A DEFENSE OF REASONS-INTERNALISM

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ABSTRACT

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In this paper I offer a defense of reasons-internalism, which is the view that all of our reasons for action are dependent on our motivations. The rival to this view is reasons-externalism, which claims that some of our reasons for action are not dependent on our motivations. My defense of internalism begins by discussing and ultimately rejecting David Velleman's claim that the debate between internalism and externalism rests on a false dichotomy. From here I consider multiple objections to internalism, as well as multiple arguments for externalism, and argue that they do not constitute good grounds for rejecting internalism. After defending internalism against these objections and externalist arguments, I go on the offensive and offer an argument in favor of internalism. I conclude that internalism is an attractive, philosophically defensible position.

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I. Introduction

One of the central issues in contemporary metaethics has to do with the nature of our reasons for action (or practical reasons); where these reasons are considerations that, in terms of practical rationality, justify doing or not doing certain things.[1] More specifically, the issue pertains to the relation between agents having these reasons and their motivations. Quite predictably, philosophers are divided on this issue. In his seminal paper, "Internal and External Reasons,"[2] Bernard Williams divides those who disagree on this issue into internalists and externalists. According to internalists, the only reasons for action that agents have are internal ones, which are reasons that are dependent on an agent's motivations in the sense that an agent having them

[1] Another way of saying "in terms of practical rationality" would be to say "from the perspective of practical rationality." The important point here is that the issue has to do with reasons that justify action within the framework of practical rationality as opposed to other frameworks like morality or the Russian mafia. Also, note that the "reasons" of concern here are ones that *justify* action, which makes them normative or justificatory reasons as opposed to explanatory or motivating reasons. The latter refer to the putative facts that we actually act upon and thus can figure into explanations of our actions, while the former are the actual facts that rationally justify performing certain actions regardless of whether or not we act upon them.

[2] Bernard Williams, "Internal and External Reasons," *Moral Luck*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), pp. 101-113.

implies that he or she has some element in his or her "subjective motivational set"[3] that is served by performing the actions favored by the reasons. Put another way, internalism says that an agent A has a reason to Φ only if A has some motivational element—some desire, interest, value, commitment, concern, etc.—that is served by Φ-ing.[4] (To keep things simple, I will use "interest" as a term of art denoting any element in our subjective motivational sets.) For example, Cassandra has a reason to go to a dance club only if she has some interest that will be served by her doing so—if she has no affinity for dancing, loud dance music, big crowds of strangers, costly booze, one night stands, or whatever else a dance club might have to offer, then she surely has no reason to go to one. According to externalists, on the other hand, it is not the case that the only reasons for action agents have are internal ones. While some of an agent's reasons are internal,[5] others are external, or independent of the agent's interests in the sense that

[3] This term was coined by Williams in "Internal and External Reasons" and is commonplace in the literature on this topic.

[4] Williams, op. cit., p. 101: "A has a reason to Φ implies that A has some motive that will be furthered or served by Φ-ing." Also, some commentators have described internalism as the view that our practical reasons imply some sort of *contingent* motivation that is served by the actions prescribed by these reasons, but it is important to note that Williams says nothing about the modality of the motivations that are entailed by our practical reasons. And even if Williams did think that such motivations must be contingent, this does not follow from his formulation of internalism, which is compatible with the motivations being either contingent or necessary.

[5] Derek Parfit gives the impression that an externalist need not concede that some of our practical reasons are internal by claiming at the end of his "Reasons and Motivation" that all of

the agent's having them does not imply that he or she has some interest that is served by performing the actions they favor. Perhaps the most common examples of external reasons are moral ones. If Φ-ing involves things like causing another person a considerable amount of unjust suffering, disrespecting his or her personhood, or breaking a promise, then these facts allegedly constitute reasons for an agent like Cassandra to refrain from Φ-ing independently of whether not Φ-ing serves Cassandra's interests. Thus, even if Cassandra has no interest that will be served by not Φ-ing, she still has moral reasons not to Φ.[6]

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our practical reasons are external. However, he also says in that paper that some of our reasons do in fact depend on our desires, thereby suggesting that some of our practical reasons are in fact internal. As such, Parfit seems to be a standard externalist after all who concedes that at least some of our practical reasons are internal. See Derek Parfit, "Reasons and Motivation," *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, supp. 71, (1997), pp. 99-130.

[6] I want to point out two things here. First, I have framed the debate between internalism and externalism as one pertaining to the reasons for action that agents *have*, not to the reasons that *there are*. While the issue is sometimes framed in terms of "the reasons there are," I think that the genuine issue between internalists and externalists is about the reasons there are *for agents* to do or not do certain things—that is, the reasons for action agents have. In fact, I imagine that this is what philosophers really have in mind when they talk about "the reasons there are," especially since reasons for action are the kinds of things that bear specifically on action-performers and perhaps do not exist in any other sense than being had by agents. These two ways of framing the debate may thus mean the same thing, and in any event I will treat them as such. Second, it is important to note that it is not the case that having an external reason to Φ implies having no interest served by Φ-ing. Instead, having an external reason to Φ has no such motivational

Despite this clear distinction between internalism and externalism, the scholarship on this issue has resulted in various positions that call themselves "internalist," which complicates the philosophical landscape. Joshua Gert draws what is perhaps the most important distinction within internalism: that between Humean and Kantian versions.[7] Humean internalism is basically the internalism as described above that makes an agent's reasons dependent on his or her antecedent motivations,[8] while Kantian internalism claims that an agent's reasons are given by his or her situation in the world instead of his or her antecedent motivations.[9] However, in terms of Williams' distinction, Kantian internalism is actually a form of externalism because it makes our practical reasons dependent on our situation in the world instead of our interests. As such, this paper is technically a defense of Humean internalism; and so this is what I will be referring to throughout the paper as simply "internalism" while any other rival position will be called

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implication and is in fact neutral with respect to whether or not the agent has some interest served by Φ-ing. Thus, Cassandra may very well have an interest in being a morally good agent that is served by doing the right things, but the presence of any such interest served by such behavior has no bearing on her having moral reasons or on them being external ones.

[7] See Joshua Gert, "Internalism and the Different Kinds of Reasons," *Philosophical Forum*, Vol. 34, No. 1, (2003), pp. 53-72.

[8] Bernard Williams is thus the classic figure of Humean Internalism.

