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Time, Tense, & Rationality

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ABSTRACT

In this thesis I try to advance our understanding of the nature of time. In particular I defend the idea that there is an objective difference between the past, the present, and the future; a metaphysical tense. This is in opposition to the idea that these distinctions merely mark an aspect of our perspective on entities in time.

I argue that tensed beliefs – beliefs that go hand-in-hand with tensed language – are essential to our lives as rational animals. Firstly, they are essential to our practices of providing reasons for action and acting for reasons. Secondly, they are essential for our lives as emotional animals whose emotions are appropriately responsive to the world.

Perry has argued that indexical – including tensed – beliefs are essential for actions. In order to attend my meeting, it is not enough that I know that it is at 2pm, I must also know that it is *now* 1:55pm. Examining Perry's argument I show that its proper conclusion is that tensed and first-personal beliefs are necessary for *rational* actions.

I argue that reasons are facts (not belief/desire complexes or intensional entities). Further, the rationality of an action derives solely from these reasons, so that when an agent is not mistaken their action is rational purely insofar as it is done for a reason that justifies it. This means that beliefs are required for rational actions only to the extent that they provide an awareness of reasons and thereby enable an action.

A proper understanding of rational action thus enables me to say that if an action must involve one belief rather than another in order to be rational, this must be because the former belief involves an awareness of a reason, hence fact, that the latter does not. Combining this with the proper conclusion of Perry's argument we can say that tensed beliefs are required in the place of any tenseless beliefs in rational actions, and therefore must involve an awareness of facts that the latter cannot capture. Given that our actions are by and large rational, it follows there are facts captured by tensed beliefs not captured by tenseless beliefs. There is a metaphysical tense.

Prior has argued that some emotions involve tensed beliefs and Cockburn has furthered this to show that the appropriateness of some emotions depends upon these beliefs. It is inappropriate to grieve a *future* death or fear a *past* danger.

I show that the appropriateness of emotions stems from the reasons they are felt for and that these reasons are revealed by the beliefs involved in these emotions. This enables me to argue that if an emotion must involve one belief rather than another to be

appropriate, then this can only be because the former belief captures a reason that the latter does not. In combination with Prior/Cockburn's conclusion I am thus able to argue, analogously to the case of rational actions, that if there are emotions which must involve tensed beliefs to be appropriate and there are examples of appropriate such emotions, then metaphysical tense is real.

My thesis thus derives a conclusion about the nature of time from our nature as rational animals. These arguments also have implications for a proper understanding of first-personal indexicals, which must now be recognized to pick out facts not captured by non-first-personal language. The former of these conclusions has been famously attacked by McTaggart, and the latter by Wittgenstein, and so I will also say something to rebut these criticisms. My arguments also have implications for certain issues surrounding the cognitive significance of co-referring names/natural kind terms which I will show to be unproblematic.

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INTRODUCTION

In this thesis I address topics concerning the nature of time. I take these topics to be of great importance because our world is temporal, everything we do and everything we know about is in time, or at least, depending upon one's opinion of abstract entities, a great many things we know about are in time. Because of time's pervasive nature I in fact spend a large proportion of this work discussing the nature of our lives as rational creatures who are active and emotional. However, this is done with an eye to revealing what this tells us about time itself.

Tensed language appears to say something different about the world than tenseless language. We appear to know something different about an event when we know that it is future, than we do when we simply know tenselessly that it occurs at a specific time, or after any other specific event. We can know the two tenseless things but still not know if the event has happened yet. The difference appears to concern the nature of time. I think that these appearances are correct, there is an objective distinction between something being future, it being present, or it being past, which is captured by tensed language, and in this respect tensed beliefs, but which is not captured by tenseless language or beliefs. I refer to this as the *tensed* view of time and my primary aim in this thesis is to provide an argument to show that this view is correct [A1].

Not everyone shares my opinion, and I refer to those who disagree as *tenseless* theorists.¹ The tensed theory as I present it above relies on two ideas, firstly, that tensed and tenseless language play different roles, and secondly, that this difference in roles involves a difference in what is described by the language. The former of these aspects allows us to distinguish tensed and tenseless beliefs as the different beliefs one portrays with the different language. The latter idea allows us to speak of these beliefs as involving an awareness of different states of the world, facts.

It is possible to challenge both of these ideas and tenseless theorists have done so. Thus I have two secondary aims in this thesis, defending the idea that tensed and tenseless beliefs and language play different roles [A2], and defending the idea that this involves them capturing something different about the world [A3].

¹ I will define the tensed and tenseless views in more detail in Chapter One.

Early in the twentieth century the opinion was popular in philosophy that tensed and tenseless language didn't play different roles and that they could in fact be intersubstituted for one another. This view went hand-in-hand with the popularity of standard first-order logic which symbolized the two equally. Since then, however, this view has gone out of popularity and today it is widely recognized that the two are not intersubstitutable, but rather differ in meaning. A view accommodated by the invention of tense logic.

There are two broad reasons for this change in opinion. Firstly, there was a recognition that tensed and tenseless aspects of language really do play different roles, there are occasions in which the former can be used and the latter cannot. This difference has been noted in a consideration of our everyday actions and emotions. Knowing that I have to cook supper tonight motivates me to go shopping in a way in which simply knowing anything tenseless does not. For example, knowing an obligation for me to cook falls on the 9th of December 2011 or after I have a particular belief might leave me unmoved even though it is the 9th of December 2011, if I do not know that is *now* the date. Similarly, I might be anxious because I know I am going to cook tonight, and not because of any tenseless knowledge I have, such that I am going to cook on the 9th of December 2011 or after a particular belief.

Secondly, advances were made in the philosophy of language that provided powerful theories of meaning according to which tensed and tenseless aspects of language meant different things. Direct reference theories of indexical language gained popularity, according to which indexical language, including tensed language, had an element of meaning akin to the rules of use for that language. This element of meaning distinguished tensed and tenseless language, as whilst one might use both 'now' and '11:15' to pick out the same time, 'now' can also be used to pick out other times in a way in which '11:15' cannot.

To this extent A2 is generally accepted. And no doubt these two motivations for accepting it are related, as two sentences which cannot be used for the same linguistic purposes amongst speakers who understand both clearly differ in meaning.

In denying A3, tenseless theories of language and truth have been offered according to which a difference in meaning can go hand-in-hand with an identity of truth-makers. That is, it has been argued that whilst tensed and tenseless aspects of language differ in meaning, the truth-value of both can coincide. Moreover, we can express the

truth-makers of a use of tensed language with tenseless language, and hence, we can suppose that the former does not capture facts which the latter does not, as the truth-makers coincide. For example, it is suggested that a use of 'It is raining now', said at 11:20 on the 9th of December 2011, will be true if and only if rain occurs[tenseless] at 11:20 on the 9th of December 2011.

This allows the tenseless theory to accept A2, and to explain the different roles that tensed and tenseless aspects of language have in terms of their differing in meaning. This can be done without needing to recognize that the two capture different facts, as the difference in meaning does not entail a difference in truth-makers.

A fuller consideration of the different roles tensed and tenseless beliefs play in actions and emotions reveals the importance of rationality (or perhaps appropriateness in the latter case). It is not that people cannot be motivated by tenseless beliefs in everyday actions, but that very often they would be acting irrationally if they were to be. I may be motivated to shop because I have the tenseless knowledge I am obliged to cook on the 9th of December 2011, but, it would be irrational of me to be if I did not know what the current date was (and hence have a tensed belief too). If it is now the 10th of December 2011 or the 10th of June 2011 shopping is pointless.

In a related way, my anxiety that I have to cook today is only appropriate if I have to cook today. Whereas, it is not clear it can be appropriate at all to have a tenseless anxiety because we ought only to be anxious about the future, and a tenseless anxiety will be one which is seemingly indifferent to this. If it is the 10th of December 2011 today, then I oughtn't to be anxious about having an obligation to cook on the 9th of December 2011 (even if it is appropriate to feel anxious about repercussions of having missed my obligation).

Since the middle of the last century it has been commonly believed that actions are caused by belief/desire complexes which provide the reasons for those actions, a view I refer to as *psychologism* about actions. Psychologism easily accommodates a tenseless acceptance of A2 and denial of A3, as it focuses on the nature of the beliefs themselves rather than what they are an awareness of in its account of an action and its rationality.

In more recent times, however, psychologism has become under increasing attack. There is now a trend of recognizing reasons for action to be facts, and hence, that the role of a belief in a rational action is determined by its content, the facts it is an awareness of.

This non-psychologism does not sit well with an acceptance of A2 and a denial of A3, rather, it implies that A2 follows from A3, that is, it is because tensed and tenseless beliefs capture different facts that they can play different roles in rational action. An issue apparently unnoticed by tenseless theorists to date.

My method in this thesis will thus be to argue that *rational* action differentiates between tensed and tenseless beliefs. In this way I defend A2 in a way that goes beyond its already popular acceptance. I will defend a form of non-psychologism about reasons and action, and will use this to argue that the difference in roles of tensed and tenseless beliefs stems from a difference in the facts they capture. In this way my defence of A3 will be in tune with contemporary achievements in the philosophies of rationality and action, and will thereby bring these into concert with the philosophy of time in a way which is currently lacking to the detriment to each of these fields. A2 and A3 lead to A1, given our actions are by and large rational. The tensed theory of time is thus established through a consideration of our nature as rational animals.

In the last fifty years it has become popular in the philosophy of emotions to think that emotions are not mere feelings, but involve cognitive aspects, they are related to beliefs. It is also increasingly popular to speak of the appropriateness of emotions. To the extent that this has come into contact with the philosophy of time it has again been argued that it coincides with a tenseless acceptance of A2 and denial of A3. A form of psychologism is adopted according to which the beliefs involved in emotions can affect their appropriateness independently of the content of those beliefs.

However, these moves have been made without a consideration of the recent advances made in the philosophies of rationality and action. Inspired by these I will defend a non-psychologism about emotions according to which they are responsive to facts which are the contents of their cognitive components. These facts are the reasons the emotions are had for, and they thereby determine the appropriateness of the emotions. This entails that the role of a belief in an emotion is determined by its content.

Thus I will run a second defence of A3, A2 and A1: I will emphasize that tensed and tenseless beliefs play different roles in justifying emotions; I will support A3 by adopting a non-psychologism in regard to emotions, in doing so I will advance the philosophy of emotions by bringing it into dialogue with the philosophies of rationality and action; and, I will defend A1 on the basis that our emotions often appear appropriate, and if they are not, this suggests we as emotional creatures are often wrong about the facts.

Establishing A1, and A2 and A3, in this way relies very little on theories of meaning (where these are something more than just descriptions of patterns of linguistic behaviour). However, it has great implications for these as it implies that tensed and tenseless aspects of language differ in meaning in such a way that they present different facts.

My primary aim in this thesis is to reveal something about the nature of time. The method I will adopt to do so will involve defending views on the nature of rational action and appropriate emotion. In defending these ideas I will adopt a method of clarifying advances in the philosophies of rationality and action and bringing these into play with advances in other fields. If these methods succeed, each field should gain, and these conclusions will also have a bearing on other issues, such as the philosophy of language.

Chapter Outlines

In Chapter One I introduce some terminology and clarify the nature of the debate between the tensed and tenseless theories of time. I examine an argument given by Prior which shows that tensed and tenseless language play different roles. Prior's argument concerns emotions, and I argue that considerations of it that have been offered by tenseless theorists fail to do justice to intuitions regarding the appropriateness of emotions. My conclusion is that tensed and tenseless aspects of language play different roles, and that in order to get clear about the implication of this for the philosophy of time we must get clear about the appropriateness of emotions.

In Chapter Two I introduce a little more terminology, and examine an argument given by Perry that shows that tensed and tenseless language play different roles. Perry's argument concerns actions, and I argue that considerations of it that have been given by tenseless theorists fail to do justice to intuitions regarding the rationality of these actions. My conclusion is that tensed and tenseless elements of language play different roles, and that in order to evaluate the implications this has for the philosophy of time we must get clear about the nature of rational actions.

In Chapters Three to Five I take up part of the challenge raised by the conclusion of Chapter Two and defend a view of the nature of rational actions. In Chapter Three I argue that the reasons that we act for and that justify our actions are facts (not belief/desire complexes or something intensional).

In Chapter Four I defend a view according to which acting for a reason, at least in a good case, involves: having a belief that is an awareness of that reason; adopting a goal of performing an action which is justified by the reason one is aware of; choosing to perform that action; and, performing that action.

In Chapter Five I argue that the rationality of an action derives entirely from reasons. It is not a matter of fulfilling normative requirements of other sorts, such as acting in a way that fits a certain pattern, for example, desiring x if one desires y and believes x is a means to y . If patterns such as this are patterns rational behaviour fits, then this is not because these patterns have their own normative import, but simply because they are patterns that are legislated by reasons.

Chapter Six brings together much of the preceding discussion. I argue that rationality demands tensed beliefs in place of any tenseless ones, and this can only be because the tensed beliefs capture reasons, that is, facts, that the tenseless beliefs do not. I also clarify the notion of fact which I use throughout this work.

In Chapter Seven I show that the argument of Chapter Six has implications for other elements of language. For example, two sentences which differ only in respect of the names they contain may capture different facts about the world even if those names are co-referring. The same can be said of co-referring natural kind terms, and co-denoting definite descriptions. These implications are already independently defended by descriptive theories of meaning, according to which reference is determined by descriptive content. They are also supposed more generally by anyone who attempts to account for differences in cognitive significance in terms of associated information, even if this information is only taken to be an aspect of the pragmatic content of the sentence. These implications are therefore not worrying and in fact have independent support. These fine-grained distinctions in beliefs couple naturally with fine-grained distinctions between actions, though I argue that they only require fine-grained distinctions between desires.

Chapter Eight defends a cognitive view of emotions according to which they represent the world to be a certain way and they are had for reasons. This enables me to apply the lessons from rational action to emotions, and it is shown that the reasons emotions are had for are facts which the emotions represent. These reasons can ground our everyday talk of the appropriateness of emotions in a way in which cannot be met by other popular approaches to the normativity of emotions, i.e. in terms of their pragmatic value and in terms of the appropriateness of their cognitive component. Furthermore, when

combined with the fact that the tense of an emotion affects its appropriateness, this shows that tensed emotions must capture facts not captured by tenseless ones.

The conclusion of these arguments is that tensed beliefs capture facts that tenseless ones do not, and that one's first-personal beliefs capture facts that cannot be captured by non-first-personal beliefs or anyone else's beliefs. The former of these conclusions has been attacked on the basis of McTaggart's paradox, and in Chapter Nine I show that this attack is mistaken. The second conclusion appears to conflict with Wittgenstein's argument against a private language, though I show that there is no real conflict here, or at least, to the extent that there is, the argument against my conclusion is mistaken. It is also made clear why these conclusions which I have drawn differ from those commonly reached in considerations of the need for indexical beliefs.

CHAPTER ONE: TENSE & EMOTIONS

McTaggart¹, and this is perhaps why he is so well discussed, highlights that events can be distinguished both as *earlier* or *later* than² one another, and, as *past*, *present* or *future*. For example, my lunch is both later than my breakfast and future. These two ways of distinguishing events give rise to two series, for example, last night's supper is earlier than this morning's breakfast, which is earlier than my writing this, which is earlier than today's lunch etc. and similarly, last night's supper is past, this morning's breakfast is less past, my writing this is present, today's lunch is future etc. McTaggart called the characteristics that ground this distinction the B- and A-characteristics respectively, and similarly, the two series the B- and A-series. A description of the B-series, if ever true, will always be true, whereas, a description of the A-series may be true at one time and false at another; this evening it will no longer be true to say "today's lunch is future".

This distinction gave rise to a new sphere of debate in the philosophy of time, one concerning whether or not the A-series was real. The focus of this debate does not concern the reality of the linguistic distinctions between the past, present, and future, all parties agree that some entities³ are described as past whilst others are described as present or future. The focus is rather on the metaphysical significance of this distinction, that is, whether there is an actual distinction between some entity being future and that entity being present or past, which goes beyond the way that entity is described. This debate shall be the focus of my thesis, and I will argue that there is more to something's being future, past, or present, than its being described or recognized as such. In this chapter I will clarify the debate, and some of the moves that have been made in it, also considering the validity of some of the arguments involved. I close the chapter by concluding that more must be said about the role of tensed language and beliefs in rationality.

1.1 Tensed Language

It is important at this stage to get clear about language and tense. Much talk of tense concerns the nature of language, for example, the differences between the sentences

¹ McTaggart:1908 and McTaggart:1927 bk.II ch.33.

² I shall also use the terms 'before' and 'after' to refer to these B-characteristics.

³ McTaggart (ibid) took the time series to be an ordering of events, it is events that are past, present, or future, or that are earlier or later than one another. However, I do not wish to make this commitment, so I shall speak simply of entities leaving it open what ontological category these belong to.

‘John is running’ and ‘John has run’. These differences enable us to speak of tensed language, or tensed utterances, sentences, propositions, beliefs etc. Such tensed language is, I take it, genuine and familiar. Craig suggests the following:

“In English, tense is usually expressed by altering the form of the verb (for example, “I write,” “I wrote,” “I shall write”), but tense can also be expressed by a rich variety of adverbial phrases (for example, “now,” “yesterday,” “three days ago,” “soon”), adjectives (for example, “past,” “present,” “future”), prepositional phrases (for example, “at present,” “in yet two days’ time,” “by next Saturday”), and nouns (as in, for example, “Today is Saturday,” “now is when he leaves”).”⁴

Not all language is tensed, for example, the sentences ‘two plus two is equal to four’, and ‘patience is a virtue’ are not.⁵ The ‘is’ in these sentences is a tenseless one. With this tenseless ‘is’ we can also construct sentences concerning time which are tenseless such as ‘sunrise is before sunset’, or ‘A.M. is born on the 10th of July 1981’. In this way we can see a number of temporal expressions as tenseless, that is, they do not entail that the sentences they occur in are tensed. For example: those picking out the B-series relations (for example, ‘before’, ‘after’, ‘earlier than’, ‘later than’, ‘simultaneous with’), expressions giving times and dates (for example, ‘2:05pm’ or ‘10th of July 1991’), and expressions giving temporal units (for example, ‘minute’, ‘day’, ‘month’). I will indicate the tenseless ‘is’ by placing it in square brackets,⁶ unless otherwise stated I will also take this to indicate that the sentence as a whole should be understood as tenseless.

Not all sentences involving the tensed elements outlined above will be tensed, for example, ‘future’ [is] a word’ is not. Amending a suggestion of Craig’s⁷, we might say that a sentence of English is tensed if it contains a singly tensed verb, a temporal indexical, or a tensed predicate adjective (i.e. ‘past’, ‘present’ or future’) not being quoted.⁸ An English sentence is tenseless if it contains a tenseless or multiply tensed verb and no temporal indexicals or tensed predicate adjectives not being quoted. These distinctions are

⁴ Craig:2000 p.3-4.

⁵ It could be denied that such sentence tokens really are tenseless, but I am happy to assume that they are, little of my argument rests on this assumption, and I will presently clarify my use of ‘tense’ in this regard. Cf. Smith:1993 ch.6, in a related manner see also Lowe:1998 ch.4.

⁶ Thereby in distinction to the use made by Lowe:1998 ch. 4.

⁷ Craig:2000 p.8.

⁸ This means that a sentence like ‘*b* is, was, or will be *F*’, is not tensed. The value in saying this is to leave some freedom for dealing with the relation between tensed and tenseless language, that is, it allows one to say that if time is tensed, then the tenseless ‘is’, is very often (perhaps not in cases dealing with entities outside time) just a short hand for the disjunction ‘is, was, or will be’. (Cf. Lowe:1998 ch.4, Smith:1993 ch.6.2, Chisholm & Zimmerman:1997.)

not exhaustive, but, they clearly classify a number of ordinary cases and in so doing are sufficient to my purposes.

A rather different classification states that a tensed sentence is one that says, or says when used, that an entity is past, that an entity is present, or that an entity is future (similarly for utterances, propositions, statements etc.). I take ‘the 2012 Olympics is present’, ‘the 2012 Olympics is now’ and ‘it’s the 2012 Olympics’, equally to say that the Olympics is present. Although these sentences do not all use the term ‘present’, that the Olympics is present, as opposed to past or future, is given by the meaning of each of these sentences. When someone utters a tenseless sentence such as ‘two plus two [is] equal to four’, one may be able to infer that an entity is present, specifically, if I am audience to such an utterance I might be able to know that the utterance itself is present. However, although the utterance to this extent implies or even informs one that an entity is present, it does not *say* that an entity is present, that is not something that the utterance means. This perhaps leaves some grey areas, and I will not try to clarify them, but, it does clearly classify many everyday examples, and is thus adequate to my purposes.⁹

This latter mode of classification captures what I take to be crucial and will be the one that I assume, though the former, perhaps more formal classification, would serve my purposes and can be assumed by a reader if they so wish. On either classification it is obvious that the simple sentence ‘I’m making a mess’ is tensed, and the simple ‘F.P. makes a mess on 12th of October, 1994’ is not.¹⁰ Tensed language thus captures McTaggart’s A-series, though tenseless language does not.

⁹ This description of tensed sentences does not make a commitment to there being an ontological distinction between an entity being present, and it’s being future or past, etc., any more than a sentence such as ‘the 2012 Olympics is present’ makes such a commitment. This description is committed to the sentence ‘the 2012 Olympics is present’ saying that the 2012 Olympics is present, which, given that the object-language and meta-language are in this case one and the same, is surely correct. It remains true whatever one takes the ontological commitments of the object-language, and hence meta-language to be, and to this extent, it is an idea independent of such ontological commitments. My description is also committed to saying that, for example, ‘the 2012 Olympics is now’ and ‘the 2012 Olympics is happening’ both say that the 2012 Olympics is present. But again, this needn’t make any more ontological commitments than ‘the 2012 Olympics is present’ makes.

¹⁰ For alternative classifications, one might consider, for example, Smith:1993 p.6-7, or Gale:1968 p.42. My overall argument could be made to work with either of these.

1.2 Metaphysical Tense

There is such a thing as tensed language. However, the issue that I am concerned with is whether time, or the world itself is tensed (we might call the former linguistic tense, and the latter metaphysical tense). In saying this I do not mean that time or the world must fit the classifications of linguistic tense, the point is rather that there is something about the world captured by tensed language.

One might in this regard speak of properties of pastness, presentness, and futurity.¹¹ Such that, the event of my being born has the property of pastness, the event of my writing this has the property of presentness, and the event of my retiring has the property of futurity. Alternatively one might say that only present time or present entities exist,¹² or that only past and present ones do¹³. In a different manner, one might say that the past, present and future all exist, but that the future is open, insofar as, there is only one past and one present but there are numerous futures (there are numerous events of my retiring, but only one of my writing this and of my being born).¹⁴

On all of these views saying that something is present says something about the nature of the world. Linguistic tense picks out metaphysical tense. An implication of this is that an ideal¹⁵ description of the world that utilises only tenseless language will necessarily be incomplete,¹⁶ it will leave an aspect of the world undescribed. More specifically, an ideal description of the world that utilises both tensed and tenseless language will more fully describe the world than one that does not use tensed language. I call any theory that has this implication a *tensed* theory, and any theory that denies it a *tenseless* theory.¹⁷ In the course of this work I will defend a tensed theory by arguing that there must be aspects of the world which are captured by tensed language that are not captured by tenseless

¹¹ For example, McTaggart:1908 & 1927, and Smith:1993.

¹² For example, Prior:1967, and Bourne:2006.

¹³ For example, Broad:1923, and Tooley:1997 & 2003.

¹⁴ For example, McCall:1994.

¹⁵ We should not be bogged down by practical difficulties in compiling such a description.

¹⁶ McGinn:1983 (care of, Le Poidevin:1991 Introduction) has argued that a tenseless description will be necessarily incomplete, but that it will not miss out anything in the nature of the world, but the clause that follows this footnote renders McGinn's point irrelevant, and my argument proves this latter positive clause.

¹⁷ Classifying theories in this way makes it awkward to say that Tooley:1997's and McCall:1994's theories are tensed theories. Because, on these views all tensed utterances have tenseless truth-conditions. This implies that both tensed and tenseless language will be equally descriptive. However, I am prepared to accept this conclusion, as I take it to be a fault of Tooley's and McCall's theories that they have this implication (cf. Bourne:2006 ch.1 II).

language.¹⁸ (I will generally allow the context to make clear whether I am discussing linguistic or metaphysical tense.)

1.3 The Old Tenseless Theories

If all tensed language could be translated or reduced to tenseless language, then the tenseless theory would be vindicated, as this would entail that tensed language could not tell us more about the world than tenseless language. This view of tensed language has been supported by a number of proponents in theories that take two general forms. (However, these theories have largely been superseded, for reasons I will outline in the following section, so I will refer to these as the *old* tenseless theories.¹⁹)

One form of the old tenseless theory suggests that a tensed sentence can be translated by, that is, will have the same meaning as, a similar tenseless sentence which includes a date. Thus Russell writes: “*When we are told “Mrs. Brown is not home,” we know the time at which this is said, and therefore we know what is meant...in order to express explicitly the whole of what is meant, it is necessary to add the date*”.²⁰ Similarly Goodman asserts: “*a certain “ran” is translated by any “runs [tenseless] on Jan. 7, 1948 at noon E.S.T.*”.”²¹

In fact, it is odd that Goodman makes this claim, as shortly before this he says that “*A “Randy ran” tells us not only who did what but also when, i.e., prior to the period of production of the sentence itself.*”²² The implication of which is that a certain ‘ran’ could not possibly be translated by a linguistically-tenseless ‘runs on’ and a date, but at best, by a linguistically-tenseless ‘runs before’ and a date; we are not given the date of the running,

¹⁸ Two motivations for defining tensed theories in this way are: firstly, that it leaves open what the tensed nature of the world consists in, for example, whether we must say there are tensed properties of events, or that only the present exists, etc.; secondly, the coherence of the tensed/tenseless debate presupposes that we could describe whether the world was one way or the other, and the most fitting way in which to describe the world as tensed as opposed to tenseless is with tensed language, and hence in tensed language describing more than tenseless language does (it is implausible that one could show that tenseless language does not state facts, or that tensed language does not, so the crucial issue is whether the tensed and tenseless language state the same facts). In fact one might argue that one inevitably arrives at difficulties if they try to describe the phenomenon of metaphysical tense with tenseless language alone, a mistake of this form perhaps being made by McTaggart (1908 & 1927 bk.II ch.33) in his argument for the unreality of time in his attempting to say, apparently tenselessly, that “an event is past, present, and future” (cf. Broad:1938 pt.1)).

¹⁹ A title used by Oaklander & Smith:1994.

²⁰ Russell:1906 p.256-7.

²¹ Goodman:1951 p.296.

²² Goodman:1951 p.292.

merely a date that the running precedes.²³ This leads us to a more complete expansion of what we might call the old *date* tenseless theory, as follows.

Any ‘*b* is *G*ing’ (present tense) said at *t*, where *t* gives a time and date, can be translated by any ‘*b* *G*s on/at *t*’ (tenseless).

Any ‘*b* *G*d’ (past tense) said at *t*, where *t* gives a time and date, can be translated by any ‘*b* *G*s before *t*’ (tenseless).

Any ‘*b* will *G*’ (future tense) said at *t*, where *t* gives a time and date, can be translated by any ‘*b* *G*s after *t*’ (tenseless).

This trend can then clearly be expanded to include more complicated tensed sentences, thus Goodman suggestively continues: “A “*Randy had been running*” tells us that the running took place prior to a moment – presumably further specified in the context – that is in turn prior to the time of production of the sentence itself.”²⁴ The application to different sentence types (for example, ‘The war has ended’) being similar, so we can say generally that a sentence in the past/present/future tense said at *t* can be replaced by one which is tenseless and includes the time *t* and a before/simultaneous/after relation.²⁵

The second form the old tenseless theory takes suggests that a tensed sentence can be translated by a tenseless sentence that refers to itself, thus Smart states: “*All the jobs which can be done by the tenses can be done by means of the tenseless way of talking and the self-referential utterance ‘this utterance’.*”²⁶

Perhaps the most complete account of the old *token-reflexive* tenseless theory (as I shall refer to it) was given by Reichenbach.²⁷ He tells us, firstly, that the word “‘*now*’ means the same as ‘*the time at which this token is uttered*’”²⁸. The words ‘present’, ‘past’, and ‘future’, presumably being similarly treated so as to translate to ‘the time at which this

²³ One might of course say “Randy ran at 4pm on the 27th of July 1997”, but still, the ‘ran’ alone would not be translated by the date, if it were this sentence would be repetitive, which surely it isn’t.

²⁴ Goodman:1951 p.292-3.

²⁵ Russell and Goodman were not the only people to support old date tenseless theories, followers also included, in a manner, Frege (1956) and Quine (1960 sect.36). However, for Frege it is the tensed utterance and the wider context (including the time it was uttered) that translate a dated tenseless sentence in a manner reminiscent to that in which Russell says a tensed sentence is incomplete, and, for Quine the tensed and tenseless do not share meaning, but rather are paraphrases of one another that can be used for the same purposes.

²⁶ Smart:1963 p.134.

²⁷ Reichenbach:1948 sect.50 & 51.

²⁸ Reichenbach:1948 p.284.

token is uttered’, ‘a time before this token is uttered’, and ‘a time after this token is uttered’, respectively. Shortly after this Reichenbach then gives a detailed consideration of tensed verbs producing the following table.

“the initials ‘E’, ‘R’, and ‘S’ stand, respectively, for ‘point of the event’, ‘point of reference’, and ‘point of speech’, and [...] the direction of time is represented as the direction of the line from left to right:

Past Perfect <i>I had seen John</i> ----- E R S	Simple Past <i>I saw John</i> ----- R,E S	Present Perfect <i>I have seen John</i> ----- E S,R
Present <i>I see John</i> ----- S,R,E	Simple Future <i>I shall see John</i> ----- S,R E	Future Perfect <i>I shall have seen John</i> ----- S E R” ²⁹

This table can be used to tell us how we might make the appropriate translation of a tensed phrase, presumably, for example, ‘I shall have seen John’ means ‘I see John after the time I utter this and before the time of reference’. Reichenbach also suggests that we might name a particular token in the meta-language, so that in that way token-reflexivity can be eliminated. For example, in the meta-language, an utterance of ‘I saw John’ might be named *b* and hence replaced by ‘I see John before the time of *b*’ where this latter is to be read as tenseless.

1.4 Problems for the Old Tenseless Theories

Mill³⁰ took many words to be directly referential, picking out entities but providing no information about them. This view lost favour as a result of criticisms from the likes of Frege and Russell³¹ who argued that, for example, it could not account for the informative nature of identity statements like ‘Dodgson is Carroll’. However, in the mid twentieth century directly referential theories of language saw a resurgence.³² In this return to direct

²⁹ Reichenbach:1948 p.290. He goes on to discuss the fact that the time extension of the event can be presented as of a longer duration, such as in ‘I am seeing John’.

³⁰ Mill:1884, bk I ch.II.

³¹ For example, Frege:1980 and Russell:1905.

³² For example, Marcus:1961, Kripke:1981, Kaplan:1989a.

referentiality, theories of language were advanced that raised trouble for the old tenseless theories, as they denied that tensed language could be translated by tenseless language.

In Kaplan's³³ theory, for example, the indexical 'now' will refer directly to a time, but, the meaning of this expression is not given simply by this referent, its *content* on an occasion of use, but also by the rules of use of the expression, its *character*. For example, if I utter "It is raining now", at 2pm 12th of February 1997, the 'now' will serve to pick out 2pm on the 12th of February 1997, and will not predicate anything of that time. The expression '2pm 12th of February 1997' also refers to that time, and to this extent it coincides with the 'now'. However, even if we suppose '2pm 12th of February 1997' to be directly referential, it will still only have the same meaning as the 'now' if it also has the same character as that expression, that is, if the two expressions have the same rules of use. But, it is clear that the two expressions do not have the same rules of use, 'now' should be used to refer to the time at which it is uttered, but, '2pm 12th of February 1997' should be used to refer to 2pm 12th of February 1997 whenever it is uttered. It follows that "It is raining now" uttered at 2pm 12th of February 1997, cannot be translated by "It is raining at 2pm 12th of February 1997". Therefore, the old date tenseless theory is wrong.

A similar fate befalls the old token-reflexive tenseless theory. An utterance of "It is raining now" could only be translated by a simultaneous utterance of "It is raining at the time of this utterance", if the 'now' and the 'the time of this utterance' share both content and character. But it is clear that they do not, not only is the latter expression a definite description, and hence not directly referential (so that perhaps the definite description picks out the time and says of it that it is the time at which the utterance occurs), but further, it is clear the definite description (and even just the indexical 'this') have different rules of use from the 'now', and so they cannot translate it. Therefore, the old token-reflexive tenseless theory is wrong.

Moreover, given the manner in which the old date and token-reflexive theories were shown to be mistaken, it is implausible that any similar alternatives could be correct (within Kaplan's theory), as it is implausible that there can be any tenseless terms that can share a content and character with 'now'. Tensed and tenseless expressions appear to differ in character, as they differ in use, and this difference in use gives rise to a second line of difficulty for the old tenseless theories. Even with the particular details of Kaplan's theory

³³ Kaplan:1989a.

put to one side, phrases which necessarily have different uses within a competent linguistic community clearly have different meanings.

This second line of difficulty is to my mind most forcefully presented in an argument by Prior, who states, in what I shall call the *thank goodness* argument:

“half the time I personally have forgotten what the date is, I have to look it up or ask somebody when I need it for writing cheques, etc.; yet even in this perpetual dateless haze one somehow communicates, one makes oneself understood, and with time-references too. One says, e.g. “Thank goodness that’s over!”, and not only is this, when said, quite clear without any date appended, but it says something which it is impossible that any use of a tenseless copula with a date should convey. It certainly doesn’t mean the same as, e.g. ‘Thank goodness the date of the conclusion of that thing is Friday, June 15, 1954’, even if it be said then. (Nor, for that matter, does it mean ‘Thank goodness the conclusion of that thing is contemporaneous with this utterance’. Why should anyone thank goodness for that?)”³⁴

Prior forcefully makes the point that in certain cases no tenseless utterance can play the role of a tensed one, from which it follows that no tenseless utterance can translate that tensed one, and hence, that the old tenseless theories are wrong.

1.5 The New Tenseless Theories

In reaction to problems such as these the tenseless theory has taken a different tack. The aim of the *new* tenseless theories (as I shall refer to them) is to admit that tensed language cannot be translated by tenseless language, but, to deny that one gets at facts not got at by the other. Crucial here is the thought that tensed and tenseless language is made true by the same facts.

As with the old tenseless theories the new ones come in two forms. The *date* tenseless theory (as I will refer to it), can be stated as follows:

“Any token of ‘e is occurring now’, tokened at t, is true if and only if e occurs at t.”³⁵

The *token-reflexive* tenseless theory (as I shall refer to it), can be stated similarly:

“Any token u of ‘e is occurring now’ is true if and only if u is simultaneous with e.”³⁶

³⁴ Prior:1959 p.17, see also Prior:1962.

³⁵ Le Poidevin:1998 p.29.

As with their old counterparts, these ideas can be expanded to accommodate tensed expressions of different types and higher orders, for example, we might say a token of ‘*e* was future’ uttered at *t*, is true if and only if there is a time *t**, such that *e* occurs later than *t** and *t** is before *t*.³⁷

The new tenseless theorist’s idea is that *e* occurring before, after, or at *t*, or before, after, or simultaneous with *e*, is something that can be stated in tenseless language. This enables the new tenseless theorist to say that the facts which make a tensed utterance true are simply tenseless facts. Thus, the tenseless theory is correct. Nevertheless, this does not entail that tensed and tenseless utterances are inter-translatable, because an utterance giving the truth-conditions of a different utterance, needn’t be taken as having the same meaning as that different utterance.³⁸

1.6 Tenseless Theories’ Responses to Prior’s Thank Goodness Argument

The new tenseless theories do avoid the problems raised for the old tenseless theories by the new direct reference theories of language, such as Kaplan’s. However, they must say something further to respond to Prior’s thank goodness argument, as they must explain how it is that Prior can be relieved that the exams are over, and not relieved they are prior to his feeling of relief, or the date of his feeling of relief, even though the exams being over just is their being prior to the relief or the date of the relief (according to the new token-reflexive and date theories respectively).

Prior asserts that he is relieved the exams are over, but not relieved that they finish before his relief, nor relieved they finish before the date of his relief (I will refer to the former as Prior’s *tensed* relief, the latter two as his *tenseless* emotions of relief). It thus

³⁶ Le Poidevin:1998 p.29. Examples of the date tenseless theory can be found in Mellor:1998, Le Poidevin:2007 and Smart:1980, examples of the token-reflexive tenseless theory can be found in Mellor:1981a, Oaklander:1991, and, Dyke & Maclaurin:2002.

³⁷ For an account of how such an expansion might be made see Mellor:1998 ch.3.5.

³⁸ There are difficulties surrounding these theories, specifically, in regard to how the conditions quoted at the start of this section are to be interpreted. If we take the quotations as giving truth-conditions, then arguably there is no difference between the date and token-reflexive versions, because each state that the token utterance must exist, even if this is only placed after the ‘if and only if’ of the token-reflexive theory. Further, Lowe has pointed out that one could interpret the stated conditions to be tensed, so that they in effect state: a token *u* of ‘*e* is now’ is now true if it is now simultaneous with *e*, it will be true if it will be simultaneous with *e*, and it was true, if it was simultaneous with *e*. The implication of which is that it is not clear that we can state these truth-conditions tenselessly. Cf. Lowe:1998 ch.4.

appears that the tensed relief is different from either of the tenseless ones. The obvious manner in which to distinguish these emotions of relief is to say that they have different objects. In the tensed relief, one is relieved for the tensed fact that the exams are over, whereas, in the tenseless emotions of relief, one is relieved for tenseless facts, i.e. that the exams finish on a certain date, or are simultaneous with a specific feeling of relief. However, this implies that the tensed fact is different from either of the tenseless ones, and hence that there are tensed facts.³⁹ This is something the tenseless theories cannot accept.

Mellor⁴⁰ initially responds to this by denying that the emotions of relief have an object at all. Rather, the expression of relief given in Prior's uttering "Thank goodness", is just an expression of pure relief, and is quite distinct from the belief he has and that he expresses in saying "that's over". In fact he could just have well said "That's over; thank goodness", as "Thank goodness that's over". But, there remains a connection between the belief and the relief, because the belief is true if and only if the exams finished before that belief (or the date of it), and, the exams being over before the belief (or date of it) causes the feeling of relief. For Mellor this excuses the tenseless theorist from the need to postulate tensed facts; they are not needed to account for the truth of the tensed belief that the exams are over, as that belief can be given tenseless truth-conditions. And tensed facts are not needed to be the object of the relief, as the relief has no object.

But Mellor notes that there is a further element to the story, because the relief is justified after the exams, but not before the exams (one shouldn't be relieved something is over when it isn't). We thus have the question, why is the relief appropriate after the exams? The tensed theorist has an answer to this, for example, because that is when it becomes a fact that the exams are over or past. The tenseless theorist cannot say this, as they deny such tenseless facts. Nevertheless, Mellor insists that one is mistaken to think that this gives the tensed theorist an advantage, because the tenseless theorist has an equal explanation. The relief is justified then because relief is justified when after pain, a tenseless fact on a par with the tensed one referred to by the tensed theorist.

MacBeath⁴¹ argues that Mellor's initial response is inadequate, because it is false to think that the relief has no object; Prior is clearly relieved about something. (This is

³⁹ We can suppose that if we spoke to Prior he would also deny having any other tenselessly expressible emotions of relief. (Note the difference here, even if different emotions of relief can share objects, this doesn't make them the same relief, propensity to express them differently is already grounds for thinking they are distinct.)

⁴⁰ Mellor:1981b & 1981a ch.3.

⁴¹ MacBeath:1983.

perhaps more clear if we speak in terms of gratitude. Prior is grateful, and not simply grateful – what could pure gratitude be – but grateful for something, for the exams being over.) Moreover, if we accept that the relief has an object, it is clearly a tensed one, as he is relieved that the exams are over, and he is not relieved that they finish before a certain date, or before a specific emotion of relief.

MacBeath offers a different tenseless solution. He points out that belief is an essential intermediary between the facts one is relieved about and the relief one has as a result. If Prior did not believe his exams were over, he would not be relieved that they were. Moreover, the relief is responsive to the belief not the fact believed, because one could falsely believe the exams to be over and resultantly be relieved. The tenseless theorist can thus say that Prior's relief has an object, namely the [supposed] fact that the exams are past, and this is [or would be] a tensed fact. However, in order for Prior to be so relieved, it is not necessary for this tensed fact to exist, it is sufficient that he believes it to exist. Moreover, this belief can be true, and made true by tenseless facts as outlined by the new tenseless theory. This relief that the exams are over is also justified, because relief that the exams are over is justified after the exams (a tenseless fact).

Mellor⁴² subsequently concedes MacBeath's point that emotions often have objects, and accepts MacBeath's proposed tenseless solution saying: "*Tensed facts figure only in our responses to tensed facts, and what our responses require is not the facts themselves but beliefs about them, i.e. tensed beliefs. But both the content and the truth of tensed beliefs can be fixed as MacBeath says by purely tenseless facts.*"⁴³ This solution has been adopted quite generally by tenseless theorists.⁴⁴

⁴² For example, Mellor:1983 & 1998 ch.4.

⁴³ Mellor:1983 p.91.

⁴⁴ Dyke & Maclaurin:2002. It is also accepted by some tensed theorists, for example, Bourne:2006 p.17-18. Garratt:1988 adopts a different solution, accepting the existence of the tensed fact, but suggesting that the tenseless theorist can accept the existence of tensed facts. His ground for making this assertion is that he thinks that the tenseless theorist is only committed to denying the existence of tensed properties, and tensed facts needn't entail the existence of tensed properties, but I think this is a very weak interpretation of the tenseless theory and the existence of tensed facts appears to be an acceptance of a tensed theory (numerous tensed theorists deny that there are tensed properties, for example, Prior).

1.7 Inadequacies of the Tenseless Theories' Response

In this section I will argue that this tenseless response is inadequate, if not erroneous. The problem with the tenseless response is that it does not make clear what the proposed tensed fact is, or the role that fact is supposed to play.

Some tensed theorists have found this tenseless response to Prior's argument inadequate.⁴⁵ Craig,⁴⁶ for example, argues that the issue concerns the rationality of the emotions. It is rational for Prior to feel relieved that the exams are over only after the exams (and anticipation that they will be over only before the exams). He points out that on the tenseless account the emotion must be irrational because relief that something is past must be inappropriate if nothing is past. On the tenseless theory the only relevant event is the exams finishing before the date Prior feels relief (I take this phrase/case to cover both the date and token-reflexive tenseless truth-conditions). But Craig, echoing Prior, finds it odd that Prior would be grateful for that. Oaklander,⁴⁷ representing the tenseless theory, finds Craig's response inadequate. One can understand why the tenseless theorist might feel this way, as Craig appears to have taken us no further than Prior originally did, and so MacBeath's answer ought to stand.

At the heart of this dispute is the tensed theorist's insistence that Prior's relief must be irrational if the tenseless theory is correct. MacBeath and Mellor, however, appear to have shown that this is not the case, by saying that on the tenseless theory relief that the exams are over is justified only after the exams, where being after the exams is a tenseless fact. Craig finds this response inadequate, I believe that this is because Craig (as did Prior) had certain presuppositions, and I will try to reveal these and thereby show an inadequacy in the tenseless response.

MacBeath has rightly argued that Prior is relieved about or for something, namely the fact that the exams are over. I will refer to this as the *object* of his relief. This object is the reason for Prior's relief, it is that for which he feels relief, and it is that to which he will refer if someone asks him why he is relieved. This object is also that which justifies Prior's relief, if he is relieved the exams are over, and they are over, then his relief is justified. It is natural to think of the object of Prior's relief in these ways, and it is this presupposition

⁴⁵ For example, Craig:2000, Cockburn:1997 & 1998.

⁴⁶ Craig:2000 p.148-159.

⁴⁷ Oaklander:2002. Oaklander is specifically referring to an argument Craig gives elsewhere (Craig:1999) but the arguments overlap.

that I think is held by Craig and Prior, and that shows the inadequacy of the tenseless response.

MacBeath⁴⁸ at times speaks of the object of Prior's belief, the tensed fact, as being a merely intentional entity.⁴⁹ Where the intentional entity 'that the exams are over' can exist even though the exams are not over. But, such an intentional entity is clearly not the object of Prior's relief. If we told Prior that the exams were not over, he would not see there to be any reason for his relief and his relief would disappear, even if we told him that the intentional entity 'that my exams are over', still exists. (That the intentional entity would continue to exist is quite plausible, if intentional entities are abstract entities, as they appear to be.) The object of Prior's relief is thus clearly not an intentional entity, but an objective entity, a state of the world. (I will reserve the term 'fact' for such objective entities.)

MacBeath is careful to stress that he is not proposing that Prior is relieved about a belief, as one might express by saying "thank goodness I believe that's over". To this extent MacBeath appears to admit the object of Prior's relief is not an intentional entity. And, in fact, at the end of his article he suggests a possible "*rewording*"⁵⁰ of his position, that instead speaks of the object of Prior's relief as a fact he believes to obtain.

Nevertheless, MacBeath is right that Prior might mistakenly believe the exams to be over when they are not over, and as a result he might become relieved. The belief that they are over, this intentional entity, thus appears to play a role in the origin of Prior's relief, and I will refer to it as the *cause* of his relief (without wishing to commit myself to a certain causal theory of the issues). We have seen that the cause of Prior's relief is not the object of his relief, and it is clear that it is not the reason for which he is relieved. If Prior learnt that the cause obtained, but that the exams were in fact not over, then Prior would take himself to have no reason to feel relieved. Further, this cause does not justify Prior's relief, if the exams are not over, Prior shouldn't be relieved that they are.

⁴⁸ MacBeath:1983 p.86.

⁴⁹ Sider:2001 ch.1, has what appears to be a different solution, as he speaks of temporal propositions, which are akin to linguistic meanings, the temporal 'over' assigning 'before *t*', to any *t* it is believed at (it is a function from a time to an atemporal proposition). He says that in relief one is not related to an atemporal proposition, but instead to a temporal one, this temporal proposition is the object of one's attitude (where being related to that function at *t*, is different from being related to that function completed by *t*). However, Sider's temporal propositions fair no better here than MacBeath's intentional entities.

⁵⁰ MacBeath:1983 p.87. Given the distinction between an intentional entity and a fact, MacBeath is misleading to describe this as a mere rewording, rather, it is better to see MacBeath as offering two distinct possible tenseless solutions. I take a confusion such as this between whether the object of Prior's emotion is intentional or not, to play a part in making the tenseless response appear more credible than it is.

The object of Prior's relief is a fact,⁵¹ and Garrett and others⁵² interpret MacBeath in this way. As such, the object must either be a tensed or tenseless fact, where by which I mean that the fact either falsifies the tenseless theory, or it does not.⁵³

If we take the object to be tensed, then the tenseless theorist must deny that the object of Prior's relief obtains, and this entails that the object of his relief cannot justify his being relieved. If the object is tensed and it does not obtain, as the tenseless theory must here maintain, then this implies that Prior can be relieved because of something and that thing not obtain and his relief nevertheless be justified. But this is false, if the exams are not over, then Prior oughtn't to be grateful that they are. Furthermore, if the object of the relief that the exams are over is a tensed fact, that implies that the belief that the exams are over serves to pick out that tensed fact. The tenseless theorist's insistence that the tensed belief can be true thus implies absurdly that the belief can be true despite the fact it picks out failing to obtain. Thus, the tenseless theorist cannot account for Prior's argument by referring to a tensed object as the object of his relief.

If we instead take the object of Prior's relief to be a tenseless object, there are still difficulties for the tenseless theory. We are unable to appeal to this object to account for the justification of Prior's relief, nor to provide the reason for which he formed that relief. The problems here stem from the fact that this tenseless fact obtains, and may be something Prior is aware of, before the exams are over. Before they are over Prior may well know, and I shall suppose that he does know, that the exams finish before the date he feels relief. Despite this knowledge, Prior does not feel relieved until the exams are over, nor is Prior justified in feeling relieved that they are over, until they are. It follows that, a

⁵¹ As I will make clear in subsequent chapters, especially Chapters Three and Eight, the fact that Prior could mistakenly take the exams to be over, and as a result become relieved, needn't entail that the object of his relief is intentional, rather, one ought instead to say that in such a situation in fact there was no object to Prior's relief, that is, he became relieved without reason. Though, this needn't mean that he did not mistakenly believe the exams to be over, nor even that we cannot explain his relief in terms of this belief, of course, we can explain emotions without referring to their objects, or the reasons for which they are felt, perhaps, for example, in terms of chemical reactions in the brain.

⁵² For example, Garrett:1988, Dyke & MacLaurin:2002. The latter do speak of the object as being intentional, and yet they also appear to speak of it as being a fact when they take pains to say that 'Thank goodness ...' creates a non-extensional context. This confusion is not surprising given that it appears to be a part of MacBeath's argument (cf. two footnotes above).

⁵³ There is some evidence that Garrett and Dyke & MacLaurin take the object of Prior's relief to be tensed, insofar as, the former refers to it as such, and the latter speak of it as an intentional object, and there would seem to be little reason for a tenseless theorist to relegate the object's status to intentional if they didn't take it to be tensed. However, there is perhaps greater evidence to think that they took the object to be tenseless, because they take pains to say that 'Thank goodness ...' creates a non-extensional context, and therefore one in which a person can be grateful for a tenseless fact, and yet false to describe them as such.

mere awareness of the tenseless object of his relief cannot account for his becoming relieved, nor does his being relieved for an object that obtains account for why he is justified in being relieved.

It follows, that if we adopt a tenseless theory, we cannot account for the justification of Prior's relief in terms of the object of his belief, the reason for which he became relieved. I take this to be the foundation of Craig's assertion that if the tenseless theory is correct, then Prior's relief must be unjustified. It is natural to take the object of Prior's emotion to play the role of justifying his emotion, he is justifiably relieved if and only if the object of his relief obtains.⁵⁴ If one is relieved that the exams are over, and the exams are over, they are justifiably relieved, if they are not over, they should not be relieved. If one is relieved that the cows have come home, and they have come home, then they are justifiably relieved, and if they have not, then they shouldn't be relieved, etc. The tenseless theory is thus inadequate, as it has done nothing to address this natural and plausible idea.

The tenseless theory does offer an alternative account for why it is that Prior's relief is justified. As already noted, they refer to the brute fact that relief about an event that is after that event is justified.⁵⁵ But, if this is said by the tenseless theorist, *pace* Mellor,⁵⁶ we do not have an account that is on a par with the account that a tensed theorist can offer. The tenseless and tensed accounts of the justification of Prior's relief both rely on brute facts, in the former case, that relief is justified after the exams, in the latter that it is justified when the exams are past. But, the tensed theorist offers us more besides this fact, they also offer us a story of the manner in which this fact has import to the situation. The fact that the exams are past makes the relief that they are past justified, as this fact is the object of that relief, the reason it was formed for. The tenseless theorist, however, offers no explanation of this form.⁵⁷

The tenseless theory cannot say why one *ought* to be relieved after an event, they cannot say, as surely we would, that "one ought to be relieved because the exams are over", as on tenseless terms this picks out nothing to justify relief. The tenseless theory might be

⁵⁴ Actually the matter is more complex than this, as the object must also justify the emotion, as we shall see in Chapter Eight, but this does not vitiate my point.

⁵⁵ Mellor does not want to say that relief is always appropriate after pain, as he believes one can enjoy pain. Whether or not we should accept this idea, it doesn't negate my point, Mellor's masochist can simply be relieved that their pain has started.

⁵⁶ Mellor:1981a p.50, 1981b, 1998 p.42.

⁵⁷ The tenseless theorist can say more than I have here considered, they might, for example, speak of it being an evolutionary advantage to have this relief at this time. I will consider ideas such as these in Chapter 8.

able to give an account of why someone *was* relieved in terms of the cause of their relief, but if we take our emotions to be something rationally responsive, then this reference to cause cannot provide a complete answer, and what the agent is aware of according to the tenseless theorist cannot either, as they were aware of it for some time before their relief.

Prior's thank goodness argument thus shows that the tenseless theory is inadequate, because it disregards a natural and plausible understanding of the justification of emotions.

Summary

In this chapter we have been introduced to a distinction between the manner in which entities can be ordered as earlier, later, or simultaneous with one another, and, as past, present or future. This distinction reflects an aspect of language, its form and the way it can be used to describe the world. However, it perhaps also has metaphysical import, capturing something of the nature of the world itself. If the world is tensed, then we cannot describe it fully with tenseless language alone.

One might believe that the world is tenseless, because all tensed language can be translated into tenseless language. But such a view would clearly be mistaken, it conflicts with prevalent theories of the meaning of tensed language, and furthermore, as tensed and tenseless language clearly differs in meaning because they differ in possible use.

One might nonetheless believe that the world is tenseless because they believe that all tensed language is made true by tenseless facts. However, this view appears to struggle to account for the role that tensed language and beliefs play in our emotional lives. It appears that our emotions are justified by an object that can only be described with tensed language.

