the theater as well, reasons that might now be outweighed by the inconvenience of retracing my steps).

Now suppose after deciding to go to the park I change my assessment of the reasons I have and I no longer see sufficient reason to go to the park. Maybe I receive information that it's going to rain, so going to the park won't achieve what I see reason to do. Then I pause and think "Well, I've already *decided* to go the park, so I should see *some* reason to continue my present route and I should see *some* reason not to do alternative actions that conflict with going to the park." That does not look like rational thought. My decision to go the park does not even supply minimal but overridden reasons to take the constitutive and instrumental means of so doing. This is why I prefer to think of activities like intending, willing, deciding, choosing, so-called "setting an end", and planning as purely executive functions that are sensitive to reason

judgments and end-setting attitudes, but which do not necessarily change one's assessment of reasons. They are purely dispositive motivational functions, or what we can call *behavior commitments*, whereby one sets oneself to do what one sees reason to do (including constitutive and instrumental acts).

Of course, if I never stick to my decisions I would rarely achieve what I see decisive reason to do. I see decisive reason to enjoy my afternoon, and I see sufficient reason to go to the park and sufficient reason to go to the movies as ways of enjoying the afternoon. Once I have made my decision, if I keep changing my mind I might never enjoy my afternoon. The same considerations apply to a great many activities that span time. I see decisive reason to have a successful career, and there are sufficient reasons to choose a number of different careers that would achieve that ultimate end. Having gone to school for some years and set out on one path to pursue one career, too many changes might prevent me from achieving my ultimate end. Often we see reasons to stick with our executive decisions as a way to keep our eyes on the prize, as it were, so long as we still see sufficient reason to pursue the activity we previously decided on.

We must now embellish our M-E principles to include principles of rationality that apply to executive functions. To save words I will use *deciding* to cover all of these functions. As I see things, insofar as one is rational, one will not decide to do anything if one does not see sufficient reason to do it. So we have:

Sufficiency: Agent A decides to  $\Phi$  only when A sees sufficient reason to  $\Phi$ , and believes she is able to  $\Phi$ .

In addition, if one judges that one has decisive reason to  $\Phi$ , then insofar as one is rational one will  $\Phi$ , so we have:

Decisiveness: Agent A decides to  $\Phi$  when A sees decisive reason to  $\Phi$ , and believes she is able to  $\Phi$ .

Again, these are constitutive principles of rationality and there is no guaranteed that one will decide in accordance with them. But when one errs from the principles we can say that one is to that extent irrational.

## **B. The Rationality of Ends**

Ginny is the easy case. It is more difficult to judge one's rationality when we disagree with one's ends. Consider the anorexic again. She takes herself to have reason to achieve an unhealthy weight, and most of us disagree with her assessment of her reasons. Do we want to say that she is *irrational* to have these end-setting attitudes, or that her end-setting attitudes themselves are irrational? According to one popular conception of rationality, the rationality of one's desires depends on one's beliefs. Derek Parfit defends such a view: "It is facts that give us reasons, but what we can rationally want or do depends instead on our beliefs."<sup>21</sup> In a similar vein, Parfit later makes the following two claims:

Our desires are contrary to reason when we want some event that we have such reasons not to want, and no reasons, or only weaker reasons, to want. When some desire is strongly contrary to reason, because we want some event that we have clearly and strongly decisive reasons not to want, this desire is irrational. Desires that are more weakly contrary to reason are merely less than fully rational. There is no sharp borderline here, since irrationality is a matter of degree.<sup>22</sup>

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I believe that, in most cases: (1) Our desires and acts are rational when they causally depend on beliefs whose truth would give us sufficient reasons to have these desires, and to act in these ways.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Parfit (forthcoming, Ch. 1, p. 25). All page citations are to a manuscript draft dated Feb 9, 2007. Permission to cite and discuss his developing views were given in personal communication.

<sup>22</sup> Parfit (forthcoming, Ch. 2, p. 51).

<sup>23</sup> Parfit (forthcoming, Ch. 4, p. 85).

In this last passage Parfit has in mind a person who wants to smoke based on the rational belief that smoking would damage his health. For Parfit, that desire would be irrational because, if his belief is true (which it appears to be) he would not have reason to want to smoke. Assuming that the anorexic is not factually mistaken about her diet and its likely consequences, her particular end-setting attitudes would be irrational, on Parfit's view, because, given her beliefs, she does not have good reason to desire her anorexic figure. Indeed, she would be irrational if she acted on those ends in accordance with the two M-E principles above.<sup>24</sup>

I do not wish to deny that it would be a good thing if our smoker failed to smoke, or if our anorexic's attitudes failed to translate into action, and I do not want to give up our critical assessment of her end-setting attitudes. However, my primary concern here is with procedural rationality, and it is doubtful that the presence or absence of certain end-setting attitudes is a matter of procedural rationality. While I don't deny that rationality is sometimes used in a broader, substantive sense that aligns with good reasons (either absolutely or relative to one's non-normative beliefs), I think it is useful to restrict the term to the internal matter of following one's perceived reasons. Useful because there is a real distinction to make, and useful because it helps us to see what the traditional debates have been about.

For example, how are we to understand what Hume was after when he declared "Tis not contrary to reason to prefer the destruction of the whole world to the scratching of my finger.