[9] Gert, op. cit., pp. 58-59. There are other differences between Humean and Kantian Internalisms as well, but these need not be discussed here. What's more, the thing that makes these different positions both "internalist" is that they agree on the necessary connection between an agent's practical reasons and him/her being motivated by them insofar as he or she is rational.

"externalism." This will allow me to stick with the debate between internalism and externalism as formulated above.

Besides being philosophically interesting in its own right, this debate between internalists and externalists is related to other metaethical issues. For example, internalism seems to threaten moral realism, or the existence of genuine moral requirements.[10] Because genuine moral requirements (1) are binding on all capable agents independently of their interests and (2) supply those that are so bound with reasons for action, these requirements entail that all capable agents have reasons for action independently of their interests [11] (this entailment is known as *moral rationalism*).[12] These reasons are obviously external ones; and since internalism denies that we have any such reasons, its conjunction with moral rationalism entails the negation of moral realism. Another way that internalism could be used against moral realism is by using it to argue against the claim that moral requirements are binding on all capable agents independently of

[10] For example, Richard Joyce has explicitly argued that internalism sinks moral realism. See Richard Joyce, *The Myth of Morality*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

[11] For the sake of brevity, I will commonly talk about reasons for action that agents have "independently of their interests" and ones they have that are "dependent on their interests." These locutions are to be understood in the sense discussed in the first paragraph: reasons agents have independently of their interests refer to ones that they have independently of whether or they have some interest that is served by the actions the reasons favor, while reasons agents have that are dependent on their interests refer to ones that they have only if they have some interest that is served by the actions the reasons favor.

[12] Russ Shafer-Landau, *Moral Realism: A Defense,* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003).

their interests. Specifically, it could be argued that since any requirements binding on agents do entail practical reasons for them and agents have practical reasons only in virtue of their interests, requirements bind agents only in virtue of their interests.[13] This would mean that there are no *genuine* moral requirements, or those that are binding on all capable agents independently of their interests.[14] It is thus no surprise that the debate between internalism and externalism is a significant metaethical issue.

While I cannot give this issue the treatment it deserves, it is my aim in this paper to offer a defense of internalism (a rather modest one, to be sure). My defense of this view will not take the shape of revitalizing Williams' argument(s) for internalism by responding to his numerous critics and trying to show their criticisms to be unfounded or without sufficient force. In other words, I will not be dealing with defensive arguments trying to show that Williams' positive case for internalism is questionable or tenuous. Instead, my defense will mostly focus on offensive arguments against internalism—that is, arguments aiming to show that internalism itself is dubious or implausible and arguments aiming to offer positive support for externalism. But before I can address these arguments, I must address a preliminary challenge posed by David Velleman to both parties of the debate; a challenge which, if successful, would undermine any defense of one position to the detriment of the other and thus my current attempt to defend internalism. After arguing that Velleman's challenge is unsuccessful, I will then move on to the

[13] This seems to be Gilbert Harman's argument in his "Moral Relativism Defended," *The Philosophical Review*, Vol. 84, No. 1, (1975), pp. 3-22.

[14] This is not to say that moral requirements do not in fact bind all capable agents; it only says that they do not bind them independently of their interests. It could be the case that all capable agents have interests that so bind them.

offensive arguments against internalism and argue that they do not constitute good grounds for rejecting the view. From here I will go on the offensive by presenting what is, as far as I can tell, my own argument in favor of internalism that I will call “The Conceptual Argument for Internalism.” I conclude that internalism is an attractive, philosophically defensible position.

II. Vindicating the Debate

Regardless of the position that one takes in this debate, one thing is necessarily agreed upon by anyone who jumps in and takes a side: the dichotomy between internalism and externalism is a legitimate one and thus one position is correct to the detriment of the other. In fact, the debate is not possible without this assumption, which is why the opposing sides can and must agree on it. Of course, this assumption can be challenged like anything thing else in philosophy; and such a challenge is offered by David Velleman in his excellent essay, "The Possibility of Practical Reason."[15] According to Velleman, the question of whether the practical reasons agents have do or do not depend on their interests should simply be rejected because it embodies a false dichotomy.[16] He instead thinks it is possible to construct an account of reasons for action that

[15] David Velleman, "The Possibility of Practical Reason," *The Possibility of Practical Reason*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 170-199.

[16] Velleman, op. cit., p. 171: "In my view, the question whether reasons do or do not depend on an agent's inclinations should simply be rejected, because it embodies a false dichotomy." Unfortunately, this thesis is not worded as precisely as it should be given that Velleman uses "reasons" to refer to complete sets of reasons. It is thus ambiguous to express the dichotomy as 'whether reasons do or do not depend on an agent's inclinations' because this could be interpreted as either (a) all reasons depend on an agent's inclinations vs. none of them do or (b) all reasons depend on an agent's inclinations vs. not all but some do. Of course, the latter interpretation is the one that captures the dichotomy of internalism vs. externalism, and Velleman certainly intends this interpretation as is evident from what he says on p. 172: "My

straddles the internalism/externalism dichotomy, and he uses reasons for *belief* (or epistemic reasons) to argue for both of these claims. In other words, Velleman utilizes epistemic reasons in order to first undermine the internalism/externalism dichotomy and then to outline a conception of practical reasons that, like epistemic ones, straddle the dichotomy. Although I think that Velleman's attempt to outline a conception of practical reasons after his account of epistemic ones is not at all promising, I will not be concerned with arguing this here. Instead, I will focus only on Velleman's central thesis that the internalism/externalism dichotomy is a false one.[17] Specifically, I will argue that (1) his account of epistemic reasons does not support his claim that the internalism/externalism dichotomy is a false one but instead supports internalism, and (2) logical considerations show the internalism/externalism dichotomy to be a legitimate one.

Before I can examine Velleman's attempt to undermine the internalism/externalism dichotomy with epistemic reasons, I need to briefly discuss what such reasons are as well as the nature of belief that he presents. The former is clear and straightforward: reasons for a belief are *considerations that probabilify or guarantee the truth of that belief*.[18] For example, I believe the following proposition:

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thesis is that we do not have to choose between the two," where 'the two' refers to internalism and externalism.

[17] As I mentioned in the Introduction, Velleman's success here would undermine any defense of internalism or externalism to the detriment of the other; and so I must attempt to refute his central thesis in order for my defense of internalism to even get off the ground.

[18] Velleman, op. cit., p. 181. We could slightly broaden this definition to include considerations that "plausibilify" belief, although this may be covered under the term "probabilify".

(A) God does not exist.