The debate between the tensed and tenseless theories thus invites us to consider in more detail the rationality of our emotions. In the course of this thesis I will take up this invitation, further investigating and vindicating a view according to which an emotion is justified by its object. In turn I will argue that not only is the tenseless theory inadequate because it neglects such a view, but further, it is false because it is unable to accommodate it.

CHAPTER TWO: INDEXICALS & ACTIONS

In the last chapter I introduced the metaphysical notion of tense, and linked it to linguistic tense. I outlined the tensed and tenseless theories, and presented Prior's¹ thank goodness argument in support of the tensed theory. Although the tenseless theory has responded to Prior's argument, this response is inadequate as it fails to address a natural view of the rationality of emotions, that is, that emotions are justified by the reasons that they are felt for.²

The force of the thank goodness argument rests on the fact that it shows that the objects of some emotions can only be expressed with tensed language. In this chapter I will show more generally that a large number of our actions require their agents to have tensed beliefs, such that the reasons that they act for can only be captured in tensed beliefs. This conclusion will follow from a consideration of arguments presented by Perry³ which show more broadly that in the majority of actions the reasons an agent acts for can only be captured by beliefs the expression of which necessarily involves an indexical.

On examination, it will turn out that indexical beliefs, as I shall call them, are specifically required for rational actions (one could act irrationally without indexical beliefs). I will examine an account given by Mellor as to why tensed beliefs might be required for actions. I will show that, as with Chapter One, this tenseless account of the need for tensed beliefs is inadequate as it fails to accommodate a natural understanding of the rationality of the actions at hand. I will begin by making clear some issues of terminology.

2.1 Indexicals

Indexicals are words that can change their referent from one use to another.⁴ A common example is the word 'I', which when uttered by myself refers to me, to F.P., but when uttered by my friend refers to him, to B.P.. Indexical expressions include, 'now', 'yesterday', 'soon', 'I', 'this', 'that', 'he' 'she', 'you', 'here', 'there', 'over yonder', and

¹ Prior:1959.

² In Chapter Eight we will see that matters are a little more complicated than this, as the reason an emotion is felt for must also justify having that emotion.

³ Perry:1979.

⁴ Of course, all words can change their meaning or referent over time, but such a protracted change of use is not what is at issue here, rather, indexicals can change their referent without, we might say, changing their use or meaning.

many more besides. I think that many of these can be grouped. ‘He’, ‘you’, ‘she’, and others like them appear to all be ways of referring to people, I shall call these *personal indexicals*. ‘I’, ‘me’ etc. should perhaps also be considered in this group, though I shall treat these separately as *first-personal indexicals*. ‘This’ and ‘that’ and others like them are all ways of referring to objects (in a broad sense) and I shall call them *objective indexicals* (they are also commonly referred to as demonstratives, on the grounds that they are often accompanied by a demonstration of their referent, I shall also follow this terminology on occasion, though plausibly other indexicals such as ‘there’ are also demonstratives). ‘Here’ and ‘there’ are ways of referring to places, *spatial indexicals*. And of course, ‘now’, ‘yesterday’ and ‘soon’ are ways of referring to times, *temporal indexicals*.

All tensed language shares characteristics with indexicals, insofar as it will refer to different things on different occasions of use. For example, ‘Simon is running’, said on the 12th of July 2020, will refer to Simon’s running on that date, whilst ‘Simon is running’, said on the 12th of September 2005, refers to Simon’s running on the 12th of September 2005. Thus, there are grounds for saying that all tensed expressions are indexical.

However, it has been argued that ‘now’ is unlike present tense verbs and copulas, or ‘present’, as can be revealed by placing these expressions within the scope of a temporal operator. Consider three utterances said on the 24th June: U1 “Tomorrow it will still be the case that it is raining”, U2 “Tomorrow it will still be the case that rain is present” and U3 “Tomorrow it will still be the case that it is raining now”. If ‘now’, ‘present’ and the simple present tense were all equivalent we would expect these three utterances to say the same thing, though it appears that they may not. Rather, it has been suggested that the former two say that rain will occur on the 25th of June, while the latter says that rain occurs on the 24th and says nothing of whether or not rain occurs on the 25th. On these grounds, ‘now’ is described as a *pure* indexical, while we might call ‘present’ and present tensed copulas and verbs mere *quasi*-indexicals (because they require double indexing in the scope of a temporal operator).⁵

I think that there is something to these observations, however, I do not take this to deny the context sensitivity of these quasi-indexicals, but rather to delimit it. Thus, in the following I shall refer to all tensed expressions as indexicals, and therefore, shall use ‘temporal-indexical’ and ‘tensed expression’ interchangeably. This will make matters

⁵ Cf. Kamp:1972, Smith:1990 & 1993, Prior:1968, and Salmon:1986 p.34-40.

more simple in most cases, as the indexical/quasi-indexical distinction often makes little difference to the arguments at hand.⁶

2.2 Perry's Argument for the Essential Indexical

Perry⁷ has presented an example which I will adapt to concern Tom. Tom was once in a supermarket which had a trail of sugar on the floor. As a conscientious member of the public he began to follow this trail in order to warn whoever was making the mess that they had a torn sack in their trolley. He followed the trail around a tall counter a number of times before suddenly stopping and rearranging the shopping in his own trolley.

Tom believed all along that the shopper with the torn sack was making a mess and that they should do something about it. His sudden change in behaviour is explained by his forming the new belief 'I am making a mess'. The central matter at hand, as Perry points out, is how to characterise this new belief. (I will pick out a belief that someone would express by saying, for example, "I am making a mess", by saying that they believe 'I am making a mess'. I will also describe a belief like this as a first-personal belief as it is expressed using a first-personal indexical, so too analogously for other beliefs.)⁸

Tom might well have a belief which is similar, but which refers to Tom in a different manner, and not be motivated to stop and rearrange his shopping. Suppose we think that Tom forms the belief 'Tom is making a mess'. This belief would only explain his behaviour if he also believed that he himself is Tom, that is, if he had the belief 'I am Tom'. This point can be emphasized by noting that Tom's behaviour might also be brought about by the belief 'Simon is making a mess', so long as Tom also believes 'I am Simon'. Similarly, if Tom believes 'The person wearing a purple and black hat is making a mess', this will not explain his behaviour, even if the description uniquely applies to him, unless he also believes 'I am wearing a purple and black hat'.

It is possible that there are mirrors in the supermarket, and that Tom catches a glimpse of himself spilling sugar. He might hence form the belief 'he is making a mess', or

⁶ I am not alone in thus treating them alike in these situations, e.g. Reichenbach:1948 and Perry:1997.

⁷ Perry:1979.

⁸ When I say this I do not mean that the person at issue would in fact be willing to say anything at all, they might be in hiding, rather, the point is that they would ideally, or if they were willing to honestly express their belief at all, express it by saying "I am making a mess". Thus we can say that the belief and the utterance share content [in a broad sense]. One might consider the converse of this, such that, when Tom says (honestly etc.) "I am X" or "I believe I am X", we take this to inform us that Tom has the belief 'I am X'. Cf. Kripke's disquotational principle in Kripke:1979.

‘that man is making a mess’, or, if this is different, a *de re* belief of that man which he sees, that he is spilling sugar. Nevertheless, these beliefs will also fail to explain Tom’s behaviour unless he has a first-personal belief, such as, ‘I am the man in the mirror’.⁹ The indexical ‘I’, or a first-personal indexical, is essential to the belief that explains Tom’s behaviour.¹⁰

Perry makes a similar point concerning other types of actions, and other indexicals. Consider Mike who intends to go to a departmental meeting on time and knows that it begins at 2pm. Nevertheless, as the meeting starts Mike remains sat at his desk. Suddenly, as he realizes the time, he stands up to leave.

Mike believes all along that the meeting starts at 2pm, and all along intends to attend the meeting at 2pm. What explains his finally moving is his forming the new belief that ‘It is 2pm now’. If we attribute to Mike a different belief, which replaced the ‘now’ by another reference to the time, then we cannot explain his behaviour. For example, if we attribute to Mike the belief ‘It is 2pm at 2pm’ this would do little to account for his behaviour. Similarly, if we attribute to him the belief ‘It is 2pm at the time when Tom realizes he is spilling sugar’, this will only explain his behaviour if we also attribute to him the belief ‘Tom is realizing he is spilling sugar now’. The indexical ‘now’, or a similar present tense temporal indexical is essential to the belief that explains Mike’s behaviour.

A third type of case arises for Arthur, who is lost in the wilderness, despite being an authority on the area. Arthur desires to return home, he is near Llyn Teifi, and he knows that his best way home from there is to head west. However, Arthur continues to look around himself confused, until he forms the belief ‘this is Llyn Teifi’, at which point he heads off to the west. No belief which lacked an indexical could explain Arthur’s behaviour, though a spatial indexical belief, such as ‘here is Llyn Teifi’ would. For example, Arthur might well believe ‘Llyn Teifi is Llyn Teifi’, or ‘the lake nearest to Strata Florida is Llyn Teifi’, and yet lack a motivation to head west.

⁹ It is worth noting that the mirror is not essential to such a point, for example, when a number of people put their hands together in the centre of a circle, it is possible for someone to fail to recognize their hand as their own. Cf. Boer & Lycan:1980.

¹⁰ Castaneda:1966 makes a very similar point, though concerning ‘he himself’ rather than ‘I’. This merely being a shift of perspective, for the use of ‘he himself’ considered is essentially that of attributing first-personal beliefs to another. E.g. We say Tom has the belief ‘I am *F*’ or similarly, Tom believes he himself to be *F*. Cf. Castaneda:1967 & 1968.

These examples show that beliefs on which agents act in certain circumstances must be expressed with indexical language. I will refer to the argument for this conclusion given by the use of such examples as these as the *argument for the essential indexical*.

2.3 Details of Perry's Argument

In this section I will make clear a number of aspects of the argument for the essential indexical which are presupposed but not necessarily explicit.

The force of Perry's argument concerns the explanation of actions. The fault of Tom's believing 'Tom is making a mess' is that this belief would fail to explain his behaviour. Thus, we can note that Perry must be assuming that Tom's beliefs explain his behaviour.

On one level, it seems quite simply false to say that everything that someone does must be explained by their beliefs. A clear example of this is their beating their heart, and a less clear example is perhaps their shivering in the cold. However, it seems very important that a great many of a person's doings must be explained by their beliefs. These are things that the person does quite deliberately and for a particular reason, doings that are intentional and are the result of the will. Such doings are often known as *actions*. Actions are doings or behaviour that "*characterises humans as 'rational animals'...behaviour that provides the grounds for judgments about people's goals, characters and values, and on account of which they are held to be responsible for certain outcomes*"¹¹. Or, as Anscombe puts it, "*they are actions to which a certain sense of the question 'Why?' is given application; the sense is of course that in which the answer, if positive, gives a reason for acting*"¹².

The link with beliefs, then, is part and parcel with the fact that actions are intentional, and are doings for which a person has a reason. To know someone's reasons for an action is to know (some of) their beliefs, and often, vice versa. Tom's reason for acting as he did, was that he himself was making a mess, and similarly, the belief of his that explained his action was the belief that he himself was making a mess, his believing 'I am making a mess'. This belief explains the action as it provides Tom's reason for performing it. The explanation is of a rational form. We take an individual's making a mess to be a good reason for stopping and rearranging their shopping. We take Tom's

¹¹ Alvarez:2005 p.45.

¹² Anscombe:2000 sect.5 p.9.

doing to be an action, and something for which there are reasons, and we take Tom to be acting rationally, and so, we expect these reasons to play a role in explaining his action, to be what he acts for. If we give the reasons that a person performed an act for, this is an explanation of their action, we can use reasons to predict and understand a person's actions.

This is not the only form of explanation. It would be quite inappropriate – well impossible – to account for a stone's rolling through providing reasons it acted for, that is, reasons that rationalize its doing. Rather, we should likely give some form of causal explanation, such as, 'the stone rolled because it was kicked by Dr. Johnson'. This is why, as the quote from Alvarez suggests, humans are often distinguished from other things as being rational. Which is not to deny that reasons can be causes of actions,¹³ but rather, to deny that all effects are the result of reasons. (Though this is not to deny that there is a use of the word reason, according to which, Dr Johnson's kicking the stone was the reason it moved, but, this use differs from the one at hand, as it has no role in rationalizing the stones movement.)

There are two potential ways of reading this role of beliefs in the explanation of actions. One might, as Davidson has,¹⁴ take this to mean that the beliefs were actually the reasons, such that, in Tom's case one of his reasons for acting was his belief 'I am making a mess'. Or, one might take it that the reasons were aspects of the world which the agent is aware of through their beliefs. Such that, Tom's reason for acting was that he himself was making a mess, his believing 'I am making a mess' being his awareness of this, and required as one must be aware of reasons in order to act for those reasons.¹⁵ This distinction does not affect Perry's argument that indexical beliefs are essential, though it is an important distinction that I shall make use of in time. Whether or not one takes beliefs themselves to exhaust the category of reasons,¹⁶ one can still take beliefs to be essential to a rational explanation of action.

The cases at hand are therefore specifically cases of actions, cases in which an agent acts intentionally for a reason which is provided by or through their belief. Furthermore, these are specifically cases of rational actions. Suppose that Tom, on forming the belief 'pigs are mammals', for that reason stops to clear up his mess. In such a case Tom will be acting, and his belief will be playing an explanatory role, though the belief is

¹³ Though we might well deny this. Cf. Lowe:2008, Dancy:2000, and Alvarez:2007.

¹⁴ Davidson:2001a.

¹⁵ E.g. Dancy:2000.

¹⁶ If one adopts the latter view, the realist view, this does not of course prevent beliefs from being reasons, they are, after all, aspects of the world. Though, this is to take it that reasons needn't be beliefs.

not first-personal and Tom lacks any other relevant first-personal beliefs. Such a case is possible, people can act irrationally doing things for reasons which are in fact no reason to do those things. Irrational actions therefore do not require indexical beliefs in the way that rational actions do, and so the argument for the essential indexical should be taken to show that indexical beliefs of particular types are required for *rational actions* of particular types.

The necessity of an indexical belief for rational action doesn't entail that all beliefs that play a role in bringing about an action must be indexical. For example, if I am asked "What is two plus two?" I will answer "Four", this answer will be brought about in part by an indexical belief, such as, 'I am the addressee of the question', but will also be brought about by my non-indexical belief 'two plus two equals four'. This latter is clearly a reason for my action and partially explanatory of it. I probably would have said something different if I had not had that belief. However, such a belief remains insufficient to explain my answering as I did for the reasons Perry provides (I've believed this for some time, but my action was timely).

It will be useful to distinguish the types of cases which demand indexical beliefs. Plausibly there is something about Tom's case which means that in order to act rationally he must have a first-personal belief. I will refer to all cases with this property as *personal actions*, and the reasons involved as *personal reasons*. Plausibly, though I rest little on this assumption, the distinguishing feature of such cases is that the agent has a reason for themselves in particular to act not just for anyone to. Again there is plausibly something specific to Mike's case that means that in order to act rationally he must have a temporal indexical belief. I'll refer to cases with this feature as *timely actions*, and the reasons involved as *timely reasons*. The linking feature of cases of this form appears to be that they all involve reasons to do something at a specific time, not simply at any time or other. Again, similarly, in cases like Arthur's I'll speak of *locational actions* and *locational reasons*, the link perhaps being reasons to perform an action at a specific location rather than just anywhere.

The argument for the essential indexical thus shows that a rational personal action requires an agent to have a first-personal belief, a rational timely action requires its agent to have a tensed belief, and, a rational locational action requires its agent to have an indexical belief. (I will at times simply speak of actions for ease of presentation, instead making it clear when the action at issue is an irrational one.)

2.4 The Sufficiency of First-Personal & Temporal Indexicals

In this section, I will consider the extent to which first-personal and tensed beliefs are essential to the types of actions at issue. We saw in the last chapter that the old tenseless theory supposed that tensed language could be translated by tenseless language. We also saw that this view was mistaken, but with it in mind, we might ask ourselves if the tensed beliefs at issue in the argument for the essential indexical could be replaced by tenseless ones. The argument for the essential indexical clearly shows that the old date tenseless theory is wrong. Mike can know ‘2pm is 2pm’ and related facts, and not be motivated to leave his office. But one might wonder, as perhaps Russell would have¹⁷, if Mike could make do with a token-reflexive belief, such as ‘2pm is the time of this belief’. Analogously, one might wonder if Tom could make do with a token-reflexive belief such as ‘the believer of this belief is making a mess’.

That token-reflexive beliefs will not suffice for Tom’s and Mike’s cases, can be shown by briefly considering the nature of beliefs. Arguably, a belief has a physical manifestation, perhaps a state of the brain. It would be possible therefore to open up Mike’s head and to get series of images of his brain states, his beliefs, perhaps with a keyhole portable instrument. If this was done we could bring Mike to believe, of the belief that he sees on the screen, that he has that belief at 2pm. If the images on the screen were live, the belief Mike had would be token-reflexive and true, our ‘2pm is the time of this belief’. However, if Mike does not know that the images are live, then, he will not be motivated to leave his office (perhaps he thinks the image must be of a past belief, and hence that it is too late to bother leaving, or perhaps he thinks it is somehow an image of a future, would be brain state, and hence that he still has plenty of time before he must leave).

Tom might have a similar portable device, and know that he is not the only one with such a device, and that some of the images of brain states, of beliefs, that he sees are images of other people’s beliefs.¹⁸ Tom might then form a belief that the believer of the belief that he sees on the screen is making a mess. If the belief was Tom’s, then Tom would have a true token-reflexive belief ‘the believer of this belief is making a mess’. However, Tom will remain unmotivated to stop if he does not know the belief is his. Similar cases could be constructed if one instead spoke of token-reflexive utterances, or

¹⁷ Cf. Russell:1995.

¹⁸ If one was inventive they could create an example where the states were seen directly rather than simply on a screen, but I’ll spare you this gore.

demonstrative reference to other things besides the beliefs themselves, as plausibly these will all have physical manifestations. So no token-reflexive, or demonstrative belief could replace the tensed belief in Mike's case, or the first-personal one in Tom's case, and so too for other timely and personal rational actions.

One is perhaps led erroneously to the idea that token-reflexive beliefs could replace the tensed and first-personal ones in these cases, because we are often aware that our beliefs are our own beliefs and are present beliefs. What these examples in part show is the extent to which this awareness can be considered. If we were to describe Mike's awareness in a normal situation that his belief '2pm is the time of this belief' is present, it is clear that we oughtn't to describe it as the belief '2pm is the time of that belief' (where 'that belief' refers to Mike's '2pm is the time of this belief', and similarly below). Because that would mean this awareness didn't provide the form of presence¹⁹ at issue as the argument for the essential indexical shows. Nor would it suffice to describe it as the belief 'the time of this belief is the time of that belief', as again this wouldn't provide us with sufficient form of presence, as I have just argued, and could at best venture us on a regress. The best characterisation of this awareness would therefore clearly be as a tensed belief 'that belief is current'. I'm not sure that speaking of this awareness of the presence of our beliefs in this manner is illuminating, but it is clear that it cannot help one who wishes to argue that token-reflexive beliefs could replace Mike's tensed belief in his rational action. If we are to refer to this normal awareness, then we ought to characterise it, and if we do, then we ought to characterise it as tensed, and hence the essential tensed belief reappears. An analogous argument can be presented for Tom's case, if we are to characterise the normal awareness he has that his belief is his own, we could only plausibly do this through a first-personal belief.

One might have a further worry in the tense case, specifically: it appears that demonstrative reference involves perception;²⁰ perception can only be of what is present;

¹⁹ To talk of this 'presence of experience' is not to presuppose the tensed theory, rather, the phrase is simply used to capture the form of awareness that Mike must have to be moved to act.

²⁰ According to many theories of demonstratives an agent must recognize the referent of a demonstrative to be playing a particular role in a context in order to understand the use of the demonstrative, to this extent perception might commonly be involved in demonstrative reference. For example, some say you must recognize the referent as the thing demonstrated (Kaplan:1989a, Reimer:1991a, perhaps, Salmon:2002), others say that you must recognize it as the most salient thing in the context (e.g. Wettstein:1984, Reimer:1991b), or as the object of the speakers intention in the context (e.g. Kaplan:1989b, Bach:1992a & 1992b), or as the thing in a particular spatiotemporal relation to the speaker in the context (e.g. McGinn:1981)(these distinctions are not necessarily exclusive of one another, and are rather rough, with some proponents falling into more than one group, and proponents within one group differing in detail).

and therefore, one can only demonstratively refer to something present; and therefore, one can know of what they demonstratively refer to that it is simultaneous with that reference.²¹ However, this worry is unfounded, as one can refer demonstratively but in a mediated fashion, as in my example of pointing to an image of something and thereby referring to that thing not the image.²² Moreover, perception gives rise to present tensed beliefs.²³ Thus, if we accept that in believing ‘2pm is the time of this belief’ Mike is aware the belief is simultaneous with his perception of it, we must also accept that Mike has the present tensed belief ‘that belief is present’. The question thus arises whether Mike’s motivation to act relies upon this tensed belief, and the problems already outlined imply that it does. Knowing 2pm is simultaneous with one’s belief, and that this belief is simultaneous with a perception of it provides no motivational force, rather one must actually be perceiving, that is having the tensed belief, to be motivated. In short, to the extent that demonstrative reference entails perception, and therefore might enable Mike to act, it also gives rise to tensed beliefs, and these are essential to the action, and thus the essential indexical re-appears.²⁴

Tensed beliefs are required for rational timely actions, and first-personal beliefs are required for personal actions. Tensed beliefs and first-personal beliefs are therefore irreplaceable in their roles. I will now argue that the converse is not that case, that is, tensed and first-personal beliefs can replace other indexical beliefs in their roles in locational actions.

If Arthur, whilst at Llyn Teifi, suddenly formed the belief ‘the place where I am now is Llyn Teifi’, or the belief ‘the lake I see before me now is Llyn Teifi’, then he would become motivated to head west to get home. In this way a tensed first-personal belief is sufficient to play the role of an objective indexical belief and a spatial indexical belief. Plausibly, the same can be said of other indexicals too, so that, for example, a use of ‘you’ might be replaced by a use of ‘the person I am now addressing’, and so on.

²¹ One is tempted to say simply ‘and therefore, one can know of what they demonstratively refer to that it is present’, but my opponent of course is not allowed to say this, and if they don’t, it is not even clear this argument is at all potent, as Mike might well know a belief is simultaneous with a perception of it and be unmoved to act.

²² Most of the views outlined in the previous footnote do not entail that one must perceive the referent (cf. Kaplan:1970).

²³ Cf. Le Poidevin:2007.

²⁴ There is thus a temptation to see demonstratives as tensed, Broad:1938 pt.I ch.XXXV, sect.2.24 p.305-7 makes this implication by noting that the copula following a demonstrative appears to be tensed.

This does not mean that tensed, first-personal, or tensed first-personal language can translate all other indexical language, merely that the former can provide awareness of the same reasons to act that the latter language can (that is, it can play the same role in rational action).²⁵

I will not try to settle whether tensed first-personal indexicals can translate all other indexicals, but I will note that an argument given by Castaneda²⁶ to show that this is not the case fails. Castaneda has argued that different indexicals cannot be taken to mean the same thing. ‘The place where I am now’ and ‘here’, for example, can be shown to have different meaning by considering the sentence ‘the place where I am now is here’. This sentence appears to be contingent, whereas the sentence ‘the place where I am now is the place where I am now’ appears to be necessary, and therefore, the former has a different meaning to the latter. Be that as it may, these appearances are misleading, and therefore, the argument fails. For example, if I utter “The place where I am now is the place where I am now” whilst moving quickly, I will utter the first ‘the place where I am now’ at a different location to the second ‘the place where I am now’, and therefore my utterance is false. It follows that the sentence ‘the place where I am now is the place where I am now’ isn’t necessarily true, and hence, that it doesn’t necessarily differ in meaning from the sentence ‘the place where I am now is here’ which isn’t necessarily true.

2.5 Mellor’s Tenseless Account of Essential Tensed Beliefs

Mellor, as we saw in the last chapter, adopts a tenseless theory. Despite this he admits that tensed beliefs are essential for timely actions. It would be natural to think that tensed beliefs are required for actions because through them an agent is aware of something that they are not aware of through tenseless beliefs, that is, reasons for those actions. In order to undermine this idea Mellor provides a rather different account of why tensed beliefs are required for timely actions.²⁷

Mellor considers a case like Mike’s, in which Mellor turns on his radio at 1 o’clock. We are invited to suppose that Mellor does this because he desires to listen to the 1 o’clock

²⁵ If translation were possible, then this would mean that all indexical language, beside first-personal language is in fact tensed language. But, it wouldn’t follow from the fact that some tensed first-personal language can translate all other indexical language that non-tensed non-first-personal language can translate all tensed and all first personal language.

²⁶ Castaneda:1967.

²⁷ Mellor:1981a ch.5 & 1998 ch.6.3.

news, and he believes that if he turns on his radio at 1 o'clock he will be able to listen to the 1 o'clock news. But Mellor realizes that this cannot be the whole story, because he had that belief and desire all morning, yet only acted at 1 o'clock, so we need something to explain why he acted then and not earlier. The answer Mellor proposes, in line with the argument for the essential indexical, is that he acts at 1 o'clock because at that time he forms the belief 'it is 1 o'clock now'.

Mellor believes that our actions are caused by our beliefs (and desires) not by the facts that we are aware of through them. He supports this claim by pointing out that if he had come to believe at some time other than 1 o'clock that 'it is 1 o'clock now', then he would at that time have turned on the radio. So tensed beliefs are necessary for timely actions, even though there are no tensed facts, because the beliefs and not the facts they are an awareness of are what the actions are responsive to. To this extent our actions occur irrespective of the truth-value of the beliefs that they are a response to. Nonetheless, Mellor believes that the truth of our beliefs are relevant to whether or not our actions succeed, such that, only actions caused by true beliefs are likely to succeed.

Mellor believes, as we saw in Chapter One, that tensed beliefs can be true despite there being no tensed facts. For example, the tensed belief 'It is 1 o'clock now', will be true if and only if²⁸ that belief is had at 1 o'clock, and if it is it will be made true by one or the other tenseless facts: the belief occurs at 1 o'clock (token-reflexive theory), or, 1 o'clock is at 1 o'clock (date theory).²⁹ The action Mellor makes in turning on the radio at 1 o'clock is an action that will only succeed at a specific time. Thus the belief and action fit nicely together, the belief is only true at a specific time, and therefore can only cause the action when it is true at a specific time, and hence when the action is likely to succeed. On the other hand, the tenseless beliefs 'Mellor's tensed belief occurs at 1 o'clock' and '1 o'clock is 1 o'clock', are true at all times if true at all, and therefore, if they caused Mellor's act of turning on the radio at a time when they were true, they would not necessarily cause that action at a time at which it would succeed.

Mellor's account of why tensed beliefs are necessary for timely actions thus runs as follows: a successful timely action must occur at a specific time. This means that a true belief must cause it to happen at a specific time. A tensed belief is a belief that is only true

²⁸ Actually Mellor avoids stating this as a biconditional, but I think this is a more natural reading and this will not affect my argument.

²⁹ Mellor adopts a token-reflexive theory in Mellor:1981a and a date theory in Mellor:1998, his shift in view is due to arguments that Smith (e.g. Smith:1993) has given against the token-reflexive theory. I think that Smith's arguments are damning of the token-reflexive theory, but I have no need to rely on them here.

at a specific time, and hence, a belief such that, if it causes an action when it is true, it will cause an action at a specific time. Therefore, a tensed belief is required for a successful timely action. A true tenseless belief can be true at any time and therefore could cause an action at any time, and therefore, is not appropriate for causing an action at a specific time.

2.6 Inadequacies of Mellor's Tenseless Account

Mellor is wrong to say that tensed beliefs, unlike tenseless ones, are only true at specific times. Moreover, Mellor says quite the opposite at other places.³⁰ In order to make this clear I will consider Mellor's own distinction between a token and a type belief. A belief type might be embodied in numerous different belief tokens. Thus if Mellor and I both believe 'it is 1 o'clock now', we will have different token beliefs, but these beliefs will be of the same type.

When talking of belief tokens Mellor in fact says that they will, if of short duration, always have an unchanging truth-value. His point is that if I yesterday at 1 o'clock believed 'it is 1 o'clock now', my belief would then have been true. Further, it remains the case that that belief was true, even though it is not now 1 o'clock. In short, the truth-value of the token remains constant despite the token being tensed. In a similar way a tenseless token will have an unchanging truth-value, if it at any time that belief token is true, at every time that belief token is true.

There is a different sense in which a tensed token is only true at a specific time, that is, the sense in which the belief only occurs, and hence has any properties at all, at a specific time. But again, this does not distinguish tensed and tenseless tokens, as a tensed belief that only occurs for a short duration will only be true for that duration, just as a tenseless belief token of parallel duration is.

The case with belief types is slightly different. A tensed belief type might have some tokens which are true and some which are false, whereas a tenseless type will have tokens all of which have the same truth-value. But this is not to say that a tensed belief type changes truth-value, as much as to say that a tensed belief type does not have a truth-value at all (in fact, it cannot have a truth-value, as Mellor's theory of truth specifically refers to a time of occurrence and a type does not have a time of occurrence). Moreover, Mellor is concerned with the causes of actions, and it is only belief tokens, not types which

³⁰ Mellor:1981a ch.6, & 1998 ch.7.4.

can be causes. So we must focus on tokens, and when we do, we see that tensed and tenseless tokens are, or can be, alike in their nature as truth-bearers, so this cannot be what explains the need for tensed beliefs. A tenseless token can be, as a tensed token can, true only at a specific time, therefore, the need for a belief only true at a specific time cannot be what makes a tensed belief essential to a rational timely action.

Mellor might have a true tenseless belief, such as ‘God is love’, only at 1 o’clock,³¹ and this might cause him to turn the radio on. If this happens all of Mellor’s criteria are fulfilled, that is, the action is caused by a true³² belief, moreover, a belief that is only true at a specific time, and which causes an action that will only succeed when that belief is true. This possibility therefore shows that Mellor’s criteria do not explain why tensed beliefs are necessary for timely action.

This example might appear unfair to Mellor because God’s being love appears to be of little relevance to Mellor’s turning on the radio to hear the news. But, the notion of relevance doesn’t actually support Mellor’s case. Because it is not clear that Mellor can show that the tensed belief that he offers, that ‘it is 1 o’clock now’, has any particular relevance to the action. Now, I do believe that the fact that it is 1 o’clock provides one with a reason to act to turn on the radio if they have a reason to hear the 1 o’clock news. Because of this I think that the belief that ‘it is 1 o’clock now’, also has relevance to the action of turning on the radio at 1 o’clock. But, Mellor, as he does not believe in the tensed fact, cannot say this. The only facts that exist and are related to the tensed belief for Mellor, its truth-conditions or truth-makers, are tenseless facts to do with the belief and its tenseless temporal location, i.e. the fact that the belief occurs at 1 o’clock, or the fact that 1 o’clock is 1 o’clock. But these facts are quite irrelevant to the action of turning on the radio at 1 o’clock. The latter fact is a tautology, and whilst loosely relevant, it is not something that helps increase the likelihood of the success of Mellor’s action. Nor does the simultaneous occurrence of a belief have an obvious relevance, all sorts of beliefs may occur or not, and Mellor’s act of turning on the radio will still succeed. It is no good to say that the belief has relevance because it causes the action, because at this stage we are trying to uncover why the belief must cause the action, and to say that it must because it is relevant, and it is relevant because it causes the action is no explanation at all. (The

³¹ It is quite possible to have a tenseless belief for only a short duration, in an unusual moment of inspiration I might consider God’s nature, decide that he is love, and then quickly abandon that idea. Alternatively, I might briefly think to myself, I have thought x at 1 o’clock, then abandon that idea because I was not actually sure whether it was thought x I was having.

³² Let us suppose.

tenseless belief could be the token-reflexive belief ‘belief *b* occurs at 1 o’clock’, the most relevant fact Mellor appears to be able to suppose, if the tensed belief is supposed to pick out a relevant fact. We would then have fulfilled all of Mellor’s criteria without a tensed belief, nor hence, an explanation of the essential tensed belief.)

Davidson,³³ from whom Mellor presumably borrows the idea that actions are caused by belief/desire complexes, does go a little further. He says that these belief/desire complexes must rationalize the action, and it might seem that the tensed belief ‘it is 1 o’clock now’ will rationalize the action of turning on the radio in a way that the tenseless belief ‘God is love’ will not. However, this is now to give a quite different account for the need for tensed beliefs, namely, that they can rationalize actions which tenseless beliefs cannot. As it happens I think this is right. But, it is far from what Mellor says. Further, it is not clear that Davidson’s position can explain why this would be the case, we can have third-personal and tenseless practical syllogisms that rationalize an action in a tenseless way. For example: F.P. has a desire to hear the 1 o’clock news; in order to hear the 1 o’clock news F.P. must turn on the radio at 1 o’clock; therefore, it ought to be the case that F.P. turns on the radio at 1 o’clock.³⁴

Rationality is crucial, the tensed beliefs do play a role in rational actions that tenseless ones cannot. One natural way to understand why this is is that tensed beliefs provide us with reasons that tenseless ones do not, and a rational action is one which is responsive to the appropriate reasons. In addition, it is natural to take the reasons provided to be the objects of these beliefs, not the beliefs themselves. If I go to the shop because I believe it sells milk, and it does not in fact sell milk, then when I arrive at the shop and realize my belief is mistaken I will also realize that I had no reason to go there after all. Our beliefs do come between our reasons and our actions, because we must be aware of our reasons to act. Sometimes we can have mistaken beliefs and so our actions can fall out of line with the reasons that there are to perform them, but this does not mean that our actions are not generally responsive to reasons as states of the world.

Mellor, as a tenseless theorist, cannot tell a story like this. Instead he must refer to a difference between tensed and tenseless beliefs which is independent of their objects (the facts they pick out). He tries to do this with reference to the fact that a tensed belief unlike a tenseless one is true at a specific time. But, a tenseless belief can also be true at a specific time. Mellor cannot simply say the tensed beliefs provide reasons not provided by the

³³ E.g. Davidson:2001a & 2001c.

³⁴ Cf. McGinn:1979 who quite naturally presents a practical syllogism in a third-personal way.

tenseless ones, because we need an account of why this is. Such an account cannot be based on the idea of rationalizing an action, as the natural way to understand this notion of rationalizing, does not prevent one from constructing a tenseless rationalization. If Mellor leaves it as a brute fact that tensed beliefs provide reasons tenseless ones cannot, then he offers an account which is poor in comparison to the tensed theory's account. The tensed theory can explain why a tensed belief provides reasons that a tenseless one does not, by referring to the objects of that belief. Moreover, if the tensed theory is right that reasons are the contents of beliefs, not the beliefs themselves, then the tenseless theory cannot accommodate this in its theory, as it can't distinguish between the facts picked out by tensed and tenseless beliefs, nor hence can it say that one provides reasons the other does not.

There is a move open to the tenseless theory that Mellor does not emphasize but that appears to have relevance here. Mellor could have argued that tensed and tenseless beliefs differ, not because only the former can be true at a specific time, but, because only the former can be known to be true at a specific time. The thought is that I can know all morning, B1, 'if I act on my belief 'it is 1 o'clock now' when it is true I will succeed in hearing the 1 o'clock news'. However, I cannot know all morning B2, 'if I act on my belief 'belief *b* occurs at 1 o'clock' [or my belief 'God is Love'] when it is true, then I will succeed in hearing the 1 o'clock news'.³⁵ Therefore, I must act on a tensed belief, not a tenseless one.

As it stands, this argument is mistaken, I could know B2 all morning. Be that as it may, there is something awkward in this, because, believing B2, whilst distinct from believing B3, 'belief *b* occurs at 1 o'clock' [or 'God is Love'], is nevertheless closely linked to it. It is natural to move from the former belief to the latter belief, insofar as, if one knows that they can in the future have a tenseless belief and it be true, it is natural to hence adopt that tenseless belief. No similar link holds in the tensed case, one can believe that a tensed belief will be true at some time in the future without being in anyway moved to therefore adopt that tensed belief at that time. If one did form the tenseless belief B3 upon forming the belief that it will be true when believed in the future, that is, upon forming belief B2 early in the morning, then, B2 will no longer be correct, because it will

³⁵ I am here speaking of token beliefs, but little would be altered if instead we spoke of, e.g. B2* 'if I act on a belief of the type 'belief *b* occurs at 1 o'clock' when it is true then I will succeed in hearing the 1 o'clock news'.

no longer be the case that acting on B3 when it is true will lead one to hear the 1 o'clock news (as it will no longer be true that B3 is had only at 1 o'clock).³⁶

This picks out a genuine asymmetry between a case of acting on a tensed and on a tenseless belief. However, it is an asymmetry based on the idea that one must know in advance that acting on these beliefs when true will lead one to act successfully, and it is not clear that Mellor, or the tenseless theory, can suppose that such knowledge is required for the actions at issue, nor even that such knowledge would aid their case. There are three issues here. Firstly, when one acts rationally in turning on the radio at 1 o'clock the phenomenology of the situation is simply that one turns on the radio because it is 1 o'clock, and one wants to hear the news, and knows that one must turn on the radio at 1 o'clock to hear the news. It is therefore apparently false to say that an agent must also know that if they act on their tensed belief when it is true then they will succeed (for example, one needn't believe something like B1 or B2).

Secondly, if we suppose that one must have this knowledge (e.g. B1 or B2), then it no longer seems plausible that one must also know that the belief one acts on (e.g. B3) will be true when one has it. If I act on a belief because I know that in acting on it I will succeed, then I do not in addition to knowing this also have to know that it will be true when I act on it. To know that acting on it will be successful all I need to know is that it occurs at a certain time, and it is possible to know that one will have a belief at a certain time without knowing that it will be true at that time, because the truth-maker of a belief is not the only thing that can bring it about. If one needn't know that the belief one ought to act on will be true, then the asymmetry between the tensed and tenseless cases evaporates, as it was only knowing the tenseless belief (e.g. B3) would be true in the future that might encourage one to form the tenseless belief in the present. Moreover, why would the object of beliefs such as B1 and B2 have to be beliefs that occur at a certain time, rather than some other timely event that is plausibly easier to predict? It would be sufficient for an agent to know simply that if they act when a clock says 1 o'clock, then they will likely succeed in acting. Once we have the higher order belief the lower order one is no longer necessary as the object of the higher order belief.

Thirdly, if Mellor must know that acting on a belief such as B3 or B4, 'It is 1 o'clock now', when he has it and it is true, will lead to successful action, that is, if Mellor

³⁶ I am supposing for Mellor's sake, though I am not sure this would be the case, that if I believe in the morning that 'belief *b* occurs at 1 o'clock', then this will be the same belief token as that I have when I believe at 1 o'clock 'belief *b* occurs at 1 o'clock'.

must believe B1 or B2 in order to perform a rational timely action of turning on the radio. Then this implies that this knowledge plays a role in the rationality of his action. But it is not clear how Mellor can account for this. The natural way to understand the need for knowledge such as B1 and B2 to be rational, is to take beliefs B3 or B4 to be reasons to act. (It is because B3 or B4 are reasons for my action that I must be aware of them in order to perform that action rationally, that is, in a way that is responsive to reasons for that action.) But we have just seen that Mellor struggles to justify this idea on a tenseless framework. Therefore, the asymmetry picked out four paragraphs above is of no help to Mellor or the tenseless theory in accounting for the need for tensed beliefs in rational timely actions.

Summary

In this chapter we have seen that Perry's argument for the essential indexical shows that tensed beliefs are essential for rational timely actions. Perry's initial argument specifically concerned a timely and rational action, not just any old doing, and plausibly applies to all actions of this type.

This fact appears to lend initial credence to the tensed theory because it implies that when one acts on a tensed belief this is rational in a way that acting on a similar tenseless belief would not be. And a natural way to understand this is that one is aware of reasons for their action, and that one acts for, through their tensed belief that one is not through their tenseless belief.

The tenseless theory cannot accept such an account. Mellor offers an alternative account of the need for tense, from the stand point of a tenseless theory, based on the fact that tensed beliefs, unlike tenseless ones, can be held and true at a specific time.

A consideration of Mellor's account found it to be inadequate, as the asymmetry he alluded to was not a genuine asymmetry. Mellor's account could be made plausible if a tensed belief is a reason to act whilst a similar tenseless one is not. However, it is not clear that the tenseless theory can justify such a claim. Mellor's account could also be made more plausible if one had to know in advance of acting that the belief one would act on in acting would be true at the time one believed it and would also make one's act likely to succeed (e.g. B1 or B2). However, again, it is not clear that Mellor can justify such a claim, as it is not clear that such a belief is rationally demanded, nor is it clear that if such a belief were necessary that it would make acting on a tensed belief essential to a rational action.

As with Chapter One, we have seen that a clear understanding of the rationality of our actions and our emotions can play an important role in the debate between the tensed and tenseless theories. In the subsequent chapters I will therefore turn to investigating the nature of this rationality.

CHAPTER THREE: REASONS

In this chapter I will examine the nature of reasons. We saw in Chapters One and Two that in order to progress certain debates about the nature of time we need to get clear about the rationality of actions and the appropriateness of emotions. The rationality of an action is tightly bound up with reasons for that action, just as the appropriateness of an emotion is bound with the reasons that emotion is felt for. Whether or not we reduce this rationality and this appropriateness to reasons, it is clear that we cannot fully assess the former without considering the nature of the latter. (In my discussion I will focus on actions, as this is the focus common in the literature, but what I say is applicable to the case of emotions, as I will make clear in Chapter Eight.)

I take reasons to be facts; for example, the fact that a car is approaching me is a good reason for me to jump out of the road. Further, if I spot the car, I will jump for this reason. I will begin this chapter by introducing terminology popular in the philosophy of reason, and using it to clarify my view. It will become clear that the points I make in the first and second sentences of this paragraph require independent defence. I will promote the idea that reasons are facts, and will defend it from numerous arguments.

3.1 Theories & Terms

We use the notion of a reason in a variety of ways, Alvarez¹ picks out three. Firstly, we can speak of reasons that justify actions: Tom's mess-making justifies his stopping. Secondly, we can speak of the reason someone acted for, what motivated them: Tom might stop for the reason that he is making a mess. And thirdly, we can speak of things that explain an action as the reasons for that action: we understand Tom's stopping through being made aware that he was making a mess.

In line with these distinctions we can speak of justificatory, motivational, and explanatory reasons respectively. However, as Alvarez is careful to stress, this need not mean that we are actually dealing with three distinct types of reasons, or even three distinct reasons, as it could well be that one and the same fact fulfils all three roles, and hence, is at once a justifying, motivating and explanatory reason. For example, Tom's making a mess, justifies his stopping, motivates him to stop, and can explain his stopping. On the other

¹ Alvarez:2009a.

hand, it is possible for the three to diverge. A fact might justify Tom's act, but if he is unaware of it, it will not motivate his action, and might not explain it. Tom might be motivated to act by a fact that does not actually justify his action. And Tom's action might be explained by a fact that neither justifies nor motivates his action. Similarly, a single fact might justify one act, motivate another, and explain a third. The difference between the types of reason is not a difference in the nature of the reason, but rather, in the role the reason plays. A fact is a justificatory reason if it justifies an action, it is a motivational reason if it motivates an action, and an explanatory reason if it is used to explain an action. With this possibility of coincidence and divergence clear, I will go on to speak of three types of reason for simplicity, though the distinction is centrally one of three roles.

For simplicity I will refer to justificatory reasons as *j-reasons*, motivational reasons as *m-reasons*, and explanatory reasons as *e-reasons*. (When I do not need to delineate a single role, then I will often drop the prefix.)

For each type of reason there can be a theory about what sort of things those reasons are. I have been speaking of all three as facts, and thus I allow that all three can coincide, and I will defend this view below. However, some disagree and take the different types of reason to fall into different ontological categories, hence denying coincidence. For example, Wallace² takes *j-reasons* to be facts, but he thinks that *m-reasons* are psychological states. Tom is justified in acting by the fact that he is making a mess, but he is motivated to act by his believing that he is making a mess and his desiring not to. I will refer to the view that reasons are psychological states as *psychologism about reasons*. More specifically, I shall speak of the view that *j-reasons* are psychological states as *psychologism about j-reasons*, the view that *m-reasons* are psychological states as *psychologism about m-reasons*, and so on for *e-reasons*. I will refer to the view that reasons are facts, analogously, as *non-psychologism about j-reasons*, *non-psychologism about m-reasons*, and *non-psychologism about e-reasons*.

Psychologism about *j-reasons* must be distinguished from *internalism* about *j-reasons*.³ Internalism is the view that one's *j-reasons* are in some way delimited by one's motivation, or potential motivation. For example, Williams⁴ has defended a view according to which one only has a *j-reason* to *F*, if one has a desire that would be satisfied by *F*ing, or could be brought to have such a desire through rational deliberation after

² Wallace:2003, see also Davis:2003, Smith:1994 & 2003, and, Mele:2003.

³ Cf. Hurley:2001 who gives an argument that suggests that internalism needn't entail psychologism.

⁴ Williams:1979.

having been made better aware of their situation. Internalism thus places a condition on any j-reason, however, it does not, as psychologism does, impose an ontological form on those reasons. One could adopt an internalism like Williams' and adopt either non-psychologism or psychologism. Tom's act could be justified by the fact that he is making a mess, even if it is only so justified as long as Tom could (in the relevant way) be motivated by that fact. *Externalism*, in this context, is the denial of internalism.⁵

It is important to distinguish between a belief (a mental state⁶) and what is believed (a state of the world the believer is aware of). The term 'belief' can be used to refer to either of these, and thus it has an act/object ambiguity. A similar act/object ambiguity occurs for the term 'desire', which might be used variously to refer to the mental state of desiring, or to the object of such affections.⁷ Psychologism, is the view that j-reasons are mental states, and in this sense the view that j-reasons are beliefs and desires. If one instead uses 'belief' and 'desire' to speak of the facts believed or desired, then, one might say in accord with non-psychologism that beliefs and desires are reasons. We must therefore be careful. I will use the expressions 'belief' and 'desire' to speak of mental states, unless I make it clear otherwise. The terms 'belief' and 'desire' are commonly used in the literature in a thin sense. 'Belief' picks out a number of cognitive states, so that if one believes *b*, one might in fact doubt *b*, assume *b*, know *b* etc. 'Desire' is used to capture a number of pro-attitudes, so if one desires *d*, one might in fact want *d*, be inclined towards *d*, etc. I will say more about this in the following chapter, but for the time being I will also adopt this thin use.

With these distinctions in the open it is possible to delineate a number of different views crisscrossing these distinctions. The view that I wish to defend is non-psychologism about j- and m-reasons. Although I will not defend non-psychologism about e-reasons,⁸ I will indirectly defend a view that e-reasons can be facts, leaving it open whether or not they can also fall into different ontological categories. I will stay largely quiet on the issue of internalism versus externalism, save for the following remarks.

As defined – e.g. the bearing of some relation to motivation – internalism could take a number of different forms. Arguably, if one adopts a particularly extreme form of

⁵ It is worth noting that Lowe:2008 uses the term 'externalism' rather differently and in a way more akin to my use of 'non-psychologism' (though Lowe goes on to talk of needs, rather than facts).

⁶ I do not mean to take a stance on the nature of beliefs and desires by speaking of mental states, as opposed to acts or episodes (cf. Steward:1997).

⁷ Cf. Alvarez:2010a p.3.

⁸ For arguments to this effect see Strawson:1992.

internalism one will have more scope for dealing with the issues surrounding the rationality of actions that were met in the last chapter, namely, the need for indexical beliefs. For example, one might insist that one has a *j*-reason only so long as one can be motivated to act whilst having an indexical belief, adding, that one can only act rationally if one has *j*-reasons. (Whilst I think this latter claim is false, I shall accept it in order to make the current point.) It would follow that Tom must have an indexical belief to act rationally, as without one nothing he did could be rational. However, such an extreme form of internalism appears to be very difficult to justify. It certainly doesn't strike one as intuitive. Rather, Tom would have a *j*-reason to act whether or not he had such a first-personal belief, so long as he was making a mess. In this regard it is telling that the forms of internalism commonly defended in the literature are far less extreme, and hence, more plausible.⁹ Of these more common forms of internalism Williams' is perhaps one of the more hard-line.¹⁰ However, I think it is clear that an internalism of this form does not explain why indexical beliefs are needed for rational actions. For the fact that Tom is making a mess, the reason we are concerned with, could qualify as such a reason without Tom having an indexical belief, whether or not we adopt this internalism. For matters of simplification then, I shall put the internalism/externalism debate to one side, on the assumption that any plausible or common form of internalism (and hence externalism) will not prevent the problems of the essential indexical from arising.

Occasionally a distinction is made between *conclusive* and *pro tanto* reasons. If one has a conclusive reason to do something then one ought rationally to do it. On the other hand, someone might have a *pro tanto* reason to do something, but also have stronger *pro tanto* reasons not to do that thing, so that all things considered they ought rationally not to do it. *Pro tanto* reasons can be weighed against one another, and having a *pro tanto* reason to do something does not mean that all things considered you ought rationally to do that thing, or that that thing is the most reasonable thing to do. I think this raises an important issue and it should be understood that in my discussion, when I say that someone has a reason to do something, I do not mean that all things considered they ought to do that thing, or that that thing is the most reasonable thing to do. In short, I am very often talking about *pro tanto* reasons, unless I make clear otherwise.

⁹ Cf. Williams:1979, Smith:1994, and Korsgaard:1986, for discussion McNaughton & Rawling:2004.

¹⁰ At least of the internalist views that will be amenable to non-psychologism. See Dancy:2000 ch.7 for a discussion of internalism from the point of view of one who adopts non-psychologism.

3.2 Justificatory Reasons

The greatest adversary to non-psychologism about j-reasons is psychologism about j-reasons.¹¹ (From here on in this section I will often simply speak of non-psychologism or psychologism, in doing so I mean to speak of non-psychologism and psychologism about j-reasons.) When the two are considered shoulder to shoulder, I think it is very clear that non-psychologism is the better theory. For example, Tom's j-reason to stop and rearrange his shopping appears to be the fact that he is making a mess. Not his belief that he is nor his belief in anything different, nor anyone else's belief. Whether or not he has this belief, there is a j-reason for him to stop. The fact that he is making a mess does not stop being problematic just as he does not believe he is, and similarly, it does not stop being a j-reason for him to act to stop making a mess.

When one deliberates about what one ought to do or to have done, one will consider facts. I see the fact that it is raining as a j-reason to take an umbrella, and the fact that the only umbrella available belongs to someone else as a j-reason not to take an umbrella. I do not consider my beliefs, but what they are beliefs of, facts, in order to make my decision.¹² Kim¹³ has pointed out that if I were to consider my beliefs and desires this would move me from an act of deliberation to one of prediction. In considering that I believe it is raining, that I believe the only available umbrella belongs to someone else, and that I desire not to use other people's belongings, I can predict that I will not take the umbrella. Just as another may predict my behaviour through knowing my mental states. But this conclusion will not tell me what I ought to do, it will not be the conclusion of an act of deliberation considering my j-reasons for acting, and it will leave me still with having to make a decision about what to do. In order to make this decision, I need to deliberate about the facts that obtain.

Suppose that I lend someone twenty pounds, as I am told they need it to pay their phone bill.¹⁴ If I later discover that they were lying and that they just wanted to buy some alcohol, then I will feel that I in fact had no j-reason to lend them the money and that I

¹¹ Bittner:2001 does offer a third alternative, referring to reasons as events and states of affairs, rather than facts. But on the crucial issue of whether one ought to jump because there is a car approaching them, or, because one believes there is, Bittner, like me, would suggest the former. Bittner does not adopt psychologism about reasons. I will say more about my ontology of facts in Chapter Six.

¹² This point is made by many writers, but perhaps especially emphasized by Kim:1998 and Manson:2004 who focus on the first-person perspective.

¹³ Kim:1998.

¹⁴ I take the example from Alvarez:2008 & 2010 ch.5.2.

acted for no good reason. This implies that it was the supposed fact that they needed to pay a bill that was what I took to be a j-reason for my lending the money. If the j-reason had merely been my belief that they needed the money to pay a bill, then I oughtn't to suppose that the act was unjustified upon discovering the falsity of the belief. Discovering the belief was false does nothing to undermine the past existence of the belief, nor hence, the potential for the belief to have justified the act. I learn that my act was unjustified because I learn that the fact I took to be the j-reason did not obtain. We can add to this common reference to facts as j-reasons, the idea that considerations of parsimony and simplicity lend weight to the view that all j-reasons fall into the same ontological category. Thus I take it that non-psychologism about j-reasons ought to be our default position, any other view would have to first unsettle it.