Tis not contrary to reason for me to chuse my total ruin, to prevent the least uneasiness of an

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<sup>24</sup> Parfit would also claim that some cares and concerns are rationally required. He claims that if someone does not give his future well being appropriate weight he is to that extent irrational. Parfit (forthcoming, Chs. 2 & 4). Such claims are best interpreted as claims about substantive rationality, or what agents have reason to do (perhaps assuming the accuracy of their beliefs). I take it that no ultimate ends are rationally required, unless adopting an ultimate end is necessary to achieve some other ultimate end, but even here the adoption of an ultimate end must be indirect, for we cannot merely choose to see a consideration as an ultimate reason for action. On Humean means for adopting ultimate ends see David Schmidtz (1996, Ch. 3).



Indian or person wholly unknown to me. Tis as little contrary to reason to prefer even my own acknowledged lesser good to my greater, and to have a more ardent affection for the former than the latter.”<sup>25</sup>?

Hume was arguing against rationalism, and he was working with a rather limited conception of Reason and its functions. In the end, he might have thought that there is no such thing as substantive rationality and indeed no such thing as a genuine normative reason (at least practical reasons). Thus, there would be no normative reason to prefer saving the world to enduring a minor abrasion. If this is Hume’s view, it is hard to agree. There sure seems to be good reason to endure a minor abrasion if the rest of the world hangs in the balance. At any rate, let us table the more radical skeptical reading, and, at risk of infidelity to Hume but with the hope of extracting a different lesson from this passage, let us seek alternative interpretations. One alternative reading has it that no desire-type attitudes are procedurally irrational to have or act upon, and so no actions can be irrational simply in virtue of the desires on which they are based. This kind of thought leads Korsgaard to complain that instrumental rationality is a principle that we cannot violate, for on this account we will always do what it is instrumentally rational to do. Because Korsgaard thinks that we must be able to violate normative principles, she thinks this instrumentalist principle cannot be normative.<sup>26</sup> To be normative, she says, we need to distinguish the desire-type states that we should rationally pursue from the desire-type states that we merely wind up pursuing: “hypothetical imperatives cannot exist without categorical ones, or anyway without principles which direct us to the pursuit of certain ends, or anyway without something that gives normative status to our ends.”<sup>27</sup> Here she is simply making the sensible

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<sup>25</sup> [II.iii.3/416].

<sup>26</sup> Korsgaard (1997, esp. p. 228-34).

<sup>27</sup> Korsgaard (1997, p. 250).

claim that some desire-type attitudes do not play the same role in the rational person as do other desire-type attitudes. So it would seem that some actions are irrational or a-rational depending on the desire-type attitudes that motivate them.

To answer Korsgaard's complaint we need simply note that attitudes through which we see reasons are end setting and these are the appropriate inputs to rational decision making, while other desire-type attitudes are not. With this distinction in mind, it is possible to act contrary to (procedural) practical rationality just in case non-end-setting attitudes are calling the shots.

But now we can also render a more robust understanding of Hume's claims about the rationality of pursuing scratch avoidance and one's lesser good. The first lesson is that no contents are excluded from end-setting attitudes as such – one can (incorrectly we might think) see reasons to give these considerations greater weight than the destruction of the world. And secondly, understood as a claim about procedural rationality, the current reading of Hume holds that if someone sees no reason to care about anything but his own pain, it would be irrational—a sort of malfunction—if that person did not attend to his abrasion until the skies fall. There is this functional relationship between end-setting attitudes, executive functions, motivation, and action that is nicely captured by procedural rationality. Similarly, for someone who sees more reason to pursue what would be less conducive to his own well-being than an alternative action that would be more conducive to his own well-being, it is not irrational *in the procedural sense* to choose the lesser good. Imprudent, but not procedurally irrational; perhaps *substantively* irrational (where this amounts to a claim about what one actually has reason to desire and to do, perhaps conditioned on the truth of one's beliefs), but not procedurally irrational. In general, it is not procedurally irrational to choose in accordance with the actions you take yourself to have most reason to do.

Having said this, procedural rationality is normative in a sense. As I have indicated, procedurally irrational individuals are malfunctioning. It is the proper function of procedure rationality to be appropriately sensitive to perceived reasons, as set out in the above principles. Crucially, this kind of normativity is not all there is. There is a more fundamental sense of normativity that concerns genuine, normative reasons and nothing I have said about rationality suggests that rational or irrational functioning is normative in the reason-implicating sense.

Meanwhile, we can still criticize individuals with imprudent or immoral end-setting attitudes. We can say that they are arrogant or inconsiderate or cruel as the case may be, and more generally they might fail to see the normative reasons that apply to them. So we have not lost the critical edge we wish to maintain. No substantive claims are lost when we restrict rationality to its narrower usage. Some of the characters we have been considering are odd to say the least. They fail to take genuine normative reasons for action as reasons. In the next section I will suggest that this failure is best described as a failure of practical wisdom, rather than practical rationality in the procedural sense. As a result, there will be no good analysis of normative reasons in terms of merely procedural rationality, contrary to internalist aspirations.

I believe that the four principles above—M-E motivation, M-E reason, Sufficiency and Decisiveness—constitute the core principles constitutive of procedural rationality. Procedural rationality might comprise additional principles besides, perhaps principles that govern contradictory ultimate ends, or the ordered pursuit of conflicting ends, but now that procedural rationality is clearly in view we can move on to other matters.

#### **IV. Reasons and Rationality**

I now want to examine the view that one's genuine, normative reasons can be analyzed in terms of what I have been calling procedural rationality. Recall claim (2) that I set forth at the outset:

(2) One has reason, and only has reason, to pursue his or her ends.