When asked why I believe this, I might cite the following as reasons:

(G) There is gratuitous evil in the world.

(M) There is strong evidence that minds are physically realized.

Because God is supposed to be a non-physical entity with a mind and M says that the evidence strongly suggests a physical basis for minds, M makes the truth of A probable and thus constitutes a reason to believe A. Also, since God and gratuitous evil are logically incompatible, G guarantees the truth of A (G entails A) and thus constitutes a reason to believe A.[19]

In terms of the nature of belief, Velleman subscribes to what is called the "constitutive aim" theory of belief. According to this theory, one of the fundamental characteristics of this mental state is that it necessarily involves regarding a proposition as true.[20] For instance, when a theist says that he or she believes that ¬A, I understand immediately that he or she regards ¬A to

[19] I am of the opinion that there are more reasons to believe A than what I provide here—in fact, there may even be better ones than the two I have given. I only mention the two for illustrative purposes.

[20] Velleman, op. cit. p. 182: "One difference between belief and other attitudes is that it entails regarding its propositional object as true." See also Peter Railton, "On the Hypothetical and Non-Hypothetical in Reasoning about Belief and Action," Garret Cullity and Berys Gault (eds.), *Ethics and Practical Reason*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), p. 56: "…belief is a propositional attitude partly characterized by its representation of its object as true."

accurately reflect or represent how things are, which means that he or she is regarding it to be true. However, regarding a proposition to be true, while necessary, is not sufficient for believing it because other propositional attitudes like *assuming* a proposition or *imagining* it also involve regarding it to be true.[21] For example, I might assume ¬A in order to derive a contradiction from it and thereby prove A to be true; or I might, when contemplating the terrible world in which we live, imagine how good the world would be if God actually existed. In both cases I have an attitude towards the proposition ¬A that regards it as true, but I certainly do not believe it like the theist does. So what is the difference between the theist and me? The difference lies in the "spirit" in which we regard the proposition to be true, or better yet, the *aim* that we have in regarding the proposition to be true. When I assume ¬A in order to derive a contradiction, I am regarding it as true only *hypothetically* or *for the sake of argument*; and when I imagine ¬A to fantasize about a better world, I am regarding it as true only *fancifully* or *for the sake of feeling better about reality*. On the other hand, the theist regards ¬A as true *seriously* or *for the sake of truth itself*. The attitude of belief is thus distinctively characterized by its aiming at the truth, which we could express by saying that belief is *constituted by* the aim of truth (hence it being called "the constitutive aim" theory of belief).[22]

Now that these distinctions are in place I can explain how Velleman thinks that epistemic reasons undermine the internalism/externalism dichotomy. First I must bring internalism and

[21] Velleman, op. cit., p. 183.

[22] One of the virtues of the constitutive aim approach to belief is how well it coheres with what epistemic reasons are. Indeed, this is no accident according to the constitutive aim theorist: since beliefs internally aim at truth, considerations that favor them (or reasons for them) must be ones that indicate their truth, which is exactly what epistemic reasons are.

externalism back into the picture, which I will represent as the following two propositions, respectively:

(N) All of the reasons we have are internal, or dependent on our interests.

(E) Some of the reasons we have are external, or independent of our interests.

Moreover, the dichotomy between the two rests on the assumption that reasons are either strictly internal or strictly external, which forces us to choose between the two positions. But it is precisely this assumption that Velleman calls into question, and he does so on the following grounds. First of all, it is a necessary condition of agents having epistemic reasons that they have beliefs—if they are not in the belief-forming business, then they obviously cannot have reasons for belief. Also, because belief necessarily aims at truth, we ourselves must be aiming at truth in order to be in the belief-forming business.[23] In other words, a necessary condition of being a believer as such is to aim for truth, which seems to be no different than having an *interest* in attaining truth.[24] But since our having epistemic reasons entails our having beliefs and our

[23] This is not to say that we choose this aim or are even consciously aware of it. Instead, it may be an aim we have in virtue of it being an aim built into our cognitive mechanisms. Velleman calls such an aim a "sub-agential" one. See David Velleman, "Introduction," *The Possibility of Practical Reason*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 21.

[24] Railton, op. cit., p. 57: "It is part of the *price of admission* to belief as a propositional attitude that one not represent one's attitude as unaccountable to truth. Someone unwilling to pay this price—who, for example, insists that he will represent himself as accepting propositions just as it

having beliefs entails our having an interest in attaining truth, our having epistemic reasons entails our having an interest in attaining truth. As such, epistemic reasons are like internal reasons: in the absence of an interest in attaining truth, people do not have them.[25] On the other hand, because believers as such are those that have an interest in attaining truth, restricting the application of reasons to believe something to those with an interest in attaining truth is tantamount to restricting them to believers as such, which is no less than to make them reasons for believing *period*. This means that epistemic reasons are also like external ones because they are applicable to believers independently of their individual interests.[26] We thus do not need to choose whether reasons are internal or external, which renders the internalism/externalism dichotomy that assumes the necessity of this choice a false one.

Despite the brilliance of Velleman's argument, it falls short of what it purports to accomplish. While it is true that epistemic reasons in some sense resemble external ones on this analysis, they are not *really* external ones because individuals do not have them *completely* independently of their interests. Consider again the example of moral reasons, which are paradigmatic external ones. These reasons are (allegedly) ones that agents have independently of their interests in the complete, full-blown sense such that people still have them even if they lack an interest in morality as well as any other interest that might be served by behaving morally. In

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suits his fancy and without any commitment to their truth—would not succeed in *believing* these propositions at all."

[25] Velleman, op. cit., p. 181: "Thus, reasons for believing something apply only to those who are inclined to believe what seems true on the topic, and so they are like internal reasons…"

[26] Velleman, op. cit., p. 182. Reasons being applicable to someone means that he or she *has* them.

the absence of such interests—especially the interest in morality—the externalist will say that the person is to some degree *irrational*, not that he or she no longer has moral reasons to do or not do certain things (as the internalist will say). However, this is not the case with epistemic reasons because people do *not* have them if they lack an interest in attaining truth (which is the only interest that could be connected to such reasons). In the absence of this interest, we cannot be an externalist and say that the person is an irrational believer who still has epistemic reasons; instead, we must say that the person is no longer a believer at all and so no longer has epistemic reasons. Thus, reasons for belief turn out to be *strictly internal* because our having them is completely dependent on our having an interest in attaining truth. As such, Velleman's analysis turns out to support internalism rather than his central thesis that the internalism/externalism dichotomy is a false one.