Psychologism is driven by the thought that, for example, if I want to stay dry, and believe that it is raining so taking an umbrella will enable me to stay dry, then I am justified in taking an umbrella. This belief/desire pair appears to justify my action and hence to be a j-reason for my action, whether or not it is actually raining. However, this thought must be mistaken. One can easily imagine an act so heinous that no one ever ought to perform it, perhaps murdering a child that has a great life ahead of it. If someone were to suddenly form the desire to commit such a murder, and a belief that murdering the child in front of them would be committing such a murder, then according to the view under consideration this person would have a j-reason to commit this murder. The formation of the belief/desire complex brings a j-reason into existence as the j-reason just is that belief/desire complex. But this is obviously false, the murder remains unjustified.¹⁵ One cannot simply bootstrap j-reasons into existence through forming beliefs and/or desires, contra psychologism.¹⁶ In short, psychologism must be wrong. A consideration of further examples will clarify this.

If Si's mother, Jo, is unwell, Si has a j-reason to call around on his way home to see if there is anything he can do for her. Here the j-reason is the fact that Jo is unwell. The opponents of non-psychologism, however, point out that even if Jo is in fact quite well, if Si believes she is unwell, this seems to give grounds for saying that he ought to call around to see her. In this case, our original j-reason no longer occurs, so if Si ought to act in this

¹⁵ One might argue that the formation of the desire entails that the agent will receive pleasure from committing the murder, and this is a j-reason, if only a very weak one, for committing the heinous act. But it is clear that if this is right, what is being offered as the j-reason is the fact that the agent would gain pleasure from the act, not simply the belief/desire pair, so psychologism is not vindicated.

¹⁶ Cf. Bratman:1987 p.24-27, and, Broome:2001b.

way, it must be the result of another j-reason, presumably his believing Jo unwell. We thus appear to have grounds for taking a j-reason to be a psychological state, contra non-psychologism.

Si appears to be subject to the complex normative requirement (hereon abbreviated to CNR) that *one ought, if they believe their mother unwell, to call around to see her*.¹⁷ Psychologism recognizes such an obligation and assumes that Si has a j-reason to call around to see his mother. But we need not interpret the CNR in this way. Rather, it has been argued that the ought in such obligations must be interpreted to have a wide scope precisely in order to avoid the difficulties of bootstrapping already alluded to.¹⁸ One cannot conclude that Si ought to see his mother from the fact that he has a belief that she is unwell. The obligation cannot be detached in this way. All the CNR requires is that Si either goes to see his mother, or, loses the belief that she is unwell. He has a requirement to satisfy a disjunction, though not a requirement to fulfil either disjunct in particular. Si could satisfy this CNR if he did not believe that his mother is unwell. In fact, given that his belief is mistaken, it may well be that it would be better if he did not have that belief and did not go to see his mother. This would in no way appear to conflict with the CNR, and thus, it vindicates the idea that the obligation applies to the disjunction as a whole.

If there is such a disjunctive obligation, then it is surely not provided by Si's belief, because it can be satisfied by the absence of that belief. Rather, if there is a j-reason for this disjunctive obligation, then it likely comes from a fact, such as the fact that unwell people require help and mothers do a lot for their children.¹⁹ To insist the obligation is not disjunctive or that it stems from a psychological state is to go beyond the example and to simply assume psychologism without defence.

A second, but related criticism of non-psychologism, concerns advice. One is able to advise someone how to do something, even if they take there to be no reason to do that thing. Ross might, for example, tell Dave how to make a birthday cake, even though he

¹⁷ Many details perhaps need to be filled in here to make the CNR plausible, but I set these aside. The point is that one takes Si to be under an obligation to call around because he has this belief. To deny this much would be to remove the criticism of non-psychologism, to accept this much is to accept that the details can be filled in.

¹⁸ Cf. Broome:2001b. See also Dancy:2000 chs.2 & 3, and Dancy:2003.

¹⁹ Many of the moves I make here reflect moves made by Dancy:2000. Piller:2003 has criticized Dancy on the grounds that these CNRs merely enable one to criticize someone who breaks them for being inconsistent. Dancy's (2003) response is to say that these CNRs can themselves be grounded, as I have here, and these grounds enable a much stronger criticism of an agent breaking the CNR. Si wouldn't simply be inconsistent if he didn't go to see his mother, he would appear to be doing something in conflict with all she has done for him and the needs a person has when ill.

knows that Dave is wrong about the date of Jo's birthday. He has told Dave about his error, but his advice fell on deaf ears. Ross might say "you shouldn't be making a cake, but, if you are going to, you should start by getting the ingredients". This is a matter of means end reasoning. Dave desires to make a cake and in order to obtain this end he has to do certain other things, including gathering the ingredients. The point of the case is that Dave has no j-reason to make a cake, he has no j-reason to do so even though he desires to, because it is not Jo's birthday.²⁰ But, despite this, it appears that his desire to make a cake has given him a j-reason to do what subserves making a cake. This is because, regardless of whether or not Dave should be making the cake, if Dave went about trying to do it without gathering ingredients, then he would be open to rational criticism that he would not be open to if he gathered the ingredients first. Thus, Dave's desire to make the cake appears to provide a j-reason for his gathering ingredients.

I have said that Dave's desire to make the cake is not a j-reason for making that cake. This is a general point, wanting x does not give one a reason to have (or do) x , and it is supported by the bootstrapping argument already given. Our question now is whether Dave's desire provides a reason for his doing what *suberves* his desired end.²¹ The suggestion that it is comes from the idea that Dave would be irrational if he had that desire but did not pursue those means. We have here, again, a CNR, *one ought, if they desire to make a cake, to gather ingredients*. With this in focus, we are free to respond to this case just as we did with Si's. Dave is irrational if he fails to meet this CNR, and he would do so if he desired to make a cake and he did not gather ingredients. Thus he is open to the criticism of irrationality. However, this is not because he has a j-reason to gather ingredients, as it is he has none, it is only that he has a j-reason (or at least a rational obligation) to satisfy the disjunction 'gather ingredients or do not desire to make a cake'. Because it is not Jo's birthday, Dave has no j-reason to make a birthday cake or to desire to, and therefore his not desiring to would be a better way for him to satisfy the CNR.

It is possible for the critic of non-psychologism to produce numerous examples like Si's and Dave's, and the literature has many. But, the pattern of response, citing the CNR and denying detachment, always appears to be open, and for this reason, I think we can take this discussion to displace a number of other similar cases.²² Whilst I think this forms

²⁰ Cf. Dancy:2000 p.32, and e.g. Bratman:1987 p.23-7, Raz:2005, Wallace:2001, Broome:2005, and, Parfit:1997.

²¹ Clearly the bootstrapping criticism can easily be applied to this case just as it was above.

²² Cf. e.g. Darwall:2003.

an interesting and provocative line of criticism of non-psychologism, I take my comments here to show that it is inadequate to its purpose. (In Chapter Five I will say more about CNRs and the nature of their rational import, but my comments here suffice to show that one can accept non-psychologism, and accept an obligation on, for example, Si.)

There is a second aspect to Dave's case. Ross has a j-reason to behave in a particular way, for example, to tell Dave that it is not Jo's birthday when approached about the cake. This j-reason looks essentially bound up with Dave's belief and if it just is Dave's belief non-psychologism is faulted. However, non-psychologism has an alternative to this, namely, the fact that Dave has the belief. The j-reason for Ross's act is the fact that Dave believes it is Jo's birthday. Thus non-psychologism is able to account for this situation. Moreover, non-psychologism's account is very plausible. It is not simply the belief, but the possession of the belief at a specific time by a specific person, that is, the fact that Dave has the belief, that provides Ross with a j-reason. Thus, it is clear that non-psychologism is not committed to the implausible idea that j-reasons are isolated from psychological states. Rather, they can play an important role when they are considered as constituents of facts. Moving to the third person perspective makes this distinction more clear.

The final difficulty that I want to consider against non-psychologism concerns the so called fact/value gap. I will consider three arguments that have been given against the idea that values can be facts: the argument from relativity, the argument from derivation, and the argument from queerness. These are of relevance as j-reasons are values, insofar as they are j-reasons that one ought rationally to *F*.

Mackie²³ raises the argument from relativity focusing on moral values: there are large disagreements between societies geographically and temporally about moral values; if moral values were facts we would not expect this to be the case; therefore moral values are not facts. If one tried to transpose this argument to the case of rational values or j-reasons, then we immediately hit upon a difficulty. It is simply false that there are large disagreements between societies about what is rational. Moreover, it is necessary that this premise is false. In order to understand another person, one must assume them to be by and large rational by one's own standards.²⁴ Without this assumption, it is impossible to get

²³ Mackie:1977 pt.1 ch.8.

²⁴ Cf. Davidson:2001g, Kim:1988 p.392-393. If one adopts a (later) Wittgensteinian view of language which is radically opposed to this Davidsonian view, we still find a similar point being made, but now in the idea that shared understanding must presuppose a shared background of judgements (cf. Wittgenstein:2001b pt.I

any foothold at all on what they mean or believe. This entails that anyone that did differ radically from oneself about what was rational, or what were j-reasons, would be someone that we could not even understand, let alone describe as disagreeing with us. In the case of rationality then, the argument from relativity is quite simply impossible. It is likely that not all will agree with me that the fact that Tom is making a mess is a j-reason for him to act. But, in order for two of us to disagree about such a matter we must first agree about a great many more things, a great many more of our j-reasons. Disagreements can only be minor, and minor disagreements ought to be expected, given that none of us are perfectly rational or reasonable beings.

The argument from derivation occurs in Hume's²⁵ writings. It is argued that P1: no statement of value can be derived from statements of fact alone; and hence, C1: that facts cannot be values. However, if non-psychologism is correct then P1 is false. More accurately, if non-psychologism is correct then many statements of fact just are statements of value. If the facts at issue are allowed to be values, then the derivation is going to be straight forward. The non-psychologist can see a statement of fact that is a conclusion following from other statements of fact, also as a statement of value thereby offering a ready case in which a value was derived from a fact. In short, Hume, for example, allows the derivation of one fact from others, but if non-psychologism is correct, then this might just be an example of a derivation of a value from facts, or from other values.

The argument from derivation has been widely discussed since Hume. For example, Searle²⁶ considers an alternative that focuses on the expressions used in the statements. The argument being that one cannot derive a statement using evaluative expressions from statements that do not.²⁷ This version of the argument meets a similar response to the one just given. But here we can also put more pressure on the issue. For example, a man might have two names, but if we do not know that he does, we will not be able to derive a statement using the one name from premises which only use the other. On the other hand, if we do know that he does, then a statement to this effect, a premise involving both names, will appear as a premise in our derivation. So we would still not have an example in which statements involving the one expression – name – can be derived from ones lacking that

sect.242). The Wittgensteinian approach makes it clear that this need not lead us to some form of psychologism, as the judgments at issue are essentially world involving (cf. Wittgenstein:2001b pt.I sect. 241).

²⁵ Hume:1985 bk.III, pt.I sect.I.

²⁶ Searle:1964.

²⁷ Of course there is slightly more to it than this, as from *P* one can always derive *P* or *Q*. Therefore, the evaluative expressions must be occurring in the conclusion in a sufficiently active way.

expression. But we do not take this to show that a man cannot have two names, so even if it were impossible to derive statements involving evaluative expressions from statements that lack them we shouldn't conclude that facts are not values.²⁸

Mackie's²⁹ argument from queerness is that: if there are objective values then these are objects of a queer sort, different from anything else, and we would have to know of them through a special faculty. The point being that objective values – j-reasons as facts – are odd, and demand us to be odd.

However, being odd does not render something impossible, so non-psychologism is not disproven by this argument, at best it is made less attractive. But non-psychologism can respond more forcefully. The crucial issue is the notion of 'queer' involved. It appears that normal for Mackie is causal nomological, or science. The criticism then is that j-reasons are unscientific. This claim is highly dubious, people spend very little of their time doing science, but arguably must respond to j-reasons at every turn, so if anything science is the queer approach to matters. If one is adamant that science will speak the whole and only truth, they ought to hope that science will encompass these normative facts. Further, in emphasizing the necessary universality of reasoning and rationality one opens space for a law-like, and hence science friendly view of j-reasons and rationality.³⁰

On the other hand, one can offer an explanation of why values are not fundamental properties of science. Arguably, science aims to produce a value neutral description of the world, in which case, it will aim to disregard values, and hence, should not be expected to posit them.³¹ I do not mean to hang much on this description of science, but rather, to put pressure on what exactly Mackie might mean by normal and queer, and to point out that if by normal Mackie means something like value neutral, then to this extent the idea that a normal view makes no reference to values is to be expected but is also irrelevant to the existence of values. Moreover, there may be good independent grounds for thinking that reasons and rationality cannot be reduced to a scientific causal system. Davidson's causal

²⁸ One might argue that derivations concern propositions, not statements, (one derives a proposition from other propositions, not a statement from other statements). One might also argue that co-referring names will be captured by the same propositional elements, and hence, try to argue that if the names co-refer there is a sense in which one must be derivable from the other. But, my point is that it is not always clear what propositions are at issue when one is trying to actually perform a deduction, nor, whether an act of derivation is logically or merely practically impossible.

²⁹ Mackie:1977 pt.1 ch.9.

³⁰ Though for reasons I will stress in the next chapter, I do not take this to be the case, even if reasons are causes, an explanation in terms of reasons is not a causal one.

³¹ Cf. Cockburn:1997 ch.5.6.

approach came under fire (from Davidson himself at a later date), on the grounds that causal accounts are susceptible to the problem of deviant causal chains.³² One might be caused by the right reasons, but in the wrong way (the fact that there is a storm is a j-reason for heading indoors, but actually being forced indoors by the storm is not responding to the j-reason in the right way). Lowe has further argued that responding to j-reasons cannot be a causal matter, as that would undermine the element of free choice essential for rational action.³³ Non-psychologism can thus respond to the argument from queerness by admitting that its objective values are not scientific or causal properties. This would not be an ad hoc answer, but rather one grounded in a thorough understanding of rationality and perhaps science.

To conclude this section, non-psychologism is promoted by our ready consideration of facts as j-reasons, and advantages of keeping j-reasons to a single ontological kind. Many arguments against non-psychologism occur in cases where there is a complex normative requirement at play, for example; one ought to *F* if they believe *p*. These CNRs can be interpreted in a way that denies detachment, they are a requirement to satisfy a disjunction, but, not to adopt any one of those disjuncts rather than the other. This removes the pressure to take the psychological state involved to be the j-reason, in fact implying the contrary. In other cases, it is a fact constituted in part by a psychological state, rather than the state itself that is the j-reason, the close relation between these two providing an error theory for psychologism's mistake. Finally, the fact/value gap arguments have their potency stunted when it is noted that rationality must have a universal nature (there can be only one rationality and hence only one set of j-reasons). Further, demands for the possibility of derivation or a particular scientific nature are demands that non-psychologism can regard as inappropriate on independent grounds.

3.3 Motivational Reasons

I now turn to considering the case of m-reasons. (In this section, when I say simply “non-psychologism” or “psychologism” I mean non-psychologism or psychologism about m-reasons.) Here again, the greatest rival to non-psychologism is psychologism. Our concern now is with the question, why did Tom act, what motivated him, what was his m-reason for acting? Non-psychologism takes it that Tom's m-reason for acting was the fact

³² Cf. Davidson:2001a and 2001b respectively.

³³ Lowe:2008 ch.9, see also McCall & Lowe:2005.

that he was making a mess, psychologism, on the other hand, takes it that Tom's m-reason was his belief that he was making a mess perhaps in combination with a desire not to. Put like this, non-psychologism again gains an initial advantage over its rival. Tom would not take himself to be acting for the m-reason that he had that belief and desire, rather, Tom quite sensibly takes his believing and desiring those things to be no j-reason for his act, and hence, it is not something that motivates him and therefore is not his m-reason either. Deliberation again lends credence to non-psychologism, the things one considers when they consider how to act are facts, it is therefore natural to suppose that these facts are what motivate the individual when they finally make their decision. To insist that they were motivated by something different appears to undermine the very act of deliberating, if one does not act for any of the things that they consider acting for.³⁴

Dancy³⁵ points out that any account of m-reasons must meet two criteria: EC, it must make it clear how a j-reason can contribute to the explanation of an action done for that reason; NC, it must make it clear how one can act for good j-reasons. To deny NC would be to assert that no one ever acts for good j-reasons, and perhaps hence that no-one is rational. Given non-psychologism about j-reasons, it is hard to see how anything other than non-psychologism about m-reasons can meet the latter of these constraints, and thus non-psychologism about m-reasons gains credence. It has been argued that one should not take NC literally, and that enough connection is maintained with normative reasons if they are, for example, the content of beliefs that are m-reasons.³⁶ However, such a response is inadequate. It is to accept that literally no-one ever acts for a j-reason (no-one ever acts for a j-reason that justifies their act). This truth alone is unacceptable, whatever non-literal interpretations one might also give.

Given that restricting m-reasons to a single ontological category has the advantages of simplicity and parsimony, we again have a case for taking non-psychologism to be our default position, any other view would have to first unsettle it. However, whilst non-psychologism about j-reasons is quite popular, the case with m-reasons comes under rather more attack as I will now consider.

In order to act for the fact x , one must believe x to obtain. This necessity could be taken to support psychologism, the need for the belief is explained by its identity with the

³⁴ Cf. Dancy:2003.

³⁵ Dancy:2000 ch.5.

³⁶ Cf. Wallace:2003 and Davis:2003.

m-reason.³⁷ However, this support is very weak, the need for beliefs could be explained in a number of manners, for example the belief appears to merely enable one to be motivated. One must believe *x* to obtain in order to act for *x*, as believing *x* to obtain enables one to act for *x*. It enables as the agent is aware of *x* through this belief, and an agent must be aware of *x* to have it as an m-reason. It would be a mistake to identify enabling conditions with what they enable, so it would be wrong to identify an m-reason, with being aware of a fact, and hence, with having a belief. (Having legs enables me to walk, but that does not mean having a walk is having legs, or, that legs are walks.) The role of the belief means that it is possible for the belief to be part of an explanation of the action. But as already noted, it is possible for e-reasons and m-reasons to come apart, and we should not let the fact that the belief is an e-reason here make us conclude that it is also an m-reason.

The case with desires is similar, though not identical, as it is less clear that desires are simply enabling conditions. Rather, those opposed to non-psychologism often take desires to be required for actions on the Humean grounds that desiring is being driven and acting for a reason is being driven.³⁸ Smith³⁹ gives the argument: having an m-reason is, *inter alia*, being motivated; being motivated is, *inter alia*, desiring; desiring is having a desire; therefore, desires are m-reasons. This is, however, not a valid argument. The conclusion one is justified in reaching is that having an m-reason is having a desire. But, unless the having is the same in both these cases it does not follow that the desire is the m-reason. Dancy⁴⁰ shows that it is not the same, by pointing out that having an m-reason is being motivated by an m-reason. On the other hand, it is not clear that having a desire is being motivated by a desire, therefore, the havings are not the same. This is not clear precisely as it is not clear that m-reasons are desires. A desire need not be what motivates it might instead simply be the state of being motivated. This would be sufficient to account for the need for desires in motivated actions, and further, for the sense in which we can say, as the Humean does, that having an m-reason is desiring.⁴¹ As with beliefs, a desire might

³⁷ Cf. Alvarez:2008 & Dancy:2000 ch.6.

³⁸ This can be put a number of different ways: desiring is having a pro attitude and being motivated is having a pro attitude, desiring is active and motivation is active, desiring considers the world the way it could be and so does being motivated, and, desire and motivation have a similar direction of fit (one that is opposed to the direction had by belief, belief being passive, and taking the world simply as it is). (Cf. Davidson:2001a, though Davidson is cautious, e.g. Davidson:2001c, Hume:1985 bk.II, Dancy:2000 ch.2, Smith:1987.)

³⁹ Smith:1994 p.116, see also Dancy:2000 p.91.

⁴⁰ Dancy:2000 p.91.

⁴¹ Lowe:2008 p.186 suggests that desiring can be a mode of awareness of a fact (or need), to this extent it is like a belief and we can see it as a mere enabling condition for acting for that fact much as a belief is.

explain an action, it might be an e-reason, but it does not follow from this fact that it is also an m-reason.⁴² (I will say more on the role of desires in the next chapter.)

That is to say, one cannot disprove non-psychologism by insisting that beliefs and desires are required for motivated actions. Nor can one do so by adopting a Humean stance according to which desire is *the* active state.

However, it is clear that we often speak of people acting because of beliefs of theirs: I went to the hall because I thought it was Tuesday, she was angry as she thought she had been forgotten. Furthermore, this way of speaking appears to be forced upon us in a number of cases, specifically, those where the agent acts due to a mistaken belief. Suppose that Bob is in the super market with Tom, and that he too is following the trail of sugar, and suddenly stops to rearrange the shopping in his trolley. We can explain Tom's doing so by referring to the fact that he was making a mess, this was a j-reason for him to stop, and he realized as much and was motivated to stop. Bob, on the other hand, was not making a mess, he did form the belief that he was, and stop as a result, but it appears that we cannot explain his stopping by referring to the fact that he was making a mess, as there was no such fact. In this case we explain Bob's act by saying that he stopped because he believed that he was making a mess. His belief is an e-reason for his act, and it looks like it must also be his m-reason. Furthermore, there appears to be little ground for taking Bob's case to be essentially different from Tom's, both have beliefs playing similar roles, and therefore, Tom's belief must in fact be his m-reason too. I shall refer to this as the error case, and I take it to be the strongest argument against non-psychologism.

At this point we can emphasize the distinction already noted between a belief and the fact that the belief is held. It might be that it is the fact that the belief is held, not the belief, that provides the explanatory force. Furthermore, psychologism's error case argument assumes that Bob's m-reason is what is referred to when we explain Bob's action by reference to his belief, that is, that it is the explanans or e-reason. However, we know that e-reasons and m-reasons can part company. I could explain Bob's act by referring to contractions of his muscles, but these are clearly not his m-reasons. In the present case it is clear that the e-reason is not Bob's m-reason. If we ask Bob what is motivating him, Bob would not cite the fact that he believes he was making a mess, but instead, his making a mess. This latter is also what he would consider in deciding to act.

⁴² Cf. Alvarez:2010a especially ch.4.

Psychologism was perhaps encouraged to identify this e-reason with Bob's m-reason on the grounds that the explanation of Bob's behaviour does reveal something about his m-reason. However, it is not necessary for the explanation to do this, that the e-reason cited is the m-reason. In this case, the m-reason is revealed by the e-reason because it is what is believed by Bob. That is, the e-reason is the fact that Bob believed he was making a mess, the m-reason is the content of this belief.⁴³

Nevertheless, psychologism might still insist that Bob does not make a mess; this fact does not obtain, and therefore, it cannot be what motivates Bob, *pace* my implication to the contrary. The problem as psychologism sees it is that what does not exist cannot motivate.

Lowe⁴⁴ has suggested a possible response to this, which uses Plantinga's⁴⁵ distinction between states of affairs and facts, facts simply being states of affairs that obtain. We could take it that Bob is motivated by the state of affairs *Bob making a mess*, something which does exist, though which is not a fact as it does not obtain. Tom is similarly motivated by the state of affairs *Tom is making a mess*, a state of affairs which actually does obtain and so is a fact. If this view were adopted, non-psychologism about m-reasons would have to be altered to allow that m-reasons can be mere states of affairs, that is, non-obtaining states of affairs, as well as facts. Non-psychologism about j-reasons though need not alter at all, as Bob, despite having an m-reason, does not have a j-reason for his action.

An alternative response, and the one I shall assume, is to deny that Bob does have an m-reason at all, but also to deny that this need prevent him from being motivated. This response is supported by Bob's willing to cite something non-existent as his m-reason. It is possible to have beliefs concerning something that does not exist. Bob has a belief about his making a mess, something that does not exist. One can take a number of attitudes towards the non-existent, such as when they are afraid of the monster under the bed, or when Bob is ashamed of his making a mess. Therefore, we ought to expect that Bob can be motivated by something that does not exist, or more accurately, be motivated without there being anything that motivates, without having an m-reason. Being motivated is in this case simply another example of adopting an attitude towards a non-existent. A matter of taking something to be a j-reason or to speak in favour of their act, and of being moved to act in

⁴³ Cf. Alvarez:2008 and Manson:2004.

⁴⁴ Lowe:2008 p.184-5.

⁴⁵ Plantinga:1978a.

so taking things. To this end, one clearly does not need to have an m-reason to be motivated.⁴⁶ (One should not confuse two issues here, even if there is a metaphysical demand that beliefs about non-existents are constituted by an existent, such as a proposition, it does not follow that the proposition is what they are about, or that in this sense they are about anything at all.)

Moreover, we are free to evaluate Bob's behaviour on the grounds of his belief, not because we can assess his m-reason, he does not have one, but because we can consider what would be the case if his beliefs were true. If Bob's belief that he is making a mess were true, he would have an m-reason that was a j-reason. Because of this his act appears to be rational, even though it is in fact without reason. (I will say more about these issues of rationality in Chapter Five.)

Linked with the idea that what does not exist cannot motivate, is the idea that what does not exist cannot explain. However, it is clear that this is not a criticism of non-psychologism as I have defended it, as the e-reason does exist, it is the fact that Bob believes he is making a mess. Suggesting that there is no m-reason does not entail that there is a non-existent e-reason, but rather, that one cannot explain the case in terms of m-reasons.⁴⁷

It is the case that we sometimes refer to beliefs even in non-error cases: I thought you would be here, John knew the boat was leaking, and so on. Advocates of psychologism might wonder why we would do this if the belief was not the m-reason. Alvarez⁴⁸ offers three explanations, though I suspect there are more. Firstly, one might simply be concerned to bring their audiences' attention to that belief. (They might be concerned to reveal the psychological mechanisms at play in acting, as well as the m-reason.) Secondly, one might want to be withholding their judgment about whether the belief was true. (I might doubt that the road really is closed, but still take that to be motivating the bus driver.) Thirdly, one might want to reveal the epistemic nature of the agent (as is particularly clear when one uses 'knows' rather than 'believes'). Crucially, however, none of these explanations entail that the belief referred to is the m-reason. So non-psychologism can readily accept that people speak of beliefs in describing actions.

⁴⁶ Cf. Alvarez:2008 and Manson:2004.

⁴⁷ However, Dancy:2000 especially ch.6.3 does suggest that explanations might not be factive.

⁴⁸ Alvarez:2008.

Dancy, has offered us a different sort of example in which it does seem appropriate to speak of belief in citing a j-reason.⁴⁹ If Jo has the paranoid belief that kettles are after her, then this might lead her to remove all kettles from her house and avoid tea rooms. However, the fact that she has this belief is a j-reason for her to go to see a psychiatrist, as she is clearly unwell. As a j-reason, this must be a fact. So when we say “Jo ought to go to see a psychiatrist because she believes kettles are after her” it is clear that the phrase ‘she believes kettles are after her’ refers to a fact. Given that this phrase so refers here, we have grounds for believing that our phrasing in reference to Bob ‘he believed that he was making a mess’ also refers to a fact. That is, even if such phrases can refer to belief states, it is clear they can also refer to the fact that someone has a belief, and we have grounds for thinking that they do so when we use them to rationalize agent’s behaviour.⁵⁰

Jo’s example can also be used to ground an attack on psychologism. If Jo was to be confronted about these paranoid beliefs, she might be carefully persuaded that she ought to go to see a psychiatrist. If so, she will act for the j-reason cited, that is, she will take the fact that she believes kettles are after her, as an m-reason to go to the psychiatrist. This lends further credence to non-psychologism, as it is now clear that cases in which one’s belief, or rather the fact that they have that belief, are m-reasons, are unusual cases. This undermines psychologism’s view that all m-reasons involve beliefs.⁵¹

There are thus clear reasons to adopt non-psychologism about m-reasons. Further, it is clear that a number of arguments which appear to support psychologism about m-reasons fail to meet their target. Non-psychologism can accommodate the idea that beliefs and desires are e-reasons for an agent’s action; beliefs are necessary conditions for acting for a reason, but they are not themselves m-reasons, desires are states of being motivated, but they are not themselves m-reasons. Non-psychologism can also account for error cases, when an agent is mistaken about what facts obtain. In such cases an agent simply has no m-reason, though their belief might still be an e-reason for their act.

I thus conclude that j-reasons and m-reasons ought to be taken to be facts. In the next two chapters we will see how this view of reasons fits with the notion of rational action.

⁴⁹ Dancy:2000 p.125, see also Lowe:2008 p.181, Alvarez:2010a p.48 and perhaps Hurtig:2006 p.540.

⁵⁰ Cf. Alvarez:2009a.

⁵¹ Cf. Dancy:2000 p.125.

CHAPTER FOUR: ACTING FOR A REASON

In the last chapter I examined the nature of reasons and showed that justificatory (j-) reasons are facts. It was also shown that motivating (m-) reasons are facts, and that often one and the same fact both motivates and justifies an action. It is the fact that Mike's meeting starts shortly that justifies his leaving his office. If Mike becomes aware that his meeting starts shortly, then he can become motivated by that fact and act for that reason (if an agent acts for a reason, then that reason is one of the agent's m-reasons).

The present chapter is concerned with the topic of acting for a reason. This takes us beyond the scope of the last chapter, as to act for a reason is not simply to behave in a way that accords with what there is a j-reason to do. If I am being approached by a speeding car I have a good j-reason to jump out of the road. But if I am given an electric shock causing my muscles to spasm in such a way as to propel me out of the road, I will not be acting for that reason.

I will not provide a fully worked out metaphysics of what it is to act for a reason. Instead I will bring to the fore a number of important issues and show how these form a coherent view. In doing so I will argue that it is necessary for an agent to have beliefs and desires when they act for a reason, and that these beliefs and desires must fit together in a certain way. This reflects the fact that when an agent acts for a reason, they not only have m-reasons but also goals towards which they act. These goals will structure the reasons an agent considers when they perform instances of practical reasoning as all of these reasons will be relevant to these goals, however, the goals will not appear as premises or reasons. The conclusion of such a piece of practical reasoning will be an action, not a belief about what one ought to do, though of course a consideration of reasons might also lead an agent, in a parallel manner, to form such a judgement.

When we explain an agent's behaviour in terms of the reasons they act for, and perhaps the goals they have in acting, this is not a causal explanation. Causal explanations are law like or nomological and explanations in terms of reasons are not. This shows that the causal influences of a reason are not what determine whether or not it is a reason that an agent acts for. However, this leaves open the question of whether or not a reason does happen to cause a particular act.

4.1 Ingredients

Perhaps the best known theory of what it is to act for a reason is that offered by Davidson¹. Davidson suggests two necessary conditions for acting for a reason:

*“C1. R is a primary reason why an agent performed the action A under description d only if R consists of a pro attitude of the agent towards actions with a certain property, and a belief of the agent that A, under the description d, has that property.”*² (p.5)

“C2. A primary reason for an action is its cause.” (p.12)³

In this Davidson clearly takes reasons, or at least m-reasons, to be psychological states. The arguments of the previous chapter tell us that this is incorrect, and to this degree we can dismiss Davidson’s view. We can also dismiss a number of other views that take a similar form, such as those offered by Wallace, Davis, Smith and Mele.⁴ However, there are a number of aspects to this Davidsonian view, and it is not clear that the arguments of the previous chapter warrant a rejection of all of them. Davidson’s view also tells us that when acting for a reason: an agent will have a belief, they will have a pro attitude, this belief and pro attitude will stand in a certain relation to one another, and further, this belief and pro attitude will together cause the action. It is possible to accept all of these ideas, and to hold non-psychologism about m- and j-reasons. In the following sections I will consider each of these ideas.

4.2 The Need for Beliefs & Desires

We must distinguish the idea that a belief and a pro attitude are necessary for an agent to act for a reason, and the idea that the belief and the pro attitude are reasons, Humeanism⁵. In the previous chapter the latter view was shown to be incorrect, but, many

¹ Davidson:2001a.

² Davidson:2001a p.5.

³ Davidson:2001a p.12. Davidson does add the notion of having an intention to his account at a later date, e.g. Davidson:2001c, but this makes little difference for my purposes. Davidson also adds a condition to the effect that the causation must not be deviant e.g. Davidson2001b, but I shall say more of this below.

⁴ E.g. Wallace:2003, Davis:2003, Smith:1994 and Mele:2003.

⁵ Hume:1985 appears to say that belief alone (as a mere concern for matters of fact) cannot lead to action, rather we also require a desire (a passion). Whether or not this is a correct interpretation of Hume’s position

of the arguments given to support that view can go some way to supporting the idea that beliefs and pro attitudes are necessary in order for agent to act for a reason.

It is clear that in order to act for a reason an agent must be aware of that reason. If there is a car approaching me then I have a good j-reason to jump out of the road, but if I am unaware of this j-reason I cannot act for it and it cannot be an m-reason for me. I might jump out of the road for some other reason, perhaps I drop some papers onto the pavement. In so acting my action will also be in accord with the j-reason that is the fact that I am being approached by the speeding car, but this is coincidence, I do not take up this latter j-reason and act for it, and it is not an m-reason for me.

Belief is a paradigmatic state of awareness; often when one is aware of a fact they have a belief about it, and vice versa. However, there are also a number of other cognitive – that is representational – states, such as knowing and suspecting. Therefore, one cannot simply move from the fact that an agent must be aware of a reason to act for it, to the conclusion that an agent must have a belief when they act for a reason. That said, it is common in the literature to use the term ‘belief’ as an umbrella term also covering these other cognitive states.⁶ This is a practice I adopted in the previous chapter and which I will continue, and with this particular turn of phrase we can conclude that an agent must have a belief in order to act for a reason.

Following this line of argument we can also say something of the nature of the belief at issue, namely, it will be a belief about the agent’s m-reason, that is, it will be a belief with the m-reason as content. In order for the fact that an agent is being approached by a car to be that agent’s m-reason to jump out of the road, the agent must have a belief with that fact as content, that is, they must believe that they are being approached by a speeding car.⁷

In the last chapter I adopted the common practice of using ‘desire’ as an umbrella term which is also supposed to cover states such as wanting and being inclined towards,⁸ and to this end we can take it to coincide with Davidson’s notion of a pro attitude.⁹

the view that an agent’s motivational reasons are a combination of beliefs and desires has become known as ‘Humeanism’. Cf. Dancy:2000 p.10, Smith:2003a, and Cullity & Gaut:1997.

⁶ Cf. Alvarez:2010a p.10 & p.126.

⁷ Below I will add to this, so that we may also need a belief such as, that stepping out of the road will involve avoiding a speeding car and so benefit my health.

⁸ Cf. Alvarez:2009a p.55.

⁹ Cf. Davidson:2001a p.4. Schueler:2003 ch.2 warns against conflating the two, as Davidson’s notion of a pro attitude includes “*a great variety of moral views*”(Davidson:2001a p.4), and to this degree also appears to include beliefs such as ‘it is wrong to *G*’. However, I shall not dwell on this here. My concern is that the

The idea that a desire is necessary in order for an agent to act for a reason is supported by the fact that if someone does something deliberately then they must have had some inclination towards doing it. Perhaps I reluctantly wash up my breakfast bowl, I do not like washing up, and do not desire (in the narrow sense) to wash up, but I am nonetheless drawn to do so. It would appear quite odd if someone insisted they did something deliberately but with no inclination at all to do so. To this end it appears an agent will have a desire (in the umbrella sense) when they act for a reason. As Alvarez¹⁰ points out, the state of desiring is a state that a person is in when they are motivated.

The distinction between desire as a state of motivation, and as an m-reason is one we met in the previous chapter. There I raised an argument presented by Smith to support Humeanism, the argument runs as follows: “(a) *Having a motivating reason is, inter alia, having a goal; (b) Having a goal is being in a state with which the world must fit; and (c) Being in a state with which the world must fit is desiring.*”¹¹ I responded to this argument with reference to Dancy¹² who points out that the only relevant conclusion that can be drawn from these premises is that having an m-reason is, *inter alia*, desiring; not, as Smith had intended, that desires are m-reasons. This valid conclusion¹³ coincides with the idea that desires are states of being motivated, and, entails that desires are necessary in order for an agent to act for a reason. I stand by this response to the argument, but quoting the argument as I have here brings to the fore Smith’s notion of a direction of fit, which it is useful to clarify.

Smith takes beliefs and desires to be states with a different direction of fit.¹⁴ He suggests that a desire is a state with a world-to-mind direction of fit, whilst, a belief is a state with a mind-to-world direction of fit. The idea is that if the world does not match the way you desire the world to be, then you should change the world to fit the desire.¹⁵

objects of desire are not reasons to act, but are perhaps goals one has in acting. It appears that Davidson takes his pro-attitudes to give the ends of an act, as he talks of having a pro attitude *towards* something. I take this to be enough to put pro attitudes in line with desires. (Though I do want to remain open on whether there are moral facts, such as that one ought to *G*, if there are such facts an agent can be aware of them and act for them, but in this case I would take them to be the contents of beliefs, not of desires or pro-attitudes.)

¹⁰ Alvarez:2010a p.119.

¹¹ Smith:1994 p.116.

¹² Dancy:2000 p.91.

¹³ Cf. Alvarez:2010a p.121.

¹⁴ Cf. Smith:1987 and 1994, see also Platt:1979 p.256-7, who Smith attributes the idea to, and who in turn cites Anscombe:2000.

¹⁵ This does assume that desires are propositional attitudes, that is, the content of a desire is a proposition or is captured by one. This does seem to be a popular view (e.g. Smith:1994, Broome:2002), however, Alvarez has argued that this is incorrect, the content of a desire can always be captured by an infinitival clause e.g. “I

Whereas, if what you believe does not match the way the world is, then you should alter your belief. A world-to-mind direction of fit is required in acting for a reason, and thus, a desire is required in acting for a reason. I think there is something right in this metaphor but, it shouldn't be taken to carry too much weight as it encourages the idea that a desire is faulty when it does not match the world, just as a belief is when it is false. However, this is surely wrong, most often we are quite right to desire what is not the case.¹⁶ Further, it implies that having a desire justifies one in changing the world to meet one's desire, but non-psychologism, as defended in the previous chapter, shows this to be wrong.¹⁷

To further clarify these notions Smith¹⁸ gives a counterfactual definition of belief and desire. Smith suggests that a belief that p and a desire that p will have a different counterfactual dependence on a perception that $\text{not-}p$. The perception will tend to make the belief go out of existence, but the desire will endure. This point accompanies a dispositional account of desires, according to which to desire something is to be disposed to act in certain ways as revealed by such counterfactual dependencies.¹⁹ However, these ideas should also be taken with caution. It seems quite plausible that an agent, upon realizing that what they desired did not obtain, should lose that desire. For instance, if I desire to be talking to my brother, but discover I am actually speaking to my dad, then I might well simply alter my desire (it is good to talk to either of them and since my dad is there).²⁰ More generally the account is open to the criticisms of any counterfactual account of dispositions, for instance finkish or antidote cases,²¹ where the appropriate

want to F " or "I want b to F ", but it is awkward if not misleading to try to capture it with a that clause "I want that b F " (Alvarez:2010a ch.3 & 4, see also Ben-Yami:1997 and Thagard:2006). Thagard:2006 argues that desires are not propositional attitudes, though primarily on the grounds of evidence from comparative psychology and neuroscience. Alvarez:2010a ch.3.3 also argues for this conclusion on the related grounds that animals can have desires, but look incapable of grasping propositions. I think that Alvarez's argument is overly hasty, but some of the points raised by Thagard can be used to fill it out. Specifically, Thagard points out that if we interpret desires as propositional attitudes, and therefore express them with that-clauses, we must take them to involve relations and agents, e.g. the difference between desiring a beer and desiring that I have a beer. A recognition of relations and oneself is arguably a higher order capacity, and hence, less plausibly something many animals can do, however, animals can desire, and therefore desires are not propositional.

¹⁶ Cf. Alvarez:2010a p.69.

¹⁷ Cf. Alvarez:2010a p.69.

¹⁸ Smith:1994 p.115.

¹⁹ Smith:1994 p.113.

²⁰ Cf. Alvarez:2010a p.69 and Schueler:2003 p.34.

²¹ Cf. Martin:1994 and Bird:1998.

circumstances for the disposition to manifest arise, but the disposition is otherwise prevented from manifesting.²²

Still, I think that there is something right in both of Smith's characterisations. Making these ideas precise would be very difficult, but I take it that we are familiar enough with the notions to make sense of the issue at hand. Desire does appear to be a state of being motivated, and to this end it goes hand in hand with a tendency to act, and, in so acting to change the world. Moreover, it differs from belief in just these respects. This is not to say that one cannot be motivated by a reason that they are aware of in having a belief, nor that belief is in this manner impotent. Rather, as desire is the state of being motivated, not what motivates, it is clear that what motivates must be found elsewhere. When one is motivated by a *j*-reason, when they believe that reason to obtain and hence adopt it as an *m*-reason, they are thus at once also in a state of desire. The fact that one must be in a state of desire if they are in a state of belief concerning an *m*-reason that is motivating them – this necessary covariance – does not entail that the desire is identical with the belief, nor with what it is a belief of (that is, nor with the *m*-reason).

One might be hesitant to accept this identification of desiring with a state of being motivated on the grounds that we on occasion appear to have desires but lack motivation, for instance, when we desire something we know we can do nothing to obtain, as when I desire that I did not just drop my bowl on the floor.²³ However, there is a difference between having a desire to *F* and not *Fing*, and having a desire to *F* and not being motivated to *F*. Motivation is such that a motivation to *F* can be manifested in the consideration of the means to, and implications of *Fing*. Factors which might in turn mean that one's motivation to *F* is outweighed by other conflicting motivations, or as in the case at hand, is halted at that stage as there simply are no means to *Fing*. An unwillingness to *F* or to consider means or implications of *Fing* is evidence that an agent does not in fact desire to *F* (even if this is inconclusive). This link is what has driven Humeanism and underlies Smith's arguments. I take this link to be real, and I have shown that it does not in fact entail Humeanism.

Accepting non-psychologism about *j*- and *m*-reasons therefore does not entail that an agent need not have a belief or a desire in order to act for a reason. Rather, there are good grounds for supposing that an agent will always have a belief and a desire when they

²² I owe this observation to Proctor:unpublished.

²³ Cf. Schueler:2003 p.34.

act for a reason. In the next section I will consider in more detail the role these beliefs and desires play.

4.3 The Role & Interrelations of Beliefs & Desires²⁴

A j-reason to do something is a fact that makes that action reasonable.²⁵ An action can be reasonable in two different ways, intrinsically or instrumentally. For example, I might enjoy going for walks, and that fact is a j-reason for me to walk. The action of walking is an end in itself, it is intrinsically reasonable. On the other hand, there is nothing intrinsically reasonable about putting my shoes on. But the action of putting my shoes on is a means to going for a walk. The fact that it is a means to walking, which is reasonable, is a j-reason to put on my shoes. Putting on my shoes is instrumentally reasonable, as it is a means to a reasonable end.²⁶

There must be actions which are intrinsically reasonable if there are actions which are instrumentally reasonable. Instrumental actions are means to ends, but if there were no intrinsically reasonable actions, it would follow that there were no actions that were the fulfilment of ends, and hence, that instrumental actions were without ends, which is impossible. The fact that putting on my shoes is a means to walking is a j-reason to put on my shoes only in combination with the fact(s) that makes walking reasonable (in this case this is intrinsic, but of course the chain could be much longer). One does not have a j-reason to do all things which are means to other things. My collecting a saw might be means to my chopping my bed in half, but this does not give me a j-reason to collect a saw as I have no j-reason to chop my bed in half, this is not an end.²⁷

²⁴ I owe much of this account to Alvarez, especially Alvarez:2010a.

²⁵ Cf. Alvarez:2010a p.12.

²⁶ The distinction between intrinsic and instrumental actions is not one original to me (e.g. Alvarez:2010a ch.4.2.2), but, instrumental actions have dominated some discussions of rational actions (e.g. Walton:1967, Beanblossom:1971).

²⁷ The thought that each action is merely a means to a further action which is itself merely a means to a further one, and so on for infinity, is clearly unacceptable, as one would have to see that which an action was a means to as of value to perceive that action itself as of value, and hence, one would have to be able to perceive an infinity of actions as of value in order to perceive any one action as of value, and this is obviously not the case. Moreover, this strikes one as an infinite chain of dependence, and such chains are highly dubious (there possibility is generally doubted, e.g. Leibniz:1974, Kant:1996 B436-437, Cameron:2008, *contra* Schafer:2003, and Brown & Ladyman:2009).

I will not delineate exactly what renders an act intrinsically reasonable, but we can find various examples in the literature. Alvarez,²⁸ perhaps following Aristotle and Aquinas, speaks of actions which involve goods such as pleasure, health, beauty or friendship. In a different manner Lowe²⁹ speaks of j-reasons not as facts but as needs, such as the need to drink, but this could be transposed as the suggestion that acts which are the fulfilment of needs are intrinsically reasonable. More generally Parfit and others have defended a substantive view of rationality according to which any rational agent must care about particular things such as their own health.³⁰ For example, a person who has every opportunity to take a medicine to prevent themselves from dying, and will gain nothing from dying, appears to be irrational if they do not recognize any value in taking that medicine. Again, this view might be transposed as the suggestion that acts directly responsive to these substantive demands are intrinsically reasonable. I will follow Alvarez, and to this end, an act that gives pleasure,³¹ promotes health, or is an act of friendship or beauty, is an intrinsically reasonable act, and the fact that the act possesses these qualities is a j-reason to perform that act. Instrumental actions will be actions that are means to actions which are themselves intrinsically reasonable, and the j-reason to perform these acts is the fact that they are such means. But the adoption of a different substantive view of rationality would do little to alter my point.

Very often there will be more than one j-reason to perform an act. Alvarez is careful to point out that this can happen in two different ways.³² Firstly, the j-reasons might be independent of one another, as, for example, when my going to a café will enable me to have a coffee, and, will enable me to see a friend. Either of these facts without the other is a reason for me to go to the café, they each independently pick out something reasonable about my going there. Secondly, we have cases where the j-reasons are not independent, that is, where a number of facts together make an action reasonable, though independently they would fail to do so. One example of this has already been indicated, i.e. instrumental reasons are only j-reasons in combination with intrinsic reasons. The fact that putting on my shoes is a means to walking, is only a reason for me to put my shoes on if I

²⁸ E.g. Alvarez:2010a p.15 & 2010b.

²⁹ Cf. Lowe:2008 ch.10.

³⁰ Cf. Parfit:1987 sect.46 and 2001, and, Dancy:200 p.17.

³¹ The action is reasonable because of the fact that the action gives pleasure, this is quite different from saying that the action is reasonable because of a desire to perform it, we have not fallen into psychologism about reasons.

³² Cf. Alvarez:2010a p.126-8.

also have a reason to go walking. A second example of this concerns facts which support an instrumental or intrinsic reason. For example, putting on my shoes is a means to walking because of various other facts, such as the fact that my feet are delicate. However, the fact that my feet are delicate is not a reason to put my shoes on independently of other facts, specifically those facts which along with it support the instrumental reason. For example, the fact that my feet are delicate combines with the fact that walking involves being on one's feet a lot to support the fact that putting on my shoes is a means to walking. We might refer to these as *supporting* reasons.³³

When one acts for a reason they are motivated to act for that reason. We know from the preceding discussion that being motivated to act for a reason involves having a desire, and to this degree being motivated to act for a reason implies desiring for a reason. In fact, we can distinguish two varieties of desires, those which are had for reasons, and those which simply assail us. I shall refer to the former as *rational desires*, and the latter as *non-rational desires*.³⁴

It is clear that some of our desires simply assail us, for example, when we suddenly feel the urge to scream, or when we become thirsty. These are non-rational desires (which is not to say they are irrational). However, other desires we have clearly are affected by reasons that we consider. For example, if I wish to become faster at sprinting and I learn that doing squats is a means to becoming faster at sprinting then this may well lead me to desire to do squats. If this is the case, then this desire to do squats will have arisen because of the reason that doing squats is a means to sprinting. That is, I will have formed this desire for a reason. This is not to say that one's rational desires are directly subject to one's choice – that we can choose what to desire – but simply to say that the reasons we consider can give rise to desires which are responsive to them.³⁵

When an agent is motivated to perform an action they will have a desire, and the object of that desire will be precisely to perform that action.³⁶ Here we must again be

³³ This needn't imply that there are always innumerable reasons for each act, or if it does, this is not a problem. Our concern is with the reasons the agent acts for, and these will be reasons that the agent is aware of. Although we could introduce a great number of relevant facts in such a case, we needn't become bogged down by them, just as the agent needn't be.

³⁴ I take the terminology from Alvarez:2010a ch.3.3, but the distinction can be found in forms in a number of writers, e.g. Dancy:2000 ch.4 and Nagel:1978 ch.5.

³⁵ Contra Nagel:1978 ch.5, who speaks of choice in regard of his similar distinction between motivated and motivating desires.

³⁶ One might dispute this, on the grounds that the objects of such desires ought to be taken to be general, so that we should perhaps say that the desire is to perform an act of a certain type, not that particular token, but

mindful of the act/object distinction. When an agent is motivated they will be in a state of desire (act), there will therefore also be something that the agent desires, an object of desire, this will be *to perform the action*. Following Alvarez, I will refer to such a desired object as a *goal*, it is the goal with which we act.³⁷ It is possible that one will also have a different goal in acting, for example, when one's act is instrumental they will not only desire the means, the action, but also the end that this act is a means towards. This is not to say that we act to fulfil every desire we have, and to this end not all objects of desire are adopted as goals.³⁸ Further, sometimes an agent will desire for something or someone else to do something or to be a certain way, in this case if the agent acts for a reason and towards a goal their goal might be related to this object of desire, for example, my goal in acting is to get that object or person to do that thing or be that way.³⁹

Let us consider again the case of walking. Walking is an action that possesses an intrinsic good, it is something that gives me pleasure. The fact that walking gives me pleasure is therefore a reason for me to walk. If this reason motivates me to walk, I will desire to walk, and my goal in walking will simply be to walk. On the other hand, my putting on my shoes is an action that does not possess an intrinsic good, but it does possess an instrumental good, as it is a means to walking. The fact that putting on my shoes possesses this instrumental good (the fact that it is a means to walking), is a reason for me to put on my shoes. If I act for this reason, then I will be motivated to put on my shoes. I will have the goals both of putting on my shoes, and of walking.

Alvarez⁴⁰ argues that goals should not be conceived of as reasons, because goals are not facts that make an action good. Going walking is not a reason to go walking, rather the fact that going walking will give you pleasure is. Similarly, when one is putting on their shoes, they do not do this for the reason of walking, walking is not a reason to put on one's shoes, though, the fact that putting on one's shoes is a means to walking is a reason to put on one's shoes. There are thus two distinct elements in acting for a reason, the reasons and the goals. We might say we are walking simply for walking's sake, but, it is plausible that this either means that we are walking because we enjoy walking, find it

this need change little. Cf. Lowe:2008 p.207, Davidson:2001a, and in a related way, Hornsby:1980 ch.1, in her suggestion that what we do is always something general.

³⁷ Alvarez:2010a ch.4.1.1, this relates to the notion of intention adopted by e.g. Broome:2009, when he speaks of our intention in acting or intention to act.

³⁸ One might, for example, decide to pursue a different desire instead. Cf. Alvarez:2010a p.96.

³⁹ Alvarez:2010a p.96.

⁴⁰ Alvarez:2010a ch.4.1.1.

relaxing etc., and are not doing it as a means to anything else, or, we mean we are simply acting without a reason at all.

When one is assailed by a non-rational desire and they simply act in response, then one is not acting for a reason. This is clear when the act is immediate, for instance when I already have a drink to hand, and can simply drink when thirst strikes. We saw in the last chapter that desires were not reasons for acting, and so it is clear that in this case the agent would not be acting for a reason. Nevertheless, people must drink in order to survive. With this in mind an agent might, upon feeling thirsty, take themselves to require water, that is, they may realize that drinking will be good for their health and hence that they have a reason to drink. In this case the agent can of course drink for this reason. (It is also possible to explain an agent's action with reference to a non-rational desire that simply assails them and then compels them. A non-rational desire can be an explanatory reason, an e-reason, though of course this doesn't mean it is an m- or j-reason, moreover, the more accurate thing to say might be that the fact that they have that desire is the e-reason.)

There is a clear relationship between our m-reasons and our goals, and hence between the beliefs and desires an agent must have when they act for a reason. When an agent performs an action, they must have that action as a goal, that is, they must desire to perform that action, and, they must believe that that action possesses either an instrumental or intrinsic good. That is, they must be aware of their reason, and motivated to perform that act. To this end we can agree with Davidson that an agent in acting for a reason will have a belief and a desire and these will stand in a particular relationship. However, the form of this relationship is quite different from that suggested by Davidson.

4.4 Practical Reasoning⁴¹

One can reason about whether to pursue a goal, or about how to pursue a goal. However, not every instance of acting for a reason will involve practical reasoning. For example, if I enjoy singing I might simply sing for that reason, and this need not require me to do any reasoning. When an agent acts for an instrumental good they will usually have engaged in reasoning to the extent that they recognize an action to be a means to an end, thus connecting the instrumental and intrinsic reasons together. Similarly, if an agent acts for a supporting reason then they will usually have performed some reasoning, in

⁴¹ I am heavily influenced by Alvarez:2010b throughout this section.

order to connect this supporting reason with the instrumental or intrinsic reason it supports. If I put my shoes on because my feet are delicate, I might have connected this fact with the fact that putting my shoes on is a means to going for a long walk, and in turn, with the fact that going for a long walk will give me pleasure.