It is widely accepted that individuals have reasons to pursue their ends, and the disputable stuff concerns whether they have reasons to pursue more besides, such as moral or prudential behavior (when those are not included in one's ends). Take this representative quote from David Schmidtz:

Our goals give us reasons for action. I say this without presuming that the goals themselves are reasonable . . . . Nevertheless, once we have an end, simply having it gives us reasons for action. For example, whether or not we can justify having a goal for survival, it remains that if our goal is to survive, there are certain things we have reason to do. Accordingly, we can make sense of the fact that even biologically given ends, like the end of survival, can give us reasons for acting in some ways rather than others. To have an end is to have something with normative force, something that gives us reasons for action, whether we in turn have reason to have the end.<sup>28</sup>

I think the plausibility of such claims stems from the fact that individuals *see* the objects of their end-setting attitudes as favoring and disfavoring actions and attitudes. So when we say that individuals *have* reasons to pursue their ends that might be true if we are heard to say that individuals *see* reasons to pursue their ends. But the more important question concerns what considerations are genuinely reason-providing for agents, setting aside what they take to be reasons. It difficult to discern this as a separate question unless we distinguish between perceived reasons are normative reasons. Not only is it a separate question, it is of central importance for practical philosophy, which is not so much concerned with what individuals take to be reasons, but what reasons individuals actually have.

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<sup>28</sup> Schmidtz (1996, p. 8). I set aside here the issue of whether the biologically given goal is a non-psychological end, for I am interested in psychologically determined ends.

## A. Reasons Internalism

With the distinction between perceived and normative reasons in hand, there is a clear issue that any defender of (2), or its sophisticated internalist cousins, must address. Here I want to focus on the sophisticated internalist theories that began with Bernard Williams' seminal paper (1981), now represented in one form or another in Williams (1995a, 1995b); Smith (1994, 2004); Korsgaard (1996, 1997); and Pettit and Smith (2006) and others. Following Williams' more recent comments (1995b), let me take the following as the core internalist thesis: *A has a reason to  $\Phi$  only if there is a sound deliberative route from A's subjective motivational set to A's motivation to  $\Phi$ .*<sup>29</sup> The italicized phrases are key. For Williams, the set of one's motivations just is the set of one's desires understood in the broad sense we've been working with, viz., any mental state with a mind-world direction of fit. It can include the kind of ends we've been talking about, and more besides. Thus, our conception of ends is simply a refinement of the motivational set that Williams and other internalists typically work with.

Sound deliberative routes, as I read Williams, are those *rational procedures* by which one changes one's subjective motivational set. While Williams does not fully articulate what sound deliberative routes are, they do include things like mean-ends reasoning, ordering and conflict resolution amongst one's desires, and the exercise of imagination, presumably all done with full information of the relevant facts.<sup>30</sup> These ways of reasoning look similar to the kinds of principles of procedural rationality I have proposed above, so it is fair to say that Williams is working with an idealized exercise of the same kinds of procedural rationality we have considered. While there might be some disagreement as to which principles are constitutive of practical rationality, I take it that a key claim for the reasons internalist is that the principles must

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<sup>29</sup> Cf. Williams (1995b, p. 186).

<sup>30</sup> Williams (1981, pp. 104-5); (1995a, p. 36).

be *procedural and not substantive*. That is, a given principle cannot make it into the cannon of rational principles simply because it enables agents to be sensitive to good, normative reasons. The whole point of the internalist analysis is to anchor an account of reasons in the rational pursuit of motivational states, which cannot be understood in terms of the pursuit of genuine reasons for fear of circularity. This requires his deliberative routes, or what I have been calling principles constitutive of rationality, to be procedural.<sup>31</sup>

On Williams' view, we must start with the actions an agent, A, is currently motivated to do, and from there see what actions are motivationally accessible from the principles of procedural rationality under full information. One nice way to think of the accessibility Williams has in mind is to imagine a *rationalization transformation*, which is a function that takes an agent A's current motivational sets, full information and sound deliberative routes as input, and outputs a rationally idealized motivational set that we can imagine embodied in a ideally rational agent A+. This is essentially how other reasons internalists, like Michael Smith,<sup>32</sup> have developed the internalist line. A has a reason to  $\Phi$  only if A+ is motivated to  $\Phi$ .<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Thus, Pettit and Smith (2006) are incorrect to suppose that the following principle could make it into the internalist notion of rationality: "Reason requires that if A believes that B is another person, equally real, and believes that B is in pain, and A believes that she can relieve B's pain by  $\Phi$ -ing, then a desires to  $\Phi$ ." Pettit and Smith (2006, p. 151). This would be a principle of substantive rationality, a principle by which agents can be sensitive to the good normative reasons there are to relieve another's pain. This procedural constraint also calls into question Korsgaard's (1996, 1997) and Hooker's (1987) standing as good internalists, for it looks like they want to count some principles as rational simply because they enable agents to respond to reason-providing considerations. When such principles look so obviously informed by what we take to be good reasons for action, the internalist bears the burden of defending these principles on procedural grounds without appeal to normative reasons.

<sup>32</sup> I am indebted to Michael Smith for thinking of those motivations reachable through sound deliberation in terms of the motivational states of an idealized agent. See Smith (1994, 2004).

<sup>33</sup> Michael Smith notes a difficulty with this formulation. There can be circumstances where the rationalization transformation changes one's circumstances such that A+ is in different psychological circumstances than is A, and these different psychological circumstances provide A and A+ with different reasons. As a result, Smith would prefer the following statement: A has

This procedure works nicely for one of Williams' cases: the case of Ginny who wants a gin and tonic, but is served a petrol and tonic. It looks obvious that an ideally rational Ginny+, who is aware of the true contents of the liquid, would not be motivated to drink it. Thus drinking the liquid fails the reasons internalists' necessary condition on reasons and Ginny does not have reason to drink. As already noted, here we have a case where Ginny's reasons come apart from what it would be rational for her to do. Given what she believes, it would be rational for her to drink, it would be irrational for her not to drink, and so she *ought rationally* to drink. Nonetheless, she does not have a reason to drink, and she ought not drink.