If I am correct in saying that Velleman's analysis actually supports internalism, then how do I explain away the resemblance of epistemic reasons to external ones? Recall from earlier that this resemblance is based on the description of epistemic reasons as being "applicable to believers independently of their individual interests." This description, however, turns out to be quite misleading because the "individual interests" do not refer to *all* of the individual's interests, but only to the individual's *other* interests that he or she has *in addition to* the single interest in truth that gives him or her reasons for belief. Epistemic reasons are thus very similar to the reasons to make particular chess moves in certain situations, which are also applicable to any chess player in those situations independently of his or her other (irrelevant) individual interests, and yet are still only applicable to those players in virtue of the single (relevant) interest in playing the game. In both cases the reasons are external-like by being applicable independently of irrelevant individual interests, but they are not genuinely external because they are not, like

moral reasons, applicable to people independently of *all* of their individual interests.[27] Instead, they are strictly internal because they no longer apply in the absence of the relevant interest.

Besides the argumentation I have given thus far attempting to show that epistemic reasons do not offer support for Velleman's central thesis that the internalism/externalism dichotomy is a false one, I think that logical considerations show this dichotomy to be a legitimate one.[28] Put succinctly, I think that this dichotomy is an instance of the Law of Excluded Middle and so there simply *cannot* be a way to straddle it. To see why, first consider again the basic meaning of "internal" vs. "external" when it comes to the reasons we have. According to N, internal reasons are those that are *dependent on* our interests; and according to E, external reasons are those that are *independent of* our interests. However, to say that X is dependent on Y *means* that X is not independent of Y; and to say that X is independent of Y *means* that X is not dependent on Y. Thus, internal reasons are those that are not independent of our interests, which means that they are not external; while external ones are not dependent on our interests, which means that they are not internal. Furthermore, by saying that all of the reasons we have are

[27] This is not to say that moral reasons—or external ones more generally—are applicable to people independently of all of their individual interests such that they would still be applicable in the absence of having interests *at all*. What I instead mean by describing these reasons as being "applicable to people independently of all of their individual interests" is that they are applicable to people independently of whether their individual interests *are served* by the behaviors prescribed by the reasons.

[28] If accurate, these considerations both support my claim that epistemic reasons do not undermine the internalism/externalism dichotomy and help to explain why Velleman's attempt to undermine it with epistemic reasons does not succeed.

internal, N is analytically equivalent to the proposition, "All of the reasons we have are not external," which in turn is logically equivalent to the proposition, "There is no reason we have that is external," or ¬E. Therefore, the internalism/externalism dichotomy, which is equivalent to the proposition (N v E), turns out to be equivalent to the proposition (¬E v E),[29] which is obviously a case of the Law of Excluded Middle. As such, the dichotomy is a legitimate one that simply cannot be straddled—it must be the case that either internalism or externalism is true while the other is false—and so Velleman's central thesis that the dichotomy is a false one is itself false.

[29] It is of course also the case that the internalism/externalism dichotomy is equivalent to the proposition (N v ¬N) because E, which says that there are some reasons we have that are external, is analytically equivalent to the proposition, "There are some reasons we have that are not internal," which in turn is logically equivalent to the proposition, "It is not the case that all of the reasons we have are internal," or ¬N.

III. Responding to Arguments Against Internalism

Now that I have shown Velleman's challenge to the debate to be without force, my defense of internalism to the detriment of externalism can make its way off the ground. In this section I will be responding to offensive arguments against internalism and will try to show that they do not constitute compelling reasons to reject the view. While I cannot respond to every such argument against internalism (for surely I am not even aware of every argument), I will respond to what strikes me as some of the strongest challenges to internalism to show that it is a philosophically defensible position.

1. Internalism is Too Psychologistic

The charge that internalism is dubious because it is "too psychologistic" is explicitly leveled by John McDowell.[30] According to him, the general idea behind internalism is that one has a reason to do what sound practical reasoning, starting from one's existing motivations, would reveal what one has a reason to do.[31] Of course, the original formulation of internalism above does not

[30] John McDowell, "Might There Be External Reasons?," *Mind, Value, and Reality*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998), pp. 95-111.

[31] McDowell, op. cit., p. 96. See also Bernard Williams, "Internal Reasons and the Obscurity of Blame," *Logos: Philosophic Issues in Christian Perspective*, Vol. 10, (1989), pp. 1-11. On p. 2 he spells out internalism as the view that, "A has a reason to Φ only if A could reach the conclusion to Φ by a sound deliberative route from the motivations A already has." This does not mean that this route could actually be taken by the agent—he or she may be too irrational for

mention sound practical reasoning from one's existing motivations as revealing our practical reasons, but it seems to be an implication of that original formulation. Because our practical reasons are dependent on our current interests, our practical reasons are essentially *grounded in or generated by* our current interests.[32] What's more, practical reasons are the things that would be discovered by practical reasoning that is free of both factual and procedural errors—that is, practical reasoning that is *sound*. From these two points we come to McDowell's characterization of internalism: sound practical reasoning is the kind of thing that discovers (or reveals) our practical reasons; and it must start from our current motivations because such discoverable entities are grounded in these motivations.

McDowell's worry about internalism being too psychologistic is inspired by Frege's complaint that logical principles should not be considered as "laws of thought" but instead as "laws of truth." This is because logical principles are supposed to stand in normative judgment over our thought processes, which they cannot do if they are constructed out of the ways that we actually think. Put another way, logical principles are supposed to serve as external constraints on the way we think and so must be determined independently of our actual thought processes. As McDowell might say, there is thus a complete transcendence of our actual thinking (or psychology) by the dictates of theoretical rationality. In light of this, we might doubt internalism about practical reasons because "the critical dimension of…practical rationality requires an

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that. The important point is that there is a route from the agent's existing motivations to his or her practical reasons.