Practical reasoning is commonly taken to have a particular form, namely: *b* desires *F*, *G* is a means to *F*, therefore, *b* ought to *G*.⁴² (This being a piece of practical reasoning that leads *b* to do *G*.) This view of practical reasoning is open to numerous criticisms. Firstly, the form of the syllogism is too narrow, as it does not allow for other desires an agent might have and how these might interact.⁴³ For example, if *b* also wanted to *H*, and wants to *H* more than he wants to *F*, and the only means to *H* is to not *G*, then one might expect that *b* shouldn't *G*. Moreover, this form, even if it were somehow expanded so as to accommodate other desires, would be subject to a criticism stemming from the bootstrapping argument considered in the last chapter, and more generally from non-psychologism about reasons. An agent does not have a reason to *F* or do what subserves *F*ing just because they have a desire to *F*, desires are not reasons.⁴⁴ In short, the conclusion of such a syllogism does not follow from its premises.

The premises of a piece of practical reasoning ought to be reasons to perform an action.⁴⁵ If we consider that the conclusion of a piece of practical reasoning is that one ought to act,⁴⁶ for example, *b* should *G*, then the premises of good practical reasoning will have to lead to this conclusion. But, considerations that make an act good just are reasons to perform that act, therefore the premises are or express reasons. This is the fault we found with including a desire as a premise, as desires cannot be reasons.⁴⁷

Just as we saw that acting for a reason involved having a desire, practical reasoning will also involve having a desire.⁴⁸ Here again the desire will be a state of motivation, one which gives rise to the practical reasoning. Moreover, the object of that desire, the goal, will delimit the practical reasoning. If I desire to go for a walk, if I have a goal of going for

⁴² E.g. McGinn:1979 and Schuler:2003 ch.4.

⁴³ E.g. McGinn:1979 and Schuler:2003 ch.4.

⁴⁴ Cf. Schuler:2003 p.92.

⁴⁵ Actually, because one can have reasons both to perform or not perform an action, the premises of a piece of practical reasoning might include both reasons *pro* and *contra* the action.

⁴⁶ Or simply 'the action one ought to perform', if we adopt the view below that the conclusion of a piece of practical reasoning is an action.

⁴⁷ Though of course the fact that a person has a desire might be.

⁴⁸ At the very least it will in most cases, given that usually we will be happy to say the reasoning is something the agent has an inclination towards doing.

a walk, then, this will specify the sort of reasoning that I will engage in, and the reasons that will appear as premises in that reasoning. As already noted, if I desire to go for a walk, this might be simply for the reason that walking is pleasurable for me. And I might simply walk without needing to perform any practical reasoning (if for instance I am in a position in which I needn't take any means to go for a walk). In this case my reason for walking will be the fact that I find walking pleasurable, and, this reason will also have given rise to a desire to walk, so I will have a goal of walking. If I do need to take means to go for a walk, then my goal of walking will lead me to reason in a particular way, specifically, it will lead me to consider what the means to walking are. My goal of walking will not appear as a premise in my reasoning, walking, or to walk, is not a premise leading to the conclusion that one ought to put on shoes. Nor is the desire itself such a premise. But, given this goal, only certain patterns of reasoning, only the consideration of certain reasons, will be initiated or appropriate. Namely, those concerning means to walking, or the value of walking. Thus, when I am motivated by the fact that walking is pleasurable, I will have a goal of walking, and if I need to take means to walking, then I will perform reasoning about what the means to walking are. I might for instance reason: walking gives me pleasure, walking involves being on my feet a lot, my feet are delicate so being on my feet a lot requires the wearing of shoes, I have no shoes on, so putting on shoes is a means to going for a walk, so I ought to put on some shoes. The desire to walk and the goal of walking do not appear in this reasoning, but they clearly play a role in motivating it, and, the reasoning/reasons are clearly related to the goal of walking, they are fitted to it.⁴⁹

If one were to reason about which ends to adopt as goals, which objects of desire to pursue in an instance of action, as opposed to how to pursue these goals, then matters will be a little different. Now one might consider the intrinsic or instrumental value in performing a desired action, and compare this to the intrinsic or instrumental value in performing a different desired action. One might also consider the means required to perform each of these actions. All of these factors will be premises in one's reasoning, and potential reasons for their action of adopting one goal rather than another. In this one will again be motivated, and one will have a goal. One's goal might simply be to reach a decision, or it might also involve the objects of the desires under consideration. Either way, it is not required that any of these goals, or the desires they are the objects of, appear as

⁴⁹ This might have some relation to arguments that have appeared from the likes of Damasio:1995, to the effect that emotions are essential guides to reasoning, in that they make certain factors salient, without which reasoning would rarely be of practical use.

premises in this reasoning. But, the reasons I do consider, the premises of my reasoning, will all be related to one or more of these goals.

As Alvarez, Anscombe and others⁵⁰ have said, desires, or the objects of these desires, do not appear in practical reasoning, *contra* the traditional view. But we have not moved too far away from this view, as the premises that do appear will concern these desires, they will be facts concerning the value of goals or the means to achieving those goals.

Broome, for example,⁵¹ takes practical reasoning to have a different general form: *b* intends to *F*, *b* believes *G* is a means to *F*, therefore, *b* intends to *G*. In this Broome supposes that intentions and beliefs are both states with propositional content, and this content will hence form a general pattern such as: *b* will *F*, *G* is a means to *F*, therefore, *b* will *G*. The preceding discussion concerning taking desires as premises applies equally to taking intentions as premises, neither are fit for the job. However, if we instead take the premise to be that *b* will *F*, matters are different. Nevertheless, it remains the case that the fact that *b* will *F*, is not a reason for *b* to *G*.⁵² If it were it would imply that the consideration of the means to *F* could not unsettle the fact that *b* will *F*. But this is false. It can be that when one performs practical reasoning one decides against pursuing a goal, for example, if I realize that in order to be rich I must abandon my friends, I will decide that I will not pursue the goal of being rich. If *b* *F*ing appears amongst the premises, this can only be as a mere possibility, which is to say, not as the fact that *b* will *F* at all. Rather, one might say that *b* *F*ing appears more clearly as a possibility in a fact such as, that *F*ing gives *b* pleasure, that is, in a reason for *b* to *F* as already mentioned above.

A different concern with the traditional understanding of practical reasoning is whether it is in fact at all practical. The thought being that one could conclude that one should *G*, without thereby being motivated to *G* and without *G*ing.⁵³ Practical reasoning is not supposed to be merely reasoning about actions, but is to be reasoning bound up with actually acting. If one's reasoning never influenced their actions then their reasoning would not be practical reasoning. Reasoning to predict one's own behaviour is not practical reasoning because predicting one's own actions does not have the right connection with acting. Similarly, one might reason to construct a moral theory, but if one

⁵⁰ Cf. Alvarez:2010b, Anscombe:2000.

⁵¹ Broome:2001a & 2002, see also Rundle:1997 p.192.

⁵² At least not generally.

⁵³ Rundle:1997 ch.7.

does not adopt this theory, then that reasoning will not be practical, but purely theoretical. Thus one is driven to the view that the conclusion of a piece of practical reasoning is an action.⁵⁴ However, the view that the conclusion of a piece of practical reasoning is an action has met criticism.

Broome⁵⁵ expresses the idea that: reasoning is essentially a mental activity, and therefore, the conclusion of a piece of practical reasoning must be something mental, such as a mental state; actions are rarely something mental⁵⁶ and therefore they cannot be the conclusion of a piece of practical reasoning. This, however, is clearly just question begging; it is to assume from the start that actions cannot be conclusions. But this does relate to a more general worry, namely what is it about practical reasoning so described (with action as conclusion) that makes it an example of reasoning?⁵⁷

It is clear that an action cannot be deduced from premises as it is of the wrong ontological kind, therefore if one must be able to deduce a conclusion from premises to have an instance of reasoning, practical reasoning cannot conclude in an action. But it is clear that not all reasoning does involve deduction; one can reason inductively. Moreover, taking theoretical reasoning as a paradigm of reasoning, theoretical reasoning is an activity. It is generally assumed that logical relations such as entailment hold between propositions, and these are distinct from the beliefs, sentences, statements and utterances that can express them. When one concludes a piece of theoretical reasoning one forms a belief, and as a belief it is of the wrong ontological form to be deduced. In short, theoretical reasoning, as embodied in beliefs, does not strictly have a logical form. Rather, reasoning is responsive to broadly logical form, as the propositions expressed by the premise beliefs, if true, will (ideally) be evidence for the truth of the proposition expressed by the concluding belief. This radically closes the distance between practical and theoretical reasoning. An action, as the conclusion of a piece of practical reasoning will not have a propositional content, unlike the belief which concludes theoretical reasoning. But, the action which is the conclusion of a piece of practical reasoning will be such that if the propositions expressed by the premise beliefs are true, then (ideally) the action will be rational. In both theoretical and practical reasoning one brings together beliefs relevant to a specific issue

⁵⁴ Cf. Alvarez:2010b, Aristotle:2006 ch.7, & 2001 bk.VI, and Anscombe:2000.

⁵⁵ Broome:2001a & 2002.

⁵⁶ Of course one might take such mental actions as the formation of a decision or the initiation of the will as actions which are somehow mental (cf. Lowe:2008 ch.8.4), but Aristotle seemed to mean something more than this, and I think we can pursue that idea further.

⁵⁷ Cf. Audi:1989 ch.1.IV.

and one considers the way these beliefs hold together – in terms of their content and how the truth of one relates to the truth of the others – and this gives rise to the conclusion. In short, the fact that an action lacks a propositional content does not stop it from being sensitive to the broadly logical relations that hold between propositions expressed by one's beliefs, and as so sensitive it is similar to the concluding belief drawn in instances of theoretical reasoning. (For example, in reasoning to reach the conclusion of acting to put on my shoes, I will consider the fact that walking gives me pleasure, that walking involves being on my feet, that being on my feet is uncomfortable without having shoes on, etc. If we say that the propositions capturing these facts are the contents of the beliefs I have in reasoning, it is clear that these propositions are related in ways determined by their broadly logical form, and it is only because they are so related that we act as we do in conclusion and that this concluding act is a reasonable one, or rather, it is because the facts are so related that the propositions that express them have the logical relations they do.)

A different concern with the idea that practical reasoning concludes in action arises from the appearance that one can perform practical reasoning without acting, for instance, if one reasons about what to do, unawares that oneself is paralysed.⁵⁸ However, it is not clear that this undermines the idea that an action can be the conclusion of a piece of practical reasoning. We can distinguish a number of cases. Firstly an agent might reason about what they ought to do at some time in the future. For example, going to the meeting will give me pleasure, in order to go to the meeting I must leave my office at 2pm, therefore We should not expect this reasoning, if performed at 1pm, to result in the agent immediately standing up to leave their office as the action is not required for some time. If the action is supposed to be the conclusion one must say that the reasoning is not complete until the action occurs, and a conclusion is not drawn until that time. This delay in concluding the reasoning might appear uncomfortable. But, there are grounds for taking this to be the case even if we suppose that the conclusion of a piece of practical reasoning is a belief. If the conclusion is a belief it must be closely tied to action, but arguably no belief that can be (accurately) drawn at 1pm can have this closeness, for example, the belief '*b* should leave his office at 2pm' does not. The belief '*b* should leave at 2pm' is generally impotent without a belief such as '*b* should leave now' which can only accurately be held at 2pm. Therefore, this latter belief appears to be essential to the concluding of the reasoning, and therefore, even if we suppose that the conclusion of a

⁵⁸ Cf. Broome:2002, Alvarez:2010b, and Audi:1979 p.18.

piece of practical reasoning is a belief we should expect that conclusion to only arise at the time when it is appropriate to act, not at the time when most of the reasoning occurs. A delayed action is therefore not a criticism of the idea that a piece of practical reasoning concludes in an action.

An alternative way to see such a case is to suggest that action in fact begins, and therefore concludes the reasoning at 1pm. At this stage the action takes the form of efforts to determine subsequent reasoning and actions so that they all enable the agent to leave their office at 2pm.⁵⁹ This gives the action a slightly different form from that of simply leaving the office, but, in cases where no time delay is necessary there is no reason to suppose that action cannot be manifested in this latter more direct way.

A second case in which a piece of practical reasoning will not result in an action is a case in which the premises promote inaction. If, that is, it appears that the best thing to do is not to act, for example, to wait a little longer to see if your parcel will arrive. We are here dealing with the case of omissions.⁶⁰ The recognition of omissions as of normative significance is growing. Omissions are increasingly recognized as having a relation to reasons, intentions and the like. Although this is usually in respect of an omission going against the reasons an individual might have to act, this also opens up the possibility to see an omission as in fact responsive to reasons. As such, it appears that we have some scope for recognizing an omission as a conclusion of a piece of practical reasoning in the relevant cases. Recognizing an omission as a conclusion is not of course recognizing an action as a conclusion, but, it is also clearly not in conflict with allowing that actions can be the conclusions of instances of practical reasoning.

A third example in which practical reasoning may not result in an action is a case in which, as stated above, an agent is, unbeknownst to themselves, unable to act. Any practical reasoning that such an agent could perform could not conclude in an action. However, this is only a criticism of the idea that practical reasoning concludes in an action if such an agent in fact concludes any of their practical reasoning, but it is not clear that we should think that they do. The agent might complete a piece of theoretical reasoning about what they can do, or will do, or should do, but, it is not clear why we would want to call this practical reasoning. This is not a matter of offering a disjunctive account where a unified account would be better, but rather, a matter of taking practical reasoning to have a particular form that theoretical reasoning lacks, a form clearly not present in the assumed

⁵⁹ Cf. Korsgaard:2009.

⁶⁰ Cf. Williams:1995.

case. (Alternatively, one might suppose that the action begins, the agent coordinates their attention etc., but they were prevented from carrying out the action in full.)

Thus I find no good reason to think that an action cannot be the conclusion of a piece of practical reasoning, rather recognizing action as conclusion respects the practicality of the reasoning. Practical reasoning will be guided by a goal, which unites the premises of the reasoning, but which is not itself one of those premises. The premises will all concern the goal insofar as they will either be facts concerning the reasonableness of the goal, or the means to reaching that goal. The conclusion of this reasoning will be an action (or omission), embodying one of these means.

None of this is to deny that the consideration of reasons can give rise to certain judgements, such as the judgment that one ought to *G*. But, this judgment needn't come between the consideration of the reasons, and the action. Even if it is a fact that one ought to *G*, being responsive to this fact isn't required in order for one to *G*, as recognizing that *G*ing is intrinsically reasonable – e.g. is good for one's health – is already sufficient (if it wasn't then it is doubtful it could be sufficient for the judgment either). If a consideration of reasons gives rise to both a judgment and an action, then it is best to think of these as arising in parallel. Similarly, although desires can be responsive to reasons this doesn't mean that they ought to be recognized as *the* conclusion of a piece of practical reasoning, even if one supposes that one must desire if one acts for a reason. Desire is not that which motivates, rather, it is the state of being motivated. As such, it needn't be a stage between the reasons one considers and one's act. Rather, it is best considered as parallel to one's act, or as involved in it; both are responsive to reasons. This does not mean that one can choose to desire, merely that choosing to act goes hand in hand with forming a desire. (Even if the choice affects the onslaught of the desire, it does not follow that the desire was chosen, there is more to being chosen than being the result of a choice. Moreover, given our thin umbrella notion of desire as encompassing all pro attitudes, it is appropriate to think that some of these will be receptive to our choices.) (I believe that this distinction is where one ought to look for an account of cases of akrasia, that is, in the idea that in cases of akrasia an agent considers reasons and is hence moved to form a judgment about what one ought to do, though one is not moved to act. A possibility opened up by the idea that the judgment and the action are, or would be independent conclusions to an instance of reasoning.)

4.5 Reasons as Causes

In this section I will consider Davidson's suggestion that a reason an agent acts for (an agent's m-reason) is necessarily a cause of the action done for that reason. I am concerned to argue that recognizing a reason as a reason that an agent acted for doesn't involve recognizing that reason as the cause of the agent's action. In arguing for this I will leave open the question of whether or not the reason does in fact happen to be a cause of the action.

Davidson believed that it was necessary that a reason was a cause of an action done for that reason. Davidson's⁶¹ concern was that a person might be aware of a number of different reasons for an action, and perform that action, but only perform the action for a subset of the reasons they were aware of. For example, I might be aware of a number of reasons to cross the road, my crossing the road will enable me to get away from my associate who is irritating me, and, it will enable me to help a person who has just fallen and is clearly suffering. But I might insist that the reason that I do actually cross the road for is that it will enable me to help, not that it would enable me to avoid my associate. We must then be able to distinguish between the reasons we act for, and the ones we are merely aware of. To this end Davidson suggests that the reasons we act for must be those which cause our action, the reasons we do not act for do not cause our action. If Davidson was right this would imply that recognizing a reason as a reason an agent acted for would involve recognizing that reason as a cause of that act as this is all there is to stand apart those reasons acted for and those reasons merely had in mind. (Davidson was thinking of reasons as belief/desire complexes, not as facts as I do, but for the present purpose this changes little.)

This account immediately meets a difficulty in the form of deviant causal chains, as Davidson⁶² himself later noted. Davidson⁶³ gives an example in which a climber is holding their partner on a rope, and the weight of their partner is threatening to pull the climber off their ledge. The climber might recognize that ridding themselves of the weight of their partner would potentially be good for their health and that one means to that end is to let go of the rope. This awareness might unsettle the climber causing them to shudder, as they become horrified of the thought of willingly dropping their partner. In shuddering the

⁶¹ Davidson:2001a.

⁶² Davidson:2001b.

⁶³ Davidson:2001b.

climber might in fact lose hold of the rope and drop their partner. If this were to happen it would be clear that the climber did not drop their partner for the reasons they were aware of, yet these reasons did cause their letting go. Davidson's response to this problem was to suggest that the reasons must cause the action in a specific way in order for the action to be performed for those reasons. It follows that if the causal account is correct then recognizing a reason as the reason an agent acted for involves recognizing that reason as a very particular type of cause of their action. However, it has remained quite elusive just what particular form such causation ought to take,⁶⁴ which to me already casts suspicion on the idea that recognizing a reason as a reason an agent acts for involves recognizing such an unknown causal relation to obtain.

Davidson does not try to argue against other accounts of the connection between a reason and an act performed for that reason, and therefore, his argument only has force so long as we take a causal account to be the only possible account.⁶⁵ However, Lowe⁶⁶ offers a rather different account, the reasons that an agent acts for are those reasons that they chose to act for, or that they chose in light of. Further, to make sense of this it is not necessary to suppose that the choice itself must have been caused by the reasons; rather, choice is already a familiar notion which is taken to be responsive to reasons but not caused by them. This is shown by the phenomenology of choosing to act in light of a reason, wherein one does not feel caused to act by the reason, quite the contrary, it appears as if the reason is impotent without one's act of choosing. Moreover, one is struck by the fact that taking one's choice to be the causal result of a reason conflicts with the very idea of making a choice.⁶⁷ But one's choices are not mere chance events, they are responsive to reasons we consider.

We can discover which reasons an agent chose to act in light of in a number of ways. Very often it is sufficient to simply ask the agent, and while an agent might try to deceive you or themselves, this does not show that there is not a fact of the matter, or that we must resort to a consideration of causes to settle the issue. Rather, it is plausible that one can deceive themselves and others about choices one makes. Further, one might uncover such hidden choices through considering the reasons an agent is aware of and

⁶⁴ Cf. Dancy:2003, Davis:2003.

⁶⁵ Cf. Schuler:2003 ch.3. Schuler himself speaks of an agent's character, so that the reasons an agent acts for as opposed to merely considered are distinguished by being those that suit his character.

⁶⁶ Cf. Lowe:2008 p.183 & 202.

⁶⁷ Cf. Lowe:2008 ch.9 & 10.

their character, that is, the choices they have made in the past.⁶⁸ Matters which themselves needn't entail that we are thinking of the choices as caused by the reasons.

The notion of choice can be fitted into the account given above by taking the choice to be an action of the agent. The choice can then be seen as the conclusion of a piece of practical reasoning. This needn't entail that the conclusion of a piece of practical reasoning cannot be an action such as putting on one's shoes, as such an action can be recognized as beginning in a choice.⁶⁹ There is little value in supposing that an agent must perform an act of choice before they can perform a chosen action, in fact it is hard to conceive what such a pure act of choice could be.⁷⁰ When one simply decides to walk, and need take no means to walking, then this decision is manifested in their very walking. There need be no gap between the decision and the act itself, rather, in such cases the lack of action is good evidence for the lack of a decision having been made. In cases where means are necessary, or where there appears to be a temporal gap between a decision and an action the comments I made above in regard to concluding a piece of practical reasoning apply. One's decision to walk, when means are necessary, will be manifested by actions to uncover and pursue means to walking, and in turn with walking.

An alternative ground for taking the reasons an agent acts for to be causes of their action might occur if the explanation of an agent's action in terms of their reasons for acting was a causal explanation. However, in considering this we must be mindful of a distinction drawn by McGinn⁷¹ between giving a causal explanation and giving an explanation in which the explanans happens to be a cause of the explanandum. It is possible to explain one thing, *b*, in terms of another, *c*, without *c* being the cause of *b* (in logic or mathematics we do this all the time). If one does this one will give an explanation of *b*, but, one will not give a causal explanation. An explanans needn't be a cause. Of course, one can provide causal explanations, so an explanans can be a cause. Nonetheless, it is also possible that we explain *b* with reference to *c*, and that *c* does in fact cause *b*, but

⁶⁸ Compare Schuler:2003 ch.3.

⁶⁹ Cf. Korsgaard:2008's identifying the intention/judgment with the action, see also Korsgaard:2009 fn.3.

⁷⁰ There is here perhaps an issue of what an action ought to be, should it involve the world as putting on one's shoes does, or should it stop at the boundaries of the human body, or should it consist solely in some minute inner action of choosing? Each of these might be imagined but I take it that the foremost is the most intuitive (e.g. Goldman:1971 and perhaps Wittgenstein:2003 [e.g. sect.402 & 476 as it is the world involving nature of actions, and the primacy of action over thought, that removes scepticism, see also Wittgenstein:2001b pt.I sect.613 and environs] at the former extreme, and, Hornsby:1980 at the other). I will say more about this in Chapter 7.

⁷¹ McGinn:1979.

that the explanation we give is not a causal explanation, that is, the explanation does not assume or utilise that causal connection.

Causal explanations are not simply explanations that explicitly refer to the notion of a cause, and so it can be difficult to distinguish causal and non-causal explanations. One way of doing so is to note that causes are lawlike, so a causal explanation ought to be an explanation that falls under a law.⁷² This appears to be Davidson's own view.⁷³ However, this makes trouble for Davidson, as he believed that reasons were belief/desire complexes, and that there were no laws linking these with actions.⁷⁴ In saying that reasons acted for just are reasons that cause, Davidson thus appears to contradict himself by implying that there was a lawlike relation between a belief/desire complex and an action.⁷⁵

Not taking reasons to be belief/desire complexes my issue appears to be fundamentally different from Davidson's. However, it has been argued that explanations in terms of reasons are elliptical for explanations citing beliefs and desires, because, as already noted, an agent must be aware of any reason they act for.⁷⁶ To this end, I will consider explanations in terms of beliefs and desires (even though the reasons are the objects of these beliefs).

It is clear that we do not take there to be a lawlike relation between beliefs/desires and an action when we accept an explanation of that action in terms of those beliefs/desires (or the reasons the action was performed for).⁷⁷ This stems from the idea that an agent chooses to perform that act in light of those reasons and they could have chosen to do otherwise. Frankfurt has famously argued that an agent needn't be able to do otherwise than they do in order to be free or to choose the action they perform.⁷⁸ But this position is disputable, as it relies on assuming that someone can control how an agent chooses or acts, and it is not clear that this idea makes sense, that is, it is not clear that what would result

⁷² Hempel (e.g. 1998) famously suggested that explanations have a form involving a generalisation, and a condition, such that, the explananda could be expected to follow from the condition given the generalisation. Thinking along these lines it is clear that a causal explanation will be one in which the generalisation at hand is a causal one, and in order for the generalisation to be causal it must be lawlike.

⁷³ Cf. Davidson:2001d.

⁷⁴ Cf. Davidson:2001a and 2001d respectively.

⁷⁵ Cf. Schuler:2003 ch.1.

⁷⁶ Cf. Cullity & Gaut:1997.

⁷⁷ This does not stand in conflict with the position defended in the preceding chapter, that there can only be one rationality and agents must be by and large rational. Because, as just noted, that requirement is only a 'by and large' requirement whereas lawlikeness is an all or nothing type of requirement, something cannot be largely lawlike, it must be either lawlike or not.

⁷⁸ Frankfurt:1969.

from such control could be an action or choice.⁷⁹ I will not try to settle this issue here, but, the point I wish to draw is more general. This very discussion of the possibility of doing otherwise shows that the thought that an agent cannot do otherwise is not straightforwardly derived from the thought that they act for a reason they are aware of in their beliefs/desires. It follows that any explanation of an agent's action in terms of the reasons they act for cannot be a causal explanation.⁸⁰ The force of such an explanation cannot be derived from a lawlike, or hence causal, relation between the reason and the action, as the explanation can stand in the face of doubts about any such relation.

Manson⁸¹ proposes that we needn't take the explanation at issue to be grounded in generalizations or lawlikeness at all. An explanation here is simply something that can lead one to understand why an agent did what they did. But because we are all ourselves agents and familiar with acting for reasons, in being informed of the reasons an agent acts for we can put ourselves in their shoes, and thereby come to comprehend their action. This distinction bears a resemblance to the distinction between the theory-theory and the simulation-theory approaches to interpersonal understanding.⁸² On the former view we must construct a theory of how other people work, involving generalizations about relations between beliefs/desires and actions. On the latter view this is not necessary, rather, as we are agents if we know what another agent believes/desires, we can place ourselves in their shoes, effectively running a simulation, and as a result be led to expect certain actions. In this latter case, there is no need to assume lawlike connections hold between belief/desires and actions, nor to suppose a causal relation holds, yet one is brought to understand why an agent made an action.

Recognizing a reason as a reason an agent acts for does not require one to uncover a special causal relation between that reason and that action, nor even to presume that such a connection could be uncovered. Though, this is not to assert that no causal connection will happen to hold between a reason and an action done for that reason.

⁷⁹ Cf. Cain:2003 and Alvarez:2009b.

⁸⁰ This is to deny that we can have fully determinate counterfactual descriptions of the relations between mental states and actions. This goes against Hornsby's suggestion that the holding of counterfactuals shows that causation is at issue (e.g. Hornsby:1993). Given the popularity of counterfactual accounts of causality (e.g. Lewis:1973), this also speaks against remarks such as Sosa:1993's that it is not clear that causation must go hand in hand with lawlikeness.

⁸¹ Manson:2004.

⁸² Cf. Gopnik:1997 and Goldman:1989 respectively.

Summary

So far I have defended a view according to which an agent acts for a reason when they choose to act for that reason. This involves the agent being aware of that reason and hence having a belief with that reason as content. When the agent is not required to take any means to that action then this choosing will manifest in that very act of the agent. The agent will be motivated to act, and therefore will have a desire with that act as content, they will have the act as a goal. For example, if I enjoy singing and am aware of that, then I might simply sing. My deciding to sing will simply involve my singing, which will be something that I desire to do. This action might also be accompanied by a judgement that one ought to sing, but, this needn't pre-empt or bring about the decision.

If an agent is not able simply to perform an act, *F*, that they are aware of a reason to perform (or if they are also aware of reasons not to perform that act) then they will perform an act of practical reasoning. The premises of this reasoning will involve reasons to perform that act and also means to performing it. If *G* is a means to *F*ing, then that fact is a reason to *G*. An agent that becomes aware of this fact in reasoning might then choose to *G*. This decision would be embodied in the act of *G*ing which will conclude the practical reasoning. This action will also embody a decision to *F* and the agent will desire both to *F* and to *G*. When the agent has *G*ed they may then *F*, this action will be a reaffirmation of the earlier decision to *F*. For example, if I become aware of the fact that walking will be good for my health, then I will consider that fact and also the means I might take to walking. If I realize that I can walk if I put on my shoes, then I might decide to put on my shoes and walk, and this decision will simply be embodied in my putting on my shoes. Having put on my shoes I may then walk, and in so doing reaffirm my earlier decision to walk.

CHAPTER FIVE: RATIONALITY

In the last chapter I showed that acting for a reason involved being aware of a reason, and then choosing to act for that reason, adopting that action as a goal, and acting. For example, I gain pleasure from whistling, and I might become aware of this fact and hence form a desire to whistle and decide to whistle, and whistle. This shows that there is more to acting for a reason than simply acting in a way that accords with a reason. The present chapter is concerned with rationality, or with rational actions. It appears that this takes us beyond the topic of simply acting for a reason, because an agent can act rationally when there is no reason for their action. If I am not being approached by a speeding car, but believe that I am, it appears to be rational for me to jump out of the road. These error cases have led to the suggestion that a rational agent must meet a number of complex normative requirements.

Thus it appears that we can distinguish two kinds of normative element. The first stems from reasons, specifically, there are acts that one has a reason to perform, reasonable acts. The second concerns requirements of rationality, actions that it is rational to perform, rational acts. It appears that rational actions will not always be reasonable actions. This has led some to believe that the requirements of rationality provide a source of normative requirements independent of reasons. In this chapter I will argue that this view is mistaken. There are no independent requirements of rationality, only reasons to act. Rationality is primarily a matter of responding correctly to reasons, that is, of acting for *j*-reasons. If a rational action is not a reasonable one, this can only be because the agent is mistaken about what *j*-reasons obtain. The rationality in this error case is derived from the rationality of the primary case. The error case qualifies as rational because of similarities it bears to the primary case of acting for a *j*-reason. Sensitivity to reasons, in terms of knowing that they obtain, is not a rational matter, a rational agent cannot be expected to be omnipotent. However, sensitivity to reasons, in the sense of reacting appropriately to those reasons one is aware of, is a matter of rationality. When an agent acts rationally, and acts for a *j*-reason, their *j*-reason and action form a structure which is isomorphic with the structure formed by their belief about their *j*-reason and their desire which gives their goal in acting. When an agent is mistaken about what reasons obtain, and therefore fails to act for a *j*-reason, they may nonetheless still have a structure of beliefs and goal giving desires. If this structure would have been isomorphic with a structure formed by their action and a *j*-reason, had

their belief been true, then their action is sufficiently similar to the primary case of acting for a reason to qualify as a rational action. If an agent were sufficiently knowledgeable, then their rational actions would simply be their reasonable actions, and they would be rational simply because they were reasonable. If an agent acts rationally, but not for a reason, then they are not doing something they ought to do, though they are sufficiently close to this ideal to be in some sense excused.

5.1 Distinction between Reasonable & Rational Actions

If I believe that eating salmon gives me pleasure then it is rational for me to eat salmon.¹ This is so whether or not eating salmon does actually give me pleasure, and thereby whether or not I have a reason to eat salmon. This shows that rational and reasonable actions needn't coincide. Rationality thus appears to track the reasons one believes oneself to have for an action, rather than the reasons one does actually have.² If eating salmon would give me pleasure I would have a reason to eat salmon, and it is because of this that my eating salmon is a rational action.

As already noted, it is popular to suppose that the conclusion of a piece of practical reasoning is a desire or intention. It is also popular to suppose, and I take this to be correct, that the conclusion of a piece of theoretical reasoning is a belief. (The distinction drawn between practical and theoretical reasoning essentially resting on this distinction of conclusions.³) With this in mind rationality has often been described as a matter of the consistency between states of an agent, between beliefs (about what reasons obtain) and other beliefs or intentions formed for those reasons, or chosen in response to those beliefs. Returning to my example, it might be said that rationality concerns the consistency between my believing that I will gain pleasure from eating salmon, and my intending to eat salmon. I believe that the conclusion of a piece of practical reasoning is a chosen action, not an intention. Nevertheless, when an agent chooses to act they will have that action as a goal, that is, they will desire to perform that action. This desire can take the role of the

¹ I will modify this claim shortly, but it remains true so long as we suppose I don't believe there to be any other reasons for me to eat or not eat the salmon.

² This has led some to speak of subjective reasons (e.g. Cullity & Guat:1997), but I prefer to avoid such labels in order to avoid the idea that we are talking of a special type of reason.

³ Cf. Mele & Rawling:2003, Audi:2003, Smith:2003b. However, some do go further, suggesting that the two also differ in form, for example, Harman:2003 suggests that theoretical and practical reasoning differ in that the latter allows preferences to influence ones reasoning.

intentions just alluded to, so that rationality can be thought of as a matter of consistency between an agent's beliefs about what reasons obtain, and their other beliefs and the desires which give their goals in acting.

The consistency at issue is often taken to be given by a number of complex normative requirements (CNRs). For example, in the case of my eating salmon the requirement at issue appears to be of the form:

CNR1: One ought rationally to have F as a goal if one believes there is all things considered reason for them to F .⁴

The notion of all things considered reason is to make matters more precise, as for most actions an agent will be aware of numerous reasons for and against an action. In a circumstance in which an agent is aware of a reason to F , but also of more reasons not to F , then F ing will not be the rational thing to do. So in giving my salmon example I supposed there were no other such reasons at issue.

When I say 'all things considered reason' this does not mean that the agent has considered everything, but rather, that of all those reasons the agent takes to obtain if they did obtain the agent would have most reason to F . The notion of most reason is not simply a matter of having a greater number of reasons to F , but rather of having a greater weight of reasons to F . I am thus speaking of *pro tanto* reasons, which can conflict with one another and be weighed against one another.⁵ I will not go into the issue of how reasons ought to be weighed but I take the notion to have a familiar sense. For example, when one takes the fact that an action will be very good for an agent's health to be a weightier reason to act than the fact that an action will give a very small amount of pleasure. As far as the agent is concerned the weight they give to reasons will be revealed in their choosing.⁶ We can ignore the complexities of weighing, as I did in giving my example, if we suppose the

⁴ Scanlon:2007 offers the looser: one ought 'to r if one believes one has an object given reason to r'; or Broome:2007a offers: one ought 'to r if one believes one ought to r'.

⁵ Cf. Broome:2004.

⁶ At this stage I might also lay my cards on the table as far as seeing there is a reason is concerned. I do not take this to be a special sort of seeing, as if one becomes aware of a fact, and then one becomes aware of the fact having a special quality e.g. the quality of being a reason. The reasons simply are facts, and only need to be seen as such. The case of instrumental reasons is slightly more complex, for example, in order to be aware that the fact that putting on shoes is a means to walking is a reason, I must also be aware that I have a reason to walk, but this does not involve seeing the fact that putting on my shoes is a means to walking in a new way, seeing something more about it, but rather, simply of being aware of how this and other facts fit together. Cf. Foot:2001 ch.4.

agent only believes there is one reason to F , and doesn't believe there are any reasons not to F , in such a case the agent will believe there is an all things considered reason to F . Correspondingly we ought to say that a reasonable action is one that there is most reason to perform, not simply a reason to perform (but again we can simplify cases such as the salmon one to be such that there are no other relevant reasons).⁷

The rationality of an agent, the relevant consistency of their states, appears to involve meeting a number of other requirements too:

CNR2: One ought rationally to have G as a goal if one has F as a goal, and one believes that one cannot F unless one G s.⁸

CNR3: One ought rationally not to have F as a goal if one believes one cannot F and G , and one has G as a goal.⁹

CNR4: One ought rationally to believe that p if one believes that q , and believes that q entails p .¹⁰

(Perhaps the wording or detail of these CNRs will be disputed, but they clearly point towards something plausible and are precise enough for my purposes. One might also wish to add more to this list,¹¹ but my intention here is merely to emphasize the extent to which rationality appears to be given by CNRs and how this differs from reasonableness.)

Variants of CNR2 are often referred to as the Instrumental Principle as they concern taking means to ends. Suppose that I believe that I have all things considered reason to go walking and that I believe that putting on my shoes is a necessary means to going walking, and this is something I am quite capable of doing. I would be irrational if I did not put on my shoes. The point of CNR2 is to capture this irrationality of being aware of means to ones ends, but being unmoved to take those means. This irrationality lingers

⁷ I am perhaps assuming that there will always be something that there is most reason to do, Korsgaard:2009 thinks that there is something awkward in believing this if one is a non-psychologist about reasons in the manner in which I am, as it is not clear that the reasons must always point in one direction, as it is not clear that facts must. But, I see little more problem in assuming that reasons thus conceived will always point in one direction than assuming, as Korsgaard does, that reasons must point in a single direction. Further, I can drop this assumption and allow that there might be cases in which two acts are equally reasonable.

⁸ Cf. Broome:2007a, Korsgaard:1997.

⁹ Cf. Kolodny:2008, Broome:2007a, and Parfit:2001.

¹⁰ Cf. Broome:2007a.

¹¹ Cf. Kolodny:2005 p.557 adds a negative form of CNR1, e.g. one ought not to F if one believes that one lacks sufficient reason to F .

even if we suppose that I was in fact mistaken and I have no reason to go walking, and so again reasonableness and rationality part company.

If I decide to go to the cinema, and know that I cannot go to the cinema and to the restaurant, then I clearly oughtn't to also decide to go to the restaurant (not without changing my other decision). Someone who acted in this way would be irrational, and this is the point of CNR3. Again this irrationality lingers however we suppose the reasons actually to fall, that is whether or not we take there to be more reason to go to the restaurant, or to the cinema, or equal reason to do either.

CNR4 probably needs to be tightened up, so that it is clear that the agent believes p and that p entails q , at the same time, we might also want to say that the entailment is in some way apparent (not merely borne out by a long series of connectable premises). But the point of the CNR is clear. If I believe that I am in Durham, and believe that if I am in Durham I am not in London, then it is quite irrational of me to remain uncertain as to whether or not I am in London. Moreover, this remains the case even if we suppose that I am mistaken and that I am in fact in London. I might then have no reason to believe that I am not in London, but it would be irrational for me not to do so.

Rationality and reasons thus appear to be quite distinct because an action can be rational but not reasonable. Moreover, the two appear to be distinct in form too, as whether or not an action or belief is reasonable depends only on the reasons that obtain, that is, the facts. However, whether or not a belief or goal giving desire is rational does not depend on the facts as much as on what the agent believes to be the case. Further, rationality appears to be determined by requirements of consistency, i.e. CNRs.

5.2 Rational Obligations

In stating the requirements of rationality – or CNRs – I spoke of what one ought rationally to do, as if rationality can place obligations on an agent. The examples I mentioned support this idea; apparently an agent should avoid being irrational. It is thus plausible to think that CNRs provide agents with j -reasons.¹²

However, the idea that the requirements of rationality provide an agent with j -reasons quickly runs into a familiar problem. Suppose that CNR1 provides me with a j -reason to act in accord with it. We saw that if I believe that eating salmon will give me

¹² Some even go so far as to suggest that all reasons derive in some way from requirements of rationality, e.g. Korsgaard:1997.

pleasure then according to CNR1 I ought to adopt eating salmon as a goal. But, if uninterrupted, my adopting eating salmon as a goal will simply be a matter of my eating salmon, so in short I ought to eat salmon. This is so whether or not eating salmon will give me pleasure, or whether or not I have any other *j*-reasons to eat salmon (excluding CNR1 itself). It follows that if I have a *j*-reason to accord with CNR1, then simply through forming the belief that a *j*-reason obtains I bring it about that I have a *j*-reason to eat salmon. But this is exactly the sort of scenario that we considered in Chapter Three, and that we rejected. One cannot simply bootstrap *j*-reasons into existence by forming beliefs or desires. It does not follow from the fact that I happen to form the belief that I have a *j*-reason to *F*, that I do in fact have a *j*-reason to *F*. It remains the case that I will not gain pleasure from eating salmon, and that I have no *j*-reason to do so or to adopt doing so as a goal, even if I mistakenly believe that I do. Beliefs about *j*-reasons are not self-fulfilling.

As we saw in Chapter Three, this problem has been considered by a number of writers, and a solution has been proposed.¹³ As it stands one could read CNR1 in two ways:

CNR1W: One ought rationally to <have *F* as a goal if one believes there is all things considered reason for one to *F*>.

CNR1N: One ought rationally to <have *F* as a goal> if one believes there is all things considered reason for one to *F*. [Or: If one believes there is all things considered reason for one to *F* then one ought rationally to <have *F* as a goal>.]

In CNR1W the conditional falls within the scope of the rational obligation, whereas, in CNR1N, it does not. This makes a difference to how one can satisfy the CNR.

Suppose that I believe that eating salmon will give me pleasure. In order to satisfy CNR1N, I would have to eat salmon. However, I could satisfy CNR1W without eating salmon, but by instead dropping my belief that eating salmon will give me pleasure. It follows that if we interpret CNR1 with wide scope, i.e. CNR1W, then we do not have the bootstrapping problem. Rather, if one forms the belief that one has a reason to *F*, CNR1W gives one a reason, either to *F* or drop one's belief, but, it does not give one a reason to adopt either one of these disjuncts in particular.

Similar remarks hold for the other CNRs. Each is susceptible to a bootstrapping criticism, but this criticism can be rebutted if it is insisted the CNRs are to be understood

¹³ Cf. Dancy:2000 and Broome:1999.

in a wide scope manner which denies we can derive a specific obligation/reason from a reason to satisfy a complex. So it appears that the requirements of rationality do give agents j-reasons, and that we can make sense of this fact.

5.3 The Denial of Rational Obligations

As just noted, accepting that CNRs provide agents with j-reasons is dependent upon denying detachment, otherwise we end up bootstrapping j-reasons into existence. However, in this section I will argue that we cannot deny detachment in the case of CNRs and therefore that we should not take them to provide reasons (my argument here will be largely that of Kolodny's¹⁴).

Kolodny points out that we can interpret CNRs as either state or process requirements. A state requirement simply demarcates certain states (or combinations of states) as irrational. A process requirement tells an agent that they ought to do certain things, or that certain processes are irrational. Requirements of rationality appear to be process rather than state requirements, as they can be used to advise or guide agents, not simply to evaluate states they are in. If they are reasons, or provide reasons, then they clearly provide reasons to do certain things, not simply to be a certain way.

Broome and Kolodny¹⁵ have both noted that an agent will only violate a wide scope state requirement, if they would also have violated a narrow scope one, and vice versa. Consider CNR1 as a state requirement:

CNR1WS: One ought rationally to <have F as a goal at time t if one believes at time t that there is all things considered reason for one to F >.

CNR1NS: One ought rationally to <have F as a goal at time t > if one believes at time t that there is all things considered reason for one to F .

There are three ways that an agent might be relevant to this requirement: A1, the agent has F as a goal at t , and believes at t that there is all things considered reason for them to F ; A2, the agent believes at t that there is all things considered reason for them to F but they do not have F as a goal at t ; A3, the agent does not believe that they have all things considered reason to F .

¹⁴ Cf. Kolodny:2005, 2007, 2007b & 2008.

¹⁵ Broome:2007b, and, Kolodny:2007a.

If the agent is in state A1 then they will satisfy both CNR1WS and CNR1NS. If they are in state A2, then they will violate both CNR1WS and CNR1NS. And if they are in state A3, then they will satisfy CNR1WS, but will not have any relevance to CNR1NS. This makes it appear that as far as state requirements are concerned there is in fact little difference between CNR1WS and CNR1NS, each evaluates the same states to be irrational.¹⁶ (And we shouldn't focus instead on the positive ascription of rationality based on fulfilling such requirements, rather than the negative one of not breaking them, precisely as it is not less rational to fail to fulfil an irrelevant CNR.)¹⁷

However, if we take CNR1 to be a process requirement then the distinction between a wide and narrow scope interpretation is much more telling:

CNR1WP: One ought rationally if one believes at time t that there is all things considered reason for one to F and one does not at t have F as a goal, to <either, going forward from t on the basis of the content¹⁸ of that belief, take up F as a goal, or, going forward from t on the basis of the content of the lack of one's having F as a goal, revise one's belief that there is all things considered reason to F >.

CNR1NP: One ought rationally if one believes at time t that there is all things considered reason for one to F and they do not at t have F as a goal, to <going forward from t on the basis of the content of that belief, take up F as a goal >.

These CNRs differ from the original CNR1, but the differences are there to make best sense of the requirement being understood as a process requirement. As a state requirement CNR1 picks out a certain combination of states as irrational, the process requirement reflects this by considering processes that will avoid such a state. If we drop the 'on the basis of' condition, then the requirement would clearly be false, as it is not rational to make that move in all possible ways. It is not rational if one drops a belief, or

¹⁶ Broome:2007b does try to bring out a distinction in discussing an agent painting themselves into a corner, such that, if an agent does paint themselves into a corner, only a wide scope requirement can allow them a way out. But Kolodny:2007a responds by saying that it is not clear we should allow the agent a way out, after all, this doesn't mean the agent is trapped, merely that they are irrational in an instance. Further, Korsgaard:2009 puts pressure in the other direction, when she speaks of a wide scope cook book being rather useless. Her point being, and this really respects Kolodny's emphasis on process requirements, that wide scope requirements are poor guides, which is to point out that one could still follow the wide scope requirement deeper into the corner.

¹⁷ Broome clearly thinks of rationality as given in this negative way, e.g. with a focus on not breaking the CNRs cf. Broome:2007b (and Kolodny:2007a).

¹⁸ I do not mean to imply that the belief must be true, by talking of its content.

gains a desire as the result of being hit on the head. A different way to fill out this condition would be to say that one ought to do so *on the basis of* other relevant beliefs or goals, or lacks thereof. But this is no good, as there needn't be any other beliefs or goals or lacks thereof of this sort.¹⁹

An agent might violate CNR1NP, but not violate CNR1WP. This will happen if an agent believes at t that there is all things considered reason for them to F and they do not at t have F as a goal, and going forward from t they do not take up F as a goal, but they do drop their belief that there is all things considered reason for them to F . This indicates that a process understanding of CNR1 is different from a state one, and moreover, that if one thinks that wide scope and narrow scope requirements say different things of rationality, as it is common and natural to, then one must be thinking of process requirements.

Now it is clear that requirements of rationality are process requirements, it is no longer clear that we ought to take them as wide scope requirements. It is rational to move as CNR1NP prescribes, from believing oneself to have all things considered reason to F , to having F as a goal. CNR1WP although not prescribing this behaviour, nonetheless recommends it as rational. However, CNR1WP also recommends as rational the quite different behaviour of moving from lacking F as a goal, to the abandonment of a belief that one has all things considered reason to F . But this latter behaviour does not appear to be rational, rather, such behaviour strikes one as quite wrong, what one ought to do shouldn't be expected to bend to one's desires.²⁰

Similar remarks apply to CNR4, it is irrational to move from a lack of belief that p , to the abandonment of a belief that q , or, that q entails p . In fact, it is hard to see how the lack of a belief or goal, a lack as opposed to the fact that a belief or goal is lacked, could be effective at all. (Which is not to say that grounds for believing not- p could not be grounds for believing not- q or not- q -entails- p , nevertheless these grounds are not what are discussed by these CNRs.) Further, the problems here would apply equally to various different interpretations of the CNRs I give. The point of CNRs like 1 and 4 is to link beliefs about reasons (or possible reasons), to further – I will say concluding – beliefs or goal giving desires which might be justified by those reasons (were they to obtain). The

¹⁹ See Kolodny:2007a for a fuller account of this.

²⁰ It is no counterexample to this to cite a case in which one's lack of having F as a goal moved one to inquire again whether or not one did have reason to F , which in turn led one to discover that one did not in fact have reason to F . Firstly, this example supposes one can delay one's rational obligation, until after one's investigation, but this is wrong. Further, the CNR ought to apply regardless of what reasons there happen to be, and so, in cases where this option of re-investigating (or something similar) is not even open.

CNRs in this way reflect the structure of reasons (and the would be structure of would be reasons), if the reasons believed to obtain did obtain, the concluding beliefs and goal giving desires would be justified. The denial of detachment aims precisely to allow that the beliefs about what reasons obtain might be mistaken, and hence that it might be that they ought to be changed. The linking of this with the concluding beliefs or goal giving desires in a CNR, entails that this change is directly linked to the possession or lack thereof of these concluding states. These points must be common to the variety of versions of the CNRs 1 and 4, and these points are all that are required to apply the above criticism of a wide scope interpretation, and subsequently the application of a bootstrapping criticism to a narrow scope interpretation.

It will not do to respond to this by suggesting that the obligations of rationality are distinct from j-reasons, so that we have two forms of broadly rational oughts. Not only is it obscure what these other rational obligations might be, and how they would interact with the obligations of j-reasons. But crucially, this would not seem to avoid the troubles here raised, for the bootstrapping argument could be applied in a similar way to rational obligations that were not reasons. It is not simply that forming a belief that one has reason to *F* or a desire to *F*, does not give one a j-reason to *F*, but furthermore, that such beliefs and desires do not make it the case that one ought to *F*, whether or not we interpret this ought as grounded in j-reasons.

It follows that we ought not to suppose that the requirements of rationality provide reasons or obligations, as if we do we ought to take many of them as narrow scope; and if we do that, then we can simply bootstrap j-reasons (or oughts) into existence by believing there are j-reasons, and this is unacceptable.

5.4 Explaining the Appearance of Rational Obligations

Kolodny, following Raz,²¹ has offered an error theory for why one might have thought CNRs did represent rational obligations. His method has two central stages. Firstly, it is noted that one might expect that CNRs provide obligations, as it is thought that if one is in a state/process that would violate a CNR, then one is in a state/process that would violate an obligation. So for each CNR a relevant violation claim is drawn out. Secondly, it is shown for each violation claim, that reasons could provide the obligations that would be

²¹ Kolodny:2005, 2007b, & 2008, and, Raz:2005.

violated. It is thus shown that a state/process that would be against a CNR would also be against reasons. This shows that we need not refer to CNRs to provide obligations, but also given this closeness between the nature of reasons and the CNR at issue, it is also shown how one might mistakenly promote CNRs.

In the case of CNR2, for example, the violation claim appears to be:

VC2: If one has F as a goal, and believes that G is a necessary means to F , and one does not have G as a goal, then one violates some obligation.

If CNR2 provided an obligation, then this would be violated in the case picked out by the violation claim. However, we needn't adopt the CNR on these grounds, as we could refer to the breaking of different obligations to satisfy the violation claim. Specifically, in line with the argument above that only reasons provide obligations, we can refer to a relevant reasons claim:

RC2: If one has conclusive reason to believe that one will F only if one G s, then one has reasons to G at least as strong as one's reasons to F .²²

According to RC2, one will go against reasons if one has F as a goal, and believe that G is a necessary means to F , and one does not have G as a goal. That is, the nature of reasons picked out by RC2 shows that reasons can provide the obligations that VC2 refers to (in place of CNR2). Moreover, RC2 picks out what is plausible in VC2, that is, either one needn't G to F , or, if one has reason to F one has reason to G .

One should not be worried about the talk of conclusive reasons in RC2. We can say two things of the case in which an agent has a merely inconclusive reason for their beliefs. Firstly, we can say the case for conclusive reasons itself provides an error theory for the case for inconclusive reasons, that is, because of the violation of reasons in one case it is naturally assumed there is a violation of reasons in the other case. Secondly, one can note that as one's belief becomes less conclusive, and so less certain, it is less clear that one is irrational in failing to act in accord with it. That is, if I am uncertain I have a reason to do something, then I am not obviously irrational for not doing it.

²² Cf. Kolodny:2007b p.151, and Raz:2005. Kolodny actually argues that RC2 cannot be correct, and instead proposes a different reasons claim. But, my concern here is not to provide all the necessary details, rather, to show how the general picture works, and so I stick with the more clear idea reflected in Raz's position.

One might have been mistakenly led to believe that CNR2 provides one with obligations, because one accepted VC2. However, VC2 in fact has an explanation stemming from reasons, as is revealed by RC2. Thus reasons provide the only rational obligations at issue, but it is understandable how one might have mistakenly thought that CNRs were of relevance as both would explain VC2.

This pattern can be repeated for the other CNRs I mentioned above. In the case of CNR1 we might refer to:

VC1: If one believes that there is all things considered reason to *F* and one does not have *F* as a goal, then one violates some obligation; and,

RC1: If one has conclusive reason to believe that there is all things considered reason to *F*, then one has reason to adopt *F* as a goal.

In the case of CNR3, we might refer to:

VC3: If one believes that one cannot *F* and *G*, and one has *F* as a goal and has *G* as a goal, then one violates an obligation; and,

RC3: If one believes that one cannot *G* and *F*, has *G* as a goal, and has *F* as a goal, then either one believes without conclusive reason that one will *G*, or one believes without conclusive reason that one will *F*, or one believes without conclusive reason that one cannot *G* and *F*.²³

The connections in RC3 are made in part by assuming that if one adopts an action as a goal, that is if one chooses to do something, then one will believe that one will do it. One cannot choose to do something that one believes one will not do.²⁴ So if the agent has both *F* and *G* as goals, they must believe they will *F* and *G*, and one of these beliefs must be wrong if they correctly believe they cannot *F* and *G*. And in the case of CNR4 we might refer to:

VC4: If one believes that *p* and that *p* entails *q*, and one does not believe that *q*, then one violates an obligation; and,

²³ Cf. Kolodny:2008 p.371.