Again, however, Ginny is the easy case. The worry is that the rationalization transformation, since it only includes principles of procedural rationality, is not robust enough to guarantee that any particular acts are motivationally accessible from all possible starting points. If not, then some individuals would not have reasons to be prudent or moral (they might even have positive reasons to be imprudent and immoral) because prudent and moral acts are rationally inaccessible from their current motivational set (while imprudent and immoral acts are so accessible). Consider the case of the anorexic. If we describe her case right, her motivation to eat an unhealthy diet, thereby causing harm to her mind and body, can survive the rationalization function. Unless there is another constraint on what can qualify as a reason, reasons internalism allows that she might have a reason to starve herself.

Perhaps more disconcerting, there are possible agents who have no motivation to help others in need. Consider Andy, who, as he exits a burning building, does not feel the slightest

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reason to  $\Phi$  only if  $A+$  would desire that  $A \Phi$  (though Smith seems to think this is a sufficient condition as well). Smith (1994, Ch. 5). This way  $A+$ 's desires are sensitive to  $A$ 's particular circumstances, including  $A$ 's less than ideal psychological makeup, and so they are more likely to capture  $A$ 's reasons, rather than  $A+$ 's reasons. See also (Smith 2004, p. 19). We should keep this modification in mind, though nothing that follows turns on it.

inclination to pull the fire alarm. He sees no reason to save others when it does not benefit him, and he is unmotivated to pull the fire alarm even if doing so would save dozens from dying in the fire. The rationalization transformation might output novel desires in ideal agents, but it would not be robust enough to produce moral desires in ideal versions of bad people like Andy. While this conflicts with a powerful commitment most of us share—the fact that pulling the fire alarm would save dozens of people is a reason for Andy to pull the fire alarm—the internalist result might be one we have to live with if the internalist’s analysis is right. So now let me turn to the arguments for internalism, and follow up to see if the internalist can bridge the is-seems divide.

### **B. Explanation, Motivation, Grip**

One of Williams’ starting points for defending internalism is the claim that reasons play an explanatory role. He says “If there are reasons for action, it must be that people sometimes act for those reasons, and if they do, their reasons must figure in some correct explanation of their action.”<sup>34</sup> Presumably, in order to explain behavior, one’s judgments about his or her reasons must be motivating, and so one’s reasons must be capable of motivating him or her. This appears to be a common claim for those who want to analyze reasons in terms of rationality. And in fact some individuals take this to be the defining aspect of reasons internalism. Korsgaard is an example. She says “Practical reason claims, if they are really to present us with reasons for action, must be capable of motivating rational persons.”<sup>35</sup> More recently she has reiterated the view: “[A]n internal reason [is] one which is capable of motivating the person to whom it applies.”<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Williams (1981, p. 102).

<sup>35</sup> Korsgaard (1996, p. 317). See also Shafer Landau (2003, Ch. 7).

<sup>36</sup> Korsgaard (1997, p. 215). Another quote from Korsgaard helps to reveal what is at issue here: “[W]e must still explain why the person finds it necessary to act on those normative facts, or what it is about her that makes them normative for her. We must explain how these reasons get a



The central question for these claims is a modal one: what does it mean to say that reasons must be *capable* of motivating agents, or to say that reason can motivate and explain behavior?<sup>37</sup> Is this motivation-explanation criterion correct? Indeed, it looks like some reasons externalists can accept some interpretations of the motivation requirement.<sup>38</sup> Importantly, however, our three-fold distinction between motivating reasons, perceived reasons and normative reasons enables us to tease apart several different motivational theses so we can evaluate them separately. Firstly, it is clear that *motivating reasons* are capable of motivating agents. They do so whenever they fulfill their mind-world functional role, as when a compulsion of mine takes hold and I obsessively straighten the fringe on the rug. But these motivating reasons can be a-rational and irrational – they are simply mental states that explain behavior without appealing to the perspective of the agent and whether or not the agents see reasons to do what they do. So *perceived reasons* are more on point. Here, too, perceived reasons are capable of motivating individuals to act; what’s more, they are capable of motivating individuals insofar as they are procedurally rational, which looks like the thesis Korsgaard is after. This is not a thesis about genuine normative reasons, though it does distinguish rational agents from irrational agents by appealing to the principles constitutive of procedural rationality.

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grip on her.” Korsgaard (1997, 240). It is not clear how to understand the grippage reasons are supposed to have. In one sense normative reasons have a *normative* grip on individuals: a given agent’s normative reasons really do pick out considerations that should guide his attitudes and actions. But Korsgaard seems to be referring to something else: a motivational grip. Perhaps the thought is that reasons get a grip on people by being the kinds of things that motivate *rational* individuals. Here again, this is the right thing to say for perceived reasons, but it is not true that normative reasons must have a motivational grip on individuals. Individuals—even ideally rational ones—can fail to see the reasons they have because their values are askew and they see ultimate reason to do things that are imprudent and immoral.

<sup>37</sup> Here I agree with Russ Shafer-Landau, who says “The sticking point about reasons internalism is understanding the relevant modality expressed in the locution ‘can be motivated.’” Shafer-Landau (2003, p. 171).

<sup>38</sup> For example, see Parfit (1997, p. 107).