[32] This is not to say that every current interest necessarily gives us reasons for action because our interests can be based on false beliefs. Instead, only some of our current interests must give us reasons for action.

analogous transcendence of the mere facts of individual psychology—even as corrected by the sort of deliberation that the internal reasons conception requires."[33]

However, this doubt about internalism is well-founded only if the analogy between theoretical rationality and practical rationality on which the doubt is based is a strong one. And while this analogy may appear to be strong given the fact that these normative activities are both rationalities, they are nonetheless substantially different. First of all, the normative activity of theoretical rationality is similar to games, cooking, and other normative activities with substantive aims and corresponding behavior-regulating rules that (1) tell us how to reach these aims and (2) are thus shaped by those aims and not at all by our psychologies. For example, the normative activity of gooseberry-pie-making has the substantive aim of possessing tasty gooseberry pies and corresponding behavior-regulating rules that tell us how to reach this aim and are thus shaped by this aim and not at all by our psychologies (our actual thoughts, beliefs, desires, etc.). Likewise, theoretical rationality has the substantive aim of possessing truth and corresponding thought-regulating rules or rational principles that govern the search for truth and are thus shaped by the aim of truth-possession and not at all by our psychologies. As such, the "critical dimension" of this activity will appropriately transcend our psychologies because it consists of thinking in accordance with these rational principles or rules that are not at all shaped by our actual psychologies.

In order for the critical dimension of practical rationality to require an analogous transcendence of our psychologies, there must be a substantive aim of this activity that shapes this critical dimension independently of our psychologies. However, there does not seem to be

[33] McDowell, op. cit., p. 106. The sort of deliberation he is talking about is the sound practical reasoning mentioned in the previous paragraph.

any such substantive aim. Instead, this activity seems to revolve around the *formal* aim of performing actions that promote one's purposes or ends.[34] As such, the critical dimension of this activity, while governed by formal principles (e.g., the instrumental principle), actually requires input that is determined by our individual psychologies[35] and thus is unproblematically shaped by our psychologies.[36]

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[34] This view is articulated by Philippa Foot when she says, "Irrational actions are those in which a man in some way defeats his own purposes, doing what is calculated to be disadvantageous or to frustrate his ends." See Philippa Foot (1972), "Morality as a System of Hypothetical Imperatives," *The Philosophical Review*, Vol. 81, p. 310. It should also be noted that one's purposes or ends do not have to be self-interested—they can involve other people or other-oriented activities. This view of practical rationality is thus not egoistic.

[35] Specifically, this input consists of non-psychological facts that are put in because of our psychologies. So for example, the non-psychological fact that trimming my nose hair pleases my partner is a reason to trim my nose hair and will go into my correct deliberation about whether or not I should do so, but this fact goes into this deliberation only because I have an interest in pleasing my partner.

[36] This makes the activity of practical rationality similar to therapy, which has a critical dimension that is governed by formal procedures but is nonetheless shaped by the psychology of the individual being treated.

This orthodox view of practical rationality,[37] if correct, would blunt the force of McDowell's worry about internalism being too psychologistic. Of course, this orthodox view is controversial and thus does not necessarily silence McDowell's worry. However, this orthodox view is at least a plausible conception of practical rationality, which means that it is at least plausible that McDowell's worry has no force. At this point, the onus is on McDowell sympathizers to supplement their worry about internalism with an alternative conception of practical rationality that has a substantive aim and is more plausible than the orthodox view;[38] and until this is offered, there is no reason to share McDowell's worry that internalism is too psychologistic.

In addition to McDowell's explicit charge that internalism is too psychologistic, another objection to internalism that can be said to fall under this category is that *interests cannot provide justification for action.* This objection seems to be based on the following kind of reasoning: since (1) practical reasons justify actions and (2) according to internalism, practical reasons are grounded in our interests, it follows that (3) according to internalism, our actions are ultimately justified by our interests. But as Talbot Brewer points out, it is not acceptable to

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[37] Michael Smith refers to the view of practical rationality that I present as "orthodox." See Michael Smith, *The Moral Problem*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994), p.79.

[38] Even if such an alternative conception can be offered, it may not necessarily be problematic for internalism. For example, a constitutive aim approach to practical reason, which would be based on a constitutive aim of action, would be similar to the constitutive aim approach to theoretical reason based on truth being the constitutive aim of belief. As such, practical reasons will turn out to be internal just like epistemic reasons (assuming, of course, that my analysis in the previous section of epistemic reasons is on the mark).

justify one's actions by citing desires or dispositions to perform them.[39] For example, my desire or disposition to lie in a certain situation does not justify my lying even if I am so justified by other things (we could construct countless other examples to the same effect). Furthermore, according to Ulrike Heuer, our interests cannot justify action unless it can be explained why the objects of these interests are desirable,[40] which means that our interests themselves cannot be the ultimate justification for action.

However, even if it is the case that our interests cannot provide justification for action, it is not the case that internalism is committed to the claim that they can. For even though the internalist is committed to (1) and (2) from the reasoning above that I presented as the basis of this objection, he or she can deny that (3) actually follows from these commitments. Specifically, the problem with this inference is that it is based on the assumption that, as the grounds of practical reasons (which justify action), our interests must confer *their own* justificatory status to the reasons. But this is not the right way to understand the relationship between our interests and practical reasons. While it is in a certain sense true that our interests confer justificatory status to our practical reasons, our interests are not justifications for action in and of themselves that confer their own justificatory status to these reasons. Instead, our interests are to be understood

[39] Talbot Brewer, "The Real Problem with Internalism About Reasons," Canadian Journal of Philosophy, Vol. 32, No. 4, (2002), pp. 443-473.

[40] Ulrike Heuer, "Reasons for Actions and Desires," *Philosophical Studies: An International Journal for Philosophy in the Analytic Tradition,* Vol. 121, No. 1, (2004), pp. 43-63.

as part of the background conditions for our practical reasons[41]—i.e., as part of the conditions that allow for certain considerations (or facts) to count as our reasons for action—that are themselves non-justificatory. Now positing this kind of non-justificatory condition (interests) for the realization of justificatory entities (practical reasons) may elicit an initial philosophical uneasiness, but one need not look too far to find similar examples: non-mental neurons are part of the conditions that allow for the realization of mental states, non-moral properties are part of the conditions that allow for the realization of moral properties, etc. As such, there appears to be no general problem with thinking that our interests provide part of the background conditions for our practical reasons. Therefore, internalism does not fall prey to this second kind of "too psychologistic" objection.[42]

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[41] Alan Goldman, "Reason Internalism," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, Vol. 71, No. 3, (2005), pp. 505-532; Mark Schroeder, *Slaves of the Passions*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007).