²⁴ Kolodny raises some doubts about this idea, and instead offers an alternative reasons claim (cf. Kolodny:2008).

RC4: If one lacks conclusive reason to believe that q , then one either lacks conclusive reason to believe that p or one lacks conclusive reason to believe that p entails q .

Of course much more could be said about these RCs and VCs.²⁵ However, my point here has merely been to show that one can provide a plausible error theory to account for why it is that someone might take CNRs to provide rational obligations, when in fact they do not. The answer being, that the individuals at issue no doubt accept a number of VCs related to these CNRs, and their mistake arises from supposing that the CNRs account for the VCs when in fact it is plausible that there are RCs that fulfil this role. This moves one towards the idea that rationality is little more than responsiveness to reasons, one is irrational when not appropriately responsive to reasons.

5.5 What Rationality Consists In

The preceding discussion shows that if we focus on the cases in which an agent is mistaken about what reasons obtain we can easily be misled, concluding from this that there must be requirements of rationality distinct from the requirements of reasons. One can notice the similarity with the reasons case, there we also saw that we should not let appearances concerning error cases mislead us, but instead focus on the good cases, and see how the two relate.

We will get a better account of rationality if we focus on the primary or paradigm cases of rational actions, or rationally forming beliefs or goal giving desires.²⁶ I will focus on the case of rational actions, and practical rationality. In an ideal case an agent will be aware of all the reasons there are, and they will do the action that there is most reason to do, for the reasons that there are to do it. The rational action will be the action that the agent ought to perform, where this obligation stems from the reasons that there are to perform it. However, agents are not omniscient, and they should not be expected to be to be rational, so instead of an ideal case we have a paradigm case of acting rationally. A paradigm case of acting rationally is a case in which an agent has an all things considered j -reason to do something, and they do that thing for that reason (the agent is ignorant of some reasons, but acts to do what the reasons he is aware of oblige for those reasons). If I

²⁵ Kolodny has gone to lengths to provide more detailed accounts (cf. Kolodny:2008, 2007b & 2005).

²⁶ I am most indebted to Jonathan Lowe, who pointed out the value of these paradigm cases to me in discussion.

will gain pleasure from eating salmon, and I am aware of that, and I eat salmon for that reason, then I will be acting rationally. In the ideal and paradigm cases rationality is simply a matter of doing what the j-reasons one is aware of prescribe doing, and doing it for those reasons. In the paradigm cases acting rationally just is acting for reasons, once we allow that omnipotence isn't a requirement of rationality. With the paradigm case in mind there is little temptation to say that one is obliged to act rationally, as it is obviously the case that acting rationally just is doing what one is obliged – by the reasons – to do.

In the last chapter I distinguished between independent and dependent reasons, the latter being reasons that were reasons only in combination with other reasons, i.e. instrumental and supporting reasons. For example, the fact that going to the shop enables me to buy food is a reason for me to go to the shop only in combination with another reason, such as the fact that I gain pleasure from buying food. A dependent reason alone does not reveal the good of an action, as an action will only be justified given that dependent reason and other reasons. Because of this it is perhaps more fitting to say that a dependent reason is not a complete reason. An intrinsic reason to perform an action is a complete reason, as it can reveal an action's good on its own. I will say that a combination of an intrinsic reason and an instrumental reason linked to that intrinsic reason is also a complete reason. For example, the fact that I gain pleasure from reading newspapers, and the fact that buying a newspaper is a means to reading a newspaper, are together a complete reason for me to buy a paper. Similarly, an intrinsic reason along with one or more supporting reasons that support it, will also be a complete reason. For example, the fact that I enjoy walking, and the fact that walking involves stretching my legs are together a complete reason for me to go walking (supposing that stretching my legs supports the fact that I gain pleasure from walking, perhaps it is in part because walking involves stretching my legs that I enjoy it). And finally, an intrinsic reason and an instrumental reason linked with it, and a supporting reason that supports that instrumental reason are a complete reason. For example, the fact that I gain pleasure from running, and the fact that going outside is a means to running, and the fact that I am currently inside, together form a complete reason for me to go outside. Complete reasons will also result from combinations of the same structure, essentially, a supporting reason must be accompanied with the reason it supports, and an instrumental reason must be accompanied by a reason to perform the action that it is a means to. If these conditions are not met, then the reasons at hand are incomplete. With this in mind it might be more accurate to say that in the paradigm or primary cases of acting rationally, an agent acts for a complete reason. However, rationality

still primarily concerns acting for a reason that justifies your action, it is just that some facts are reasons only in combination with others, so I will generally not include the 'complete' prefix.

When we turn to error cases, cases in which an agent mistakenly takes j-reasons to obtain that do not obtain, we should not think of there being different requirements of rationality at issue, that is, requirements beyond j-reasons. Rather, we should say that an agent can sometimes be forgiven for not acting for a j-reason. In the error case an agent does not do what they ought to do as they do not act for a j-reason. When we nonetheless describe the agent as rational, this is not because they have done what they ought to do (i.e. fulfilled a rational requirement like a CNR), but because what they do is sufficiently close to the paradigm case for the agent to be excused for falling short and failing to do as they ought to. If I mistakenly believe that I will gain pleasure from eating salmon, and have a goal giving desire to eat salmon, then I am rational. This is not because I act for a reason, nor because I fulfil a CNR, but, because I am sufficiently close to the case of acting for a complete reason to be forgiven.

More specifically, we can say that an agent will be forgiven if, had their beliefs about what reasons obtained been true, these beliefs and other beliefs and goal giving desires of the agent would form a network isomorphic with that of the network of reasons and the beliefs and actions they are reasons for. For example, if I will gain pleasure from eating salmon, and there is no reason for me not to eat salmon, and I am aware of this reason to eat salmon and I eat salmon for this reason, then I will be acting rationally; in fact, my action will be a paradigm of rationality. It would be a paradigm of acting rationally because it would be a case of acting for an all things considered j-reason. In such a case my reason for eating salmon and my eating salmon are related in a particular way. Further, my belief about that reason and my goal giving desire of eating salmon are also related in an isomorphic way. Suppose instead that I would not gain pleasure from eating salmon, so I had no reason to do so, but believed I would and had eating salmon as a goal and resultantly ate salmon. Then my belief and desire giving goal would not be isomorphic with the relations between my j-reasons and my actions, because there were no j-reasons. However, had my beliefs been true, there would have been j-reasons, and further, there would have been isomorphism. I suggest that something like this demarcates those cases which qualify as being rational from those which do not, and it does so because it demarcates a number of cases in which we would forgive an agent for not acting for an all things considered j-reason. These are perhaps cases in which one is tempted to say that had

the agent's beliefs about what reasons obtained been true, those agents would have acted [formed a belief or goal giving desire] for all things considered j-reasons, and no doubt the obtaining of this counterfactual conditional would encourage forgiveness, that is, qualify the agent as rational.

Similar points are made by both Raz and Kolodny.²⁷ Raz speaks of a faculty of rationality, which is the faculty which enables an agent to respond appropriately to reasons. For Raz, when an agent acts irrationally this is not a matter of their going against particular reasons, nor of them breaking a CNR, but rather, of them acting in a way that reveals a fault in their rational faculty. The fault is an insensitivity to the general nature of reasons, where a sensitivity to reasons in the relevant sense would be captured by the isomorphism or would be isomorphism I spoke of just above. However, I find this notion of a faculty of rationality unclear and even misleading insofar as it suggests that one has a sensitivity to reasons in the error cases where there are in fact no reasons to be sensitive to. I take the more telling issue to be the closeness of the relation between error cases and paradigm cases.

Kolodny again draws the boundary between rational and irrational cases in the same place, though he focuses instead on the perspective of the agent and the reasons that they take themselves to have. For Kolodny, an agent will be rational insofar as they act in accord with the reasons that they take themselves to have to act. When I mistakenly believe that I will gain pleasure from eating salmon, from my perspective I have a reason to eat salmon, and so I will be rational so long as I do so. An advantage of this view is that it can explain why, from the agent's perspective, being told what the rational thing to do is is not merely a matter of having the situation evaluated, but rather, also of being given guidance about what they ought to do. From the third party's perspective, describing such an action as rational is merely evaluating it, but, from the perspective of the agent mistaken about what reasons obtain this is a matter of being told what these reasons are reasons for, and hence, what they ought to do. Thus from the perspective of the agent the appearance of obligations lingers in the error cases, even though there is in fact none. I think that Kolodny is right about this, though it remains that these error cases qualify as rational solely on the basis of the closeness they bear to paradigm cases. If acting rationally did not involve acting for reasons as it does in the paradigm cases, it would not involve acting in accord with the reasons one takes oneself to have in the error cases.

²⁷ Raz:2005, and, Kolodny:2005, 2007b & 2008. Scanlon says things which reflect aspects of both ideas, see Scanlon:2010 and Scanlon:2007 respectively.

This account clearly links to the patterns suggested by CNRs 1 and 4. In fact, satisfying CNRs 1 and 4, involves having a network of beliefs about reasons²⁸ and other beliefs and desire giving goals, which, if those beliefs about reasons were true, would be isomorphic with the network of j-reasons and the beliefs or actions they are j-reasons for. The story with the other CNRs is perhaps less clear, but the RCs noted above open a window here. The RCs show that in paradigm cases of acting [desiring or believing] rationally in accord with these CNRs one is acting [desiring or believing] in accord with reasons. Acting [desiring or believing] rationally, is also arguably a matter of acting [desiring or believing] in a way somehow responsive to reasons or one's beliefs about these reasons, not any old bodily movement [or urge or imagining] is rational, rather only those with a specific form of responsiveness are (ones which do not qualify in this way will be simply non-rational.) It follows that in the paradigm cases of acting [desiring or believing] in accord with these CNRs an agent will not merely act [desire or believe] in accord with reasons but will act [desire or believe] for reasons. The error cases will then have a closeness to these paradigm cases which can be described in terms of an isomorphism or would be isomorphism, even if this now concerns the states mentioned by the CNR and other states, rather than merely the states mentioned by the CNR as with CNRs 1 and 4.

Irrationality will then consist in acting without appropriate responsiveness to reasons. There are two obvious ways that this can come about. If an agent is aware of a number of reasons to perform an action, but a number of far stronger²⁹ reasons not to perform it, and yet they nonetheless perform the action, then they do not have the appropriate accord with reasons and are irrational. Alternatively, if an agent is aware of a fact and for that fact performs an action, so that they adopt it as an m-reason, but that fact is not a j-reason for their action, then the agent does not have appropriate accord with reasons and is therefore irrational.³⁰

²⁸ In the case of CNR4 these are the beliefs that q and that q entails p , as the fact that q and the fact that q entails p are together reasons to believe that p .

²⁹ We might allow that weights are vague, so in some cases one can be equally rational to go one way or the other.

³⁰ One might think that there can be cases in which one is irrational because one acts for a j-reason, but couldn't have known the fact was a j-reason, or similarly, are rational because one acts for a fact which one understandably takes to be a j-reason, but which in fact is not. But such cases will not raise trouble for the view at hand, because this view takes it that the reasons ought to be complete reasons, so must involve an intrinsic reason. Thus, we have specifically cases of agents taking facts to not be or to be intrinsic reasons. These beliefs might be insufficiently responsive to reasons, or appropriately responsive to them, and this will

Summary

The only rational obligations on an agent are those provided by j-reasons. In paradigm cases an agent will be aware of what there is most reason to do, and they will do that thing for those reasons. However, an agent can be mistaken about what reasons obtain; when they are, they may nonetheless qualify as rational. They will do so not because they do as they ought to, that is, what there is most reason to do, nor least because they fulfil a CNR, but rather because they act in a way sufficiently close to the paradigm case. Specifically, because they have a network of beliefs and goal giving desires which, were their beliefs about what reasons obtain true, would be isomorphic with the network of reasons and the actions they are reasons for. From the agent's perspective the rational thing to do will always appear to be the thing that they ought to do. Though a third party can see that in error cases what it is rational for an agent to do and what they ought to do, or the actions that they have reasons to perform, can be distinct. But, despite this distinction they will always bear a certain relationship, a closeness which enables the one action to qualify as rational in light of the other's reasonableness. This links back to the account of acting for a reason given in the last chapter where it was shown that to act for a reason involves an agent having a belief and a desire which gives their goal. Because this belief and desire are of import to acting for a reason, and hence to the paradigm cases of acting rationally, the beliefs and desires of an agent can also be of import to whether or not other actions qualify as rational.

Before closing I will say how this fits with the use made of CNRs in Chapter Three. There I referred to two apparent CNRs: one ought, if one believes their mother unwell, to call around to see her; and, one ought, if one desires to make a cake, to gather ingredients. The former of these is a specification of CNR1, the point at issue being that one's mother being unwell is a reason to call to see her; one believes that reason to obtain, so one ought to have a goal giving desire to go around to see her. As such the best thing to say is that, if Si (the agent at issue) is mistaken in believing his mother unwell, he is irrational for not going around to see her, but this does not mean that he ought to go around to see her; rather, as she is well, Si should carry on home to his children. The second CNR is a specification of CNR2, gathering ingredients is a means to making a cake. An agent with

be the central issue. In the former case, for example, we could say the agent is irrational in their belief that the fact is an intrinsic reason, but, they are nonetheless rational in acting.

the goal of making a cake is irrational if they do not gather ingredients despite believing that they must do so in order to achieve their goal. In the previous chapter the agent at issue is Dave, who desires to make a cake, but whose desire is ill founded and not had for a reason as he is mistaken in believing that it is his friend's birthday. In advising Dave that in order to make a cake one must gather ingredients, or even in saying that the rational thing for Dave to do given he has the goal [and belief] he does, is to gather ingredients, one is not specifying what Dave ought to do. Rather they are evaluating certain actions as rationally excusable. Nevertheless, from Dave's perspective (unwilling to accept it is not his friend's birthday or resultantly to drop his desire) he will feel that he has reason to gather ingredients, and hence the evaluation will strike him as advice on what he ought to do.

CHAPTER SIX: THE ARGUMENT FROM RATIONAL ACTION

In this chapter I will take up and defend an argument mentioned in Chapter Two. There we saw that many actions will only be rational if their agents have tensed and/or first-personal beliefs. Mellor tried to account for this need in terms of the causal roles of beliefs; however, I raised some doubts about the adequacy of this answer as it presupposed an asymmetry that did not in fact exist and as it seemed to neglect the manner in which these actions are responsive to reasons, hence, rationality. I took up this theme in the subsequent chapters, first arguing that reasons (both in their role of justifying and motivating) are facts. I then argued that acting for a reason was a matter of being aware of that reason, and then forming a goal, choosing to act and acting in response to that reason. I used this notion of acting for a reason to clarify the notion of rationality. A rational action, in the paradigm or non-error case, is an action which an agent does for a reason which is a complete reason for that action. In an error case, when an agent mistakenly takes a reason to obtain which does not obtain, then they qualify as rational on the basis of the similarity between their case and the paradigm case.

I will bring these elements together in this chapter to argue that if rationality demands tensed and first-personal beliefs, in place of tenseless and non-first-personal beliefs, then this must be because the former involve an awareness of facts that the latter do not. Both tenseless and non-first-personal beliefs can be involved in acting for reasons, what distinguishes them from tensed and first-personal beliefs in the eyes of rationality is simply the reasons they are an awareness of. It follows from this that the tenseless theory of time is wrong, as it denies that tensed beliefs capture facts not captured by tenseless beliefs. This shows that my argument does require a realist and pluralist notion of facts, but this is a view that I will show to be independently plausible.

6.1 The Argument from Action

My first argument against the tenseless theory of time concerns rational actions and runs as follows:

P1 In some cases an agent must have a tensed belief in order to act rationally, and no tenseless belief can satisfy this requirement.

P2 In some cases an agent must have a first-personal belief in order to act rationally, and no non-first-personal belief can fulfil this requirement.

P3 The reasons that motivate actions (m-reasons) and the reasons that justify actions (j-reasons) are facts.

P4 In non-error cases of rational action if an agent is required to have a belief and another belief cannot satisfy that requirement, then the former must be an awareness of a j-reason that the latter is not.

C1/P5 If there are non-error cases of rational action in which an agent is required to have a tensed belief and a tenseless belief cannot satisfy that requirement, then the former must be an awareness of a j-reason that the latter is not. (From P4.)

C2/P6 If there are non-error cases of rational action in which an agent is required to have a first-personal belief and a non-first-personal belief cannot satisfy that requirement, then the former must be an awareness of a j-reason that the latter is not. (From P4.)

C3/P7 If there are non-error cases of rational action in which an agent is required to have a tensed belief and a tenseless belief cannot satisfy that requirement, then the former must be an awareness of a fact that the latter is not. (From P3 & P5.)

C4/P8 If there are non-error cases of rational action in which an agent is required to have a first-personal belief and a non-first-personal belief cannot satisfy that requirement, then the former must be an awareness of a fact that the latter is not. (From P3 & P6.)

P9 There are non-error cases of rational action in which an agent is required to have a tensed belief and no tenseless belief can fulfil that requirement.

P10 There are non-error cases of rational action in which an agent is required to have a first-personal belief and no non-first-personal belief can fulfil that requirement.

C5/P11 Agents are aware of facts in tensed beliefs that they are not aware of in any tenseless beliefs. (From P7 & P9.)

C6 Agents are aware of facts in first-personal beliefs that they are not aware of in any non-first-personal beliefs. (From P8 & P10.)

P12 According to the tenseless theory of time there are no facts captured by tensed beliefs that cannot be captured by tenseless ones.

C7 The tenseless theory of time is wrong. (From P11 & P12.)

I shall refer to this as *the argument from action*. I will now set about justifying the premises that I take to need external support, namely, P1-4, P9, P10 and P12, the other premises gain their support from one or more of these.

P12 comes straight forwardly from the definition of the tenseless theory that was given in Chapter One, and the manner in which beliefs are characterized. A tensed belief will be a belief an agent has when they are disposed to honestly express or affirm tensed uses of language.¹ It is therefore natural to take the beliefs and the language to share contents and to capture the same facts.² Therefore, if tensed beliefs capture facts that tenseless ones do not, then tensed language captures facts that tenseless language does not. The definition of the tenseless theory is that it denies that tensed language captures facts that tenseless language does not, and therefore, we arrive at P12.

P1 and P2 come from Chapter Two. There we saw that Perry's argument for the essential indexical has showed that some actions require their agent to have tensed beliefs. A consideration of this, and Mellor's arguments, led to the conclusion that the tensed beliefs were essential specifically for some rational actions. That is, if an agent is going to act rationally and in a timely fashion, then they must have a tensed belief. For instance, one must believe that 'it is now 1pm' [or something similar and tensed, for example, 'it is 1pm'], if one is going to act rationally to fulfil one's goal of listening to the 1 o'clock news. The agent might have tenseless beliefs such as 'I must turn on the radio to hear the 1pm news', and 'I must turn on the radio at 1pm' all morning, but they must gain a tensed belief in order to act rationally at 1pm, no tenseless belief can fulfil this role; P1.

Chapter Two also showed that analogous remarks apply for a first-personal indexical. An agent must have a first-personal belief if they are going to act rationally, and for considerations that apply to them in particular. For instance, if I am going to collect my order I must believe 'I have ticket 114' [or something similar and first-personal], no non-first-personal belief can fulfil this role, for example, the belief 'F.P. has ticket 114' will not as I might not know that I am F.P.; P2.

The discussion of Chapter Three showed that reasons are facts. More specifically, it was shown that the reasons that make an action appropriate or justified are facts, and, that the reasons that an agent acts for are facts. It is the fact that cycling gives me pleasure that justifies and motivates me to go cycling on a particular occasion. This gives us P3.

¹ There will be complexities, but the plausibility of functionalism about mental states supports the plausibility of this idea.

² My argument shows that one must be aware of facts in tensed beliefs that one is not in tenseless ones, it appears moreover, that an awareness of these facts can be shared and passed on, and given the association of these beliefs and tensed language, it is plausible that these facts are captured by tensed language and not by tenseless language.

6.2 Justification of P9 & P10

P9 and P10 say that there are non-error cases of rational action which require tensed and first-personal beliefs. My reason for taking these premises to be correct is that denying them leaves one in an unacceptable position.

A great majority of our actions are timely actions and/or actions done for reasons specific to ourselves. That is, a great many of our actions fall within the scope of Perry's essential indexical arguments. (I have argued in Chapter Two that all of Perry's examples, so those concerning 'here', 'this' or 'you' beliefs too, can be interpreted as concerning tensed and/or first-personal beliefs, and it seems few of our actions escape all of his arguments.) To deny P9 and P10 would thus entail that a great majority of our actions are error cases.

As reasons are facts, saying that the great majority of our actions are error cases implies that they are cases in which we are mistaken about what facts obtain. It would follow that people were generally mistaken in their world view. This is something that the tenseless theory has been careful to deny, firstly by saying that tensed beliefs are reducible to tenseless ones, and then by saying that they have tenseless truth-conditions. The thought that these comments appear to encourage is that we are not mistaken about the world; our tensed characterisations get the tenseless content right, they just have a peculiar form. But, this response is no longer open to the tenseless theorist; if they avoid my argument by insisting that most of our actions are error cases, then this means the content of our tensed (and first-personal) beliefs is mistaken. If, as it seems, the content of our perceptual beliefs are all present tensed,³ it follows that all of our perceptual beliefs are mistaken; they all get the world wrong. This mistake would thus infect all of our empirical data, and hence even the sciences – commonly a tenseless theorists preserve – would be shown to be built on error. Whilst I am ready to admit that we do not get everything right, error on this scale is surely unacceptable.

Moreover, the tensed and/or first-personal beliefs are required for the actions at issue to be rational actions. This means that the reasons that they are an awareness of, or would be if these were not error cases, are reasons that are essential for the actions, that is, are reasons required to justify the actions. It follows that if all of these actions are error

³ E.g. Le Poidevin:2007 p.78.

cases, then they are without reasons that would be essential for justifying those actions. In other words, all of these actions would be without reasons, and hence unreasonable actions.

The rationality of an action in a paradigm case is reliant on the agent's awareness of a reason for that action, and their acting for that reason. The demand for the belief is a demand for an awareness of a reason for that action; it is a demand for an awareness of *any* reason for that action. It follows that if an agent must have a particular belief, then they must be aware of a particular reason, and hence, that this reason must be the only reason for the action at hand (as any reason would do, so if only one reason will do, then that one reason is all of the reasons there are). The error case differs from the non-error case, as it is recognized that the agent is not aware of a reason for their action. However, such cases are recognized as rational on the basis of the fact that if the beliefs of the agent were true, that is, if the reason the agent took to obtain were to obtain, then it would have been a reason for their action. It follows that the demand for a belief in the error case is a demand for a belief which were its object to obtain, that object would be a reason for the action. Therefore, so long as the cases in which a tensed or first-personal belief is required are rational actions, then, the objects of those beliefs must either be the only reasons for those actions, or else, they would be were they to obtain (and if they don't obtain then there are no reasons for those actions). Hence, if all these cases are error cases, then none of the reasons for these actions obtain, and hence all of the actions are unreasonable. Not only does this sound wrong, but it also implies that we ought to be acting quite differently to the ways we do act, but it is quite incomprehensible to fathom what such a radical change in people's actions ought to be. If I shouldn't turn the radio on at 1pm, or go to the meeting at 2pm, or buy milk when I run out or any of these mundane everyday actions, I am lost to imagine what I ought to do. (One couldn't avoid these consequences by denying that the actions at issue were rational actions, because it is not possible for the majority of our actions to be irrational.⁴)

In short, I take it that P9 and P10 must be correct, as to deny them is to insist that the great majority of our actions are unreasonable. Further, it would be to suggest that the great majority of our world view is mistaken. I do not think that these consequences are acceptable, and hence, P9 and P10 must be.

⁴ Cf. Davidson:2001g, Kim:1988 p.392-393, and Wittgenstein:2001b pt.I sect.242.

6.3 Justification of P4

Beliefs were introduced into the discussion of reasons and rationality on the grounds that an agent must be aware of a reason in order to be able to act for that reason. In short, they were introduced solely on the grounds that they were a form of awareness of a reason. This grounds P4, as if beliefs are only required to provide the awareness of reasons in paradigm cases of rational action, then, given two beliefs are both states of awareness, if one is required in place of the other it must be that the one concerns a reason that the other does not.

We saw in Chapters Four and Five that a paradigm case of rational action will involve an agent being aware of a reason (or several) for an action, and then choosing to perform that action for that reason, adopting the goal of making that action, and acting. We thus have the four components, belief, choice, desire and action. In error cases of rational action we have the same four components, though the belief is mistaken and involves an agent taking a reason to obtain that in fact does not.

If one wanted to deny P4 they might argue that two beliefs can involve an awareness of the same reason, but, that one is required by rationality in place of the other because only one of these beliefs enables the agent to act for that reason. That is, an opponent of P4 might try to argue that only some beliefs can combine with desires, choices and actions in the right way to enable an agent to act for a reason. However, this is highly implausible. Because the notion of belief we are working with is an umbrella one, all the beliefs are alike modes of awareness. This denial would hence have to mean that an agent could be aware of a reason, but, that if they are aware of it in one way rather than another then it would be *impossible* for them to act for that reason. I do not deny that a person can be aware of something in two cases and fail to recognize it to be the same thing, but, it appears that this is plausible on the grounds that different aspects of the item are presented (for example, the rear rather than the front of a house). In the current context, that which is presented differently is a fact, but there is no sense in which a fact can be presented via different aspects, that would simply be to present different facts (for example, being close to the rear of a house is different from being close to the front of a house). In short, we are simply left with my conclusion that different facts are presented in first-personal and/or tensed beliefs to those which we are presented within non-first-personal and/or tenseless beliefs, which would already be to accept the denial of the tenseless theory. Further, such

misrecognition appears to be at best likely, not impossible, so it could not ground the idea that tensed and/or first personal beliefs were necessary.⁵

Moreover, it is clear that an agent's beliefs can vary independently of the other three components. For example, I can believe that walking gives me pleasure, and can choose not to walk, desire not to walk and not go walking for this reason (perhaps I feel in need of some self-discipline). Alternatively I might choose to go walking, desire to go walking and go walking for this reason. Moreover, I might believe that walking gives me pleasure, and choose to cycle, desire to cycle and go cycling. That is, I can choose to go cycling because walking gives me pleasure. We can make this case appear plausible by adding in some other beliefs to the effect that people who gain pleasure from walking gain pleasure from cycling. However, we needn't do so. If we do not, then the agent will be acting irrationally, the fact that one gains pleasure from walking is not a reason to go cycling. This makes it hard to understand such a case, as we generally try to understand people by assuming them to be rational, but, this does not show that the case is impossible. The requirement that we take other agents to be rational in order to understand them is a proportional requirement, we must take another to be rational in a good proportion of cases, but we needn't take them to be rational in every case. It is clear we can understand others well enough to pick out their occasional irrational actions as irrational on the basis of a background of their rational actions.

Acting for a reason, or a fact one takes to be a reason, has a certain phenomenology, or at least, an agent can normally tell you when that is what they are doing. In the terminology of Chapter Three, one might say having an m-reason has a certain phenomenology, whether or not that m-reason is also a j-reason. This can enable one to know when another is acting for a reason and hence when they are acting irrationally. If I cannot make sense of another's actions I might ask them what their reasons for performing those actions were. It might turn out that the facts they refer to are not j-reasons for those actions at all, and I might hence judge them to be irrational. But, crucially, it is not necessary that I conclude that the person did not in fact decide or desire to act. It is clear people are sometimes wrong about what a particular fact justifies, what it is a j-reason for.

⁵ I do not believe it makes sense to talk of the mode of presentation of a proposition, but if it does it is of no relevance, as it is the propositional content that counts, as the propositional content is the reason. Therefore, so long as one can grasp the content of a proposition, that is grasp a fact at all in a belief, then this is all that is of import to acting rationally. (Cf. Kaplan:1989a who speaks of mode of presentation of a proposition, something discussed by others too, e.g. Salmon:2006, Braun:2006 and Soames:2002 as discussed by e.g. Schiffer:2006 & 2003 ch.1.)

If we can talk about being more or less off target in this respect, then each of these are as possible as the other, even if they are not equally common.

Specifically, in the present case, it is possible that Mike believes he will gain pleasure from attending his departmental meeting at 2:05pm, that is, he is aware of a reason to attend the meeting. And, that at 2pm he forms the belief ‘I must leave my office now if I am to attend the meeting’, and for these reasons he chooses to leave his office and desires to leave his office, and leaves his office. In this case Mike acts rationally. But, it is also possible that the case is changed so that at 2pm, instead of forming the belief ‘I must leave my office now to attend the meeting’, Mike forms the belief ‘I must leave the office at 2pm to attend the meeting’, and on the basis of these facts he chooses to leave and desires to leave and does leave. If he does this latter he will be acting irrationally, because, as Perry emphasizes, he might not know that it is 2pm at the time he forms his belief and acts.⁶ As the argument from action will have it, it follows that the only difference between the two cases can be that in the former Mike is aware of a reason that he is not in the latter, and hence, the tensed and tenseless beliefs must concern different facts.

Similarly for Tom. He might believe ‘My stopping will be good for people’s health (as I am making a mess)’, thus being aware of a reason to stop, and hence choosing to stop and desiring to stop and stopping. In so acting he would be acting rationally. However, he might form the belief ‘Tom’s stopping will be good for people’s health (as Tom is making a mess)’, hence choosing and desiring to stop, and stopping. If he acts in this latter manner he will be acting irrationally, as he might not know that he is Tom. Again it follows that the only difference between the two cases can be that the former belief concerns a reason that the latter does not, and hence each is an awareness of different facts.

These cases are not as alien as one might think. I suspect that we all know people who upon being told that someone will be fired/sent away/etc. react as if it were themselves who were being fired/sent away/etc. Of course these people appear to be acting irrationally, “you do not know that it is you they were talking about”, we say to them. In saying this we acknowledge that we take their actions to be irrational, not non-rational. (There is no need to insert a first-personal judgment between the reasons and actions, but

⁶ The point here is not that it is irrational because it is too much a matter of chance or luck (compare discussion of Gettier cases in epistemology), rather, the point is that one needs a further belief, hence reason, to suddenly spring into action at a particular time because the tenseless beliefs are too independent of the action, they are true when one ought to leave, but also when one needn’t leave yet or ought to apologize for not attending.

even if one did, the judgment would be irrational, and therefore equally as telling as the action.)⁷

In regard to the case of first-personal and tensed beliefs, it is worth considering that the examples of the essential indexical are often introduced as specific cases, e.g. we need a tensed belief when we must act at a specific time. This might lead one to think that there are cases of rational actions in which an agent does not need a tensed belief. For example, when they do not need to act at a specific time or when they have a reason to do something at any time at all. If this is right, it shows that tensed beliefs are not required simply in order for a person to act rationally full stop. That is, this would show that beliefs other than tensed ones can combine with choices and desires and actions in the relevant way in rational cases. Again it follows that if tensed beliefs are required in one instance rather than any other belief, it must be because of the reasons they are an awareness of. Similarly, the need for first-personal beliefs appears to arise in cases where it is oneself in particular who has a reason to act. So if there are cases in which this is not so, cases in which anyone or everyone ought to act, then these will be cases where first-personal beliefs are not required for rational actions, and where non-first-personal beliefs combine with desires, beliefs and actions in the right way. So it must be the content of these beliefs that are of import.

It is worth noting that, in thinking of an action as done for a reason, that is, being chosen and desired etc., we are not thinking of the action as being caused by that reason, or caused in a specific way.⁸ It follows that it is inappropriate to say that only beliefs with a particular causal shape can combine with choices, desires and actions in the right way. Rather, if we are able to say that the agent forms goals and choices on the basis of what they believe, then, as this is the primary way in which we talk of acting for a reason, we can also say that if there are any causal requirements then these must also have been met.

It can be appropriate to take an agent's movements to be simply non-rational, that is, such that it is inappropriate to judge them in terms of rationality at all. Breathing is an example, or, being manipulated by a super scientist might be a rather different example.

⁷ To this degree it appears one can have, and therefore act on, Davidsonian primary reason which rationalizes (in Davidson's sense) their action and is third personal and tenseless, and which involves only true beliefs and appropriate desires, and yet act irrationally (Davidson:2001a & 2001c). If this is right, then Davidson's theory appears to have left something lacking and it is not obvious how one could plug this gap, as simply insisting primary reasons must be first-personal and tensed appears to be an *ad hoc* manoeuvre which thus requires further justification.

⁸ Cf. Chapter Four.

However, these cases are clearly different to the ones I just described as irrational. There the agent has their action as a goal, and they choose to perform that action on the basis of a fact they are aware of (which as it happens is no j-reason for the action that they perform). These conditions are lacking in the examples of non-rational actions I outlined, and it appears to be this very lack which renders them non-rational.

To deny P4 my opponent must say that tenseless and non-first-personal beliefs cannot combine with choices, desires, and actions in the way beliefs do when one acts for a reason. I am ready to accept that there are numerous beliefs which do not commonly combine in this way, but I take this simply to stem from the fact that such a combination would be irrational and people are not generally irrational. I take these cases to be irrational because the beliefs concern facts (or would be facts) that are not reasons for the actions at issue. A thought defended in Chapter Five. The arguments of Perry and Mellor show that such combinations are not common, but, they do not deny their possibility. Rather, the fact that people sometimes do act irrationally by acting for facts which are not j-reasons shows that certain awkward combinations are possible. Further, the fact that there might be rational actions which do not require tensed or first-personal beliefs shows that even these uncommon combinations are possible. The notions of belief, desire, choice and action, as they have been introduced in this discussion, are focused on the ways they can be combined. They have been defined in terms of these roles, and nothing about this, nor common practice, implies an impossibility of their combination when the contents, or meaning [as my opponent might have it] of the beliefs alter. Moreover, a state that cannot be combined with desire and choice etc. in this way, for that very reason no longer looks like a state of belief. Thus P4 is vindicated.

6.4 Facts

So far I have spoken a great deal of facts; they are reasons and are where the reality of tense lies. However, I have said very little about what exactly a fact is. In this section I will say something to address this. I will do this by looking back at my arguments and discussions and what they presuppose facts to be like. I have used 'fact' in a loose everyday way. It will turn out that my use can be taken to coincide with the idea that facts are an ontologically fundamental kind, but that it is not committed to such an ontology (my

facts could simply be, for example, particulars instantiating modes, bundles of tropes containing specific tropes, or, particulars standing in specific resemblance relations⁹).

Three aspects of my use of facts stand out. The primary role facts have played so far is in providing a form of realism or objectivity. Facts are aspects of the world; they are what we consider in acting and are in contrast to the intentional and intensional states through which we make these considerations. Secondly, my arguments presuppose (or I might say entail) that there is a plurality of facts. The fact that I like cycling is different from the fact that my knee is injured, and it is because they are different that they can provide different reasons (the former being a reason to go cycling, the latter a reason not to). Thirdly, it appears from my discussion that facts can be general, negative, disjunctive, and conjunctive, for example, it appears that my reason for going to the shop might be the fact that there is no milk anywhere in my house. I will argue all three of these aspects are unproblematic.

My view of facts is realist in two senses. Firstly, it supposes that facts exist, and secondly, it supposes that facts are objective, that is, they are mind independent. I assume that both of these claims are acceptable, and I will say little to defend them from sceptical attacks. I should, however, clarify the objectivity claim. When I say that facts are mind independent, I do not mean that were there no minds all the facts would remain the same, as some fact such as the fact that I feel happy plausibly involve the existence of minds. However, these mind involving facts remain objective insofar as no one need recognize or consider them for them to obtain. This objectivity was brought to the fore by my examination of reasons, where it was shown that reasons, as facts, were starkly contrasted with beliefs as presentations of these facts.¹⁰ This last comment makes clear that I also

⁹ Cf, respectively, Lowe:2006a, Campbell:1990, Rodriguez-Pereyra:2002.

¹⁰ It is worth noting that the arguments given to show that reasons were not beliefs are equally applicable to the more general claim that reasons are not merely representational entities, no representation of a car approaching me is a reason for me to move, rather, the fact of the car approaching is the reason. Thus facts are strongly objective. This perhaps gets more complicated when one considers propositions. Dancy:2000 ch.5.3 for example says that propositions could not be reasons, rather reasons must be the sort of things that make propositions true, they must be facts. Alvarez:2010a ch.2.2, conversely, says that reasons are true propositions. However, Alvarez identifies true propositions with facts, and to this extent, it appears that Alvarez would accept that true propositions are their own truth-makers, and the disagreement between her and Dancy appears to be primarily terminological rather than ontological; Alvarez thinks of propositions more highly than Dancy, rather than thinking of facts less highly. I confess I find a view that identifies facts and true propositions confusing, as it appears to entail that true propositions are their own truth-makers (cf. Lowe:1998 p.234). If instead true propositions and their truth-makers are distinguished, then reasons lie with the truth-makers not the propositions, and thus here too is where facts lie. Alvarez:2010a ch.2.2 does argue that reasons must be propositions as they can be premises in arguments and can stand in entailment relations,

assume that facts can be objects of awareness; we can come to know a fact obtains. Again, I assume this is plausible, and will not address sceptical concerns to the contrary.

Armstrong¹¹ has defended an ontology according to which states of affairs are ontologically fundamental (therefore real and objective). A state of affairs is a complex constituted by a particular object and a property, or n objects and an n -ary relation, where these properties and relations are considered to be universals (that is, they are repeatable and identical in each repetition). Armstrong's states of affairs appear to coincide nicely with my facts. Just as I recognize it to be a fact that the road is slippery, Armstrong would take the road's being slippery to be a state of affairs; a complex of the particular road and the property of slipperiness.¹² With this in mind I will show how my notion of facts is plausible, by assimilating it to Armstrong's notion of a state of affairs.

If one is going to adopt a states of affairs ontology, one must say something about how a state of affairs is composed; how should a particular and a property be related when the particular instantiates the property? The state of affairs of a ball being red does not simply require the existence of the ball and the property of redness, as it is clear that both the ball and redness can exist and the ball not be red (for example, if the ball is yellow and a bat is red). One must say then, that the property and the particular are related in some way. However, difficulties arise when we consider this relation (let us call it ' R '). For example, it is not sufficient to simply take R to be a third ingredient to the state of affairs alongside the ball and the property of redness, because it appears that the ball, R , and the property redness can all exist when the ball is not red. Plausibly, all three exist when the ball is yellow and the bat is red, redness exists in the bat, the ball exists, and R exists in the ball being yellow (as the relation between the ball and yellowness). If one tries to deal with this problem by postulating a further relation, $R2$, to hold between R and the ball and

but this argument strikes me as overly quick. If facts were distinct from true propositions, then there would be some form of necessity relation between facts, that was reflected in the entailment relation between propositions, and it is plausible that this relation can play the role of entailment, and that the fact represented can be taken as the reason.

¹¹ Armstrong:1997. Armstrong is taking his lead from Wittgenstein:2001a and Russell:1968. Skyrms:1981 follows this lead and adopts an ontology of states of affairs or facts (in the technical sense, rather than in my open sense), but his position differs from Armstrong's. Simons:1992 again follows this lead, but does not adopt an ontology of facts.

¹² Armstrong certainly speaks in this manner, though we should be careful here, as Armstrong does not want to be committed to objects or properties being of a specific form, it could, for example, turn out that the only real objects are the fundamental particles of physics, and the only real properties and relations, are the properties and relations that these objects instantiate. However, this needn't entail that there are not macroscopic things or qualities, macroscopic states of affairs, merely that these would strictly speaking be complexes of the more fundamental states of affairs, and so this does not affect my argument.

redness, then clearly the same issues simply arise again, and so on for infinity. Such an infinity of relations appears to be unacceptable, and to this extent the state of affairs of the ball being red is thrown into doubt. (This is of course a variant of Bradley's regress.¹³)

Armstrong's theory, however, can avoid this difficulty, because for Armstrong¹⁴ the relation between, for example, the ball and the property redness, is a relation that could not occur without relating those two, and therefore, we needn't postulate a further ingredient to relate this relation and the ball and redness. The constituents of the state of affairs, we can say, are internally related. Armstrong says this about the relation, because he takes the state of affairs of the ball being red to be ontologically prior to the ball or the property of redness, as the latter are abstractions from the former (though the ball can/will possess other properties, and other particulars can/will be red).¹⁵

A second problem for a states of affairs ontology, directly relates to my assumption that there is a plurality of facts, as it has been argued that a states of affairs ontology is implausible, as it entails that all states of affairs are identical. The argument I have in mind has become known as the slingshot argument, and can be presented as follows:¹⁶

P0. Jill is sad, and, Henry is happy.

P1. The state of affairs that Henry is happy is identical to the state of affairs that Henry is happy.

P2. A statement such as occurs in P1, if true, cannot be falsified by replacing the embedded sentences (e.g. Henry is happy) by logically equivalent sentences.

P3. A statement such as occurs in P1 cannot be falsified by replacing a referring term in it by a co-referring term.

¹³ cf. Bradley:1897 bk.I.ch.II.

¹⁴ Armstrong:1997 ch.8 especially p.118.

¹⁵ This leads Lowe:2006a p.168 to think that Armstrong's theory must be inadequate, as he cannot explain the contingency of the relations between particulars and properties (because the particulars are defined by their properties). However, Armstrong:2004 p.81 does perhaps hint at an answer to this worry, when he says that although the relations between particulars and properties are in some sense necessary (they couldn't occur without being so related) it is nonetheless the case that these particulars and properties are contingent, and it could be that different but similar ones obtained instead.

¹⁶ The name 'slingshot argument', originates with Barwise & Perry:1981, but the argument appears to be originally attributed to Frege:1980. Neal:1995 doubts the validity of this attribution. If the attribution is fair then the form of the argument given by Frege differs widely from the form of the argument as I will give it here, Neal:1995 considers a variety of forms. I am tacking my presentation largely from Searle:1995 appendix to ch.9, Mellor:1999 p.114, and Lowe:1998 p.229-30 fnt.2.

P4. The sentence ‘Henry is happy’ is logically equivalent to the sentence ‘the unique x such that (x is identical with Jill) is identical to the unique x such that (x is identical to Jill and Henry is happy)’. (Given P0.)

P5. The sentence ‘Jill is sad’ is logically equivalent to the sentence ‘the unique x such that (x is identical with Jill) is identical to the unique x such that (x is identical to Jill and Jill is sad)’. (Given P0.)

P6/C1. The state of affairs that Henry is happy is identical to the state of affairs that the unique x such that (x is identical with Jill) is identical to the unique x such that (x is identical to Jill and Henry is happy). (From P1, P2 & P4.)

P7/C2. The unique x such that (x is identical to Jill and Henry is happy) is identical to the unique x such that (x is identical to Jill and Jill is sad). (From P4 & P5.)

P8/C3. The state of affairs that Henry is happy is identical to the state of affairs that the unique x such that (x is identical with Jill) is identical to the unique x such that (x is identical to Jill and Jill is sad). (From P3, P6 & P7.)

C4. The state of affairs that Henry is happy is identical to the state of affairs that Jill is sad. (From P2, P5, & P8.)

P0 simply assumed any two true sentences, and as such it is clear that the sentence ‘Jill is happy’ could be exchanged for any other true sentence to show, in C4, the identity of the state of affairs that Henry is happy, with any other state of affairs. Likewise, one could swap the sentence ‘Henry is happy’ for any other true sentence, and so, we could argue that any two states of affairs are identical.

One way of responding to the slingshot argument is through denying the move from C2 and C3. One can do this if one adopts Russell’s theory of descriptions according to which definite descriptions do not refer.¹⁷ If this is right, it follows that the definite descriptions *the unique x such that (x is identical to Jill and Henry is happy)* and *the unique x such that (x is identical to Jill and Jill is sad)* do not refer. If they do not refer, then P3 does not apply to them, and hence, we cannot get to C3.¹⁸ An alternative way to deal with the slingshot is to question either P2 or P3. Mellor¹⁹ denies P3, though he is careful to point out that this doesn’t entail the falsity of the plausible idea, P3*, a statement such as occurs in P1 cannot be falsified by replacing a term in it that refers to a fact by a

¹⁷ Cf. Russell:1905, 1919 ch.XVI, and, 1968 lect.VI. I will say more about this in the next chapter.

¹⁸ Cf. Neal:1995 and Lowe:2002 p.172-3.

¹⁹ Mellor:1999 ch.9.5.

co-referring term. However, if P3 were replaced by P3*, the slingshot argument wouldn't work. Searle²⁰ instead denies P2. The power of these responses lies in the fact that P2 and P3 are difficult to justify, whilst the conclusion C4 appears obviously false, and hence, it is more plausible to deny C4, and deny P2 or P3, than to accept all three.

Armstrong²¹ offers two types of identity criteria for states of affairs. Firstly, he says that different states of affairs can be distinguished by their constituents. So states of affairs that are constituted by different particulars, or different universals, will be different states of affairs. Secondly, Armstrong accepts that we can often distinguish between states of affairs empirically, such that, two states of affairs which are not necessarily concurrent are not identical. For example, although the state of affairs of Bill loving Bess, has the same constituents as the state of affairs of Bess loving Bill, unfortunately, it is possible for one of these states of affairs to occur whilst the other does not, and therefore it is clear that the two are distinct states of affairs.²² This last example also highlights that for Armstrong a state of affairs cannot only be identified by its constituents, but more specifically, by the manner in which these constituents are structured, Bill loving Bess forming a different structure from Bess loving Bill.

Armstrong's states of affairs are thus far adequate to play the role of my facts, they are realist and there is a plurality of them. This raises the question of how Armstrong deals with negative, general, disjunctive, and conjunctive states of affairs, and whether this is adequate to my concerns.

The conjunctive case is perhaps the easiest to deal with. Armstrong²³ denies that there are conjunctive states of affairs, the state of affairs of a ball being red and round, is nothing over and above the state of affairs of the ball being red and the state of affairs of the ball being round. This is perfectly acceptable for my notion of fact, which doesn't require a conjunction to be anything over and above the conjuncts. Plausibly one is not rationally required to do something because of x and y , rather than because of x and

²⁰ Searle:1995 appendix to ch.9 (see also, Barwise & Perry:1981). Olson:1987 ch.4 considers variants of both.

²¹ Armstrong:1997 ch.8.6.

²² Armstrong thinks that this empirical criterion is insufficient on its own, as there might be necessarily concurrent states of affairs. Armstrong thinks that the constitutive identity criterion is sufficient on its own, however, Lowe:1998 ch.11.5 raises doubts about this. I think that by combining these two criteria we go some way to alleviating these doubts. Further, as I am not wedded to Armstrong's ontology, I can borrow Lowe's own criteria for individuating states of affairs (by which he means something ontologically innocent, as I do with my facts).

²³ Armstrong:1997 p.134, see also, Armstrong:2004.

because of y (or because one believes x and y , rather than because one believes x and believes y).

Armstrong²⁴ also denies that there are disjunctive states of affairs. Here it is perhaps useful to note his use of the truth-maker relation, because he says that a statement such as ‘the ball is red or it is round’ is made true by either the state of affairs of the ball being red, or the state of affairs of it being round, or by both, and therefore needs no special disjunctive fact as truth-maker. This might raise trouble for my use of facts, if I am to say that a rational action might require an agent to have a disjunctive belief, in place of a belief in one or the other, or both disjuncts. Because such a case would appear to show that the disjunctive belief must get at a fact that the combination of disjuncts cannot, perhaps hence a disjunctive fact. However, such a potentially problematic case is not possible. If it is rational for me to believe ‘either Jack or Bob are at the gallery’, and therefore to form a goal of going there, then it is equally rational for me to believe simply ‘Jack is at the gallery’ and therefore form the goal of going, or to believe ‘Bob is at the gallery’ and therefore form the goal of going, or to believe ‘Jack and Bob are at the gallery’, and therefore form the goal of going. This is because the disjunction can only be a reason if each of the disjuncts alone would be a reason.²⁵ As non-disjunctive beliefs can step in for disjunctive ones, we needn’t suppose that disjunctive beliefs get at facts that the non-disjunctive ones do not, nor hence posit disjunctive facts.

One might worry that there could be a case in which it is rational to act on a disjunctive belief, but not on either disjunct, if one knows one or the other disjuncts to obtain but not which one obtains. However, this simply puts matters back a step, so we must consider the evidence for the disjunction, and unless this evidence must also be disjunctive, then, one can simply refer to these non-disjunctive evidential beliefs (and hence facts) in place of the disjunctive one. (Given that plausibly, at root, our evidence is non-disjunctive, as we do not see or experience disjunctions, then we can always step back from a disjunctive belief to non-disjunctive beliefs.) For example, I might believe that ‘one of my friends is at the gallery’, and also believe that ‘I have two friends, Bob and Jack’. I could therefore believe ‘either Bob or Jack are at the gallery’, and therefore form the goal of going there. But, plausibly, this disjunctive belief gives me a reason to form that goal,

²⁴ Armstrong:1997 p.134, see also, Armstrong:2004.

²⁵ Perhaps there is a case in which the disjuncts provide different reasons, e.g. I believe either Jack is at the coffee shop or at the gallery, and hence form the goal of going to the gallery. I am not sure that this is a valid case, but even if one insists that it is, it can still only be plausible if one of the disjuncts would provide a reason for my action.

only because the non-disjunctive beliefs on which it was based gave me a reason (in this case my believing that one of my friends is at the gallery already makes my goal of going there rational). So again, it is plausible that rationality will never require an agent to have a disjunctive belief in place of a non-disjunctive one, nor hence, need we suppose that disjunctive beliefs get at facts that non-disjunctive ones do not, nor hence, that there are disjunctive facts.

We should note, however, that in the preceding paragraph my opponent is really cheating. Because they are considering what beliefs an agent might rationally arrive at, and supposing they can only rationally arrive at the disjunctive belief, not a specific one. But, really this is a completely different issue to the one at hand, which is a matter of what beliefs an agent must have in order to act rationally. For example, it could be that an agent must believe Jack is in the gallery to act rationally, perhaps in telling someone where he is. If the agent cannot rationally have arrived at the belief that Jack is in the gallery because they lack sufficient evidence for that belief, then this does not alter the demand the action makes on the agent. It simply means that if the agent performs the act of telling someone where Jack is they are irrational at some stage, either in the formation of their specific belief, or, in their acting without the specific belief. However, it in no way follows from the fact that they cannot form the belief rationally, that an action cannot demand that belief.

We can distinguish several types of general beliefs. For example, I might believe ‘there is something such that it is my apple, and whatever is my apple is equal to that thing, and it is red’, ‘some apples are red’ or ‘all apples are red’.²⁶ It is easiest to treat these cases separately.

Armstrong does believe in general states of affairs, specifically, in totality states of affairs. Suppose that there are only two apples, the state of affairs that all the apples are red, will be a state of affairs over and above the state of affairs of the first apple, a1, being red, and the state of affairs of the second apple, a2, being red. (Armstrong supports this idea by noting that these two apples could exist and be red, but there also exist a further green apple, in which case there would not be a state of affairs of all the apples being red, even though there remained the state of affairs of a1 being red, and the state of affairs of a2 being red.) In relation to such general facts Armstrong speaks of a totalling relation, which in our example binds all the apples, specifically, the totalling relation holds between the mereological whole composed of all the apples, taken as a particular, and the property

²⁶ Of course, there is a sense in which the first of these three is really just a combination of the latter two, but I think there is some worth in discussing it separately.

*being an apple.*²⁷ The truth-maker for all apples being red, will hence involve a1 being red and a2 being red, and the totality state of affairs that these are all the apples. In my terms then, we can readily say that the belief that all the apples are red gets at a different state of affairs to the belief that a1 and a2 are red. Armstrong believes in totality states of affairs, so, I can readily admit that totality beliefs, beliefs concerning all the so-and-sos as all of the so-and-sos, capture different facts from non-totalling beliefs. Therefore, I can freely admit that rationality requires totalling beliefs in place of beliefs concerning each and every individual in the total.

For Armstrong the belief that some apples are red will be made true by any state of affairs of an apple being red. For example, if a1 is red, this state of affairs will make it true that some apples are red, even if a2 is green and a1 and a2 are all the apples. To this extent Armstrong does not think there is a general state of affairs of some apples being red. We thus arrive at a potential difficulty for my position, if rationality can require an agent to have a some-belief (e.g. 'some apples are red') in place of any particular belief (e.g. 'a1 is red'), then this would imply that the some-belief captures a fact not captured by any of the specific beliefs, perhaps hence a special some-fact. If I must admit that there are some-facts, and Armstrong does not admit that there are some-states of affairs, then my facts cannot be identified with his states of affairs and I cannot simply adopt his ontology. The problem is similar to the disjunctive case, and so too is the solution. Such potentially problematic cases cannot arise, because if it were the case that some apple being red was a reason to act, plausibly, a1's being red would also be a reason (or a2's would). So it will not be the case that rationality requires a some-belief rather than a particular belief that would fall under this general one. For example, suppose I have reason to collect something red, and I know that some apples are red, and all the apples are in my room, then I could rationally form the goal of going to my room. However, I could equally rationally form this goal if I know that a1 is red, rather than merely that some apple is red. Rationality will not demand a some-belief in place of any specific belief, therefore, it needn't be the case that there are some-facts over and above any specific facts.