We want the real deal: *normative reasons*. Is there any similar constraint on normative reasons such that they must be capable of motivating agents? I see no such constraint. Recall our agent, Andy, who fails to pull the fire alarm. We say he ought to pull the alarm – the fact that it would prevent needless suffering is a reason for him to do it. Would we withdraw these claims if we found out that he was not capable of being motivated by such considerations? No.<sup>39</sup>

The idea of a normative reason is the idea of a consideration that favors action, and any additional motivational condition simply confuses normative reasons with motivating reasons or perceived reasons. The confusion is more understandable when we take cases where individuals have perfectly acceptable ends, ends they really have reasons to pursue. In those cases one's end-setting attitudes actually pick out reason-providing considerations, and when those considerations are subsequently acted upon, then one acts in accordance with normative reasons. Thus it might look like normative reasons play an explanatory role; however, it is really the end-setting attitudes (through which one is seeing reasons aright in this case) that enter in to an explanation of behavior. From a first-person stance, one acts on what she takes to be favoring considerations and so in a sense those considerations are motivating her, but that is the case whether or not the considerations she takes to be reasons really are reasons. What is dispositive is whether she takes the consideration to be a reason, not whether it is a reason. In the end normative reasons are hangers on in the motivation-explanation game.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Cf. Shafer-Landau (2003, p. 187).

<sup>40</sup> A nice though admittedly imperfect test for whether something is playing a causal explanatory role in any given situation is to formulate a subjunctive conditional. In our case we want to know whether a normative reason R explains A's  $\Phi$ ing, so we ask whether A would have  $\Phi$ ed in the nearest possible world where R is false. Let's consider the anorexic case. Is it the case that she would not starve herself if it were the case that she had no good normative reason to starve herself? No. The nearest possible world where she has no good reason to starve herself is probably this world, and in this world she starves herself anyway. She does so because she

In fact, the explanatory requirement seems to get the point and purpose of normative reasons backwards. We do not exchange reasons with one another under the assumption that our interlocutors are already motivated by them, or could be motivated by them through some internal rationalization process. We exchange reasons to change one another's motivations, not through their own private deliberation, but through external and public debate. This exchange of reasons can come to alter one's motivational profile and what motivations are rationally accessible from that profile, but this is all for the better if we are changing our attitudes to align with our reasons. Of course, there are some abusive and disrespectful ways of getting others to change their minds, and the rest of us have reasons not to use such abusive and disrespectful methods, but there are other fruitful and respectful ways of engaging in sincere debate. These are legitimate ways of changing one's motivational profile in addition to private thought.<sup>41</sup>

Sometimes legitimate debate fails, and individuals are not motivated to do what they have reason to do. That is no mark against normative reasons because they are not required to motivate; they are only in the business of determining what people ought to do.

### **C. Reasons as Considerations that Explain Ideally Rational Behavior**

Williams and other internalists might be heard to say that A's normative reasons must be *capable* of explaining A's action in the sense that the considerations that are reason-providing for A *would be motivational for A+*, or more narrowly, *would be perceived reasons for his ideally rational self, A+*. Because A+ acts on perceived reasons (after all, he is rational) the contents of those perceived reasons do explain A+'s actions. In a sense the considerations could explain A's actions, too, because in the nearest possible world where A is A+ they do explain his actions via

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perceives a reason to do so, and because there is some belief-desire complex that gets her to do so. Motivating and perceived reasons alone explain her behavior.

<sup>41</sup> McDowell (1995) discusses non-rational routes of conversion.

perceived reasons. (So formulated, this is not quite right because A+ might see many competing reasons for doing incompatible actions, and he might only choose one of those actions, in which case the reasons he did not act upon would fail to *explain* A+'s actions. What we should say is that A's reasons are A+ perceived reasons and so *motivate* A+, at least a little bit and not necessarily dispositively.)

Nuances aside, that rendering of the motivational condition is just another way of stating reasons internalism, so it cannot provide independent grounds for reasons internalism. We still want to know why R is a reason for A only if A+ would see R as a reason. In the case of our agent who would not pull the fire alarm to save others, we want to know why he has a reason to pull the alarm only if his ideally rational self would be motivated to do so. That necessary condition leaves his reasons too captive to his heinous motivational inputs. When considering the rationalization operation, it's garbage in and garbage out.

We could try to crank up the power of rational deliberation such that all ideally rational individuals are prudent and moral regardless of the subjective motivational states of their non-ideal counterparts. Michael Smith holds out hope that ideal rationality will converge on their desires,<sup>42</sup> and Kantians can argue for more robust principles constitutive of practical rationality. Though I cannot foreclose that option, I must revert to the sketch of rationality offered above, and simply remark that I have not seen an argument that successfully expands the notion of procedural rationality to cover moral behaviors without losing sight of the important distinction between procedural rationality and substantive rationality. It seems that procedural rationality is at base a matter of acting in accordance with the reasons you take yourself to have. Any attempt to inflate the principles of procedural rationality so that they ensure that all or most subjective

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<sup>42</sup> Smith (2004, p. 27).

motivational sets will converge on a set of moral or prudential motivations after the rationalization transformation runs the risk of equivocating between procedural rationality and substantive rationality. In any event, this procedural use of the term serves us well by marking out a real distinction that is worth talking about independently of the merit of one's ends. It also makes sense of the traditional claims made by Hume and Humeans. So until we see a good argument for a principle or norm of procedural rationality—one which does not earn its status as rational because it enables agents to see the reasons that apply to them—we are well advised to stick to the Humean conception.