[42] One may worry that the internalist solution to this second "too psychologistic" objection conflicts with the solution to the first one. Specifically, it may seem like our interests (or psychologies) play a justificatory role on the orthodox conception of rationality, which certainly conflicts with what I have just said about them being part of the non-justificatory background conditions that allow certain facts to count as practical reasons. However, there is no conflict here—in fact, the two internalist solutions I offer to this pair of objections cohere very nicely. While the aim of practical rationality according to the orthodox conception is to promote our ends, the critical dimension of this activity, which will involve the justificatory considerations (or reasons), is merely shaped by our psychologies, which themselves are non-justificatory. That is, psychological facts do not go into rational deliberation (the activity's "critical dimension")

2. Pathological Changes in Motivational Sets

One of the most interesting challenges to internalism is presented by Crystal Thorpe in her paper, "A New Worry for the Humean Internalist."[43] The basic structure of her argument is as follows. First, internalism faces the following dilemma: either our practical reasons are fixed at birth and thus unchanging over time, or else they could (theoretically) all change simultaneously based on erratic and random changes in our interests (or subjective motivational sets). Now the first horn of the dilemma is obviously false: our practical reasons most certainly do change over time and are thus not fixed at birth. This forces the internalist to embrace the second horn of the dilemma, yet this is unattractively counterintuitive. It thus appears that internalism is committed to a rather unpalatable consequence.

But how does internalism face this dilemma in the first place? There are two parts to generating this dilemma. The first part is the basic idea of internalism—that our reasons for action are grounded in our current interests—combined with the possibility of changes in our interests over time. This results in the possibility of changes in our practical reasons over time in virtue of changes in our interests. The second part has to do with what kinds of changes can occur in our interests and whether or not such changes result in changes in our practical reasons.

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and thus do not justify, but they do determine which non-psychological facts do go in (see again the example I give in footnote 35 above). This is essentially saying that our interests provide part of the background conditions that allow facts to count as reasons.

[43] Crystal Thorpe, "A New Worry for the Humean Internalist," *Philosophical Studies: An International Journal for Philosophy in the Analytic Tradition*, Vol. 131, No. 2, (2006), pp. 393-417.

Thorpe locates three kinds of possible changes that can occur in our interests: rational, irrational, and non-rational. Rational changes are those that result from sound practical reasoning. An example of such a change would be if Cassandra, a ridiculously busy graduate student, were to acquire an interest in exercising from the realization that it would improve her physical health and significantly buffer against her high levels of stress and anxiety. Irrational changes are those that result from bad practical reasoning. An example of this kind of change would be if Cassandra acquired an interest in drinking her own urine because it is warm like herbal tea and thus, like herbal tea, has calming effects to buffer against her anxiety. Non-rational changes are those that do not result from reasoning at all. Such changes often result from familiar non-rational processes like socialization, conditioning, experience, and conversion. They may also result from erratic and random changes in our interests.

Now of these three kinds of changes to interests that can occur, only the non-rational changes can result in changes in our practical reasons; rational and irrational changes in interests do not result in changes in our practical reasons.[44] Rational changes in our interests do not result in changes in our practical reasons because such changes in our interests are themselves the rational results of our recognition of our practical reasons via sound practical reasoning. In the first example above, Cassandra does not acquire any reason as a result of coming to have an interest in exercising. Instead, she already has reasons to exercise in virtue of her interests in

[44] This may not be entirely accurate. While irrational changes in our interests do not result in changes in our practical reasons, it may be the case that rational changes in our interests result in very minor and insignificant changes in our practical reasons. But this possible error on Thorpe's part would not be at all detrimental to her challenge to internalism, which is based on non-rational changes in our interests. As such, we can ignore this possible error.

having good physical health and not having stress and anxiety (which are served by exercising); and her interest in exercise is a rational result of recognizing these reasons.[45] Put another way, rationally sound changes in our current interests are derivative from the practical reasons we already have in virtue of our current interests; they do not modify these reasons. On the other hand, irrational changes in our interests do not change our practical reasons because they are based on false beliefs resulting from bad reasoning. In the second example above, Cassandra comes to have an interest in drinking her own urine because she mistakenly believes that she has a reason to; namely, that it will buffer against her anxiety. But if she would have engaged in sound practical reasoning from her interests (or reasoning that is free of both factual and procedural error), which would have revealed her practical reasons, then she would have recognized that she had no reason to drink her own urine because this serves none of her interests, especially the one in reducing her anxiety.[46]

[45] Perhaps the trivial fact that exercising will promote her interest in exercising is a new reason for Cassandra to exercise on top of her original reasons to exercise. But even if this is the case (and I do not want to say that it is, just that it might be), this would again be very minor and insignificant, resulting in no problems for Thorpe's project.

[46] I want to make two points here. First, Cassandra would not need to recognize that she has no reason to drink her own urine because it would serve none of her interests in these exact terms. Specifically, it does not need to enter into her reasoning that none of her interests will be served by drinking her own urine. Instead, her reasoning will merely be *shaped* by the fact that none of her interests will be served by drinking her own urine—that is, while she will soundly reason to the conclusion that she has no reason to drink her own urine because doing so serves none of her interests, this "because"-clause here is part of the factual background that determines the

This brings us to non-rational changes in our interests, which are the important ones for Thorpe's challenge. Unlike rational and irrational changes respectively, non-rational ones are not rationally derived from current interests via the recognition of current reasons through sound practical reasoning and are not necessarily based on falsity that results from errors in reasoning. As such, non-rationally acquired interests will not necessarily be revealed as non-reason-giving interests via sound practical reasoning. Instead, such non-rational changes are basically brute modifications to our interests that shift the starting point of the sound practical reasoning that reveals one's reasons for action and thus can result in a shift in these reasons. For example, if I were to have an extremely powerful religious experience that results in me converting to Christianity (which would have to be one hell of a religious experience!), then this would result in at least some change in my practical reasons. While the central tenets of Christianity would remain false (or so I say), my conversion could change me into a different person that now requires religious activities to have a meaningful life. We would thus say that I now have reasons to participate in religious activities that I previously had no reason whatsoever to participate in.