My concern with the third type of general belief is a concern whether the general belief 'there is something such that it is my apple, and whatever is my apple is equal to that thing, and it is red' and my specific belief 'a1 is red', supposing a1 to be my only apple. Now, it is clear that according to Armstrong's theory there will be a difference in the states

²⁷ Armstrong:1997 ch.13, see also Armstrong:2004 ch.6.

of affairs these two beliefs pick out. The latter belief picks out a state of affairs composed by a1 and redness. The former belief arguably picks this state of affairs out too, but, it also picks out more besides. Specifically, it picks out a totality of all the things which have the property of *being my apple*.²⁸ It follows that Armstrong can readily admit that the general belief captures something that the (supposed) specific belief does not, without postulating a specific type of states of affairs to account for this. I can readily say the same about the case of the facts at issue, and so can again coincide my view and Armstrong's.

This brings us finally to the case of negative beliefs, and hence negative facts. To a large extent Armstrong²⁹ denies the existence of negative states of affairs, however, he believes that the totality states of affairs alluded to above are a form of negative state of affairs because they involve an element of 'and nothing more'. Armstrong believes that with totality states of affairs we have all the states of affairs that are needed to provide truth-makers for negative statements. For example, the statement that there are no green apples will be made true by the state of affairs of a1 being red, and the state of affairs of a2 being red, and the totality state of affairs that those are all the apples. At first blush it thus seems that without having a (strictly) negative state of affairs, Armstrong can nevertheless have a unique state of affairs to provide a truth-maker for a negative belief. However, this does not offer me a ready solution for dealing with a rational requirement for negative beliefs. The problem here becomes apparent when we think of the truth-maker that Armstrong might offer for the belief that there are no yellow apples. Presumably, Armstrong would give this belief the very same truth-maker as he gave the belief that there are no green apples, e.g. the states of affairs of a1 being red, a2 being red and the totality state of affairs that a1 and a2 are all the apples. But, it is plausible that rationality can demand an agent to have one of these beliefs in place of the other, and hence, that they ought to capture different facts. Thus, my facts and Armstrong's states of affairs appear to part company. However, there is more of relevance to the beliefs than these truth-makers. For example, the fact that there are no green apples could also be made true by a set of states of affairs including the totality of the green objects, and the states of affairs that none of them are apples (the state of affairs that the first green object is a car, the state of affairs

²⁸ Armstrong:2004 p.72-3 recognizes that in such totality states of affairs reference will be made to potentially worrying – because overly abundant – properties such as *being my apple*. However, he thinks they are harmless because they needn't be anything over and above more familiar properties.

²⁹ Armstrong:1997 ch.8.7, see also Armstrong:2004 ch.5.

that the second green object is a tree...etc)³⁰. These states of affairs will not be of relevance to the belief that no apples are yellow, though this belief will be relevant to another set of states of affairs, i.e. the totality state of affairs of all the yellow objects, and, the states of affairs of those things not being apples. With these extra states of affairs in mind, then we do appear to have enough positive states of affairs to provide the reasons captured by negative beliefs that agents rationally act on; the belief that no apples are red will be linked to states of affairs that the belief that no apples are yellow is not linked to, and vice versa. Nonetheless, this suggestion also relies on it being plausible that rationality will not demand an agent to have a negative belief in place of a positive belief which captures the truth-makers just discussed. That is, it cannot be the case that rationality demands an agent to believe ‘there are no yellow apples’ in place of believing ‘a1 is red, a2 is red and a1 and a2 are all the apples’, or ‘y1 is a banana, y2 is the sun, and y1 and y2 are all the yellow things’. If rationality were to make such a demand this would imply, via the argument from action, that the former belief captured a fact not captured by the latter two, perhaps a negative fact. However, fortunately such a demand appears unwarranted, because the positive states of affairs appear to provide all the reasons of the negative ones. It therefore appears that I needn’t posit any negative facts, and that the states of affairs that Armstrong considers as truth-makers for negative beliefs are plausibly all the states of affairs that are required to provide reasons in the cases at hand.

In short, Armstrong takes states of affairs to be real, objective, and to form a plurality. He argues that there are totality states of affairs, but otherwise there are not general, negative, disjunctive or conjunctive states of affairs (at least these are no addition of being over the ‘logically’ simple states of affairs). Armstrong supports this view on the grounds that the states of affairs he posits are adequate to provide truth-makers for all truths. My facts can be identified with Armstrong’s states of affairs, as these are also sufficient to provide all the reasons one might need for rational actions.

³⁰ So when I say the states of affairs that *none* of them are apples, this should not be taken as a negative, rather we need only think of the various positive states of affairs composed of green objects and properties of *being a ball, being a cabbage* etc. (The same can be said for the other cases below.) (I am not sure that this is reliant on the fact that being a cabbage excludes being an apple, on the fact that nothing can be both an apple and a cabbage. However, if it does, it relates to a proposal that has been put forward that instead of some negative facts, we could make do with positive facts which exclude these negative ones (cf. Demos:1917). Armstrong:2004 ch.5.2.1 considers such a view, but finds it insufficient as it depends too much on the contingent nature of reality for whether or not all negatives are actually excluded, something which is not obvious, though plausibly there are enough exclusions for the types of cases that lead to this footnote (cf. Molnar:2000 and Rodriguez-Pereyra:2006).)

In discussing Armstrong's position, it became clear that my notion of facts does not require that there are any conjunctive or disjunctive facts, and that it can also do away with negative and general facts, if it adopts totality facts. Other than these specifics concerning the types of facts that obtain, there is little to limit my notion of facts to one of a variety of ontologies. A pure trope theory will be realist and objective, and will distinguish a number of different facts, as would a nominalist ontology that adopts only particulars (not properties) and a multi-category ontology.

The crucial limiting factor in fitting my facts to an ontology thus appears to be the types of facts I take to exist. Armstrong is not the only ontologist to posit fundamental entities of a slightly negative kind, Russell for example at times posits negative facts and general facts, and Martin posits absences.³¹ To this extent it appears to be plausible that my facts could be fitted to either Russell's or Martin's ontologies, though I will not defend this idea. Moreover, there is nothing essential to a pure trope, resemblance nominalist or multi-category ontology that prevents them from adopting something analogous to Armstrong's totality state of affairs, and the need for truth-makers for negative truths provides an independent reason for positing them.³²

My facts are then, realist, and plural, and involve totality facts. As such they can be neatly fitted to Armstrong's ontology of states of affairs. Being so fitted they avoid the problems of Bradley's regress and the slingshot argument. Further, being so fitted they gain the support that Armstrong's states of affairs have, namely of providing truth-makers for all truths. Nonetheless, this notion of fact could doubtlessly also be accommodated into a variety of other ontological systems, should one wish.

³¹ Respectively, Russell:1968 lect.III & V, Martin:1996, see also Beall:2000 (and similarly Barwise & Perry:1983), who offers a rather different proposal offering negative facts without real negativity by instead positing simply positive facts of different polarities (though perhaps for this reason his proposal is dubious).

³² An alternative would be to deny that there are negative facts. One could do this by either arguing that negative beliefs are never rationally required, or by suggesting that when they are this is because rather than acting as an awareness of reasons, they act as an awareness that there are no reasons. So, for example, when I believe that there is no milk in the fridge, I am not aware of a negative fact, but, I am aware that I have no reasons to look in the fridge for milk. This implies that I was wrong to say that beliefs are only required in order to act as a mode of awareness of reasons, now one should say that they can also be required to provide an awareness of a lack of reasons, where this lack needn't be a reason nor hence a fact. But it is clear that this is irrelevant to the cases at hand, as knowing there are no reasons is being concerned with negatives, not positives, but the tense and first-personal cases arise for positives. I must believe 'I am F.P.', or '2pm is now', where these are positive beliefs. Further, it is implausible to think that tense and the first-personal are required just to provide an awareness that reasons do not obtain, because such a denial of reasons could be done tenselessly if all reasons were tenseless. If I can get rid of negative facts, I can also get rid of totality ones, as they can be interpreted as negative ones 'all the apples are red' is akin to 'it is not the case that there are any apples which are green or yellow or ...'.

Summary

In this chapter I have argued that the tenseless theory of time is wrong. I argued this by making use of the conclusions of previous chapters. Tensed beliefs are required for rational actions, and they cannot be replaced by tenseless beliefs in this role. However, the role of beliefs in rational actions is simply to provide an awareness of reasons, that is, facts. It follows that tensed and tenseless beliefs must involve an awareness of different facts, and hence, the tenseless theory is wrong. This is the argument from action.

The argument from action makes clear what is demanded of my theory of facts. It must be realist, it must allow for there to be a plurality of facts, and, perhaps it must recognize the existence of totality facts. All of these demands are met by identifying my facts with Armstrong's states of affairs, though they could plausibly also be met by other ontological theories.

CHAPTER SEVEN: IMPLICATIONS FOR NON-INDEXICAL CASES

In the last chapter I argued that the need for tensed and first-personal beliefs in rational actions entails that these beliefs get at facts not got at by other beliefs: the argument from action. In this chapter I will show how my argument differs from issues of cognitive significance, such as Frege's Puzzle¹. Frege's Puzzle, for instance, can show that a tensed and a tenseless belief must differ in cognitive content, and hence that they must be different beliefs. But my argument goes further by showing that this difference in beliefs relates to a difference in the actions that they make rational, and hence, to a difference in the facts that they concern. This discussion indicates that one might be able to apply a version of my argument to other beliefs. If rationality demands one belief in place of another then the two beliefs must involve an awareness of different reasons and hence facts. I will show that my argument from action is applicable to other cases, but that this is unproblematic as it simply fits with a common practice of explaining a difference in cognitive significance in terms of a difference in descriptive content. However, unlike the case with tensed and first-personal beliefs, the case of proper names etc. tells us little about our ontology, as any required facts are of a familiar form.

In the course of this discussion it will appear that the argument from rationality presupposes a fine grained notion of actions, though I will show that it does not.

7.1 Cognitive Significance

What I shall refer to as *Frege's puzzle*², is a puzzle raised by Frege³ concerning the cognitive significance of proper names. It is generally trivial and uninformative to be told that "Dodgson is Dodgson", but it is often informative to be told that "Dodgson is Carroll". If one identified the meaning of a name simply with its referent, then assuming these identity statements are both true, the names 'Dodgson' and 'Carroll' would have the same meaning (I will call this the *Millian* view, as Mill offered a view like it in regard to names⁴). If one identified the cognitive significance of an utterance with its meaning, then it would follow that on the Millian view the two identity statements would have the same

¹ Cf. Frege:1980.

² Following, e.g. Salmon:1986.

³ Frege:1980.

⁴ Cf. Mill:1884, the name is not my own, e.g. Lycan:2008 (though Mill also uses the term 'name' to refer to a number of expressions besides proper names).

cognitive significance, which Frege's Puzzle shows that they do not. The implication of the puzzle is thus that either the meaning of a name is not simply its referent, or, the cognitive significance of a name is not simply its meaning.

Very similar puzzles can also be shown to arise for expressions other than names. For example, although the two definite descriptions *the author of 'Euclid and his Rivals'*, and *the author of 'Alice's Adventures in Wonderland'*, denote the same person, namely Carroll (and hence Dodgson), it is generally trivial to be told that "the author of 'Euclid and his Rivals' is the author of 'Euclid and his Rivals'" but it is informative to be told that "the author of 'Euclid and his Rivals' is the author of 'Alice's Adventures in Wonderland'". If one took the meaning of a definite description to be its denotation, and the meaning of an expression to give its cognitive significance, then one would expect these two utterances to share cognitive significance. But as one generally appears trivial whilst the other does not, then they do not share cognitive significance.⁵

These puzzles immediately link with a second puzzle. If co-referring or co-denoting expressions can have different cognitive significance, then utterances describing beliefs ought to pay heed to this fact, and to this end inter-substitution of co-referring/co-denoting expressions often fails in such utterances. For example, if Jo does not know that Carroll and Dodgson are the same person, then Jo might believe that Carroll is making a mess, but not that Dodgson is. Jo believes Dodgson to be dark haired and careful man from when she was introduced to him at work, she believes Carroll to be blond and scruffy from when she met him at a party where he was in fancy-dress. So whilst it is true to say "Jo believes that Carroll is making a mess" it is false that "Jo believes that Dodgson is making a mess". Explaining why substitution fails in these cases is the *puzzle of substitution*, an issue raised by Frege⁶ and exercised by Russell⁷ and many since⁸. I will refer to both puzzles together as the puzzles of *cognitive significance*. (I said that substitution usually fails in utterances describing beliefs, because there is a way of understanding such utterances according to which failure does not occur. There are so called *de re* beliefs, when we might say that, for example, Jo believes of the person that is Dodgson (and Carroll) that he is making a mess. This is taken by most to be a different case and I will not

⁵ Again a similar puzzle arises for indexicals, as it is possible to find "this is that" informative, even if the two demonstratives pick out the same object, and despite the thought that it is generally trivial to be told that something is self-identical. (Cf. Perry:1977.)

⁶ Frege:1980.

⁷ Russell:1905 & 1968.

⁸ E.g. Quine:1956.

focus on it here. Though Perry's argument shows that *de re* beliefs do not do away with the essential indexicals⁹.)

The problem of the essential indexical as raised by Perry could be seen as a further puzzle of cognitive significance, for example, if I am F.P., and I can fail to know that I am, then it appears that the two expressions 'I' and 'F.P.' will have different cognitive significance for me. Moreover, if I must believe "I am making a mess" rather than "F.P. is making a mess", then perhaps this is because the two beliefs have different cognitive significance for me. Similarly, even if it is now 2pm, I might not know that, and so 'now' and '2pm' will have different cognitive significance for me.

If one was an ardent Millian then one might take the puzzles of cognitive significance to show that many apparently co-referring names in fact do not co-refer, Carroll is not Dodgson, and this is why "Dodgson is Dodgson" is trivial but "Dodgson is Carroll" is not trivial (but in fact false). Similarly one might insist that many apparently co-denoting definite descriptions do not co-denote. This would be a rather implausible conclusion to draw; the examples I have already given imply that a person can have two names and yet another can fail to know this. Similarly, a person can fulfil more than one definite description.

In short, the puzzles of cognitive significance appear not to warrant the conclusion that a person cannot have two names. Noting the link between the puzzles of cognitive significance and the case of the essential indexical might hence lead one to say that we ought not to be led by this latter case to conclude that my belief 'I am making a mess' [or my 2pm belief 'I must leave now'] concerns different facts from my belief 'F.P. is making a mess' [or 'I must leave at 2pm']. However, it is important to notice that the argument from action goes far beyond an issue of cognitive significance. The point of my discussion of reasons and rationality is to show that it is not enough to explain the essential role of indexical beliefs to say that they have a different cognitive significance to non-indexical ones. Rather, a rational demand for an indexical belief must be a demand for a belief which is an awareness of a particular fact. Undoubtedly such a belief will also have a different cognitive significance, but if indexical beliefs and non-indexical beliefs merely differed in their cognitive significance, then rationality would not require one in place of the other. Therefore, we should not equate the argument from action with the puzzles of cognitive significance.

⁹ Perry:1979.

7.2 The Application of the Argument from Action to Non-indexical Cases

With the puzzles of cognitive significance in mind, one might wonder if the argument from action can be applied to other cases. That is, if two co-referring names, for example, can have different cognitive significance, then, might an agent be rational to act on a belief involving one name and not on a belief involving a co-referring one?

Before considering this question I should say something of the assumptions of my discussion. In addressing the above question I will spend some time looking at theories of meaning or semantics. These theories clearly tell one primarily about language and uses of language, about sentences and utterances, whilst my argument concerns beliefs. However, I have characterised beliefs partly in terms of a propensity to accept or assent to certain utterances or sentences. It follows, that if utterances/sentences differ in meaning, then the associated beliefs will also differ. Further, that if grasping the meaning of an utterance/sentence involves grasping certain facts, then those facts must also be grasped in the corresponding beliefs. Therefore, a discussion about semantics will aid a discussion of beliefs. Further, whilst one might be hesitant to simply identify cognitive significance and meaning, it appears plausible that utterances/sentences with different meaning will have different cognitive significances, so a focus on semantics is again legitimate.

Suppose that a person has two names, 'Harry' and 'Will'. Further, suppose that although I am familiar with both names I do not know that they denote the same person. If I am told that Harry is in danger, then I might form the belief 'Harry is in danger', hence being aware of a reason to help Harry. In such a case it seems to be rational for me to form the goal giving desire to help Harry, but, it does not appear to be rational for me to form the goal giving desire to help Will, as for all I know Will is perfectly safe. Alternatively, if I formed the belief 'Will is in danger', then it would appear rational for me to adopt the goal of helping Will, but not necessarily of helping Harry. It thus seems as if rationality can demand a particular name involving belief in place of a different co-referential name involving belief. It follows that the argument from action ought to apply in this case too.

Similar considerations arise for the case of definite descriptions. It is possible that one person both fixed my car last summer, and, lives next door to me now. Further it is possible that I do not know that one person satisfies both of these definite descriptions. If this is the case then it would seem that there is something irrational in my forming an intention to help the person who lives next door to me now, on forming the belief 'the

person who fixed my car last summer is in danger'. Conversely, it seems irrational of me to adopt the goal of helping the person who fixed my car last summer, on the basis of forming the belief 'the person who lives next door to me now is in danger'. Again, it appears that rationality might demand one definite description involving belief in place of another co-denoting definite description involving belief. Therefore, the argument from action ought also to apply in this case.¹⁰

This places a certain demand on the argument from action. Rational action, as I have defended it, concerns actions one chooses to perform for a reason for that action. Belief's sole role in this is to provide an awareness of the reason at issue. Similarly, the goal an agent has in a rational action is simply to perform that action. The belief must be an awareness of a fact which is a reason to perform the act which one has as a goal. It follows that my belief 'Harry is in danger' must be an awareness of a different fact from my belief 'Will is in danger', because the former, unlike the latter, can combine with my desire to help Harry in a rational action. Conversely, it appears [though I will subsequently deny this] that the actions I adopt as goals in desiring to help Harry and desiring to help Will must also be different, as the former, unlike the latter, can combine with my belief 'Harry is in danger' in a rational action. More generally, if two beliefs involving different co-referring names can play different roles in rational actions, then they must concern different facts. It also appears two desires involving different co-referring names can play different roles in rational actions, then they must concern different actions. Further, if two beliefs involving different co-denoting definite descriptions can play different roles in rational actions, then they must concern different facts, and, if two desires involving two different co-denoting definite descriptions can play different roles in rational actions, then

¹⁰ However, I am not sure it makes sense to say an agent must have a belief involving one demonstrative rather than another. Still, there is scope for me to address this case as I address the cases of names and descriptions below. According to many theories of demonstratives an agent must recognize the referent of a demonstrative to be playing a particular role in a context in order to understand the use of the demonstrative. It follows that one will have to recognize different things in understanding different demonstratives. In short, the different demonstratives will involve capturing different facts, even if these facts are not part of the truth-evaluable content of the utterances at issue (e.g. the fact that *x* is the most salient thing in context *y*, is a different fact from the fact that *x* is the most salient thing in context *z*, if the two contexts *y* and *z* are different). For example, some say you must recognize the referent as the thing demonstrated (e.g. Kaplan:1989a, Reimer:1991a, perhaps, Salmon:2002), others say that you must recognize it as the most salient thing in the context (e.g. Wettstein:1984, Reimer:1991b), or as the object of the speakers intention in the context (e.g. Kaplan:1989b, Bach:1992a & 1992b), or as the thing in a particular spatiotemporal relation to the speaker in the context (e.g. McGinn:1981)(these distinctions are not necessarily exclusive of one another, and are rather rough, with some proponents falling into more than one group, and proponents within one group differing in detail). Thus the argument from action is vindicated in the case of demonstratives.

apparently they must concern different actions. In the following sections of this chapter I will argue that this is quite plausible, I will first address the case with beliefs and facts, and subsequently that with desires and actions.

7.3 Co-Reference & Distinct Facts: Names & Definite Descriptions

Frege's¹¹ answer to the puzzles of cognitive significance was to turn to the mode of presentation of the referent, which he termed the *sense* of the expression. Each referring expression was to have a sense as well as a referent. The sense of a sentence containing such referring expressions would be composed by the sense of these expressions and would give the *thought* captured by this sentence; where this thought may be considered as the proposition expressed by the sentence. The complete sentence itself will refer to either *The True*, or *The False*, unless it is embedded within a further sentence, in which case it will refer to its usual (i.e. unembedded) sense.

Suppose that the sense expressed by the name 'Charles Dodgson' was *the author of 'Euclid and his Rivals'*, and that that expressed by 'Lewis Carroll' was *the author of 'Alice's Adventures in Wonderland'*. These were the guises under which the names presented their referents. Then, the thought expressed by an utterance of 'Charles Dodgson studied at oxford', would be the thought 'the author of 'Euclid and his Rivals' studied at oxford'. It would therefore be quite distinct from the thought expressed by 'Lewis Carroll studied at Oxford', which would be the thought 'the author of 'Alice's Adventures in Wonderland' studied at Oxford'. Nevertheless, the two sentences would designate the same referent, namely *The True*, and the names composing those two sentences would also designate the same referent, specifically, the man who wrote both 'Euclid and his Rivals' and 'Alice's Adventures in Wonderland'. Thus Frege's puzzle of identity is answered as although the utterances "Carroll is Carroll" and "Carroll is Dodgson" share truth-value and referent, they nevertheless differ in meaning, as they have different senses as their component expressions have different senses, and therefore they will differ in cognitive significance.

In describing beliefs we embed one sentence within another, for example, the sentence 'Carroll is making a mess' stands alone as a complete expression with a truth-value, however, it is emended in another sentence when we say "Jo believes that Carroll is

¹¹ E.g. Frege:1980.

making a mess”. When a sentence is thus embedded Frege says that it refers to the sense it would have if it was not embedded. Because of this although the two sentences ‘Carroll is making a mess’ and ‘Dodgson is making a mess’ will share truth-value and referent when they are not embedded, when they are embedded, their referents become their usual sense. Unembedded these two sentences have different senses, and therefore, once embedded they have different referents. Thus it is clear that we shouldn’t expect to be able to substitute the name ‘Carroll’ occurring within one, for the name ‘Dodgson’ occurring within the other. The puzzle of substitution is avoided.

Frege’s solution applies in a similar way to the case of definite descriptions. The definite description *the author of ‘Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland’*, will have the same denotation as the definite description *the author of ‘Euclid and his Rivals’*, but the two will have different senses. In fact, in this case it is plausible to assume that the former definite description, insofar as it captures the sense of the name ‘Carroll’, will share a sense with that name, that is, the definite description and the name alike will present Carroll as the author of ‘Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland’.

Russell¹² offers a different solution to the puzzles of cognitive significance based on an analysis of definite descriptions such as *the author of ‘Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland’*. He takes an utterance using a definite description to make a number of claims. For example, “The author of ‘Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland’ is making a mess” means that, at least one thing authored ‘Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland’, at most one thing authored ‘Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland’, and whatever authored ‘Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland’ is making a mess. For Russell, definite descriptions thus have the logical form – even if not a surface grammatical form – of quantified sentences in which the definite description does not appear.¹³ Thus for Russell definite descriptions do not refer, though they do denote whatever object uniquely fulfils the description. This enables us to see that co-denoting definite descriptions will mean quite different things. For example, “The author of ‘Euclid and his Rivals’ is making a mess” will mean, there is at least one thing that wrote ‘Euclid and his Rivals’, there is at most one thing that wrote ‘Euclid and his Rivals’, and whatever wrote ‘Euclid and his Rivals’ is making a mess. So although the definite descriptions co-denote, they have quite different meanings, and hence cognitive significance.

¹² E.g. Russell:1905, 1919 ch.XVI, and, 1968 lect.VI.

¹³ This enables Russell to deal with a number of other puzzles, such as how to make sense of non-referring names, or non-denoting definite descriptions (cf. Russell:1905).

Russell argues that all apparently referring expressions (except for the indexicals ‘this’ or ‘that’ and ‘I’) are in fact disguised or abbreviated definite descriptions.¹⁴ Because of this, Russell’s analysis of definite descriptions can also deal with the problems of cognitive significance as they arise concerning names. For example, the name ‘Carroll’ will in fact express a definite description which denotes Carroll, perhaps ‘the author of ‘Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland’’.¹⁵ The name ‘Dodgson’ will express a different definite description though one that also denotes Carroll, perhaps ‘the author of ‘Euclid and his Rivals’’. Therefore, despite sharing a denotation, the two names will mean quite different things.

I will refer to Frege’s and Russell’s theories as *descriptive theories*. They are theories of the way words refer, or, in Russell’s case, denote. Both of these theories encourage the view that sentences containing different co-referring/denoting names can be expected to capture different facts. This is because the different senses, or definite descriptions, associated with different names, capture different facts, as for example, the fact that someone wrote ‘Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland’, is quite distinct from the fact that someone wrote ‘Euclid and his Rivals’. Using Russell’s analysis of definite descriptions¹⁶ it is clear that, for example, “Carroll is in Oxford” and “Dodgson is in Oxford” capture different facts. The former will (we are supposing) capture the fact that someone both wrote ‘Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland’ and is in Oxford, whilst the latter will capture the fact that someone both wrote ‘Euclid and his Rivals’ and is in Oxford. To this degree the argument from action is thus vindicated (notice that Frege’s and Russell’s theories have independent support, so utilising them to support the argument from action is not an *ad hoc* manoeuvre).

However, both Frege’s and Russell’s theories have come under attack, most noticeably from Kripke.¹⁷ Kripke criticized Frege’s and Russell’s views, arguing: K1, that a person needn’t be able to associate a definite description with a name to be able to refer

¹⁴ E.g. Russell:1919 ch.XVI, and, 1968 lect.II, for ‘this’ anyway, perhaps Russell changes his mind about ‘I’, e.g. Russell:1910 and 1995.

¹⁵ It is hard to find one description that could be a name or its sense, for this reason some have offered a view according to which names correspond to clusters of definite descriptions (cf. Searle:1958 and Wittgenstein:2001b pt.I sect.79).

¹⁶ Russell’s theory of definite descriptions has been criticized quite independently from the idea that names are abbreviated definite descriptions, for example, by Strawson:1950 and Donnellan:1966, who both insist that definite descriptions can refer. However, Kripke:1977 has defended Russell’s analysis, arguing that it captures the semantic nature of definite descriptions, which is distinct from pragmatic fact that such descriptions can be used by speakers to refer. For more recent discussion see Neal:1990 ch.3.

¹⁷ Cf. Kripke:1981, see also Marcus:1961.

with it; K2, that being able to associate a definite description with a name is not sufficient to enable someone to refer with it; and finally, K3, that definite descriptions and names have different logical shapes, that is, they act differently in modal contexts.¹⁸

Kripke gives argument K1 by considering a case in which a person appears to be able to use a name meaningfully, despite not knowing anything uniquely individuating of the person. The example Kripke gives concerns Richard Feynman. Many people can use his name and know something about who they are referring to, for example, that he was an American physicist, however, many people know little more than this about him. Crucially, they do not appear to know enough about him to distinguish him from Gell-Mann, another famous American physicist. Yet despite this, it is clear these people can talk meaningfully about Feynman by using his name. It appears to follow that the name is not associated with a definite description for these individuals, and therefore this cannot be the mechanism through which the name refers/denotes.

Kripke gives argument K2 by considering a case in which a person associates a definite description with a name, but the description applies to someone other than the referent of the name. Kripke invites us to imagine that Godel, whom is commonly taken to have been the first person to have proven Incompleteness (a definite description), in fact copied the proof from little known Schmidt. In such a case it would seem that we all still refer to Godel in using his name, even if Schmidt is the person who is captured by the definite description associated with the name. More generally it seems that we can be mistaken about the things we refer to with names. It thus appears that associating a definite description with a name is not sufficient for referring/denoting with that name, contra Frege and Russell.

Kripke gives argument K3 by distinguishing between rigid designators and non-rigid designators, where the former, unlike the latter, pick out the same individual in all possible worlds. For example, although Dodgson wrote ‘Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland’, it is true to say “It is possible that Dodgson was not the author of ‘Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland’” whereas it is false to say “It is possible that Dodgson was not Dodgson”. This is because the name Dodgson picks out the same person in every possible world. However, a definite description, such as *the author of ‘Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland’*, will pick out different individuals in different possible worlds. For example, in a world where Dodgson did not write that book, but instead Orwell did, then the definite

¹⁸ Kripke:1981.

description will pick out Orwell not Dodgson. In short, names appear to be rigid designators, whilst definite descriptions appear to be non-rigid designators, so it makes little sense to suppose the latter can give the meaning of the former.¹⁹ A second aspect of this problem for the descriptive theories, is that if they were correct then an utterance such as “if Dodgson exists then they wrote ‘Euclid and his Rivals’” would be necessarily true and a priori, because it would mean something like *if the author of ‘Euclid and his Rivals’ exists then they wrote ‘Euclid and his Rivals’*, which is necessarily true, and knowable a priori. But, in fact, the utterance “if Dodgson exists then they wrote ‘Euclid and his Rivals’” appears to be neither necessary nor knowable a priori. I’ll call this *K3i*.

Despite their strong appearance, Kripke’s criticisms against the descriptive theories have all been responded to, largely by arguing that Kripke focused (as perhaps Russell and Frege encouraged) on the wrong descriptions.

It has been argued that, *contra* to K1, there will always be a definite description of the referent of a name available to a speaker. For example, users of the name ‘Feynmann’, can associate with this name the definite description *the person named ‘Feynmann’*, or the description *the person who is the causal origin of the information that I associate with the name ‘Feynmann’*.²⁰ Such definite descriptions, or ones like them, will concern Feynmann, and will always be available to users of his name.²¹ Jackson²² has in fact argued for the necessary availability of descriptions from data used by Kripke himself. In K3 Kripke makes use of our ability to judge what a name refers to in different possible worlds, Jackson argues that this ability itself reveals that users of a name have in mind a stock of properties that they associate with bearer of the name and that they utilises to make these

¹⁹ There is an awkwardness in applying this argument to certain interpretations of Frege. For Frege speaks of the sense of an expression as the mode of presentation of its referent, and although he says that this might be captured by a definite description, one might wonder whether the object presented is an essential part of the mode of presentation. In fact, Evans:1982 has argued that it ought to be thought of as such. I will not discuss this issue further here, save to say that, even if the referent is taken to be an essential ingredient to the mode of presentation, it is still plausible that different modes of presentation give different facts because they give different facts about the referent.

²⁰ Cf. Bach:1981, Loar:1980, and Geurts:1997.

²¹ Kripke’s own theory is that a name refers through a causal link back to a baptism in which the name is given to the referent. This causal link is what is being made use of in descriptions of these types.

²² Jackson:1998b. This is criticized by Soames:2005a & 2005b for being too powerful, however, Jackson:2007 responds accepting its potency, but denying this undermines it.

decisions.²³ A disjunction of such properties could be used to form a definite description capturing the referent of a name.²⁴

K2 is in part responded to by the response to K1, as there it is shown that a speaker will always be able to associate an accurate definite description with a name that they use. All that is required is then to distinguish this accurate description from other descriptions a speaker might associate with a name. If the description at issue is of the form indicated by Jackson, then this distinction is accomplished, as only the (disjunctive) definite description that a speaker takes to pick out a referent when considering different possible worlds need be taken as that which plays a crucial role in determining the referent/denotation of a name.

Kripke himself notes that some definite descriptions are rigid designators, for example, the definite description *the positive square root of four* will denote two in every possible world. More generally, other definite descriptions can be rigidified by including a modifier such as ‘actually’, for example, *the actual author of ‘Euclid and his Rivals’* will pick out Dodgson in every possible world (as whatever world we consider, it remains the case that in the actual world Dodgson was the author).²⁵ It follows that insisting that names are rigid designators needn’t rule out definite descriptions from providing the meaning of names (all that it does appear to rule out is non-rigid definite descriptions providing the meaning of a rigid name). Dummett²⁶ instead emphasizes a point noted by Russell²⁷, that a definite description can be interpreted to take wide scope in modal contexts. For example, we can interpret “It is possible that Carroll didn’t visit Oxford” in two ways. If we take the description to have narrow scope the utterance means something like *it is possible that exactly one thing wrote Euclid and his rivals and it did not visit Oxford*. In this interpretation the utterance will be true if and only if there is a possible world in which someone authored ‘Euclid and his Rivals’ and did not visit Oxford (whether or not Carroll was the author in that world). In essence, the definite description will act akin to a non-rigid designator. However, if we interpret the utterance in such a way that the definite description has wide scope we end up with something like, *there is exactly one thing which*

²³ Cf. Plantinga:1978b who takes the descriptive content to capture the essence of the referent of a name.

²⁴ Kripke:1981 p.44 is careful to stress that possible worlds are stipulated not discovered, meaning that we needn’t identify a referent in a possible world via its properties. However, this does not really seem to undermine Jackson’s point, which could be put in terms of our willingness to stipulate a world in which a referent has certain qualities, but not one in which they lack those qualities.

²⁵ Alternatively one could use something like Kaplan’s dthat operator, see Kaplan:1970.

²⁶ Dummett:1973 p.110-151.

²⁷ Russell:1905 was also clearly aware of this distinction of scope, and made use of it, even if not directly as is required here.

wrote *'Euclid and his Rivals'* and it is possible that that thing did not visit Oxford. This will only be the case in worlds in which Carroll did not visit Oxford (whether or not he wrote *'Euclid and his Rivals'*) and hence will give us the results Kripke desired.²⁸

Closing the gap between definite descriptions and rigid designators in this way undermines several aspects of K3. However, more must be said to deal with the apparent descriptivist conclusion that, for example, "if Carroll exists then they wrote *'Alice's Adventures in Wonderland'*" will be necessarily true and knowable a priori, that is, K3i.

The lesson from the response to K1, is that the descriptions that give the meaning of names will not be of a form like *the author of 'Euclid and his rivals'*. In fact, bearing in mind what has been said about rigidity, we might take the description associated with the name 'Carroll' to be more like *the person actually referred to by the name 'Carroll'*. The supposed problematic sentences raised in K3i would thus be of the form 'If Carroll exists then they are the person actually referred to by the name 'Carroll''. This sentence is, according to the descriptivist²⁹ and the worry of K3i, a necessary sentence that a language user would be able to know a priori. However, this sentence is plausibly both necessary and a priori. The rigidifying nature of 'actually' means that if Carroll has been, as he has, actually referred to by the name 'Carroll', then it is necessary that he has. There is no counterfactual situation, no possible world, the consideration of which will show that in the actual world Carroll has not been so referred to. The idea that this can be known a priori might be less obvious, one might wonder, for example, how Carroll's mother can have known he would be called 'Carroll' the first time she used his name. But, I take it that this, if anything, simply shows that the description being considered cannot have been the meaning of the name when it was first used. This could be because until first used, that is until first introduced into the language, the name simply lacked a meaning. Alternatively,

²⁸ Soames:1998 has argued against this use of scope, on the grounds that it does not work in particular complex cases, e.g. in some propositional attitude contexts, however, it is not clear that a more complicated rule than the simple 'names take wide scope in modal contexts' cannot be offered to account for such cases. Soames:2005b p.423 later admits this possibility, however, he thinks that the earlier problems associated with K1 will still raise trouble for the descriptivist. Jackson:2007 p.26 responds to Soames' argument by suggesting that there are a variety of complications involved in propositional attitude reports which must be taken into consideration (though Jackson is primarily concerned with description rigidified by 'actually' rather than with talk of scope).

²⁹ I am assuming simple descriptivist theories like Frege's and Russell's, there is of course scope to say that descriptions fix reference or denotation but to insist that they are not to be considered in determining the truth-value of a sentence, this being determined by the referent/denotation. (Recanati:1993 divides these two roles.)

one might take it that we are simply dealing with the wrong description.³⁰ If Jackson is right, then there will be another description available, and further, if it plays the role of defining the modal nature of the name (picking out its referent in different possible worlds), then it must be that the object fits this description of necessity.³¹

In this way I take it that descriptive theories, or variants thereof, can be made plausible despite attacks such as Kripke's. If a descriptive theory of some sort is correct, then this means different names will have different information associated with them, that is, they will capture different facts. As, for example, the fact that Carroll is actually called 'Carroll' is a different fact from the fact that he is actually called 'Dodgson'. To this extent the argument from action is vindicated, even if rationality can demand one name involving belief in place of another different co-referring/co-denoting name involving belief.

Nevertheless, a defence of the argument from action does not require the adoption of a descriptive theory of names, because such a theory is not the only theory that supports the idea that sentences differing only over their containing different co-referring/denoting names – and hence related name involving beliefs – will capture different facts. Rather, many theories make use of this to account for the puzzles of cognitive significance. Besides the idea that the descriptive/informational content is part of the meaning of a sentence in the sense intended by descriptive theories, one might instead say it is part of the semantic content but plays a different role³², or one might say it is part of the pragmatic content.

For example, Soames³³, in defending a non-descriptive theory, suggests that whilst co-referring names³⁴ will have the same semantic content, namely their referent, one name

³⁰ It could even be that the name has different descriptions associated with it by different speakers, though this would of course put pressure on the notion of meaning (cf. Jackson:1998b p.214-15).

³¹ A more detailed discussion of the issues of a priority and necessity can be found in discussions of two-dimensional semantics, which allow for contingent a priori beliefs, and necessary a posteriori beliefs, by distinguishing two dimensions of meaning, for example, one which gives the referent of a term in a possible world considered as counterfactual, and one that gives the referent of a term in a possible world considered as actual. Cf. Davies & Humberstone:1980, and Jackson:1998a ch.2. Jackson utilizes two-dimensional semantics within a descriptive theory of meaning, though the two needn't coincide (e.g. Chalmers:2006 makes it clear that he is not committed to descriptivism by his brand of two-dimensional semantics, and Davies & Humberstone:1980 and Kaplan:1989a do not apply their two-dimensional framework to proper names).

³² E.g. D'Cruz:2000 and Evans:1973.

³³ Soames:2002 ch.2. In a different way see Recanati:1993, who, although he associates a description with a name, does not intend the description to play quite those roles envisioned by Frege and Russell, as he takes the description to fix the referent of a name but not to enter into the proposition expressed. Even if the description is removed from the propositional content, as Recanati does, this does not undermine my position,

will often be used rather than another co-referring one, as they will express different information, different descriptive content. In saying this Soames takes himself to be furthering, if also correcting, the thoughts of Kripke, however, I will not go into this non-descriptivist theory in detail here.

One important difference between Soames' theory and the descriptive theories discussed is that Soames takes the difference in information captured by different co-referring names to be in some sense context sensitive.³⁵ This might lead one to worry whether it can fulfil the role I need. However, this difference in descriptive content is introduced in part to deal with the puzzles of cognitive significance, and it is precisely when one takes two names to have a different cognitive significance that one might take the argument from action to apply to the case of name involving beliefs. It follows, that even if Soames does not think that a difference in descriptive content will always arise for co-referring names, he will take it to arise in all cases where the argument from action takes it to.

More generally, one might be tempted to think that co-referring names share a semantic value, but that the puzzles of cognitive significance can be explained simply by individuals associating different information with different co-referring names, because they are ignorant of the co-reference.³⁶ If one adopted this approach to cognitive significance then this simple theory ought also to accommodate the argument from action. Because, this simple theory already implies that the agent will be capturing different descriptive content, facts, when having beliefs involving different co-referring names. (I

because all I require is that an individual is aware of different facts, whether or not these fall within the scope of the proposition expressed or the truth-conditions of the utterance.

³⁴ At least, names lacking descriptive content, unlike names such as 'Durham University'.

³⁵ Again, my concern is with beliefs rather than with utterances, however, it is plausible to think that if utterances would carry different information in a particular context, then associated beliefs would too. Soames' talk of different information being conveyed is in part reliant on the epistemic state of the listeners, something which appears to be absent in the case of beliefs. However, I think there is a sense in which, in talking of another's beliefs we place ourselves in a context, and in this way there is scope to find a surrogate for Soames' listener in the belief case. More generally, as we can imagine an individual deliberately using one name rather than another in a situation, we can also imagine him having one belief rather than another.

³⁶ E.g. such an idea is explicit in McMullen:1985, and I take it also to be implicit in form in ideas given by Perry himself in more recent work e.g. Perry:1997, 1998, and 2006. In these works Perry talks about storing information in different files, files plausibly differing between uses of names and uses of the first-person indexical, even if the names and the indexical are co-referential. Thus my believing 'Carroll is making a mess' will entail me associating the individual making mess with being a philosopher, whereas my believing 'Dodgson is making a mess' will not involve me taking the mess maker to be a philosopher, but instead with me taking them to be a mathematician, even though the thoughts, unbeknownst to me, concern the same person. These consequences also appear to follow from Alward:2009's position despite his moving away from Perry's talk of files, and instead talking of teams of cognitive relations.

admit the exact way this further content is involved is here left unclear, but, it is clear that it must be involved in a strong way as it effects cognitive significance; the further facts impinge upon the persons conscious states of awareness.)

Thus, it is plausible to think that beliefs involving different co-denoting definite descriptions will capture different facts. Because the beliefs will, in accord with Russell's theory of descriptions,³⁷ pick out different facts as being the case.³⁸ In part because of this, it is also plausible to think that beliefs involving different co-referring or co-denoting names will capture different facts in a way that vindicates the argument from action. This follows straightforwardly if one adopts a descriptive theory of names, which is a view with independent plausibility, and a view that continues to hold supporters. However, even if one does not adopt a descriptive theory, this needn't damn the argument from action, as is revealed by Soames' theory and a temptation to explain cognitive significance in terms of information associated with an expression.

7.4 Natural Kind Terms & the Argument from Action

As it is possible that the argument from action applies to beliefs involving co-referring/denoting names and definite descriptions, it is also plausible that it can apply to beliefs involving co-denoting/referring natural kind terms. For example, it could be that the terms 'water' and 'H₂O' both denote the natural kind water, but that an individual can fail to know this, and the terms can have different cognitive significance for such an individual. It would appear to be rational for a person like this, upon forming the belief that drinking water is good for their health, to adopt the goal of drinking water. But, it would be irrational of them, upon forming that belief, to adopt the goal of drinking H₂O, because for all they know this is a highly poisonous substance used by chemists.

³⁷ It is worth noting, that various criticisms of Russell's theory often still presuppose the idea that different definite-description involving beliefs will capture different facts. This is shown, for example, in the case of Strawson:1950 by the fact that that the use of the definite description to refer presupposes the ability to recognize the referent as fulfilling the criteria stated by the description, that is, to recognize that it is the case that, for example, Carroll is referred to by the name 'Carroll'. Similarly, Donnellan:1966 thinks that although the referent needn't fulfil the criteria associated with the definite description (language users might be wrong about the world), the referent should nonetheless be taken to fulfil the criteria, or be recognized as being taken to.

³⁸ Cf. Chisholm:1970 especially p.21-22 for a different argument that they are distinct facts, on the grounds that they entail different counterfactuals.

It follows that the argument from action could also apply to beliefs involving different co-denoting kind terms, and hence, that in order to make the argument from action plausible it must be plausible that such beliefs can capture different facts. I will not defend this idea in great detail, save to note that the discussion of kind terms overlaps the discussion of names, with many of the same issues arising alike in both fields, and in fact, with many writers covering the two cases side by side.³⁹

The puzzles of cognitive significance can be recast using kind terms, for example, it is often trivial to be told “water is water”, but informative to be told “water is H₂O”. One can suggest that kind terms do not refer, but that they denote as names do, by being disguised definite descriptions. If this idea is correct, it can account for the puzzles of cognitive significance.⁴⁰ Nonetheless, to make this idea plausible, it must be detailed in such a way as to account for Kripke’s criticisms, which can also be recast using kind terms. But again, as Kripke’s worries can be met in the case of names, they can be met for the case of kind terms, for example, water might be associated with the rigidified definite description *the stuff actually referred to as ‘water’*.

Nevertheless, introducing these issues to natural kind terms too raises a further problem for the descriptivist approach. According to descriptivism, an expression refers/denotes by being associated with a definite description. But this of course raises the question of how the terms in the definite description themselves refer/denote. It could be that they also refer/denote via associated definite descriptions, however, we cannot carry on with this pattern (for the reference of the terms of these further descriptions, and so on), otherwise we would be launched on an infinite regress or around in a circle,⁴¹ apparently entailing the referent/denotation of a term could never be established.⁴²

³⁹ This is clear in many of the works cited in the previous section, however, Soames:2002 does believe that the case of names and kind terms must be treated differently.

⁴⁰ The puzzle of substitution perhaps goes beyond the other puzzles, and arguably requires more to be said, but it is the other puzzles that are of my primary concern.

⁴¹ It is important to note that we are here concerned with a theory of reference/denotation, which appears to render the regress or circle vicious. Some people have defended a form of linguistic wholism according to which the meaning of each expression is dependent upon the meaning of every other (cf. Wittgenstein:2001b pt.I sect.199, Quine:1951, and Davidson:2001e). But it appears that wholism works on the assumption that all words are equal, so that a definition tells you as much about the definians as about the definiendum. However, the descriptive theory of reference appears to place words on a hierarchy, you must understand the associated description, before, or independently of, understanding the expression whose sense it provides. If I am wrong about this, and descriptivism doesn’t entail a hierarchical approach to language, then wholism might provide a response to the worry I’m outlining in the text here.

⁴² E.g., Devitt:1996 p.159, as discussed by Jackson:1998b. Part of Devitt’s point is that, if we have to accept a form of reference which is not descriptive, then it is better to apply this to names and natural kind terms too.

One way to answer this worry is to suggest that there are a number of terms whose reference/denotation are not fixed by definite descriptions. Chalmers⁴³ defends an idea like this, speaking of *semantically neutral* or *qualitative* terms. These are terms for which the two-dimensions (reference to possible worlds as counterfactual, and as actual) would provide no difference in reference/denotation. Chalmers gives as examples the terms: ‘and’, ‘philosopher’, ‘friend’, ‘consciousness’, and ‘cause’.⁴⁴

An alternative response is provided by Jackson, who argues that descriptivism needn’t suppose that the associated descriptions are linguistic.⁴⁵ Rather than saying that the reference/denotation of a term is fixed by a description, Jackson speaks of it being fixed by the language user associating properties with the term. The referent/denotation is the object that possesses these qualities. This makes it clear that the way that these qualities are thought of, the way that they refer/denote, can be quite distinct from the way that the term refers/denotes. For Jackson, the descriptive theory is a theory of language, of the meaning of words like ‘water’, and there is no need to suppose that such words, which have their meaning given to them in part by practice, will refer in the same way as the components of thought, which appear not to have their meaning given to them by practice. Thus there is no infinite regress.

It is plausible to think that a difference in associated properties, in this sense, is sufficient to give a difference in captured facts, as is my concern, because the fact that an object has one property, is different from the fact that it has another one. Further, although Jackson thus draws a distinction between thought and language, and my primary concern is with thought, this does not undermine my use of the descriptive theory. My concern is that, for example, the thoughts ‘Carroll is in Oxford’ and ‘Dodgson is in Oxford’, capture different facts. I am concerned to defend this idea by arguing that the utterances “Carroll is in Oxford” and “Dodgson is in Oxford” capture different facts, and by arguing that this shows that the two thoughts must capture different facts, because the thoughts are recognized in part with a propensity to accept or make such utterances. This is in no way reliant on supposing that the thoughts are linguistic.

I do not mean to assert that natural kind terms and names ought to be treated as the same in all respects, but I hope to have made it clear that it is plausible to think that beliefs

But, the possibility of necessary a posteriori truths, and contingent a priori truths, and the explanation of this via two-dimensional semantics, arguably gives a reason for differentiating such cases.

⁴³ Chalmers:2004 & 2006.

⁴⁴ Chalmers:2004 p.191.

⁴⁵ Jackson:1998b.

involving different co-denoting natural kind terms will capture different facts, just as those concerning different co-denoting names will.⁴⁶

7.5 Actions

Above we saw that an agent might act rationally whilst believing ‘Harry is in danger’ and having the goal of helping Harry, but not in believing ‘Will is in danger’ and having the goal of helping Harry, even if Will is Harry. According to the argument from action, it must follow from this that the two beliefs pick out different facts, and I have just defended this idea. Similarly, an agent can act rationally in believing ‘my neighbour is in danger’ and forming the goal of helping their neighbour, but not act rationally in believing ‘my mechanic is in danger’ and forming the goal of helping their neighbour, even if their neighbour is their mechanic. Again, according to the argument from action, it must follow from this that the two beliefs pick out different facts, and I have also defended this idea. The reason that the argument from action had these implications is that rationality will only demand one belief in place of another in a rational action if the two beliefs pick out different reasons, hence facts.

We also saw that an agent can act rationally when they believe ‘Harry is in danger’ and form the goal of helping Harry, but not when they believe ‘Harry is in danger’ and form the goal of helping Will. Similarly, when they believe ‘my mechanic is in danger’ and form the goal of helping their mechanic they can be rational, but not when they believe ‘my mechanic is in danger’ and form the goal of helping their neighbour. One might suppose that the sole requirement on a goal giving desire in a rational action was that the goal was to perform an action which was justified by the reason the agent was aware of in their belief. If this was the case, then it would seem to follow that as the former beliefs in the two cases just outlined concern the same reasons, it must be that the two goals in each case concerned different actions, otherwise rationality wouldn’t differentiate between them in this way. In this section I will argue that this is mistaken, the goal giving desire of an action is subject to rational requirements besides those of having as goal an action for which the reason the agent is aware of in their belief is a reason. Before arguing this I will say something about the individuation of actions.

⁴⁶ And so on for non-natural kind terms too, if need be.

The individuation of actions has divided authors, some believe that there are only very coarse grained distinctions, *unifiers*, others believe that there are very fine grained distinctions, *multipliers*.⁴⁷ Adopting Anscombe's⁴⁸ lead we might consider the following case: Bart is moving his arm up and down, he is thereby working the arm of a pump and pumping water to a house, the water has been poisoned, and so Bart is also thereby poisoning the people in the house, and thereby killing those people. The question of action individuation I am here concerned with is how many actions Bart is performing in this case.

One might argue that Bart is only performing one action, perhaps moving his arm.⁴⁹ The circumstances in which this action occurs are such that: Bart thereby also pumps water, as he is at a pump; and Bart poisons, as the pump is connected to a poisoned water supply which is being drunk; and Bart kills, because the people drinking the water supply end up dead as a result. However, Bart doesn't need to do anything besides moving his arm in order to pump, poison and kill, it just happens that the circumstances are such that in moving his arm he is pumping, poisoning and killing, and therefore these are all one action of Bart's.⁵⁰

However, one might argue that the arm moving, pumping, poisoning and killing are all different actions. This is because different things appear to be true of each. For example, it is true to say that Bart kills by poisoning, but false to say that Bart poisons by killing, and odd to say that Bart poisons by poisoning. The 'by' relation appears to be asymmetric and irreflexive, but no asymmetric or irreflexive relation can hold between a thing and itself.⁵¹ It also appears that these actions stand in different causal relations, for example, it seems that Bart's pumping caused water to flow, but it seems false to say that Bart's killing caused water to flow.⁵²

A second type of consideration also supports the multipliers' idea that Bart, as described, is performing numerous actions, namely, the actions appear to happen at different times. In the most clear case, killing involves someone dying, so it appears that Bart cannot have killed anyone until they die, however, it might be that the people Bart

⁴⁷ E.g. respectively, Anscombe:2000 and Davidson:2001a, and, Goldman:1971 and Thomson:1971a.

⁴⁸ Anscombe:2000 sect.23 p.3.

⁴⁹ I will not here go into the issue of what should be taken as the so called basic action, that is, whether it is a mental event, act of the will, contraction of the muscles, etc. focusing instead on whether, for example, pumping and killing are the same actions. (Cf. Hornsby:1980 ch.1 & 2, Hornsby:1982, Hornsby:1983, Lowe:1981, Lowe:1983, and, Alvarez & Hyman:1998.

⁵⁰ Cf. Anscombe:2000 and Davidson:2001a.

⁵¹ Cf. Goldman:1971, Thomson:1971b, Hornsby:1980 ch.1, and, Mackie:1997.

⁵² Cf. Goldman:1971, Thomson:1971b, and, Botting:2010.

Kills do not die until after he stops moving his arm or pumping. Therefore pumping and arm moving are not occurring when killing is, and thus they must be distinct actions from killing.

Unifiers can respond to these arguments for taking Bart to be doing numerous actions. In the first case one might argue that in saying “Bart poisons by killing”, one is not picking out a relation between two actions, because ‘killing’ does not pick out a specific action, as it is not a referring/denoting expression (unlike ‘the killing Bart performs in 1957’ or ‘Intention-gate’).⁵³ Nevertheless, there remains the implication that Bart’s fulfilling the one action type, for example, poisoning, is different from his fulfilling the other action type, and if fulfilling an action type is embodying an action token, and embodying an action token is acting, then we still have the implication that the actions are distinct.