#### **D. To Have a Reason**

The internalist strategy is in jeopardy. It looks like we cannot generate a conception of reasons for agents out of the procedurally rational pursuit of ends (or motivational states more broadly) even if we idealize the rationality. Any given agent can intelligibly ask “Do I have reason to do the things I think I have reason to do?” And this question is not always resolved by providing the agent with more information or greater powers of procedurally rational deliberation. Sometimes, perhaps often, the question is deeper than that. Agents start to doubt whether they have reason to pursue self-aggrandizing behavior at the expense of other worthwhile activities, and this is at base a doubt about whether they have the reasons they always thought they had. The doubt can go in all directions. One who dedicates her life to the well-being of others can seriously wonder whether she does not have reason to focus more on her own well-being instead. These questions are not about what their ideally procedurally rational counterparts would be motivated to do or advise, for the idealized motivations will still be anchored in each individual's own motivational states, and we are imagining agents who question whether their own motivations are reason-providing. Even our ideal selves can sensibly

ask “I think I have reason to  $\Phi$ , but do I really have reason to  $\Phi$ ?” All this suggests that reasons cannot be generated out of the ideal pursuit of ends or motivations, and neither can they be essentially tied to one’s current subjective motivational states as the internalist envisions.

I am suggesting that fundamental problem for reasons internalism is the is-seems divide that will remain no matter how much procedural rationality, and how much information, we supply to an agent.<sup>43</sup> And it is simply too easy to obfuscate this divide by failing to distinguish perceived reasons from normative reasons, procedural rationality from substantive rationality, or, as we shall now see, senses of the phrase *to have a reason*. According to one normal usage, when we want to know whether an agent has something we want to know what that agent can recognize as a reason. On this recognition model, to find out if an agent has a reason we must look inside his head and see what considerations he has internalized as reason-providing. So if we want to know whether our agent who fails to pull the fire alarm has *in the recognition sense* a reason to pull the fire alarm we must know whether he sees a reason to do so, or perhaps whether he can be brought to see reason to do so by the rationalization transformation. We are forced to consider the kinds of considerations he has internalized as reason-providing.

But this way of understanding what it is to have a reason only gets at perceived reasons. If internalists think this is all there is to talk about, then they are skeptics about practical reasons. For those who accept practical reasons of any kind, there are further issues. This brings us to a

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<sup>43</sup> Derek Parfit (1997, esp. pp. 119-120) suggests another line of argument that might debunk internalism’s appeal. He thinks that reasons internalism is attractive for those who would eliminate or ignore the concept of normative reasons altogether. If the internalist maintains that A has reason to  $\Phi$  iff A+ would be motivated to  $\Phi$ , for instance, then the internalist gets an eliminative reduction either by maintaining that the two sides of the biconditional mean the same thing, or they mean something different but nonetheless state the same fact. Those views lose sight of normative reasons by denying that there are any favoring relations – the left side of the biconditional says nothing about any considerations favoring any attitudes or actions. So let me assume that internalist want to talk about normative reasons and explore whether there are good reasons to prefer a non-reductive analysis in terms of procedural rationality alone.

second sense of *having a reason*, which is less ambiguously referenced by asking whether there is a *reason for* an agent to act. It might turn out that the only reason for an agent to act is if that act furthers the agent's ends, or if the act is otherwise connected to the agent's motivational profile, but that claim requires arguments that cannot be based on the first, recognition sense of what it is to have a reason.

Analogous cases in epistemology clarify the point. One question we can ask is what counts as evidence, understood as good reasons for forming or revising beliefs, and we can try to come up with the general theory of evidence. Another, entirely different, question we can ask is whether a particular agent *has* a particular piece of evidence in the recognition sense. That question forces us to consider that agent's internal states to see whether he has the evidence or can recognize it as such. To illustrate, let us assume that the fact that the universe is expanding in every direction is evidence that there was a Big Bang. Suppose that A is not aware of this fact, so it is not the content of any of his mental states. In the recognition sense, A does not have this particular piece of evidence in favor of Big Bang theory. Still, the expansion of the universe is evidence that there was a Big Bang. Indeed, it needs to be evidence independently of whether A has it if we are to make sense of our practice of telling A the information, hoping it will weigh with him. If we did not take certain considerations to be evidence independently of whether agents have the considerations to begin with we would be hard pressed to explain why we exchange information with one another.

Now suppose A realizes that the world is expanding in all directions, but he does not take it to be evidence, and cannot be convinced to take it as evidence, even though he has all the background beliefs that would lead you and I to correctly regard it as evidence. With the recognition sense in mind there is still a sense—a recognition sense—in which A does not have

evidence of the Big Bang, for he does not *regard* it as evidence and he cannot be *convinced* otherwise. Nonetheless, there is another sense in which A does have evidence of the Big Bang, for the expanding universe in combination with relevant background beliefs is a reason for him to believe in the Big Bang. In this sense A has a reason to believe in the Big Bang, despite the fact that he cannot be convinced to see the relevant information as evidence.

This second sense of having evidence/reasons (or there being evidence/reason to form a belief or perform some action) is the one that we are after, but I fear that reasons internalism gets much of its appeal by focusing on the first, recognition sense. A theory of what it is to possess a reason does not begin to address the deeper issue of whether a particular reason actually applies to an agent. None of what I have said precludes the possibility of constructing normative reasons out of perceived reasons. It just shows that, under critical examination, the internalist analysis lacks any support.

## **V. Reasons and Wisdom**

We are not in the first instance interested in what an agent takes to be a reason, what he would take to be a reason under certain counterfactual circumstances, or whether we can convince him that he has a reason. We are primarily interested in what his reasons are.