We are finally in a position to see the internalist's dilemma. Because non-rational changes in our interests can result in changes in our practical reasons, we must entertain the possibility that erratic and random changes in our interests could result in changes in our practical reasons. In fact, we must entertain the possibility of an erratic and random modification

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conclusion of her reasoning without functioning as an explicit part of this reasoning. Second, it should be noted that drinking your own urine can have placebo effects based on what you might believe it will do; and so if you are the kind of person who believes in the benefits of drinking one's own urine, then you might have a reason (or even reasons) to do it. However, Cassandra is not such a person, and so she has no reason to drink her own urine.

of our entire motivational set that would result in a radical (if not complete) change in our practical reasons. And given this possibility, the internalist must either (1) deny that such non-rational changes can change our practical reasons or (2) accept that our practical reasons could undergo such a radical, erratic and random modification. Now denying that erratic and random non-rational changes in our interests can change our practical reasons while allowing other kinds of non-rational changes to do so is arbitrary—there is simply no reason to allow things like socialization, conditioning, and conversion to change our practical reasons while not allowing erratic and random changes in our interests to do so. As such, option (1) commits the internalist to denying that any kind of non-rational change to our interests changes our practical reasons, which amounts to holding our practical reasons fixed from birth (or perhaps more accurately, from whatever time we were sufficiently developed in terms of having a motivational set that generated reasons for action). But this option is clearly false: our practical reasons are not fixed throughout our lives; they do change over time as a result of non-rational changes in our interests. The internalist must therefore embrace option (2), which means that a person's practical reasons can radically change due to *pathological* changes in his or her interests. But to think that a person's practical reasons can be altered by such psychological instability, Thorpe contends, is counterintuitive. It makes more sense to think that this person's practical reasons remain the same as they were before the pathological shift occurred. Thus, it seems that internalism has a rather unpalatable consequence that constitutes a good reason to reject the view.

While Thorpe is right to say that internalism must embrace the possibility of radical changes in practical reasons due to radical changes in interests occurring erratically and randomly, I do not think that this constitutes a problem for internalism. First of all, it does not

strike me as the least bit counterintuitive to think that practical reasons can change in virtue of pathological changes in our interests. Consider the case of Marge, who becomes agoraphobic as the result of a traumatic experience that occurred outside her house (which means that she has a strong interest in never leaving her house). In this case, leaving the house produces extreme anxiety and fear; and so avoiding these extremely negative experiences is a reason to not leave the house. Of course, it may be the case that Marge has more reason to leave the house sometimes than to stay all the time (especially to receive treatment for her condition), but she still has the standing reason to stay. This reason is one that she did not have before the traumatic experience, and yet there is nothing at all counterintuitive about this. In fact, I think we should treat Marge's acquisition of agoraphobia like a *negative conversion* that, like religious or other conversions, modify one's practical reasons.

It may be objected here that the extreme anxiety and fear around leaving the house is based on the false belief that something bad will happen by leaving the house; and so if Marge were to engage in sound practical reasoning, then she would realize that she in fact has no reason to never leave the house. However, Marge's agoraphobia is much different than a case of false belief (like Cassandra's belief in the calming effects of drinking her own urine). Marge may very well know that nothing bad will happen by going across the street to have a meal with a friend or by driving to the store just a few blocks away to pick up some groceries. Her problem here is a pathological reaction to going outside that cannot be quelled at all by knowing that nothing bad will happen by doing mundane things outside the house. As such, leaving the house will elicit extreme anxiety and fear *no matter what*; and so Marge has a reason to never leave the house.[47]

[47] This does not mean Marge is rational for never leaving the house—i.e., that her reason to never leave the house is stronger than her reasons to leave sometimes. Instead, she is surely

Besides the case of Marge, which suggests that there is no general problem with thinking that practical reasons can change in virtue of pathological shifts in interests, there is another (and perhaps better) reason to think that changes in practical reasons due to erratic and random radical changes in interests is not a problematic result of internalism. This is because these pathological changes envisaged by Thorpe *will result in changes to who one is as a person,*[48] and there is certainly no problem with thinking that different people have different practical reasons in virtue of being different people (or having different interests). In fact, even modest erratic and random shifts in our interests can result in us becoming different people. For example, if instead of having a powerful religious experience I woke up tomorrow morning a devout Christian ready to quit graduate school and dedicate my life to the pulpit as the result of some erratic and random

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irrational for never leaving. However, she still has a reason never to leave (that it will cause her to feel extreme fear and anxiety) despite the fact that it is irrational to do so. In fact, that she does have this reason for never leaving the house lends some intelligibility to her behavior.

[48] Thorpe might be trying to anticipate this kind of objection when she says, on p. 409, that a person need not lose his or her sense of self by undergoing a radical shift his or her motivational set. But even if this highly doubtful claim is true, it does not anticipate my objection because maintaining a sense of self is not the same thing as becoming a different person. In fact, maintaining a sense of self is perfectly consistent with becoming a different person and even recognizing that one has become a different person. For example, I have maintained my sense of self throughout my entire life in that I have always (1) felt like one and the same person from childhood to adolescence to adulthood and (2) thought of myself as one and the same person throughout these stages, but I nonetheless recognize that I am a different person today than I was during childhood and adolescence.

change during sleep (perhaps the Devil is having some fun at my expense), then those who know me best would be entirely justified in thinking that I had become a *very* different person. And as this new person, I would have different practical reasons than what I have as my actual self. As I mentioned earlier, the devout Christian Ryan would have a reason to participate in religious activities that I currently have no reason whatsoever to participate in. Now it is of course true that everyone, including myself, would refer to me as one and the same person that has undergone some kind of extremely bizarre, Twin-Peaks-like change, but the treatment of me as one and the same person from pre-change to post-change is no more than a conventional convenience. For it seems obvious that Ryan Stringer and the devout Christian dedicating his or her life to the pulpit are qualitatively different people with different practical reasons, and this would still be the case if these numerically distinct persons were combined into one and the same numerical person that undergoes a significant qualitative change.

It is therefore not at all problematic to think of someone who undergoes the erratic and random radical shift in interests envisaged by Thorpe to undergo a corresponding radical change in his or her practical reasons. If I were to undergo this kind of shift in my interests, then the "new me" would be much more alien than the devout Christian Ryan—in fact, it is hard to even imagine what kind of Ryan would emerge from this radical shift. He would not have interests in his life partner, his cats, his friends and family, studying metaethics, teaching or writing philosophy, attacking theism and defending atheism, or even in general things like happiness or having a meaningful life. It seems quite certain that this alien, inconceivable Ryan that would emerge from an erratic and random radical shift in my current interests would be different than both the normal and the devout Christian Ryan (or Scary-Ryan) and would thus have radically different practical reasons than either does. It is therefore implausible to claim, as Thorpe does,

that it makes sense for one's practical reasons to remain fixed despite such psychological instability in one's interests.