One might respond to the multipliers’ causal argument by distinguishing between a context in which one describes causal relations, and a context in which one provides an explanation in terms of causes. We would expect the former context to be extensional, so any expression referring to *c* could replace the ‘*c*’ in “*c* caused *e*”, without changing the truth-value of the sentence. However, we would not expect the explanatory context to be extensional. This would enable one to say that when considering “Bart’s killing caused water to flow”, we must bear the context in mind. If we take the context to be one in which we are simply picking out causal relations then this sentence is strictly true, but, the sentence would provide a poor explanation, and so in the explanatory context would not play the same role as “Bart’s pumping caused water to flow”. It is because “Bart’s killing caused water to flow” would provide a poor explanation, that it would be an odd thing to say, but, this does not mean that it is false. The distinction between contexts thus enables the unifier to insist that Bart only performs one action, and to provide an error theory for the multipliers temptation to see, for example, “Bart’s killing caused water to flow” as false, but “Bart’s pumping caused water to flow” as true. Nevertheless, a multiplier might worry that even when one is aware that they are in an extensional context, “Bart’s killing caused water to flow” still sounds wrong.⁵⁴

⁵³ Cf. Hornsby:1980 ch.1.

⁵⁴ Cf. Botting:2010. Anscombe:1979 offers a different response to the multiplier’s causal argument, but Botting:2010 gives grounds for thinking this is insufficient (e.g. because it presupposes a certain ontology of events as particulars, which is itself questionable).

The unifier might respond to the argument from temporality by distinguishing between, for instance, when an act becomes recognizably an act of killing, and, when that act occurs. If no one dies for a day after Bart stopped pumping, we would not say that Bart was killing for that day. Thus, it doesn't appear that we need to think of the act of killing as having this drawn out duration, nor hence, that we should not identify it with the act of pumping, or of moving his arm. What happens at the event of Bart's victim dying, is not that Bart stops killing, but, that it becomes clear that Bart's act of pumping was in fact an act of killing. At this later time we are able to describe the act as an act of killing, something we were not able to do before the death, but, nonetheless, the act of killing happened when the pumping did, and so sometime before the death.⁵⁵

However, the multiplier is also able to respond to the unifiers' argument that the agent only does one thing. Botting⁵⁶ points out that we might say that someone is doing something when they are not moving, for example, one might be said to be printing despite being sat at their computer motionless waiting for their printer to finish. In such a case it therefore appears that the agent's doing in selecting the print option on their computer, is quite distinct from their doing in printing, as the former is over before the latter. This means that the unifier speaks too quickly when they say, for example, that Bart needn't *do* anything further in order to poison, than he does to move his arm, because it is no longer clear that an agent must, so to speak, be in motion in order to be doing. Some cases differ from the printing case, for example, we are unwilling to say Bart is doing anything for the time in which the poison he has spread is taking effect on his victims. However, it needn't follow from this that Bart is not at this time acting or killing, as the multiplier may suggest, because the phenomena might have a different explanation. For example, it might be that we do not say that Bart is doing over this period because he has insufficient control over the spread of the poison, not because the killing, which is one of his actions, isn't occurring at this time.⁵⁷ In short, an unwillingness to describe an agent as doing, or even acting at a time, needn't entail that one of their actions is not occurring at that time, as it might simply follow from the nature of the action instead.

So much to say that, besides there being good reasons to adopt a coarse grained approach to action individuation, there are also reasons to adopt a fine grained approach, and it is not clear that one is foolish to adopt the latter. If one did adopt the fine grained or

⁵⁵ Cf. Anscombe:1979 and Bennett:1973.

⁵⁶ Botting:2010.

⁵⁷ Cf. Botting:2010.

multipliers approach, then it might plausibly follow that the action one had as goal in desiring to help their mechanic was distinct from the action they had as goal in desiring to help their neighbour. Further, it is possible, especially if one adopts a descriptive theory of names as outlined above, that the action one had as goal when one desired to help Will, was different from that which one had as goal when one desired to help Harry. It seems fine to say one helped Harry by helping Will, or one's mechanic by helping one's neighbour, but questionable to say that one helped Will by helping Will, or one's mechanic by helping one's mechanic. If this were right, then the argument from action would be vindicated.⁵⁸

Nevertheless, as already suggested, I think there is an alternative way to vindicate the argument from action. I am only pressed to suppose that the goal of helping one's mechanic, and the goal of helping one's neighbour, concern different actions, so long as we suppose that the sole requirement on a desire giving goal in a rational action, is that it concern the reasonable action. But, this supposition can be denied. A desire giving goal must meet this requirement, but, it must also meet a further requirement if the action is to be rational.

In Chapter Three I pointed out that desires can be responsive to reasons, one can have a desire for a reason (I can want to go cycling because I gain pleasure from cycling). I now contend that in order to act rationally, the agent's goal giving desire in the action must be appropriately responsive to the reason they perform the action for. Specifically, the reason they perform the action for must also be the reason for which they form the goal giving desire that is their state of motivation in acting. This does not mean that the agent must choose to have that desire, as a desire's responsiveness to reasons is different from an action's responsiveness to reasons.⁵⁹

⁵⁸ Goldman:1971's theory of actions would be sufficiently fine grained to fit this notion. However, one must be careful in how one accounts for this. For Goldman an action is simply an agent instantiating an action type at a time. It follows that the same action occurs so long as the same agent and action type occur at the same time. For Goldman so long as we see the properties of *being a mechanic* or *being a neighbour* as applied to the agent, we are dealing with the same action. However, Goldman does think that action types are very finely individuated, so the action type of *a strolling by a mechanic* and the action type of *a strolling by a neighbour*, will be different action types.

⁵⁹ To this degree I draw a distinction between the belief and the desire in an action. The desire must be appropriately responsive to reasons, but, the belief needn't be. Nonetheless, this does appear to be quite an appropriate distinction to draw. An agent can act rationally despite having a false belief, and plausibly despite having a belief that they did not have sufficient reason to adopt. We can separate the episode of acting from the episode of forming one's beliefs. However, the origin of the desire which is the state of motivation in an action arguably has a much closer relation to the rationality of the action. If one's state of motivation is irrational, then one's action is, as to act just is to be motivated.

It follows that I can admit that (although I am not convinced this is the correct thing to say) in desiring to help one's mechanic and in desiring to help one's neighbour, one has the same action as goal, and yet, a rational action for which the first desire is the state of motivation must be responsive to different reasons to one for which the second desire is the state of motivation. An agent is rational to believe 'my mechanic is in danger' and to form the goal of helping their mechanic, and act to help their mechanic for the reason they are aware of in this belief. The belief that 'my mechanic is in danger' captures a fact which is a reason to form the desire to help their mechanic and a reason to act to help their mechanic. However, an agent is not rational to believe 'my mechanic is in danger' and to form the goal of helping their neighbour, and to act to help their neighbour for the reason they are aware of in this belief. This is because the belief that 'my mechanic is in danger' captures a fact which is not a reason to form the desire to help their neighbour even *if* it is a reason to act to help their neighbour.

That the desire to help one's mechanic is different from the desire to help one's neighbour is quite plausible, even if they are the same person. In fact, were this denied, then the very worry I am trying to deal with in this section appears to evaporate. It is therefore quite possible there will be different reasons for the two desires. Moreover, it is plausible that there are different reasons for the two just as is implied by the case at hand. If I do not know that my mechanic is my neighbour, then it is rational to be brought by an awareness of the fact that my mechanic is in danger, to form the goal of helping my mechanic, but, not to form the goal of helping my neighbour. This is because even if the desires concern the same actions, the desires are more fine grained than the actions, and are receptive to the distinction between the fact that someone is a mechanic and in danger, and the fact that someone is a neighbour and in danger. My preceding discussion of descriptive theories of names shows how this can also account for the difference in roles of the two desires, to help Will and to help Harry. Different facts will be associated with the names 'Will' and 'Harry', and the two desires will be responsive to these different facts, being as fine grained as the beliefs that involve those names are.

I can thus account for why the desire to help Harry might play a different role in the rationality of an action, than the desire to help Will, even if Will is Harry, and similarly, why a desire to help my mechanic might play a different role to a desire to help my neighbour, even if my mechanic is my neighbour. The quick response to this is that the actions one adopts as goals in these two desires are different. This response relies on adopting a fine grained theory of action individuation, a view which has some independent

plausibility. A further and distinct response notes that the goal giving desire, as one's state of being motivated in acting, must itself be appropriately responsive to reasons. An agent must desire for the reasons they act for when they act rationally. Desires admit of fine grained individuation (even if actions do not), and thus actions involving different goal giving desires may differ in their rationality and hence responsiveness to reasons.

The discussion of this and the preceding few sections shouldn't cover over an important point. Perry's arguments concern essential indexicals, not essential names or definite descriptions or kind terms. The interpretation of another agent's action as rational does not appear to demand the attribution to that agent of a particular non-indexical belief in place of any other non-indexical beliefs. However, it can demand the attribution of an indexical belief in place of any non-indexical belief. It remains the case that there is a special indexical/non-indexical asymmetry.

Summary

The argument from action goes beyond issues of cognitive significance as whilst one might try [though I suspect unsatisfactorily] to explain a difference in cognitive significance without reference to a difference in the facts one is aware of, one cannot respond to the argument from action in this way.

The argument from action will have implications for all cases in which a rational action requires one belief in place of another. In all such cases the beliefs must involve an awareness of different facts. That the argument is correct to say this about a variety of cases is shown by the fact that definite descriptions pick out different facts, even if they denote the same individual, and also by the plausibility of the descriptive theory of names and natural kind terms, or at least, by any theory that accounts for a difference in cognitive significance between co-referring names or kind terms, through taking different facts to be associated with the different names or kind terms.

If the role of goal giving desires in rational actions is understood to be simply that the goal adopted is the action performed, then the argument from action also implies that one must adopt a fine grained approach to action individuation, an approach with independent plausibility. However, it appears that the goal giving desire must meet further requirements. As the state of motivation in acting the desire must also be responsive to the reasons one acts for. As such, the argument from action only in fact requires a fine grained approach to desire individuation.

The argument from action is plausible in its implications and numerous applications besides its application to the case of the tenseless theory of time, and therefore, its application in this latter case also stands as appropriate.

CHAPTER EIGHT: THE ARGUMENT FROM APPROPRIATE EMOTIONS

In the last chapter I argued that the tenseless theory of time was incorrect, as the demand for tensed beliefs in rational actions proved the reality of facts picked out by those beliefs and not picked out by any tenseless beliefs. This argument rested on the argument for the essential indexical and on the nature of rational action.

In this chapter I will examine the nature of emotions, or a sub-species thereof, and their appropriateness. I will defend a cognitive view of emotions according to which an emotion involves a belief. I will argue that such emotions are appropriate or inappropriate on the basis of the reasons that those emotions are felt for, those reasons being given by the cognitive component of the emotion, the cognitive component being an awareness of the reason the emotion is felt for.

On the basis of Prior's thank goodness argument I will show that an emotion can be appropriate when it is felt for a reason captured by a tensed belief, and inappropriate when felt for a reason captured by any tenseless belief. This will enable me to argue in a manner analogous to the last chapter, that the tensed belief must capture a reason, that is fact, not captured by any tenseless belief, and hence, that the tenseless theory of time is mistaken.

8.1 A Cognitive Theory of Emotions

James¹ said that emotions were the feelings of bodily changes which resulted from a perception of the exciting fact. For example, when I see a bull charge towards me, this causes my heart rate to rise, adrenalin to flow, etc. I will feel these physiological changes, and these feelings will be my emotion of fear.

However, this view that emotions are simple² feelings suffers from a number of criticisms. Cannon³ has argued that physiological data does not support James's claim, as one can have, for example, the physiological effects associated with fear, rising heart rate etc. and not have the emotion of fear.

¹ James:1884.

² By 'simple feeling' I mean a feeling devoid of cognitive content, and therefore, I am excluding from these comments theories such as Greenspan:2004a's, de Sousa:1987's, or Goldie:2004's in which one might want to say that an emotion was a feeling with a cognitive content.

³ Cannon:1917.

Separating the feeling and a particular physiology does not help the view that emotions are simple feelings. Feelings are not fine grained enough to distinguish the myriad of emotions that people have, for example, feelings of embarrassment and of shame can coincide. Furthermore, emotions can go unfelt, as when one does not realize that one was angry on a past occasion until one looks back and reconsiders it. Or, as when one has an emotion for a number of years, perhaps anger at a childhood slight, but one only has feelings of that emotion during particular episodes within that time.⁴

Identifying emotions instead with actions, or dispositions to act, that is, adopting a behaviourism about the emotions,⁵ fares little better. Behaviourism here suffers many of the criticisms of behaviourism about other mental states. It is not clear exactly what behaviour ought to be associated with a particular emotion, because people can feel an emotion but refrain from acting in typical ways because of certain other beliefs and desires that they have, for example, they may not want to show their anger. Moreover, it is clear that one does not generally know about their emotions through observing, either directly or indirectly, their own behaviour. It is plausible that there is a link between emotions and behaviour, but it is implausible that emotions simply are behaviour.⁶

Solomon⁷ points out that one can know what emotion one would likely feel in a particular scenario, not because one knows how one would feel, nor because one knows how one would behave, but because of the details of the scenario and the judgments one knows one would make about it. For example, if one knows that one would take a scenario to be awkward but not one's responsibility, then one will expect oneself to be embarrassed but not ashamed. One can know about one's emotions through knowledge of what one is, or would be, aware of.

We saw in Chapter One that MacBeath criticized Mellor for failing to acknowledge that people are emotional about things. For example, Prior is relieved that the exams are over, Mellor is grateful that MacBeath offered him an improved solution to Prior's puzzle, and so on. It is clear that emotions have cognitive content, that is, they involve a state of awareness, a belief.⁸ This shows that emotions are not simple feelings. It also enables one

⁴ Cf. Solomon:1993 ch.4.

⁵ Cf. Ryle:1949 ch.4.

⁶ Cf. Solomon:1993 ch.4, more generally, Lowe:2000 ch.3.

⁷ Solomon:1993 p.98, at this time Solomon was keen to defend the idea that an emotion is a judgement, however, later Solomon shifts to the view that emotions essentially involve judgments, even if they also have other aspects, such as feelings, e.g. Solomon:2003.

⁸ A number of writers have defended the idea that emotions have cognitive content, though not all of these writers are happy to speak in terms of belief as providing that cognitive content. I will say something of this

to account for why there would be a link between particular emotions and particular types of behaviour, because there is a link between particular beliefs and particular types of behaviour.

Recognizing that emotions have a cognitive component also nicely fits the fact that there are fine-grained distinctions between types of emotions, because there are fine-grained distinctions amongst types of beliefs. Moreover, there are plausible identifications between types of the former and types of the latter sort. For example, in fear one will believe something to be dangerous, in relief one will believe a discomfort has ended, in shame one will judge a discomfort to be their responsibility, and so on.⁹

This view is also supported by considering uses of emotion language. When an individual says, for example, “I am very angry with you”, one is informed of their emotion. But, very often the appropriate way to respond to this is not to react as if one has been informed of another’s feelings, e.g. “Poor you, that must be uncomfortable”, nor as if one has been informed of another’s behaviour “Thanks, in that case I’ll avoid you for a while”. Rather, one ought to respond to the utterance as informing one of a belief the speaker has about them, e.g. that one has done something wrong, “I’m sorry, it was an accident”.¹⁰

Emotions, therefore, are not simple feelings or patterns of behaviour, but instead have a cognitive component, in having an emotion one believes something to be the case.

8.2 Objections to a Cognitive Theory of Emotions Rebutted

Despite the increasing popularity of a cognitive theory of emotions, the view has been criticized, and a consideration of these objections will clarify the view I am proposing.

Solomon¹¹ once defended the view that an emotion could be identified with its cognitive component, so that feelings were mere ornamentations to emotions but no proper part of them. However, if this view is correct it is not clear how there can be a difference between having an emotion, and having the same belief without having the emotion, as one surely can. For example, how I can dispassionately be aware that someone has died,

below. (Cf. Solomon:1993, Greenspan:1988, Calhoun:2003, and de Sousa:2004.) In making these comments, I am no longer using ‘belief’ as an umbrella term.

⁹ Cf. e.g. Solomon:1993 ch.5, Greenspan:1988, and Taylor:1975.

¹⁰ Cf. Pitcher:1965 (who cites Bedford:1957 and Urmson:1952).

¹¹ Solomon:1993.

without grieving that they have died, though plausibly a belief that someone has died is a paradigmatic example of the cognitive component of grief.¹²

The obvious and I believe correct response to this criticism, is to accept that emotions are not merely cognitive but are more complex.¹³ For the reasons given in the last section it is wrong to say simply that an emotion must be a belief and a particular feeling, or belief and a particular pattern of behaviour. Nevertheless, it appears that an emotion, as opposed to a pure belief will have close links to, or often will simply be in part constituted by feelings. Plausibly it will also have close links to certain forms of behaviour, facial expressions etc. I will not try to detail this relation; suffice to say that the cognitive view of emotions should not be understood to be that an emotion is no more than a belief.¹⁴

It appears that someone might be scared and not believe that they are in danger, and therefore, that it is wrong to identify the emotion of fear with the belief one is in danger. For example, someone on a high balcony might appear to be scared even though they say that they believe that they are not in danger because they believe the rail is strong, and no one will push them etc.¹⁵

The force of this criticism against the cognitive theory is removed by the peculiarity of the situation at hand. Most often when someone is fearful, if they come to believe that they are not in danger, then they will lose their fear. For example, if I step out onto a road to cross it and glimpse a car out of the corner of my eye, then I will become afraid. But when I look more closely, and see that the car is stationary, the fear will pass and I will continue in my stride. We should therefore expect there to be something peculiar in a situation in which someone professes to know they are in no danger, yet appears to be fearful. One is thus encouraged not to treat the case simply at face value, nor hence to see it as a straight forward counter example to the cognitive theory.

¹² Cf. Shaffer:1983.

¹³ Solomon:1988 actually argues in response that the notion of pure belief [or for Solomon, ‘judgment’] is in fact unclear, insofar as, there appears to be something at fault in, or pathological about, a belief that one has, for example, been wronged, which lacks relations to, or elements of feeling. I think this is interesting, but it does not – as Solomon acknowledges – undermine the response I have given.

¹⁴ If one were to insist that an emotion was a feeling with a cognitive content, then, given the appropriate nature of this intentionality, that is a willingness to see it as a propositional attitude, I would be happy to speak of this feeling as a belief, given an umbrella use of the term ‘belief’ as a mode of awareness (cf. Chapter Three).

¹⁵ Cf. Pitcher:1965, Deigh:2010, Greenspan:1988 ch.1, Calhoun:2003, and, de Sousa:2004.

For example, it might be that the individual accepts that there is good evidence that they are safe and they do not want to appear sceptical of their friend's assertions that they are safe, and therefore they say that they believe that they are safe. Nevertheless, the individual does actually harbour a belief that they are in danger, they passed the building when it was in construction and they saw the workmen hurrying, they know building inspectors can be susceptible to bribes, even if this isn't very common etc. Perhaps if pushed the individual would admit that in fact they believe there is a chance they will fall, but even if not, the appearance of fear, the persons unwilling to approach the edge, and the peculiarity of the situation is already evidence that such a belief might be at play. Alternatively, it might be that the person really does believe themselves to be safe, but that they are not in fact scared. Perhaps they are simply experiencing physiological effects related to fear or a feeling related to fear as the result of some sort of pathology. A pathology indicated by the peculiarity of the case. Finally, it could be that the person holds contradictory beliefs, both taking themselves to be in danger, and taking themselves not to be in danger. Accusing an individual of self-contradiction is not something that should or even could often be appropriate, but, as already noted, the case at issue is a rare one, and moreover, it is a case in which the individual concerned appears to be irrational.

The idea that emotions are cognitive has also been criticized on the grounds that animals and infants can have emotions, but it is not clear that they can have complex cognitive states. For example, it appears animals and infants can be scared, but not so clear that they can believe that they are in danger. The problem being that danger is a complex concept, and therefore not one we would readily attribute to animals and infants.¹⁶

However, it is quite plausible that animals and infants do have a less rich emotional life than more mature humans.¹⁷ Furthermore, it is plausible that to the degree that animals and infants have emotions they have them about something, they are cognitive. The cat is scared of the dog. It might be that we ought therefore to say that fear doesn't simply involve the belief that one is in danger, but could also involve a more simple belief such as 'pain is imminent'.¹⁸ Alternatively, it might be that we ought to say that fear concerns danger, but that animals and infants have a variety of emotions which are related to and perhaps predecessors to fear. These earlier emotions being more simple and involving more simple beliefs, such as 'that causes pain'. I will not decide between these options, but

¹⁶ Cf. Deigh:2010.

¹⁷ Cf. Greenspan:2004b, Solomon:2003, and, de Sousa:2004.

¹⁸ Deigh himself supposes something like this (2010 p.31).

on either account it remains the case that emotions are cognitive states and that, for example, fear remains a concern with harm.

Robinson¹⁹ has criticised the cognitive view of emotions through a consideration of the startle response. Robinson believes that startle is an example of an emotion. It gives rise to changes in facial expressions, as are closely linked with emotions, it is also related to fear and shock which are characteristic emotions. Startle, however, is not cognitive, it doesn't involve the agent having a belief about what startled them, from which it appears to follow that emotions needn't be cognitive.

I believe that startle is not an emotion²⁰ but is rather a more primitive brute reaction to the environment. Nevertheless, I will not defend this idea, rather, I will limit my discussion to emotions that are more apparently cognitive. I will not define this group of emotions, suffice to say clear examples are relief, gratitude, anxiety, grief, anger, fear, embarrassment, contempt and shame. These examples are all linked in a manner similar to that which Anscombe²¹ links all actions. That is, they are emotions for which people can give reasons as to why they have them, or why someone would be justified in having them. They are emotions that inform one of the person's beliefs and values. If startle is an emotion and it is not cognitive, that does not entail that all emotions ought to be thought of in that manner, and nor does it undermine the points raised above in favour of thinking of some emotions as cognitive.²² From now on I shall be concerned with just this class of cognitive emotions, and I will simply use the term 'emotion' to refer to members of this class unless otherwise indicated.

The cognitive theory of emotions that I propose is therefore not the view that all emotions are simply beliefs. Rather, by 'emotions' I mean to pick out a class of cognitive emotions, which may or may not be the class of all emotions. Further, these emotions will be something more than mere beliefs.

¹⁹ Robinson:1995.

²⁰ Cf. Solomon:1998.

²¹ Cf. Anscombe:2000 chap.2.

²² It should be noted that Robinson does not take herself to have proven that no emotions involve a cognitive element, merely that not all do.

8.3 The Appropriateness of Emotions

For some time it was thought that emotions and rationality were entirely distinct. Hume²³ for example declared that reason will always be the slave of the emotions, because the emotions could not be compelled or judged by the standards of rationality. However, more recently²⁴ room has been made to consider the rationality or appropriateness of emotions. This trend has taken two broad forms, one considering the practical value of an emotion, and one considering the rationality of an emotion's cognitive component.²⁵

That emotions can be rational or justified, is evinced by our everyday practices. For example, it is inappropriate to get angry at someone for being nice to you, or to be extremely grateful to someone for being just a little bit nice to you. In fact, that emotions can be appropriate or rational has been offered as evidence that emotions are not simply feelings, as simple feelings, such as headaches or itches, are not rational or appropriate (even if they can be expected effects of certain events).²⁶

One manner in which emotions have been judged, on occasion if not always, to be rational or appropriate, is in regard to their practical value. Damasio²⁷ has argued that emotions play a vital role in reasoning. It is thought that they can provide a solution to the frame-problem by making certain facts salient to an agent in their reasoning, and therefore preventing them from being drawn into a potentially endless consideration of factors. Emotions have a rational value because they enable agents to act rationally without being drawn into endless reasoning.

However, it is not clear that emotions do play this practical role. Evans,²⁸ for example, has argued that before we can be sure that emotions provide a solution to the frame-problem, we need a clear account of what emotions are and how they play this role. Moreover, it is not clear that if emotions do play this role, that in letting them do so we are not passing over a different and better method for solving the problem, nor hence, that we should take emotions to be appropriate or rational because they fulfil this role.

²³ Hume:1985 bk.II pt.III sect III.

²⁴ Though that is not to say the idea is new, Aristotle perhaps being an earlier example (cf. Aristotle:2001 bk.IV).

²⁵ Cf. Greenspan:2004a, she refers to the two types as emotions *adaptiveness* and *appropriateness* respectively.

²⁶ E.g. Solomon:1993 ch.4, Pitcher:1965.

²⁷ E.g. Damasio:1995.

²⁸ Evans:2002.

Elster²⁹ suggests a different manner in which emotions have practical value, that is, because they are the sole source for the maintenance of social norms. Social norms are non-outcome-orientated injunctions to behave in certain ways. They are distinct from social conventions, social norms being exemplified by the norm of wearing black at funerals, social conventions by the convention of driving on the left in the UK. My shame in my not wearing black at a funeral will be a response to another's contempt for me not wearing black, and will in turn bring me to feel contempt for others who break the norm.³⁰

But Elster's suggestion is implausible. It is not clear what social norms could be in play in all cases of appropriate emotions. For example, no social norm appears to be supported by my being relieved that my headache has ended, nor ought I to be ashamed if I am not relieved it has ended, nor ought another experience contempt towards me because I am not relieved. I have not worn bright colours to a funeral, and this is not because I have experienced contempt as a result of doing so (I haven't done so), but because I was told as a child that I ought not to. In short, there are clearly other ways than the experience of emotions to pass on social norms. Furthermore, if emotions did play the role of maintaining social norms, this would only make the emotions appropriate if the social norms themselves were. And plausibly, if the norms are appropriate, then the appropriateness of the emotions stems from them, not from the role of emotions maintaining them. If I am ashamed having worn bright colours to a funeral, I will not be ashamed because of having experienced contempt, that is, I will not be ashamed of experiencing contempt, but of my wearing the bright clothes. My act, not the contempt would be the object of my emotion. If the norm of not wearing bright colours is appropriate, then plausibly my act of wearing them is inappropriate, and it is my shame's having this act as object that makes it appropriate.³¹

The practical value of emotions needn't rest solely on general claims such as those concerning the frame-problem or social norms, instead we might make more specific cases.

²⁹ Elster:2004.

³⁰ A different social practical advantage of emotions, might be taken to arise from the idea that expressions associated with emotions aid social cohesion (cf. Robinson:1995 attributes such an idea to Paul Ekman). But, given that emotions and behaviour needn't be covariant, then this appears to be implausible.

³¹ Even if one insisted the contempt triggered this shame, it is not clear that it is the only thing that could have done so, furthermore, that contempt itself must either have been triggered or not, at some stage we must reach an emotion not triggered by another one, and here plausibly the justification of the emotion would stem from its object, that is the inappropriateness of the act.

For example, the discomfort of anticipating a pain might encourage one to act so as to prevent the pain coming around, and in turn be an aid to the survival of the agent.³²

But there are a number of general problems with taking the rationality or appropriateness of an emotion to rest on its practical value. It is not clear that emotions are always of practical value.³³ In a case such as the anticipation one, it might well be that, for example, anticipation makes an agent nervous, and therefore perform less well, and therefore, actually places the agent at greater risk. It is not clear that an emotion such as grief plays a practical role at all, after all, a concern for death or loss is already to be found in emotions such as fear, or in sensations such as pain.

Furthermore, these points make it clear that we are not generally certain of whether a particular emotion, or even emotions in general, will be of practical value to an agent, and yet we are generally certain of whether an emotion is appropriate or not. If I do not know whether or not grief is advantageous, my certainty that grieving a death that is yet to come is inappropriate cannot be a judgment of the practical value of the emotion. The appropriateness at issue in our everyday consideration of emotions as rational or appropriate therefore cannot be a matter of the practicality of those emotions, even if they do have practical value.³⁴

Cockburn³⁵ has noted that if someone is angry because they believe that someone has slighted them, then this anger is inappropriate if in fact the person has done no such thing. Or if someone is extremely angry at another who has only done them a very minor injustice, then again this anger is inappropriate. These examples of anger remain inappropriate even it turns out that they were practically fortuitous to the emotional individuals. A celebrity might make their living from being an overly angry character, but that does not mean that their exaggerated emotions are appropriate. These points lend weight to the idea that the appropriateness at issue is not a matter of practical value. Cockburn presses this idea further by pointing out that there is something worrying, I

³² Cf. Nagel:1978 p.71 ftnt. 1.

³³ It is no good to suppose that an emotion must be of practical value otherwise it would have been ruled out by evolution, because it could be that emotions are side effects of things which are of value, that emotions are of neutral practical value, or, that we have not evolved to a state at which the negative practical value of emotions has knocked them out of existence.

³⁴ de Sousa:1987 speaks of the appropriateness of an emotion in terms of whether the context of the emotion is relevantly similar to the paradigm context of the emotion. But, this does not offer us an alternative to a practical assessment of emotions, as de Sousa takes the appropriateness of the paradigm contexts to be determined by practical matters.

³⁵ Cockburn:1998 and 1997 especially ch.2.

would say sinister, in the idea that our emotions are purely or ultimately to be valued in terms of their practical worth.³⁶ As if it is right to grieve a loved one simply because that brings practical advantages to one.

The cognitive element of emotions raises scope for a rather different manner in which emotions can be considered as appropriate or not, a manner in which emotions themselves are responsive to rational concerns not merely characters within them. (Hume³⁷ denied that emotions had a cognitive component, and therefore this approach could not have been open to him.) Beliefs can be appropriate or inappropriate, and therefore, if emotions involve beliefs this evaluation should also apply to them. The appropriateness of a belief is grounded in its origin. An appropriate belief will have an appropriate origin, that is, one which is likely to entail the truth of the belief.³⁸ For example, if I believe that it is raining because I witness the rain, then my belief is appropriate, whereas, if I believe that it is raining because I dream that it is, my belief is not appropriate. Emotions then are appropriate or not according to whether the beliefs they involve are appropriate or not. If I am angry because someone has slighted me, I will believe that someone has slighted me. If this belief would be appropriate, then, so the theory goes, the anger would be too.

It is plausible that we can speak of the appropriateness of emotions in terms of the appropriateness of the beliefs they involve. However, it is wrong to think that this is the only or fundamental manner in which we so speak, because emotions can be appropriate or not independently of whether or not the beliefs they involve are appropriate. If I learn that a loved one will die on a particular date in the distant future, it is inappropriate for me to at that time grieve their death. That is, it is inappropriate to have grief where the belief element involved is the belief ‘*x* will die at *t*’ or the tenseless belief ‘*x* dies at *t*’. Such grief would be inappropriate despite the belief it involves being true and appropriate. Similarly, if I am in danger it is appropriate to be scared, but it is not appropriate to be scared of that danger afterwards, that is, it is appropriate to have fear involving the belief ‘I could fall off this balcony which would cause me great harm’, but not involving the belief ‘I could have fallen off that balcony which would have caused me great harm’, despite both beliefs being true and appropriate. Alternatively, if my friend wrongs me in a minor way it is appropriate for me to be a little bit angry, but it is not appropriate for me to be extremely

³⁶ Cf. Bergmann:1978.

³⁷ Hume:1985 bk.II pt.III sect.III.

³⁸ E.g. Audi:2004. My argument is not reliant on this view of the appropriateness of beliefs, and would work equally well if one wanted to say, for example, that appropriate beliefs just are true beliefs.

angry, yet, plausibly both emotions would involve the same belief, namely, 'my friends refusing my invitation was a slight against me'. Some things Pitcher says suggest the thought that extreme anger and mild anger will involve different beliefs, for example, 'I was badly wronged' and 'I was slightly wronged' respectively.³⁹ But I find this implausible, it is clear people can get extremely angry about what they know is a trivial matter. Moreover, their anger can calm, and nothing about the belief involved changes in this calming.

The appropriateness of emotions therefore does not reduce simply to the appropriateness of the beliefs they involve.⁴⁰ But this perhaps ought to be expected, as emotions are more than just the beliefs they involve, it is fitting therefore that there is something more to their appropriateness. In short, it is fitting that there is something that makes it appropriate to have an emotion on an occasion, not merely to have the simple belief which would capture its cognitive component.

As already intimated above, emotions are had for reasons, I am angry because someone has wronged me.⁴¹ I give their wronging me as a reason for me to be angry, and further, their wronging me makes it reasonable for me to be angry. If an emotion is had for a reason that is a reason that justifies that emotion, then that emotion will be in that regard appropriate, it will be reasonable. In the terminology of Chapter Three we might say that if the m-reason for my emotion is a j-reason for that emotion, then the emotion is appropriate. This is a form of appropriateness distinct from either the practical value of the emotion or the appropriateness of the belief involved as just discussed. Furthermore, this form of appropriateness is fit to fulfil the roles unfulfilled by the previous forms. For example, it is appropriate of me to be angry when my friend slights me by refusing my invitation, because this is a j-reason for my being angry. However, this is not a j-reason to be extremely angry, and therefore, extreme anger would be inappropriate.

³⁹ Pitcher:1965.

⁴⁰ Greenspan (e.g. 1988) says that the appropriateness of an emotion will not be identical with the appropriateness of the belief it involves. Her reason for saying this is that the belief will often have to meet higher standards to be appropriate than the emotion does. However, this difference in level changes little of relevance to my argument.

⁴¹ I am not the only person to speak of reasons in regard of the appropriateness of emotions, but discussions often conflate these reasons with reasons to form the belief involved in the emotion, they leave little room for the belief to be appropriate and the emotion inappropriate, and therefore, they fall under my discussion of equating the appropriateness of the emotion with the appropriateness of the belief involved (cf. Pitcher:1965, Taylor:1975, Goldie:2004, Solomon:1993).

Thus we can see that there are number of different manners in which one might judge an emotion to be appropriate. The two most popular types of way of doing this, in respect of the practical value of the emotion and in respect of the appropriateness of the belief involved in the emotion, cannot exhaust the field. We must recognize a third measure, namely, whether the emotions are had for reasons that justify those emotions.

8.4 The Reasonableness of Emotions

In the previous section we saw that emotions can be identified as appropriate or not simply in regard to the reasons that they are had for. In this section I will consider what these reasons are, and how they are related to the emotions.

It is clear that the reason an emotion is had for, its m-reason, is given by the cognitive component of the emotion. When I feel relief because – for the reason that – my headache is over, the cognitive component of my relief will be the belief ‘my headache is over’. Similarly, when I am scared because I might fall off the balcony which would cause me harm, the cognitive component of my emotion will be the belief ‘I might fall off this balcony which would cause me harm’, and so on. Conversely, when I have grief whose cognitive component is the belief ‘my grandmother has died’, the reason for which I grieve is that my grandmother has died. And so on.

Solomon⁴² has suggested that the cognitive component of an emotion picks out a subjective object, where this is something other than a fact, or a state of the world. For Solomon, when I am relieved because my headache is over my relief does not concern the fact that my headache is over, rather, it concerns a subjective object.⁴³ Moreover, this subjective object can exist even if the fact does not, that is, even if my headache is not over.

However, it clear that Solomon is wrong. If my headache is not over I ought not to be relieved that it is, furthermore, if I know that my headache is not over I will not be relieved that it is. I do not take this subjective object to be a j-reason for my emotion, and therefore I do not adopt this subjective object as an m-reason. (The arguments here mirror arguments of Chapter Three, though I take Solomon’s subjective object to be something different from a mental state.)

⁴² Solomon:1993 ch.5.

⁴³ Solomon believes that the emotion will be triggered by something objective, but that objective thing needn’t be anything to do with the fact that my headache is over.

Facts are j-reasons for emotions, and subjective objects are not. I ought only to be relieved that my headache is over if it is, to grieve a death if there has been a death, fear a danger if there is a danger, and so on. Further, we are aware of this, and therefore, we often have these j-reasons as m-reasons. If I learn there was no death, I will stop grieving whether or not a subjective object persists. If I learn there is no danger, I will stop feeling scared whether or not a subjective object persists, and so on. Moreover, it must be the case that some emotions are had for reasons that justify them, and therefore, that sometimes our m-reasons for our emotions are j-reasons for them, and are hence facts.

Solomon⁴⁴ recognizes that it appears that the cognitive component picks out facts, but he motivates the idea that it picks out subjective objects by considering error cases, for example, when I mistakenly believe that I am in danger and am resultantly scared. However, with the arguments of Chapter Three in mind we can see our way clear of this muddle. If I mistakenly believe that I am in danger, this belief is the cognitive component of an emotion of fear, and, I am not in danger, then it needn't follow that my m-reason for my fear was some subjective object. Rather, it could simply be that I had no m-reason for my emotion. Furthermore, it appears that in such a case I will not have an m-reason, because if I learn that I am not in danger I will believe that I oughtn't to have been scared, that is, I will admit that I had no reason to be scared and merely mistakenly believed that I did (even if a subjective object persists). The emotion is an attitude towards a non-existent, i.e. my danger, this is not in itself unusual as we have all sorts of attitudes towards non-existents, and it reveals that the m-reason is a non-existent, that is, that I have no m-reason.

Solomon is not the only person to suggest that the cognitive components of emotions pick out something less than facts. Rather, this is a common⁴⁵ response to a criticism I considered above against the cognitive theory of emotions. The criticism concerns the idea that someone might, for example, appear to be scared even though they appear to believe that they are in no danger. I will refer to this as the criticism from irrationality. One pattern of response to the criticism of irrationality is to suggest that the cognitive component of the emotion does not simply pick out facts. I am not sure the proponents of these views would want to speak in terms of subjective objects, an alternative way of putting matters might be to say that the emotions pick out facts but they

⁴⁴ Solomon:1993 ch.5. I am tempted to say that Solomon is only partly motivated by error cases, as I suspect he has other motivations stemming from the existentialist background to his ideas, but this needn't concern us here as one needn't adopt an existentialist approach to these issues.

⁴⁵ E.g. Greenspan:1988, Calhoun:2003, de Sousa:2004, and Pitcher:1965 (though he does not make it a general claim).

don't take them to occur. For example, Greenspan⁴⁶ says in response to the argument from irrationality, that the cognitive component of the emotion is the imagination that one is in danger. This imagination can persist even if one is not in danger, and even if one believes that one is not in danger. There is nothing irrational in imagining things to be one way and believing them to be another, so there is no problem. The case picked out by the criticism from irrationality merely concerns an individual imagining that they are in danger, and because of this being scared, even though they know that they are not in danger.

But, now it is clear that the cognitive component of the emotion serves to pick out the reason the emotion is felt for, it is clear that one should not try to respond to the criticism from irrationality in this way. If the agent merely imagined that they were in danger, but believed that they were not in danger, then they would not take themselves to have a reason to be scared. (Either because the object of the emotion is merely subjective, or, because it is a fact, but one they don't take to obtain.) This leaves us with difficulties, as it now appears the person both does not take themselves to have a reason to be scared (as the fear is a mere imagining) and does take themselves to have a reason (they are scared *of falling*). In order to resolve this conflict one ought to say either that the person does in fact believe themselves to have a reason to be scared, that is they do believe themselves to be in danger, or else, we ought to say that they are not experiencing a normal case of fear but are suffering some sort of pathology which is producing fear like symptoms.⁴⁷ The move away from a simple cognition of facts in response to the criticism of irrationality therefore acts as no solution, merely shifting the problem to being one of a person both appearing to and appearing not to take themselves to have a reason to be emotional. In fact, having got to this stage, I suggest that this is the heart of the criticism from irrationality, and therefore no response which proposes that the cognitive component captures something less than a fact or that it does not take that fact to obtain, can be an adequate solution to the criticism of irrationality. But this is not a problem, as we have already seen these cases are unusual and plausibly do involve irrationality.

The reasons that emotions are had for are facts. These facts are given by the cognitive component of the emotions; they are the contents of the beliefs emotions involve. The reason the emotion is had for just is the fact which is the content of the belief involved.

⁴⁶ Greenspan:1988 chs.1 & 2.

⁴⁷ An indication that we are dealing with an unusual case and a pathology might come from the person's unwilling to say they are scared *because* they might fall. Normally when people are scared of something they are happy to say they are scared because of that thing, that thing is their reason.

The emotion will be reasonable, and therefore in this sense appropriate, if it is had for an m-reason which is a j-reason for that emotion. The j-reasons for an emotion are familiar, and are indicated by the belief types which distinguish emotion types. For example, a j-reason to be scared will be a fact that one is in danger, a reason to be very angry will be a fact that one has been gravely insulted, a reason to grieve will be the fact that someone has died, and so on.

The j-reasons for emotions will often be j-reasons to have the beliefs involved in the emotions. For example, the fact that my headache is over is a j-reason for me to believe that my headache is over, as well as being a j-reason for me to be relieved that my headache is over. Nevertheless, it remains the case that the j-reason for an emotion is not simply the j-reason for the belief involved in the emotion, because, as already noted, the j-reason for the belief involved might not be a j-reason for the emotion. For example, if the m-reason one has an emotion for is not a j-reason to have that emotion, as when I am extremely angry at a slight injustice. Before closing this section, I will briefly consider some difficulties for the view that the j-reasons for emotions are facts.

I have spoken of the j-reason for fear being the fact that there is danger, in more detailed moments I have spoken of the fact that it is possible one will be harmed. In short, my view implies there are facts of possibility. This might sound worrying, though it needn't be. It is clear that there can be a fact of the matter whether or not something is possible; what is less clear is the nature that this factuality takes. However, my view is not committed to this factuality taking any particular form. It does not entail for example, that possible worlds exist, or that there is a property of possibility. It could well be that the fact that x is possible in circumstance y , merely means that something similar to x has occurred in a circumstance similar to y . If this were how one wished to cash out possibility,⁴⁸ then this would simply mean that the fact that I could fall off this balcony and suffer harm, is the fact that in a similar circumstance someone has fallen off a balcony and suffered harm, and, that this fact is a j-reason for me to be scared. It doesn't follow from this that one would need to formulate the cognitive component of their fear in these latter terms, merely that if they did they would be scared for the same reason as if they formulated it in the former terms, and hence, that the appropriateness of the one fear would coincide with that of the other.

⁴⁸ Though I do not mean to be advocating this idea.

The cognitive component of an emotion is often characterized as an evaluation, and this suggests a problem linked to the one just raised. If the cognitive component of an emotion is an evaluation, and it picks out a fact, then the values must be factual. But, speaking in terms of evaluations is misleading, for example, there is little in the way of an evaluation in the belief that someone has died, or that my headache has ended, or that I am in danger. Be that as it may, I accept that the issue is not so clear in the case of all emotions, for example, one will be embarrassed because a situation is awkward, or angry because they have been wronged, or ashamed as they have done wrong. To describe an event as a wronging or a situation as awkward, does appear to be to evaluate the situation. Nevertheless, I am not committed to the values at issue taking a particular nature. I am not committed, for example, to there being a property of wrongness or awkwardness. It could be that a wronging is simply the causing of harm, where this could be physical, psychological or social, and plausibly, there can be a fact of the matter whether harm of this sort has occurred, even if these facts can be hard to fully define.⁴⁹ Similarly, the awkwardness of a situation, could be a matter of the situations propensity to lead to harm, which is plausibly a factual matter. Thus, I am happy to believe that there is a fact of the matter whether someone has been wronged, or whether a situation is awkward. In order to have a counter example to my position, one would have to suppose that there was an emotion, the reason for which was not a matter of fact. But I am happy to be sceptical that such a case can arise, because I find it implausible that such an emotion would be had for a reason at all, because I find it implausible that there can be reasons that are not facts. For example, if there was no fact of the matter that something was good, because expressivism is correct and to say something is good is simply to express positivity, like cheering, then, it is not the case that something's being good would be a reason. Alternatively, if a value was a merely subjective object, it is not clear it could really be a reason, as it is not clear it could really make anything justified, though of course the fact that one was in a subjective state could be a reason, but this would be a different matter.

A different problem for the idea that the j-reasons for emotions are facts stems not from the idea that they are things of a merely subjective nature, but from the idea that they are provided by entities that are more simple than facts, for example, objects. One might

⁴⁹ Which is not to say that I do not think that they can be in any way known, for example, if I am angry because a friend has refused an invitation of mine, I will be able to say what harm I think that they have done me, for example, they have made me feel upset, they have refused to put themselves out for me even though I would have put myself out for them etc.

be led to believe that emotions can have reasons which are simple objects by considering love. It appears that one might simply love a person, rather than love any particular fact about them, “she drives me crazy, but I can’t help but love her”. Thus love is often singled out as quite unlike other emotions.⁵⁰ However, love, in its peculiarity, is not generally regarded as reasonable or unreasonable. When someone simply loves a person rather than anything about them, it is right to say that they do not love that person for a reason, but they simply love them. Therefore, we needn’t identify the reason for their love simply with the love’s object, rather, we can accept that love is without reason. Moreover, this seems generally true of love. I can love someone’s smile, but I cannot love them because of their smile, as this would imply that were they to lose their smile, I would lose my love for them, and hence, that I did not love them after all. We therefore have good grounds for treating love as unlike the emotions I am concerned with, and as no counter example to the idea that the j-reasons for emotions are facts.

8.5 Appropriateness and Tense

At this stage I would like to return to Prior’s thank goodness argument, which I discussed in Chapter One. Prior suggested that when he said “Thank goodness that’s over”, he was expressing relief that the exams were over, not relief that they finished on the 15th of June 1954, or that they finished simultaneously with his utterance. Therefore, the utterances “that’s over” and “that ended on the 15th of June 1954” or “that ended simultaneously with this utterance” do not mean the same, even if they were all uttered at the same time. Following the discussion of this chapter we can say Prior’s relief that involved the belief ‘that’s over’, would be different from any relief he felt which involved the belief ‘that ended on the 15th of June 1954’ or ‘that ended simultaneously with this relief’. In this section I will push this distinction between what I shall refer to as the *tensed* and the *tenseless emotions of relief* a little further. I will also stress the distinction in regard to some other emotions.

⁵⁰ E.g. Pitcher:1965. One might think that fear can merely be aimed at an object, not a fact, but this is wrong, one will always be scared because something is dangerous, whether that thing be a fact or an object. Further, more often or not, it will be a fact that one takes to be dangerous, e.g. a spider is not dangerous, rather, its being close and therefore able to bite one is what is dangerous.

Prior not only denies that he has the tenseless emotions of relief; he actually says in reference to them: “*Why should anyone thank goodness for that?*”⁵¹ I take this to raise the issue not only that these tenseless emotions of relief would be odd, but further, that they would be inappropriate.⁵² It is appropriate to be relieved that a discomfort has ended, but, it is inappropriate to be relieved that a discomfort will end (even if it is appropriate to be relieved to learn that a discomfort will end, for example, be relieved when one’s discomfort at the prospect of endless discomfort ends). In a connected manner, it is inappropriate to have a tenseless emotion of relief, because in such tenseless relief one will not know whether or not the discomfort has ended.

That a tenseless belief of the form ‘the discomfort ends at *t*’, a *date tenseless belief*, does not involve knowledge that the discomfort has ended is clear from the fact that one can hold this belief and know that the discomfort has not yet ended. An argument I gave in Chapter Two makes this clear in the case of a self-referential tenseless belief, for example, ‘the discomfort ends before this belief’ (it does not matter to my argument whether we take the belief involved in a relief to refer to the relief or the belief so I will speak of the belief for simplicity). That is, one might be seeing the belief as a brain state on a computer screen, and pointing and saying of the belief seen that the discomfort ends before it. Unaware that it is a live image that one is seeing, one does not know whether or not the discomfort has ended. (One might think that we can only have images of past or present beliefs, and therefore the self-referential belief does involve knowledge that the discomfort has ended. However, the pattern of temporal orientation manifested in relief is quite different to that manifested in other emotions, and so this cannot be a general response to the matter at hand, as I will make clear shortly.)

One might also be led to think that the tenseless emotions of relief are inappropriate as the reasons they pick out are not facts that make the relief appropriate. If a discomfort of mine has ended I have reason to feel relieved, and if it has not, I do not. I have reason to feel relieved quite independently of other factors, such as, that the sky is blue, that I believe the sky is blue, etc., or similarly, I would lack reason quite independently of these other factors. More specifically, I have or lack a reason to be relieved, whether or not I am relieved, and therefore, whether or not the relief I have is after the ending of my discomfort. It thus appears that the fact picked by the tenseless self-referential belief is not a fact that makes my relief reasonable. Analogously, I have a

⁵¹ Prior:1959 p.17, see also Prior:1962.

⁵² Cf. Cockburn:1998 p.83.

reason to be relieved if a discomfort has ended, and no reason to be relieved if a discomfort of mine has not ended. This is so quite independently of the date on which the discomfort ends. Therefore, the fact that the discomfort ends on a specific date is not a fact that makes it appropriate for me to be relieved.

Relief such as Prior's thus has a *temporal aspect* to it. It is appropriate to have a tensed relief that a discomfort has ended, but it is inappropriate to have a tensed relief that a discomfort will end, or a tenseless relief that a discomfort ends at a particular date or simultaneously with something else. That is, it is appropriate to have relief which involves a tensed belief such as 'my discomfort has ended', but inappropriate to have relief that involves a tensed belief such as 'my discomfort will end', or any tenseless belief.

Relief is not unique in this respect; a number of other emotions also have temporal aspects. Grief, for example, is appropriate when it involves a tensed belief such as 'x has died', but not when it involves a tensed belief such as 'x will die', or a tenseless belief such as 'x dies at *t*', or 'x dies simultaneously with y'. We might say that relief and grief are *orientated towards* the past in their temporal aspect, and we can say the same of gratitude and shame. However, fear and anxiety, for example, have a temporal aspect which is orientated towards the future. It is appropriate to be scared that one will be in danger, but not appropriate to be scared that one was in danger. It is appropriate to feel anxious that one will suffer harm, but not that one did suffer harm.⁵³ This orientation towards the past and future needn't rule out the role of the present, for example, it can be appropriate to fear when one is in danger and to feel relief that a discomfort is ending.

We saw that in the case of relief, that no relief that involved a tenseless belief was appropriate. This followed from the fact that the tenseless relief didn't involve an awareness of whether the discomfort was past or not (and also because of a consideration of the nature of the reasons involved). Analogously, we can see that the same holds in the case of the other temporally orientated emotions. For example, in the case of fear one can have the tenseless belief that 'I am in danger at *t*', and not know whether one is, will be, or, was in danger. One can also have the self-referential belief 'I am in danger simultaneously with this belief' and not know whether one is, will be, or, was in danger. This is made clear by considering someone viewing their belief as brain state on a computer screen. They may believe of the belief they see that they are in danger simultaneously with it, but not knowing whether the image is live or not, they don't know whether the danger is future

⁵³ Which is not to say that one cannot be afraid or anxious about gaining the results of some tests that will tell one if one did suffer harm. But here the learning is future, and the object of concern.

present or past. If it is not possible to have an image of something future, then it remains clear that the person at issue would not know whether or not the danger was past, and therefore, that they wouldn't know whether the fear was appropriate.

Emotions can have a temporal orientation, and hence, can be such that they are only appropriate if they involve a tensed belief, not if they involve a tenseless one. Prior's relief is a case in point, not only does he lack the tenseless emotions of relief, he is quite right to lack them.

8.6 The Argument from Emotions

In this section I will bring together what has been revealed about emotions in order to provide an argument against the tenseless theory of time. This argument will reflect what I take to be the core of Prior's thank goodness argument.

I have shown that whilst we can consider the practical value of an emotion, this is not generally what is of concern when one considers the appropriateness of the emotion. This led me to consider what is generally at issue in the appropriateness of an emotion. An emotion can be appropriate or not in respect of the belief that it involves, that is, in respect of whether or not the belief it involves is an appropriate belief. One might think of this in terms of the origin of the belief, whether it arose from a source which was liable to give rise to true beliefs. I showed that emotions must also be appropriate or not in a further respect, and that this was a matter of whether or not the emotion was had for a reason that justified that emotion. The reason an emotion is had for is simply the fact which is the content of the belief that the emotion involves. This fits our everyday practice of giving reasons for our emotions, or reasons which would justify being emotional. It also appears to provide us with all the resources necessary to evaluate the appropriateness of an emotion.

I have also considered the pattern of appropriateness that arises in the case of some emotions. It was shown that there are a number of emotions of which it is true that that emotion can be appropriate when it involves a tensed belief, but cannot be appropriate when it involves a tenseless one. I referred to such emotions as emotions with a temporal aspect, and I will here refer to them simply as *temporal* emotions.

The respect in which a temporal emotion is appropriate or not according to whether or not it involves a tensed belief, appears to be a matter of the reasonableness of the emotion. The fact that the exams are over is a j-reason for Prior to feel relieved, whilst the

fact that they occur on the 15th of June 1954 and the fact that they finish before his relief are not reasons for him to feel relieved. Moreover, Prior's relief would be inappropriate when it involved a tenseless belief, even if those tenseless beliefs were themselves appropriate, that is, they arose from a source liable to lead to true beliefs. (The schedule of the exams is set out in advance, and Prior knows from past experience, and maybe talking with some psychologist friends, that he will feel relief after the exams.) In addition, we do not know what the practical advantages of Prior's relief are, or even whether or not it has any practical advantages, so it is clear that its practical value is not of concern here. Further, we can assume that the cases of relief based on the different beliefs would all be equally advantageous, and an asymmetry in their appropriateness would still exist.

Our consideration of emotions thus shows that when Prior is relieved because the exams are over he is relieved for a reason picked out by his belief 'the exams are over'. Further, this reason cannot be picked out by any of Prior's tenseless beliefs, because, the relief would not be reasonable if it involved a tenseless belief. Because the reasons at issue are facts, it follows that Prior's tensed belief picks out a fact not picked out by any tenseless belief.