If we reflect on our use of normative language there is good case for an analysis of one's reasons in terms of more normatively laden concepts, and not merely the procedurally rational pursuit of ends. Take some ordinary reason claims, for instance. We would say that A's severe food allergy to peanuts is a reason for A to avoid eating peanuts. Not that A would necessarily take himself to have that reason – he might have a particularly resilient death wish. Or we might say that the fact that  $\Phi$ ing would cause severe and unnecessary suffering is a reason for A not to  $\Phi$ . Again, not that A could be brought to see this reason – he might not care about the suffering



of others. The inhumane person who does not pull the fire alarm, Andy, really should pull the fire alarm – the fact that doing so would save lives and avoid much pain and suffering is a reason for him to pull the alarm. That he cannot be brought to see this reason does not challenge our original assessment of the reasons.

There are also less direct ways of speaking about reasons, and much of our use of evaluative concepts are reason-implicating. Williams himself acknowledges that ideally rational agents can be “inconsiderate, or cruel, or selfish, or imprudent” and to this list we can add that some ideally rational acts can be immoral or illegitimate or blameworthy.<sup>44</sup> Yet all of these evaluative terms strike me as reason-implicating. It is conceptually confused to claim that someone’s failure to act is immoral and blameworthy, for example, while at the same time admitting that he had no reason to act in that way. Pettit and Smith (2006) press the charge that the externalist analysis of reasons is really just a way of saying what it would be good for someone to do, not what they have reason to do. So for them, as for Williams, what it is good to do is one thing, and what one has reason to do is another. But if that is the case, what is the point of distinguishing what states of affairs are good, what acts are right, and what characters are virtuous? Aren’t these categories supposed to carry normative significance? One would have thought that the point of arguing about what is good vs. bad, right vs. wrong, and virtuous vs. vicious is to distinguish those considerations that should normatively guide our lives from those that should not. And the way these normative terms do so is by picking out reason-providing considerations.

Importantly, the proper application of these normative concepts does not depend on whether the target agent can be counterfactually motivated to do the right thing. And though we

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<sup>44</sup> Cf. Shafer-Landau (2003, p. 181, p. 192).

can use ‘irrational’ in a broad, substantive sense to condemn one’s ends, the evaluative terms Williams and I prefer are more apt.

In the end, to analyze reasons in terms of procedural rationality alone is to fail to capture the bulk of these linguistic practices.<sup>45</sup> Because reasons internalism uses the procedural sense of rationality, insofar as we are trying to come up with the best analysis of reasons that captures and explains most of our considered judgments about who has reason to do what, and respects the ways we use normative language, reasons internalism does a poor job. Given that we have debunking explanations for the initial appeal of reasons internalism, if such there be, the weight of evidence suggests we should abandon it.

We want to align normative reasons with the rest of our normative concepts, like good and bad, right and wrong, and the various virtue concepts, and not merely with the concept of rationality if that is best understood as a kind of functioning between ends, executive functions, and attitudes/actions. In analyzing one’s reasons we must correct one’s end-setting attitudes to ensure that individuals see reasons they have, and do not see reasons that they do not have. The way to do this is to idealize agents into wise people and ask what their *wiser* selves would want them to do, where wisdom is ideal procedural rationality plus correction of one’s end-setting attitudes. We can formulate the wisdom account of reasons as follows.

Wisdom account: An agent  $A$  has a reason to  $\Phi$  in circumstances  $C$  iff an ideally wise version of  $A$ ,  $A^w$ , would desire for himself to  $\Phi$  were he  $A$  in  $C$ .

where  $A$ ’s having a reason to  $\Phi$  is the same as there being a reason for  $A$  to  $\Phi$ . Essentially, the idea is that wise agents are attuned to reasons; they are substantively rational and so they see reasons aright. And because they are also procedurally rational, the acts they see most reason to

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<sup>45</sup> Parfit (1997) raises a similar point. However, I prefer to use the term ‘wisdom’ instead of substantive rationality to clearly mark the difference. Also, on my view, wisdom just is sensitivity to good, normative reasons.

do, their ends, will translate into seeing reason to perform the constitutive and instrumental means to those ends, and ultimately into motivation to take the means to those ends. Moreover, the corrected end setting attitudes are the only things that would translate into motivation because attitudes that do not present considerations as reason-providing do not get a motivational grip on procedurally rational agents. To be clear, what  $A^w$  would desire were he A in C is not simply what A *actually* desires. We need to make  $A^w$ 's desires sensitive to his superior information and sensitivity to reasons. Nor does the analysis appeal to what  $A^w$  would simply want A to do, where A is considered to be some unrelated person, for we are not asking what  $A^w$  wants other people to do. Instead,  $A^w$  is thinking of what he would want *himself* to do (where these desires bring to bear  $A^w$ 's complete knowledge and sensitivity to reasons) were he more like A, in A's circumstances, with A's capacities and with A's desires. Presumably,  $A^w$  would want himself to be sensitive to the reasons presented by A's circumstances.

Williams considers a similar view, where each individual has reason to do what a phronimos would do. He then makes the sensible charge that such a view would fail to relate actions to persons: "I confess, though, that nothing yet has persuaded me to give up the opinion that internalism in some form is the only view that plausibly represents a statement about A's reasons as a distinctive kind of statement about, distinctively, A."<sup>46</sup> To respond, we must ask: What would it take for a statement of A's reasons to be a statement about A? Is this complaint something more than a reiteration of the internalist constraint? I think the real concern here is that externalist analyses of reasons will not be appropriately sensitive to A's unique psychology, including A's hopes and dreams, and what A would get out of various courses of action. We must admit that if the externalist view holds that there is but one set of reasons for action, and

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<sup>46</sup> Williams (1995b, p. 194).

one way to live a life in accordance with reason, then actions would not relate to persons at all. But that is not the view. The externalist view I advocate can acknowledge that there are a plurality of meaningful lives and a plurality of sufficient reasons to act upon that are sensitive to the psychological makeups of each individual agent. Even if we filter reasons through one's wise self, one's reasons can in a deep and important sense depend upon what one gets out of various courses of action.

Here are some ways that reasons can depend upon persons under the wisdom account. We can assume that  $A^w$  would see reason to enjoy food, so if A prefers chocolate ice cream over vanilla, and only enjoys eating chocolate ice cream,  $A^w$  would want for himself to buy and eat chocolate ice cream if he were A in C. This is simply because A's preference for ice cream is part of A's circumstances, and  $A^w$  will take into account A's circumstances. To take another example, let us assume that being a philosopher and being a lawyer are both worthwhile careers. Even so, A can still have more reason to be a lawyer over being a philosopher if that will turn out to be more rewarding for him as a matter of his contingent psychology because  $A^w$  correctly sees more reason to have a worthwhile, rewarding career.

On the other hand, though A might see reason to have a rail thin body, we can assume that a perfectly wise version of A would not, and so  $A^w$  would not desire for himself to starve were he A in C. If we are roughly right in what we think are reason-providing commitments, we can assume that  $A^w$  would also care about the plight of others, and desire to render aid when possible. Therefore, not all of A's reasons would be relative to his particular motivational makeup.<sup>47</sup> To be sure, A might not be *motivated* to pursue some of the actions A actually has

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<sup>47</sup> There might also be a category of motivations and actions that are mindless and possibly a-rational in the sense that we neither have reason to do them, nor reason not to do them unless they get in the way of something else we have reason to do. Twirling one's hair comes to mind.

reason to pursue, and maybe A wouldn't be motivated even after lots of therapy. But if that is Williams' complaint, then he does not merely demand that statements about A's reasons be about A, and sensitive to A's psychology. He is really reaffirming his own internalist leanings, and the case for that position has been debunked.

Another potential problem with this view of reasons, and the wise being sensitive to reasons, is its metaphysics. Metaphysical objections to the view are off point, however, for anyone who takes normative reasons seriously will have to grapple with the same metaphysical worries. Our issue now is at the level of conceptual analysis and not metaphysical entities, properties, or relations. At this level, I have argued that the best analysis of the concept of a reason connects it up with other normative concepts, and not necessarily with procedural rationality. I have argued that a view that constructed one's reasons out of one's ends and procedural rationality alone would fail to capture many of the reasons we take all individuals to have, such as reasons to look after one's well-being and reasons to help those in need. That said, it is a separate and important project whether we should be realists about reasons, and whether the normative relational properties constitutive of reasons exist. I take it that genuine normative reasons to pursue one's ends are no less metaphysically suspect than are normative reasons unconnected with one's ends. Changing the source of reasons does nothing to affect the oddity of the favoring relations involved.<sup>48</sup>

Indeed, I do not think that normative reasons are the kinds of things that can be constructed. We would not construct relations like being taller than or believing that, so why think we can construct the favoring relation? As a result, I would not say that R is a reason *because* a wise person sees it as such. That placed wisdom conceptually prior to reasons, and I

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<sup>48</sup> Parfit (1997, pp. 120-30); McNaughton and Rawling (2003).

do not think we have a conception of wisdom independently of what reasons there are. Rather, I would analyze the wise person roughly as McDowell (1997) does, in terms of one who sees reasons aright, placing reasons conceptually prior to and explanatory of wisdom and other normative concepts like good, bad, right and wrong.<sup>49</sup> Thus, the wisdom account does not deliver a substantive theory of reasons *tout court*. Indeed, it assumes a substantive theory and introduces wise individuals that are sensitive to whatever substantive reasons there are. But the wisdom account does shed light on the ways in which a particular individual's reasons can be sensitive to the idiosyncratic psychological makeup of that individual, and so it helps to dissipate Williams' concern.

Metaphysics aside, my main point is that we need an argument to connect up one's perceived reasons to one's normative reasons in the way internalists envision. I have found no such argument. But I have found reason to connect up normative reasons as the wise see them, for they simply see reasons aright. When we compare the virtues of internalism and externalism, externalism simply does a better job respecting and illuminating the conceptual terrain.

## **VI. Conclusion**

On the one hand, we have perceived reasons, procedural rationality, and the recognition sense of having a reason, which are all theoretically connected. On the other hand, we have normative reasons, substantive rationality, and the non-recognition sense of having a reason. There is a gulf between these two sets of concepts, and I have argued that we cannot analyze the

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<sup>49</sup> Regarding kindness McDowell (1997, p. 142) states:

A kind person has a reliable sensitivity to a certain sort of requirement that situations impose on behavior. The deliverances of a reliable sensitivity are cases of knowledge; and there are idioms according to which the sensitivity itself can appropriately be described as knowledge: a kind person knows what it is like to be confronted with a requirement of kindness. The sensitivity is, we might say, a sort of perceptual capacity.

second set in terms of the first. No matter how ideal one's rational self is in the procedural sense, there is always the sensible question "Do I have reason to do what I think I have reason to do?" In the end, this debunks popular analyses of reasons in terms of practical rationality, and encourages us to take reasons as primitive, whereby one analyzes the reasons for a particular agent (in the non-recognition sense) in terms of the wise agent who is procedurally rational and also sees reasons aright. That does not mean that reasons will no longer relate to persons, for good reasons can flow from contingent aspects of particular agents. The final view is a Humean theory of procedural rationality that comports with most of our considered judgments about rational responses to contingent ends. It is also a somewhat Aristotelian view of substantial rationality, or wisdom. Reasons internalist rejoinders must be sensitive to the distinctions we have drawn and offer a better justification for their preferred order of analysis.

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