The tenseless theory is the view that tensed beliefs do not capture any facts not captured by tenseless beliefs. To deny this would be to imply that there can be facts that one must grasp to understand tensed language but which they must not grasp to understand tenseless language, but yet that these facts were not captured by the tensed language, which is implausible. Therefore, the nature of emotions entails that the tenseless theory of time is wrong.

In order to undermine this argument the tenseless theory would have to find fault with this account of emotions, something which its coherence and fitting with everyday practice defies. Furthermore, it is very clear that Mellor's reference to the brute fact that Prior's relief comes after the end of the exams, and his insistence that the belief it involves has tenseless truth-makers, is not sufficient to upset this criticism. It is in no way obvious why the temporal location of the relief would require that it must involve a tensed belief in order to be appropriate.

CHAPTER NINE: FURTHER CONSIDERATIONS

In the preceding chapters I have provided two arguments to show that the tenseless theory of time is mistaken. In this chapter I will consider a number of issues that are brought to the fore by these arguments. I will begin by showing how my treatment of Perry's argument differs from many of those found in the literature. I will argue that although I draw conclusions from this argument which are not commonly drawn, this is a result of my emphasizing an aspect of Perry's argument not often emphasized. I will also respond to some criticisms of Perry's argument.

I will then consider some of the problems raised by my conclusion, that is, by a recognition that first-personal and tensed beliefs/language pick out facts not picked out by non-first-personal and tenseless beliefs/language respectively. I will outline McTaggart's paradox and the private language argument. I will not provide full solutions to these problems, but I will say something to take the sting out of their tails.

9.1 The Problem of the Essential Indexical

In presenting his argument Perry¹ refers to the *problem* of the essential indexical, and I too have treated his argument as providing a problem. However, the problem that I consider is different from that which Perry and a number of subsequent writers have addressed. Perry raises his argument as a problem for what he calls the *traditional* view that belief is a relation to a proposition. The view that when I believe that JP is making a mess, I am in the believing relation to the proposition that *JP is making a mess*.

According to the traditional view² propositions have a particular nature, they have a determinate and unchanging truth-value. Further, two propositions are the same only if they share the same truth-value, they attribute the same properties or relations to the same objects, and, they involve the same concepts. The propositions that *grass is green*, and, that *snow is white* meet the first condition but fail the second two. The propositions that *the home of the rules of golf is in Scotland*, and, that *St Andrews is in Scotland*, meet the first two conditions but fail the third.

¹ Perry:1979.

² Perry takes this view of propositions to be held by Frege, though Evans:1981 thinks that Perry is unfair in some of his treatment of Frege's position (cf. Perry:1977).

The question Perry raises is: Q1, what proposition does an agent believe when they have an indexical belief? The argument for the essential indexical makes this problematic, as we know that in certain cases an agent can have all the non-indexical beliefs that one could have, and still fail to have a requisite indexical belief. This implies that they can have a belief relation to all of the propositions captured by non-indexical utterances, and not have one to a proposition expressed by an indexical utterance. For example, I can believe ‘FP is making a mess’ and ‘the only son of FHP is making a mess’, but not know ‘I am making a mess’ because I can fail to know ‘I am FP’ and ‘I am the only son of FHP’. Furthermore, when I believe ‘I am making a mess’ I believe something quite different to that which is believed by anyone else when they believe ‘I am making a mess’.

This problem is not resolved by altering our notion of proposition either, for example, if we instead propose relativized propositions which are only true at a particular index³ such as the proposition that *I am making a mess*. A proposition only true at me when I am making a mess, and only true at someone else when they are making a mess. Such relativized propositions must not only be believed, but be believed true at an index, as I can believe the proposition that *I am making a mess* is true of JP, but not of me, if I believe that JP is making a mess but I am not. But it follows from this that I must believe that the proposition that *I am making a mess* is true at me, when I believe I am making a mess. Further, because I can fail to know that I am FP etc., I must believe ‘the proposition that I am making a mess is true at me’, a belief picking me out with a first-personal indexical, not any non-first-personal referring expression. Therefore, the essential indexical reappears and our problem is not removed.

The problem is also not removed if we turn from talking of what might be termed *de dicto* beliefs, to talking of *de re* beliefs, beliefs in which an object stands in a special relation to the believer which enables them to refer to it without necessarily picking out anything particular about it. For example, when I see a person, and believe of that person that they are tall, without my having to note any individuating quality of the person.⁴ This move to *de re* beliefs does not solve the problem, as one is able to have a *de re* belief of

³ It is quite common to think that propositions only have a truth-value relative to a possible world, so the proposition that *FP is making a mess* will be true in all those worlds where I make a mess, but not in any others. The indexes at issue here are thus ones within a world, for example, a context consisting of an agent, a time and a place.

⁴ There are a number of different accounts of *de re* beliefs some of which would involve one needing to know something particular about the referent, but most agree that it is one’s special relation to the referent, rather than the knowing of the quality, which distinguishes the *de re* from the *de dicto* (cf. Kaplan:1968).

oneself that one is making a mess, without believing 'I am making a mess'. As Perry notes, I could see myself in a mirror making a mess, and believe of the person I see that they are making a mess, but fail to know that I am the person that I see.

Perry proposes to solve the problem by differentiating the proposition believed from the belief state, so that two beliefs can be different despite picking out the same proposition, because they nonetheless manifest different belief states. The answer to Q1 is hence that an indexical belief will pick out the same proposition as a related non-indexical belief. When I believe 'I am making a mess' and 'FP is making a mess', my beliefs concern the same proposition, the proposition that *FP is making a mess*, though they manifest different belief states. When JP believes 'I am making a mess' he will be in a belief state of the same type as I am in when I believe 'I am making a mess', though his belief will pick out a different proposition from mine, namely the proposition that *JP is making a mess*. Moreover, the actions of an individual are responsive to the belief states they are in, rather than the propositions they believe, and therefore, I act differently when I have an indexical belief than when I have a non-indexical belief that picks out the same proposition.

Perry's reference to belief states therefore plays two roles, it shows how two beliefs that pick out the same proposition can have a different cognitive significance, and, can lead to different actions. Belief states thus answer a further question: Q2, how can indexical and non-indexical beliefs pick out the same facts and yet have different cognitive significance and lead to different actions?

My question, however, differs from either Q1 or Q2, it is: Q3, how can an action be rational when it involves an indexical belief though not when it involves any non-indexical belief? I am led to Q3 by noting that Perry's argument for the essential indexical shows not merely that indexical beliefs are essential for a particular doing of an agent, but specifically, for a particular rational action of the agent. It is clear that one can answer Q1 and Q2 without answering Q3 because people can act irrationally. Moreover, one can give a story to meet Q1 and Q2 that pays no attention at all to the rationality of an action.

Perry's reference to belief states, even if it could answer Q1 and Q2, is no answer to Q3, as we have seen that rationality demands that a response to Q3 must involve recognizing that the indexical and non-indexical beliefs pick out different facts, and hence

different propositions⁵. This is not surprising given that I believe Perry was not concerned with Q3, nevertheless, Q3 derives from the argument for the essential indexical, and therefore Perry has failed to address this argument. Conversely, a proper answer to Q3 does address Q1 and Q2. If indexical beliefs pick out different facts from non-indexical ones then the two will likely involve different propositions and inevitably have a different cognitive significance therefore leading to different actions. We needn't answer Q2 directly rather we dissolve the need to answer it by accounting for the data differently.⁶

9.2 Other Responses to Perry's Problem

Many⁷ of those who have considered the argument for the essential indexical have focused, as Perry did, on Q1 and Q2 or the concerns they reflect, and these concerns are also reflected in many accounts of the semantics of indexicals. I find this unsurprising given the origins of the argument and the fact that the questions are very interesting in their own right. I will now briefly outline some of the other major responses that have been given, and will indicate how they meet Q1 and Q2, but fail to meet Q3. I will not attempt to consider all accounts that have been given of indexicals, I merely wish to make plausible the idea that discussions often fail to consider Q3, and thereby, to account for why my conclusions differ from many other responses to the argument for the essential indexical.

Lewis⁸ answers Q1 by denying that beliefs are relations to propositions at all. Rather, when an agent has a belief they attribute a property to themselves. This enables Lewis to account, in part, for the argument for the essential indexical, because he takes properties to be more fine-grained than propositions. For Lewis propositions are sets of possible worlds, so the proposition that *JP is making a mess*, will be the set of all the worlds in which JP is making a mess, the proposition that *FP is happy*, will be the set of

⁵ Plausibly at least, though I do not want to be committed to this idea, perhaps a single I-proposition picks out different facts for different people.

⁶ Perry expands upon this view in more recent work (e.g. 1997, 1998, and, 2006) in doing so he makes more propositions and facts relevant to the indexical beliefs, propositions concerning meaning and context, but it is clear that unless these are propositions that give facts non-indexical beliefs cannot capture, which they don't, then they won't be adequate to answer Q3.

⁷ There are of course exceptions. Perhaps most notable is Castaneda, whose work inspired Perry and who goes on to give a more detailed account of action (cf. Castaneda:1990 & 1992). Parfit:1987 is another counterexample. However, I have addressed these accounts, by defending a particular view of rational action in Chapters Three, Four and Five.

⁸ Lewis:1979, see also Lewis:2001 for details regarding possible worlds, propositions and properties.

worlds in which FP is happy, and so on. Properties, however, cut across worlds as well as between them. The property of *redness*, for example, is the set of all those entities, in all possible worlds, which are red. Lewis has an abundant view of properties, so that, for example, *inhabiting a world in which JP is making a mess* is a property. Because of this, there will be a property for each proposition, however, there will be more properties besides.

According to Lewis, when I believe ‘Durham is in England’, I self-ascribe the property of *living in a world in which Durham is in England*. I narrow down the world I live in to being a world from this set. Similarly, when I believe ‘FP is making a mess’, I self-ascribe the property of *living in a world in which FP⁹ is making a mess*. These are beliefs that could easily be accounted for with reference to propositions. On the other hand, when I, FP, believe ‘I am making a mess’, I self-ascribe the property of *making a mess*. This property cannot be captured by a proposition (hence the problem for the traditional view). This difference in property self-ascribed accounts for why my first-personal belief and my third personal belief have a different cognitive significance and lead to different actions (i.e. Q2).

Nevertheless, Lewis must say something more to account for the role of tensed beliefs, that is, to account for how my 2pm belief ‘it is 2pm now’ differs from any tenseless belief of mine, such as my belief ‘2pm is 2pm’. They cannot both simply be the self-ascription of the property of *living in a world where 2pm is 2pm* as they play different roles. Lewis accounts for this by saying that people are not continuants, but are in fact composed by time-slices each of which exists at only one time.¹⁰ When I know ‘it is 2pm now’, my 2pm time-slice self-ascribes the property of *existing at 2pm*, which is quite different from it self-ascribing the property of *being a time-slice of a person that exists between 6pm 12/05/1946 and 11pm 9/2/2000*. With these tools one can also account for the difference between my believing whilst in London that ‘London is here’ and my believing ‘London is London’. In the former I self-ascribe the property of *existing in London*, in the latter I self-ascribe the property of *existing in a world where London is London*.

⁹ Lewis believes that individuals exist in only one possible world, but that they have counterparts that are relevantly similar and that exist in different possible worlds, to this extent my presentation is misleading, it might be better to speak of self-ascribing the property of living in a world in which someone called ‘FP’ is making a mess. But this does not affect my argument, so for ease of presentation I write as I do in the main text.

¹⁰ Again I slightly misrepresent Lewis here, as he believes that time slices can have a duration, so long as they do not change in that time. However, again, this doesn’t alter my argument, so for simplicity I speak as I do. (Cf. Lewis:1983a, 1983b, and, 2001.).

In this way Lewis can answer Q1 and Q2, indexical beliefs will involve a relation to a property, not a proposition, and they will differ from non-indexical beliefs by differing in respect to these properties. Nevertheless, Lewis's account does not provide an adequate answer to Q3. On Lewis's account the set of entities that one is related to in a particular first-personal belief might be different to the set of entities one is related to in any non-first-personal belief, but, these sets of entities are not reasons to act. Reasons to act are states of the actual world, facts. We know from Chapters Six and Eight that in order to answer Q3 Lewis must say that an indexical belief captures facts not captured by any non-indexical belief. But this is not a result of Lewis's position (thus Lewis's answer to Q2 is that the beliefs involve different properties).¹¹ I am a member of the set of entities that have the property of *making a mess* in virtue of the fact that I actually make a mess. My actually making a mess, is also part of that in virtue of which I am a member of the set of entities that inhabit a world in which FP is making a mess. There is a reason that the sets converge in the actual world. (One might want to say that facts, and reasons can concern possible worlds as well as the actual world, but this does not undermine my point, as once you have the states of all the possible worlds, that is everything that can be captured non-first-personally, you also have all the states of all the entities in those worlds, that is, everything that can be captured first-personally.)

Chisholm¹² offers an account very similar to Lewis's, except Chisholm does not posit time-slices of people, instead recognizing that tensed beliefs capture something about the world not captured by tenseless beliefs. In this way he can go part way towards an answer to Q3 (though he does not consider the role of rationality as I have). However, his account remains insufficient as he does not recognize that first- and non-first-personal beliefs must capture different facts.

¹¹ One should not get misled by Lewis's talk of properties, one does not merely have beliefs about properties (even if one believes through properties). For one thing, this interpretation of Lewis would render his view incoherent. Because we can know that there are some things which are not properties, but on this interpretation we can only know about properties. For example, my having a property cannot itself be a property, so that, for example, when I have the property of being happy, I also have the property of having the property of being happy, otherwise we are launched on a vicious Bradley style regress. But then I cannot have a belief about my having a property on this interpretation of Lewis, but this is surely absurd. (Similarly, it is no good to suppose that all of our beliefs are about our having properties, as we can also have beliefs about our beliefs.)

¹² Chisholm:1981. I am inclined to agree with Chisholm that people do not exist through time by being made up of time slices, for arguments to this effect see, e.g., Lowe:1987a and 1998 chs.4 & 5.

Stalnaker¹³ responds to Perry's argument for the essential indexical by saying that we can recognize there to be more propositions relevant to a belief than Perry appreciates and with which we can characterize the beliefs at issue. The propositions Perry recognizes can be thought of as functions from a possible world, to a truth-value (horizontal propositions). For example, the proposition that *JP is making a mess*, is a function that gives the value true for any argument which is a world in which JP is making a mess, and the value false for any other argument. However, Stalnaker suggests that we can recognize further propositions, which can be thought of as functions from pairs of possible worlds to truth-values, or as functions from possible worlds to horizontal propositions, so called diagonal propositions.¹⁴ For Stalnaker these diagonal propositions can characterise certain beliefs, for example, if I am willing to accept the utterance "FP is FP" but am unsure about the utterance "I am FP", what I do not know is the diagonal proposition arising for the utterance "I am FP", that is, the proposition that is true in a world if and only if the proposition expressed by the utterance "I am FP" in that world, is true in that world. This is different from the proposition expressed by "I am FP" in this or any other world, as can be seen by the fact that the proposition expressed by "I am FP" in this world, the proposition *FP is FP*, is true in all possible worlds. But had that utterance been made by me in a world in which 'FP' referred to someone else, to JP, it would be the proposition that *FP is JP*, which is false in all possible worlds. The diagonal proposition, on the other hand would be true in the actual world, but false in the possible world in which JP is known by the name 'FP'. However, Stalnaker stresses that these diagonal propositions needn't be thought of as a special variety of propositions, because they too could be the horizontal propositions of different utterances.

Stalnaker thus tries to answer Q1 and Q2 by referring to a further set of propositions which are associated with the beliefs at issue.¹⁵ However, this is no answer to Q3, because, as with Lewis above, someone possessing all possible non-indexical knowledge would thereby know all of the facts [the states of our world, the reasons] that they could in an instance of indexical knowledge. In fact, Stalnaker¹⁶ appears to agree as much at a later date, at which time he emphasizes that what is crucial about an indexical

¹³ Stalnaker:1981.

¹⁴ Stalnaker's view is a form of two-dimensionalism, as I discussed in Chapter Seven.

¹⁵ I am not sure that this really works, because I don't think it is clear that a diagonal proposition associated with a required indexical belief could not be the content of an appropriate non-indexical belief.

¹⁶ Stalnaker:1999.

belief is not so much what one knows in that belief, but one's perspective upon that content.

These failings are not surprising, as Perry, Lewis, Chisholm and Stalnaker did not try to address Q3, they did not consider the nature of rationality. But with Q3 in mind, they are quite obvious, one's brain states, or the properties or propositions one is related to in a belief, to the extent that they can vary independently of the facts that one is aware of in those beliefs, are not relevant to the rationality of an action arising from those beliefs. The rationality of one's action is concerned with its being an agential response to the world, it does not matter how one is composed.

Evans¹⁷ meets the concerns of Q1 and Q2 in part through recognizing there to be more propositions than Perry was willing to accept, for example, in my first-personal beliefs I will be related to propositions that no one else can be related to.¹⁸ To this extent the comments I just made in regard to the other writers apply equally here. But Evans also emphasizes (perhaps more so than the others) the relations between beliefs and information and dispositions to act. These relations being in part constitutive of beliefs. That is, for example, my first-personal and third-personal beliefs just are differently responsive to sources of information and lead to different actions.

This invites the idea that, for example, my belief 'I am making a mess' is essential for my action of stopping, because a belief which leads to this action just is an 'I am making a mess' belief.¹⁹ However, this cannot be correct, as I have already argued, I could instead act on a third-personal belief if I act irrationally. The point I wish to make clear here, and that I take to be a failing of Evans', is that the ties he makes between beliefs and actions are plausible only for rational actions. A belief cannot be defined in terms of the actions it leads to, as it might lead to any action. Nevertheless a particular belief will fit only a specific set of rational actions. However, taking this association with rational actions to be partly constitutive of a belief does not account for why it and the rational actions fit together in this way, it does not answer Q3, at best it says that there is no explanation, "here our spade is turned". But, not only is it fair to think that there ought to be an explanation here, I have already provided one, that is, the beliefs and rational actions co-vary in this way because a belief is an awareness of particular facts, and these facts are j-reasons for a particular set of rational actions.

¹⁷ Evans:1982.

¹⁸ Which is not to say it is subjective (cf. Evans:1981).

¹⁹ I do not mean Evans would say something this simplistic.

9.3 Criticisms of Perry's Argument Rebutted

Some²⁰ writers have responded to Perry's argument by denying its cogency, and I will here briefly respond to these points. One popular criticism is that people might, and in fact do, for example young children and some politicians, refer to themselves using their own name, rather than with an indexical. From which it appears to follow an indexical is not essential for the rational actions Perry refers to.

It is important to distinguish the cases here. A mature English speaker, even if they can speak of themselves in the third person, must have a first-personal belief in the cases Perry describes. If Perry knows what 'I' means he must believe 'I am making a mess' when he acts rationally, even if he might also believe 'JP is making a mess'.²¹ This case alone is all I require to run the arguments I have. This case is very different from the case of a child who has an incomplete grasp of language, and therefore uses their own name first-personally "FP want sweetie". Such a child does not know how to use 'I', and thus they do not use it. However, such a child is not irrational if they do not use 'I', to this extent they needn't have an 'I' belief. But, given what we have learnt from the case of the mature adult, it is appropriate to say that the child simply uses their name in two different ways, in one way to pick out third-personal facts, in another way to pick out first-personal facts. In short the child simply speaks a different language, and therefore their case does nothing to undermine the case involving the mature English speaker (just as a monolingual German speaker does not). We might note that no one uses '2pm' or some other substitute temporal reference in place of 'now'. We should not take this to mean that they could not coin a phrase for this use. Rather it is clear that they could coin any phrase, no one lends itself in particular, which undermines the impression present in the name case, to suppose that the term we coin in place of 'now' would simply be used in its usual way to pick out the same facts.

Perry's argument has also been criticized on the grounds that it in fact concerns an opaque²² context.²³ In short it can be appropriate to say "JP believes FP is messy" and

²⁰ E.g. McMullen:1985, Tiffany:2000, and to a lesser extent Boer & Lycan:1980 (e.g. p.460).

²¹ Note Perry doesn't need to have a 'JP is making a mess' belief even if he knows what 'JP' means. This is most clear because he could know what 'JP' means and not know it was his name (if asked, he can pick out which one is JP in his class photo etc.).

²² Cf. Frege:1980, Quine:1956, Davidson:2001f, and, Kaplan:1968.

²³ E.g. by Tiffany:2000.

inappropriate to say “JP believes OP is messy”, even though FP is OP. This is because the sentence ‘FP is messy’ is in the scope of a *believes-that* operator, and it is commonly thought that one cannot replace co-referring terms within the scope of such an operator. The implication being that we shouldn’t expect to provide the same explanation of Perry’s action by saying “Perry believes JP is making a mess” and by saying “Perry believes himself to be making a mess” because we know *believes-that* creates a strange context.

I confess I do not know exactly how the above criticism is to be cashed out, but there are reasons opacity doesn’t undermine my argument and these are things it is valuable to make clear. The opacity of the context does not undermine the idea that the fact that it was appropriate for Perry to say “I came to believe that I was making a mess” and not to say “I came to believe that JP is making a mess” in order to explain his action, implies that he is picking out different beliefs in so speaking. That is, if it is appropriate for me to say “I believe FP is happy” and inappropriate for me to say “I believe OP is happy”, this can imply that if I were to say the latter I would pick out a different belief of mine than if I say the former, especially if I am familiar with both names but don’t know they co-refer. This is made clear by Frege’s²⁴ account of opaque contexts according to which a sentence has a different reference to usual when it is within the scope of a *believes-that* operator (as we saw in Chapter Seven). So even if the sentences ‘FP is happy’ and ‘OP is happy’ co-refer, the sentences ‘FP believes that FP is happy’ and ‘FP believes that OP is happy’ do not. In short, it is still correct to suppose that Perry’s first-personal belief is different from a third-personal one he has in that context. This difference in beliefs is all my argument requires, as we can now ask how these beliefs differ and why? And our answer will be one but not the other is associated with first-personal language and makes Perry’s action rational, because it captures facts the other does not.

This difference in Perry’s beliefs is made clear by the fact that Perry is likely to say “I am making a mess” when he has a first-personal belief, and not when he has a third-personal one, if he has forgotten he is JP for example.²⁵ It is this aspect of the beliefs that I utilize in my notation of referring to beliefs within inverted commas. In this manner, when I say “Perry believes ‘I am making a mess’”, I do not create an opaque context. Because of this, we could present the argument for the essential indexical without referring to beliefs

²⁴ Frege:1980.

²⁵ This doesn’t undermine the comments I made regarding Evans, rather there I recognized the likely covariance of beliefs and actions, the qualification was merely that the actions be rational, and most of our actions are, hence my current supposition (and probably Evans’s).

at all, for example, if one said to Perry when he realized what he was doing but before he managed to stop himself “What are you doing now?”, his response would have to involve [if he was being honest etc.] his uttering a first-person indexical word. The question is then why his so speaking and his stopping coincide? And the answer is because they share content, and that content is a reason to say that and to stop.²⁶

9.4 McTaggart’s Paradox

McTaggart’s Paradox, as I shall refer to it, is the most discussed criticism of the tensed theory of time. In this section I will present it, and show that there are a number of ways the tensed theory can respond to it.

As we saw in Chapter One, McTaggart, instead of speaking of tense, spoke of the A- and B-series, and A- and B-characteristics. The A-series is the series running from the distant past to the far future, and A-characteristics are the characteristics of presentness, pastness, and futurity. The B-series is the series from earlier to later, and the B-characteristics are earlier and later (or before and after). The latter captures tenseless time, the former tensed time.

McTaggart²⁷ argued as follows: P1, time requires change; P2, change requires the A-series; P3, the A-series is impossible; C1, therefore time is impossible. McTaggart provides little argument in support of P1. Whilst there is scope to question it²⁸ I will not do so here as I believe the heart of the matter lies elsewhere.

McTaggart took the constituents of times to be events, and his defence of P2 assumes that if there is change, it must be the changing of events. He argues that events cannot change by coming into or out of existence as their order in the B-series is unchanging. Events also cannot change most of their properties or constituents; the sun rising at 4am, must occur at 4am and must be a rising of the sun, otherwise it is a different event. The only characteristics of an event that can change and that event remain the same event, are it’s A-characteristics, a sunrise can pass from the future into the past, and remain the same event. Thus McTaggart concludes change requires the A-series.

²⁶ Tiffany:2000 actually seems to suppose that if we asked Perry why he stopped, he would have to say “Because I believed I was making a mess”, not “I was making a mess”. This doesn’t undermine my response to the worries about opacity, moreover the arguments I gave in Chapter Three show that Tiffany is mistaken.

²⁷ First in McTaggart:1908, and in a slightly expanded form in McTaggart:1927 ch.33.

²⁸ Cf. Shoemaker:1969.

McTaggart notes that A1, the A-characteristics are incompatible. If an event is past, it is not also present or future, and if it is present it is not future or past, and if it is future it is not present or past. (Things can of course be extended in time, but if we make more fine grained distinctions McTaggart's point seems right, for example, if the beginning of the war is past, it is not present or future. I'll therefore, ignore temporal extension as a counter example in my discussion.) However, McTaggart believes that A2, every event must have all three characteristics, every event is past, present, and future. It must pass from being future to being present and then past (if there is a beginning or end of time some events might have only two characteristics but this changes little). Thus McTaggart believes that the A-series is self-contradictory, and hence impossible, P3.

In considering how the tensed theory can respond to McTaggart's paradox it is fruitful to bear in mind that it is often supposed that the tenseless theory can avoid the paradox but the tensed theory cannot [therefore the tenseless theory is right].²⁹ The tenseless response to the paradox denies P2 and hence C1, concluding the B-series can exist but the A-series cannot.

Russell³⁰ provides a very different account of change to McTaggart's. For Russell, it is things rather than events that change, for example, a tomato changes from green to red as it ripens. In short, a thing changes if it has a property at one time that it does not have at another time.³¹

McTaggart considers such a response to his argument, but criticizes this account of change on two grounds. Firstly, it doesn't appear to provide change, as the facts remain unchanging. Secondly, it does not account for why change does not occur in space in an analogous way, for example, when an object has a property at one place, but not at another place (imagine a poker partially in the fire, with one hot end and one cold end).

However, McTaggart's rebuttal is weak. His first point merely presupposes the account of change under consideration is wrong, and thus has no force. His second point, whilst interesting, can be met because there are asymmetries between time and space, for example, causation happens across time but not necessarily across space.³²

²⁹ For example: Broad:1921 (though he later changed his mind adopting a tensed theory, e.g. Broad:1923), Blake:1925, Braithwaite:1928, Mellor:1998, Le Poidevin:1991, and Oaklander:2004 (especially 'McTaggart's Paradox Defended').

³⁰ Russell:1996 sect.442.

³¹ Russell's definition refers to the truth-values of propositions (Russell:1996 sect.442 p.469), however, one needn't go into these complications (e.g. Le Poidevin:1998 p.16).

³² E.g. Le Poidevin:1991 and Bourne:2006. Lowe:1987b offers a rather different asymmetry; one's spatiotemporal route must follow a particular temporal order, but not necessarily a particular spatial one.

The tenseless theory could thus adopt a Russellian account of change, and thereby deny P2. Nevertheless, it is also open to a tensed theory to adopt such a theory of change, but to insist upon P2. If one has independent reasons for thinking time is tensed then these are reasons for thinking that the references to time made in the Russellian definition of change must be references to a tensed time (or an A-series).³³

McTaggart's defence of P3 assumes A1 and A2, however, A2³⁴ is clearly false, nothing is past, present and future. My sitting down to supper this evening is future, but not present or past. My writing this is present, but not future or past. My birth is past, but not future or present. Therefore, P3 ought to be denied. Moreover, this should be clear from the plausibility of the tenseless account of the truth-conditions of tensed sentences. According to this account a token of 'e is present' said at *t* is true if and only if *e* occurs at *t*, a token of 'e is past' said at *t* is true if and only if *e* is before *t*, and, a token of 'e is future' said at *t* is true if and only if *e* is after *t*.³⁵ Therefore on the tenseless theory a token of 'e is past, present and future' said at *t* is true if and only if *e* is before, simultaneous with, and after *t*. As we are neglecting the temporal extension of *e* to make A1 plausible, these truth-conditions can never be fulfilled, so A2 is clearly false.

It is worth noting that the 'is' in the 'every event is past, present, and future' of A2, is plausibly a present tensed one and hence implies simultaneity.³⁶ Not only is it implausible that something can have an A-characteristic timelessly or tenselessly, a timeless or tenseless 'is' would not lead to self-contradiction nor impossibility. For example, if we consider A3, red and green exclude one another, and A4, a tomato is red and green. A3 and A4 only contradict if the 'is' of A4 is present tensed. We can say tenselessly [perhaps timelessly] that "a tomato is red and green" quite truthfully, for example, if the tomato is green at time *t*₁ and red at time *t*₂.³⁷

Mellor:1981a instead notes that objects are extended through space by having spatial parts, but they are not extended through time by having temporal parts (hence disagreeing with Lewis's view mentioned above).

³³ For a rather different, arguably tensed, account of change see Lowe:2006b.

³⁴ Some deny A2 on the grounds that only the present exists, e.g. Bourne:2006, but I don't think a denial of A2 entails presentism.

³⁵ This accommodates both the token-reflexive and date accounts of the truth-conditions, as in order to be simultaneous with an utterance *e* must occur at the time of the utterance.

³⁶ In saying this I disagree with those who criticize McTaggart for using a tenseless or timeless 'is' here (e.g. Broad:1938 pt.I ch.XXXV, Prior:1967 pt.I, sect.2). I take my lead from Smith, Q. (e.g. 1994b).

³⁷ It is worth noting that my argument in the preceding paragraph does not assume the argument of this paragraph.

Denying A2, and hence P3, undermines McTaggart's argument and prevents the paradox being a problem for the tensed theory of time. Nevertheless, I will say a little more in order to explain away the temptation to accept A2.

McTaggart supports A2 with reference to his theory of change, according to which events pass from future to past. However, we have already seen that we needn't accept McTaggart's theory of change, furthermore, this theory of change does not entail an event is past, present, and future. At best it encourages one to say A6, *an event is past, and was present and was earlier still future, or, will be past, is present, and was future, or, is future and will be present, and will subsequently be past*. Any of the disjuncts of A6, and hence A6 itself, are compatible with A1. Just as we can truthfully say a tomato is green and will be red, without contradicting A3.

Nonetheless, McTaggart does consider A6 and any of its disjuncts to be incompatible with A1. McTaggart argues for this conclusion as he thinks that his opponent might try to deny A2 replacing it instead with a disjunct of A6. "My birth is not past, present, and future, rather, it is past, was present, and was before that future." McTaggart argues that this move from A2 to a disjunct of A6 is inadequate to remove conflict with A1, because, it entails either a vicious circle or a vicious infinite regress. McTaggart says this because he takes saying, for example, "*e* will be past", to be equivalent to saying "*e* is past in the future", and so moving from A2 to A6 or one of its disjuncts is simply the move from one set of A-characteristics, to two sets. Therefore, if one set was a problem, i.e. A2, then two sets, i.e. A6, will be too.

However, it is clear A6 and its disjuncts are compatible with A1, just as *e*'s being present is, or its being future is, or its being past is. We don't need to say "*e* is past, present and future", to say "*e* is past", "*e* is present", or "*e* is future", that is, we needn't adopt A2 to adopt the tensed theory or A-series. Similarly, we don't need to say A7, *e was present, is present, and will be present*, to say A6 or one of its disjuncts. A7 could be problematic, and could be a step on a vicious circle or infinite regress. But A6 and its disjuncts are not.

We have seen that the tenseless theory, like the tensed theory, ought to deny A2, and clearly the same considerations show they ought to deny A7, and hence P3. Thus far the two theories are in fact on a par. However, it might appear that the tenseless theory has an advantage with A6. The tenseless theory will say, for example, a token of "*e* was future" tokened at *t*, is true if and only if there is a time *t** such that *t** is before *t*, and *e* is after *t**. In this there is no implication that we must introduce a new aspect or dimension of time, or even a new time series. However, it appears that the tensed theory must introduce

a second A-series to account for the truth of such a token. As far as I can see, this is the only advantage the tenseless theory has over the tensed theory in accounting for McTaggart's paradox. Further, it is not much of an advantage. It is not clear that a second A-series is necessary, as Prior³⁸ says, the 'was' and 'future' in 'e was future' appear to be just our usual ones. Moreover, if the A-series is coherent, there is no impossibility in having more than one. (A6 needn't be introduced to solve a paradox or make time possible, so there need be no circle or infinite regress.³⁹)

Lowe⁴⁰ denies that one even ought to say A6 or something equivalent, on the grounds that one cannot iterate indexicals. It makes no more sense to say "e will be past", or "e is after now before now", than it does to say "Bath is here there", or "I am JP at you".⁴¹ (This links with my comments concerning the truth-conditions of tensed utterances.) Lowe instead accounts for why someone might be tempted by A2, by saying that they are really tempted by something meta-linguistic. Namely, if it is true to say "e is future", it will be true to say "e is present" and subsequently "e is past".

McTaggart's paradox is no problem for the tensed theory as A2 and hence P3 are false. Further, one should not be tempted to A2 or P3 by McTaggart's theory of change.

9.5 The Private Language Argument

The first-personal fact that I am aware of when I correctly believe 'I am making a mess', is a fact that cannot be captured by any non-first-personal beliefs, nor by anyone else's first-personal beliefs. To this extent the fact is knowable only to me. The implication of this is that when I utter "I am making a mess", I express a fact that no one else can comprehend. To this extent I appear to be saying something private. Wittgenstein⁴² has argued⁴³ against the possibility of a private language, and in this section I will consider this argument, and how it bears on my position. (I will refer to Wittgenstein's argument as *PLA*.)

³⁸ Prior:1967 p.19.

³⁹ For examples of those who have adopted such harmless infinities or circles see Smith:1993 and 1994a, and, Schlesinger:1994a and 1994b.

⁴⁰ Lowe:1987b, for discussion of this point see also Lowe:1987c, 1992 and 1993, MacBeath:1988, Le Poidevin & Mellor:1987, and, Le Poidevin:1991 ch.2 and 1993.

⁴¹ This means we cannot describe change as McTaggart does, but I have argued that this is no obstacle.

⁴² Wittgenstein:2001b.

⁴³ I will speak in this manner, but I do not wish to enter disputes as to whether or not Wittgenstein actually argued the case, or was merely trying to get us to see right etc.(cf. Canfield:2001).

It is commonly thought that the core of the PLA appears between sections 243 and 271 of the first part of Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations*.⁴⁴ By private Wittgenstein means: "*The individual words of this language are to refer to what can only be known to the person speaking; to his immediate private sensations.*"⁴⁵ The focus of the argument appears in section 258:

*"Let us imagine the following case. I want to keep a diary about the recurrence of a certain sensation. To this end I associate it with the sign "S" and write this sign in a calendar for every day on which I have the sensation. – I first want to remark that a definition of the sign cannot be formulated. – But still I can give myself a kind of ostensive definition. – How? Can I point to the sensation? Not in the ordinary sense. But I speak, or write the sign down, and at the same time I concentrate my attention on the sensation – and so, as it were, point to it inwardly. – But what is this ceremony for? for that is all it seems to be! A definition surely serves to establish the meaning of a sign. – Well, that is done precisely by the concentrating of my attention; for in this way I impress on myself the connexion between the sign and the sensation. – But "I impress it on myself" can only mean: this process brings it about that I remember the connexion **right** in the future. But in the present case I have no criterion of correctness. One would like to say: whatever is going to seem right to me is right. And that only means that here we can't talk about 'right'."*

There have been a great number of different interpretations given of the PLA.⁴⁶ The idea that one must remember the connection right can be variously understood. It might be taken as a reference to the idea that we appear to have a certain incorrigibility as regards our own sensations, I can be wrong about the cause of my pain but not that I have pain. Therefore, if the diarist is to establish meaning, then they must establish something involving incorrigibility, U1.⁴⁷ Alternatively, one might consider that the act at issue is to establish the meaning of the sign for the individual, therefore, if it is possible for the act to

⁴⁴ Kripke:1982 is an exception.

⁴⁵ Wittgenstein:2001b pt.I sect.243.

⁴⁶ I do not intend my following distinctions to be exhaustive, nor exclusive of one another. Further, the references I give are not intended to pigeonhole writers, whose views are often far more complicated than my distinctions might suggest.

⁴⁷ Cf. Cockburn:2001 ch.4 (though Cockburn makes this point in order to show how the case of "S" differs from our normal use of sensation words such as "pain").

occur, and the individual to fail to grasp the meaning, then the act did not succeed, and therefore is not after all an act which establishes meaning, U2.⁴⁸ (Or one might simply take this to be pre-empting the comment to follow two sentences later.)

The idea that in the present case there can be no criteria of correctness can also be variously interpreted. One might think that there is no criterion for checking that the sensation had when 'S' is first used, is the same as that had when it is later used, U3. Or, one might think that there is no criterion to verify that the meaning 'S' had when first used, is the same as it is taken to have when later used, U4.⁴⁹ Or, one might doubt whether there was a meaning established in the first place, and hence any sort of criterion of correctness, U5.

There are no indicators of the presence of S other than the diarist's awareness of S. Therefore, when the diarist tries to confirm that a sensation they have now is the same as that which they had when they first used 'S', all they can compare their current sensation with is the memory of the past sensation. However, this memory can only act as a criterion of correctness if it can itself be verified. There is nothing against which the memory can be checked, and therefore, the diarist has no criteria for recognizing that their later sample is the same as S, U3. Similarly, the diarist will have no access to the original meaning of 'S', other than through their memory, which as noted cannot itself be verified by the diarist, and hence, cannot provide a criterion for checking that a later use of 'S' shares meaning with the original use, U4.

U3 and U4 thus imply that the diarist can be mistaken in their later use of 'S', because memory is not infallible. Thus they conflict with U1 and/or U2, and the idea of the diarist, and hence of a private language appears to contain an inconsistency, and hence to be impossible.

U3 and U4 might also be taken to be worrying in their own right, as one might believe that an expression can only be meaningful if it is possible to verify whether or not it is used correctly, U6. Or, that one can only learn to use, or continue to use an expression meaningfully, if they can verify when that expression is used correctly, U7.⁵⁰ Or, one might think that the memory of the first experience of S, was supposed to provide one with the meaning in the later use, but, it can only do that if one knows which sensation to

⁴⁸ Cf. Canfield:2001.

⁴⁹ The former of these views is perhaps held by those Kenny dismisses, the latter by Kenny himself (Kenny:1973 ch.10 especially p.191-2), and in a rather different form by Canfield:2001 insofar as he questions the possibility of continuing a practice.

⁵⁰ Cf. Pears:1988 ch.13, and, Glock:1996 entry 'The Private Language Argument'.

remember, and that presupposes already knowing what the meaning of 'S' is, U8.⁵¹ If any of these theories are right 'S' lacks meaning, and a private language thus looks impossible.

One might believe that a criterion of verification alluded to in the previous paragraph was a general requirement on all uses of language, perhaps because all uses of language must accord with a rule, and the existence of a rule requires the possibility of verification.⁵² Alternatively, one might think that although this isn't a general requirement, the diarist's sets it up as a requirement of their position, because they set up a case in which 'S' might be misapplied.⁵³

U5 perhaps becomes most plausible when one also bears in mind other aspects of Wittgenstein's position. Focusing one's attention on a sensation and a sign might simply be inadequate to provide meaning. This could be because the possibility of naming something presupposes a great deal of ground work, such as a practice of naming. Or, it might be that one thinks that introspecting a sensation, or ostensive definition generally, is not sufficient alone to establish the identity criteria of a referent. More generally, an ostensive definition alone cannot delimit a pattern of correct use, a practice for a sign, but this is essential for it to be meaningful.⁵⁴

Thus it can be seen that there are a number of arguments against a private language that one might think of under the heading of the 'PLA'. At this stage, I wish to raise an initial response. If the PLA is right, then we ought to conclude that Perry's utterance "I am making a mess" does not express a fact known only to Perry. However, this is clearly a meaningful utterance. Moreover, as noted above, it is clear that Perry's making of this utterance informs us that he has a belief different from one which he had before he was willing to make that utterance, different from any non-first-personal belief of his. We can then inquire as to the nature of this belief, and, we can apply the argument given in Chapter Six to conclude Perry must be aware of a new fact. I can accept the private language argument, and that hence first-personal utterances don't express private facts, without this denying my conclusion that first-personal beliefs/utterances involve an awareness of facts not captured by non-first-personal ones. It would also follow that when I said "the fact Perry is aware of when he uttered "I am making a mess"", I was not referring to a private fact. But this needn't undermine my point. The ability to gesture

⁵¹ Cf. Hacker:1987 p.109.

⁵² Cf. Malcolm:1986.

⁵³ Cf. Canfield:1991.

⁵⁴ Cf. McGinn:1997 ch.4, and, Candlish:1980.

beyond what is known is different from the ability to refer to something 'unknown'. At least some interpretations of the PLA will allow the former even if not the latter, there doesn't appear to be an analogue to U1 or U2 in the former case, and nor is ostensive definition required.

There are, however, good grounds for finding the PLA unconvincing. U1 takes incorrigibility to be required as it takes our everyday talk of sensations as a paradigm. But it is not clear that all sensations must involve incorrigibility, and very doubtful that all private objects must. U1 succeeds in standing S apart from, for example, pain, and this was no doubt a large part of Wittgenstein's concern, but this difference needn't damn privacy.

U2 is implausibly restrictive. An ostensive definition could establish meaning, even if people are sometimes forgetful. One's knowledge of a meaning needn't be unfaltering for them to know that meaning, nor for the meaning to have been established.

U6 supposes a form of verificationism, the idea that something must be verifiable to be meaningful, but this is an idea that ought to be abandoned (after all, it is an idea that cannot itself be verified). It is similarly implausible that it must be possible to verify that someone is continuing to use a sign with the same meaning, for them to do so. It is possible for someone to act in a way that accords with a rule without anyone being able to verify as much (as if there were no patterns where patterns couldn't be verified). It is also not required that the use of a sign can be verified in order for someone to learn the use of that sign. This would be so if all learning involved a process of trial and error, but it doesn't seem that it must, further, one can adopt a practice without learning that practice, therefore U7 is questionable.⁵⁵

There is no necessity for the diarist, or the private language theorist, to enter into the circle highlighted in U8. One needn't be able to call to mind a sample of the referent of a sign to recall what that sign means. If one had to do this it would cause trouble for all referring terms. Nor is the diarist committed to the idea that this is peculiarly how things are in the case of 'S'.

U3 and U4, are also implausible. Memory can itself act as a source of verification. Memory is generally reliable, and therefore, remembering something to be the case can act to verify that it is the case. Further, there could be other sources of verification available. Blackburn⁵⁶ points out that if the diarist in fact kept note of a number of their sensations, then their diary may indicate a pattern, for example, S always occurs with T and after R.

⁵⁵ In this paragraph and the one below it I am following Law:2004.

⁵⁶ Blackburn:1984, see also Bain:2004.

Such a regulation could provide them with grounds for thinking they have mischaracterized a sensation on an occasion, for example, if they note an occurrence in their diary of 'R' followed by 'T' and 'Q', they will have grounds for thinking that the 'Q' was mistakenly applied to an S. The regularity will itself have been empirically confirmed, but if it is well established and embedded in a theory of these emotions, there could be grounds for holding onto that regularity and rejecting outliers. Moreover, just because the sensation is private, it needn't follow that it cannot leave traces which the diarist can be aware of and which can provide a criterion of verification, as ashes are evidence that there was a fire.

When considering U5 it is important to bear in mind that Wittgenstein believed that a person could follow rules and have a language even if they were and always had been alone, a Crusoe character. Section 243 which I quoted part of earlier in fact starts

“A human being can encourage himself, give himself orders, obey, blame and punish himself; he can ask himself a question and answer it. We could even imagine human beings who spoke only in monologue; who accompanied their activities by talking to themselves.”⁵⁷

Moreover, Wittgenstein seems right in this. We can imagine Crusoe, somehow alone on an island from birth, following practices and using signs meaningfully, scratching a cross onto a rock near streams that he has drunk from and been made ill by and a circle next to those which have not made him ill. Hence, either ostensive definition alone can lead to meaningful language, or, there is a source of meaning besides ostensive definition and linguistic definition, and which does not require the cooperation of other people. Either way, U5 is no longer plausible. (Hanfling⁵⁸ extends this point by making use of Wittgenstein's own notion of a family-resemblance. Showing that although 'S' is unlike 'pain', one can trace family-resemblances from 'pain' to 'S', for example through descriptions of dreams, and phrases for sensations such as 'pins-and-needles', thus both 'S' and 'pain' are meaningful.)

This brings to the fore the notion of privacy, which isn't simply a matter of only being known to one person, but is more specifically a matter of having no outward

⁵⁷ Wittgenstein:2001b pt.I sect.243, a number of other and sometimes more explicit quotes from Wittgenstein's manuscripts can be found in Canfield:1996.

⁵⁸ Hanfling:1984.

appearance, apart from the private linguist's awareness of it. Thus Wittgenstein speaks of what can only be known to the diarist and invites us to imagine sensations with no outward signs⁵⁹. Privacy in this strong sense is thus crucial to the PLA, as it is what the diarist has, but Crusoe lacks. I am hence encouraged to offer the following different reading of the PLA: *For a sign to be meaningful it must have a use, to play a role in a practice.*⁶⁰ *For a sign to refer to an object, that object must play a role in this practice, it must influence the use of the sign.*⁶¹ *Therefore, if a sign referred to an object, the use of that sign would indicate the existence of that object. Any object referred to therefore is not private, as it would appear in something external to it and one's awareness of it. Conversely, if an object was private, it could not influence the use of a sign, therefore the use of the sign would be invariant to it, and therefore, there is little ground to say that the sign refers to it.*

This does render Wittgenstein's argument very simplistic, but it would still have a bearing on those who are often recognized as Wittgenstein's targets, i.e. those who might think that for all anyone else can know, I might have no sensation at all when I see red. Such a person would have to deny my red experience had any influence on the use of the word 'red'.

My understanding of the PLA, *PLAI*, does not succumb to the criticisms I raised above against the PLA. However, *PLAI* does not conflict with the existence of first-personal facts, as these facts are not private in the strict sense. Rather, they provide reasons for action and belief, and therefore, are manifest in human practices. To this extent it is appropriate to take Perry's 'I am making a mess' to express a fact not expressed by any other non-first-personal utterance, nor anyone else's first-personal utterances.

A first-personal fact is unlike *S*, because *S* is strictly private. But, there is also a difference between a first-personal fact and the sensation of pain. Wittgenstein at times denies that there is an inner sensation of pain, to the extent that, "I am in pain", should not be understood as expressing a relation between two objects, myself and pain. The idea is captured in section 271:

“Imagine a person whose memory could not retain what the word ‘pain’ meant – so that he constantly called different things by that name – but nevertheless used the word in a way fitting in with the usual symptoms and presuppositions of pain” – in

⁵⁹ E.g. Wittgenstein:2001b pt.I sect.257.

⁶⁰ E.g. Wittgenstein:2001b pt.I sect.260 & 268.

⁶¹ E.g. Wittgenstein:2001b pt.I sect.270, 271, & 293.

*short he uses it as we all do. Here I should like to say: a wheel that can be turned though nothing else moves with it, is not part of the mechanism.”*⁶²

Nevertheless, Wittgenstein is happy to admit that ‘pain’ expresses a sensation: “*How do words refer to sensations? ... Here is one possibility: words are connected with the primitive, the natural, expressions of the sensation and used in their place.*”⁶³

If ‘pain’ refers to a sensation, it is because a sensation gives rise to the natural expressions of pain, but there is no particular sensation nor perhaps any sensation at all that must fulfil this role. Thus “I am in pain”, shouldn’t be recognized as expressing a relation between objects.

The sensation of pain is not the m-reason one behaves as they do when they stub their toe, if anything it is closer to the cause of that behaviour. The case with a first-personal fact is different. It is a reason for the behaviour it brings about. If there were no pain sensation and no first-personal fact, then we must conclude that the behaviour was not a response to these objects. But, because the first-personal fact was the reason for the behaviour it is associated with, this would also mean that that behaviour was unreasonable. The pain behaviour, conversely, would not be rendered unreasonable by the lack of a pain sensation. Or if it was, we ought to think it is not the idle wheel one might imagine.

The PLA as commonly understood does not undermine my reference to first-personal facts, crucially, because its argument is unreliable. PLAI survives these criticisms, but, it does not undermine first-personal facts, which are not private in the relevant sense. First-personal facts are in a manner knowable generally, they are evinced in things besides themselves, and even if one’s first-personal facts are not known to others as the content of their propositional attitudes, they are known in their practices.

Summary

In this chapter, I have defended the argument for the essential indexical from criticism. The opacity of the belief context, and the potential to refer to oneself third-personally, do not undermine the fact that an indexical belief is essential for certain rational actions.

⁶² Wittgenstein:2001b pt.I sect.271.

⁶³ Wittgenstein:2001b pt.I sect.244.

I have also shown that many of those who have considered the argument for the essential indexical have not paid attention to the role of rationality. Due to this their responses to the argument fail to account for this element of the phenomenon, and are thus inadequate.

My previous chapters give rise to the conclusion that the tensed theory of time is correct. The tensed theory is often criticized because of McTaggart's paradox, however, I have shown that McTaggart's paradox admits of various solutions compatible with the tensed theory.

My previous chapters also imply that someone's first-personal facts cannot be fully grasped by anyone else. This appears to conflict with Wittgenstein's argument that a private language is impossible. However, I have shown that a number of interpretations of Wittgenstein's argument are inadequate, moreover, first-personal facts are not private in the sense Wittgenstein's argument is concerned with.

CONCLUSION

My intention in this thesis has been to provide an argument for the tensed theory of time. I have done this by focussing on issues already familiar within the debate about metaphysical tense, namely, the need for tensed beliefs in action and emotion. I showed that previous discussions of these issues were inadequate as they failed to account for the rationality of the actions, and the appropriateness of the emotions. This is unsurprising given that rationality and appropriateness were not considered in detail.

I examined the nature of rational action, and showed that the rationality of an action stems solely from the reasons it is performed for, and that the role of belief in an action is simply to provide the agent with an awareness of their reasons. This account of rational action fits the contemporary status of the field, and is defended and plausible quite independently of the issues surrounding metaphysical tense. However, it does entail that, given that tensed beliefs are often required in rational actions, tensed beliefs must capture facts that tenseless ones do not.

In a parallel manner I defended a cognitive view of emotions according to which emotions are had for reasons. These reasons are the facts represented in the cognitive component of an emotion. This view of emotions advances the field which has been incapable of fully accounting for the normative value of emotions either by referring to their pragmatic value, or to the appropriateness of their cognitive components. This view of emotions also entails that tensed emotions capture facts not captured by tenseless ones.

These arguments for the tensed theory of time have a general form, so that, for example, if two sentences which differ only in containing different co-referring names can play a different role in rational action (or appropriate emotion), then these sentences must capture different facts. These implications are not problematic, and in fact have independent plausibility stemming from theories of reference and accounts of cognitive significance. For example, a descriptive theory of reference will associate different facts with different co-referring names, and more generally, it is tempting to think that two co-referring names will have a different cognitive significance precisely because the two have different facts associated with them.

The tensed theory of time has been criticized on the basis of McTaggart's paradox, however, I have shown that these criticisms are ill-founded as the tensed theory needn't lead to the paradox envisioned, as the tensed theory does not entail that anything is at once

past, present, and future. Besides metaphysical tense, my arguments also show that a person's first-personal beliefs will capture facts not captured by any other beliefs. This conclusion appears to conflict with Wittgenstein's private language argument. However, again, the conflict is merely apparent. Certain interpretations of Wittgenstein's argument present poor arguments. On the other hand, stronger interpretations show that these first-personal facts are not private in the manner that concerned Wittgenstein, they are knowable, and if not known by others as the objects of their propositional attitudes, they are nevertheless recognized by them in their practices.

Thus the primary value of my thesis is providing a novel argument to establish a disputed view in the philosophy of time, namely the tensed theory of time. This conclusion is reached in a manner that leaves it open exactly how this tensed aspect of time ought to be understood, for example, in terms of tensed properties, or tensed existence, etc. I take this to be an advantage of my argument, affording it a certain freedom. On the way to this conclusion I also provide an original tying together and embellishment of a number of arguments within the philosophy of action. Further, I use my understanding of these arguments to present a view of emotions which provides an insight into the inadequacies of many existing accounts of emotions.

If one were to disagree with my accounts of rational action and appropriate emotion – as I have argued they ought not to – then they might in this way try to preserve a denial of the tensed theory of time. However, they ought still to appreciate the link that I have shown to hold between certain intuitive accounts of rationality and appropriateness, and the tensed theory of time. I have shown that one cannot decree time to have a particular nature independently of considering the nature of other facets of our lives, here specifically, normative ones. Similarly, it follows from what I have argued, that one cannot decree the meaning of indexicals to have a particular nature independently of considering the nature of these normative issues.

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