But what if someone suffers from a pathological condition in which his or her interests undergo the erratic and random radical shifts only temporarily? This seems to be the kind of psychological instability that Thorpe specifically has in mind.[49] So instead of the Devil having some fun by simply morphing Normal-Ryan into Scary-Ryan or Alien-Ryan while I sleep, he inflicts me with a pathological condition in which I only temporarily turn into Scary-Ryan or Alien-Ryan. Does this change anything? Should we now hold my practical reasons fixed such that Scary-Ryan and Alien-Ryan have the same practical reasons as Normal-Ryan? I think not. For starters, we are still dealing with three qualitatively different people here (assuming that Alien-Ryan is even a person); and so it is not at all intuitive to think that they each have Normal-Ryan's practical reasons. It still makes much more sense to treat these three Ryans as very different people with different practical reasons. Furthermore, it seems completely arbitrary to pick Normal-Ryan as the source of practical reasons for all three. For even though Normal-Ryan (and those who know him) will treat himself as "the real Ryan" and the other as an intolerable frustration, Scary-Ryan and Alien-Ryan would simply do the same thing to Normal-Ryan. There seems to be no good reason to privilege one perspective over the other; and the fact that each perspective would see the other as a different, end-frustrating person further supports the idea that we are dealing with different people with different practical reasons. In fact, Normal-Ryan and Scary-Ryan would each see the other as one among many others that oppose one of his deepest and self-defining commitments: that of defending and promoting a certain worldview. It

[49] Thorpe, op. cit., pp. 410-411: "…I think it is intuitive to say that this person's reasons should be held fixed…until her motivational states regain their characteristic stability."

would thus be absurd to say that Scary-Ryan has a reason to write papers criticizing his own theistic worldview or defending an atheistic worldview to which he is fundamentally opposed, which is what we would have to do if we fixed Normal-Ryan's practical reasons to hold for Scary-Ryan. Finally, since there is no problem with thinking that the transition from Normal-Ryan to Scary-Ryan or Alien-Ryan results in a change in practical reasons (as I argued in the previous paragraph), there is no problem with thinking the same would happen if I started out as Scary-Ryan or Alien-Ryan and changed into Normal-Ryan. But if practical reasons change in each of these unidirectional shifts in my interests, then it would make no sense to think that they stay the same if these unidirectional shifts were combined into a bidirectional one. Overall, then, we should conceive of my pathological condition as one in which I oscillate between being two different people, with changes in my practical reasons as simply part of this condition.

Besides thinking that it is intuitive to hold practical reasons fixed despite erratic and random radical changes in our interests, Thorpe seems to be troubled by the fact that such erratic and random radical changes in our interests are inexplicable. However, it is not clear why this should be considered a problem. For even though such changes are inexplicable while other non-rational changes are not nearly as mysterious, all of these changes function as brute modifications to our interests that can result in changes to our practical reasons. It simply does not matter if we can explain the mechanisms of some of these modifications more than others; and so if it is not problematic for things like socialization, conditioning, and conversion to modify our interests and practical reasons over time, then it is not problematic for erratic and random changes to do the same over a much smaller time span. We thus should not be troubled by the inexplicability of such changes.

3. Appropriate Reason-Ascriptions Are Not Based on the Agent's Ends

Another interesting challenge to internalism comes from Stephen Finlay in his paper, "The Reasons That Matter."[50] While Finlay does argue that only internal reasons are important and thus can be seen as defending a certain kind of internalism ("importance internalism"), he actually rejects the internalism that I am defending. I therefore need to explicate why he rejects my position and defend it against his rejection (I will not address the issue of importance).

Finlay's focus is on reasons-talk and the appropriate ascription of reasons to people. One of the central features of his position is what he calls the *end-relational* theory of (normative) reasons, which defines reasons as follows:

(R) For all facts F, F is a reason for Φ-ing, relative to a system of ends E, if and only if F explains why Φ-ing is conducive to E.[51]

This definition of reasons is very plausible, as there are numerous normative activities (or systems) that generate their own reasons for action from the ends (or aim) of that activity. Consider again the normative activity of gooseberry-pie-making that I mentioned earlier. It revolves around the end of having tasty gooseberry pies, and this end generates reasons for doing certain things over others. For example, there is a reason to put real sugar in the caramel topping; namely, that doing so will make the pie taste good. Now we can present this in a way that fits the

[50] Stephen Finlay, "The Reasons That Matter," *Australasian Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 84, No. 1, (2006), pp.1-20.

[51] Finlay, op. cit., p. 8.

end-relational theory: the fact F that putting real sugar in the caramel topping makes the pie taste good is a reason to put real sugar in the caramel topping relative to gooseberry-pie-making, with its end E of having tasty gooseberry pies, because F explains why putting real sugar in the caramel topping is conducive to E. The same applies to more serious normative activities like morality, which revolves around the end of rightness that generates its own reasons for doing or not doing certain things.[52] For example, there is a reason to refrain from punching Jack in the face for writing an awful IAH paper; namely, that such restraint would not harm him unjustly, which is a right-making property of this restraint. We can again present this in a way that fits the end-relational theory: the fact F that not punching Jack in the face for writing an awful IAH paper would not harm him unjustly is a reason not to punch Jack in the face relative to morality, with its end E of realizing rightness, because F explains why not punching Jack in the face is conducive to E.

Besides reasons being end-relative, another important feature of Finlay's position is that reasons-talk is *context-dependent*. For instance, consider the question, "Why did the World Trade Center buildings fall on 9/11?" When asking why-questions of this sort, we are asking for a reason of some kind and thus are engaging in reasons-talk. Now if we pose this question to a demolition expert, then the reason we are after is a causal explanation in structural engineering terms; but if we pose this question to a political scientist, then the reason we are after is a political explanation that will be significantly different from the one given by the demolition expert. And if we pose the question to someone like Bin Laden, then the reason we are after is a

[52] It may be an oversimplification to describe morality as revolving around the single end of rightness, but I think that morality can be roughly conceived in this manner since it is at least *heavily* concerned with rightness in our motives, characters, actions, institutions, and policies.

justification for making the buildings fall. As such, it is the context that determines (or shapes) this kind of information-seeking reasons-talk. The same applies to reason-*ascriptions*, which is another kind of reasons-talk. If I am playing in the world championship match of chess and could make a move that would trap my opponent's queen in such a way that she will lose it no matter what move she makes next, then it is appropriate to say that I have a reason to make this move. But if I am instead forced at gunpoint to play against mob boss Moe, who is a violently sore loser, and find myself in a similar situation of being able to make a move that would guarantee my taking his queen on my next move, then it is appropriate to say that I do not have a reason to make this move.

Furthermore, the context of reasons-talk is determined by *ends*. In the information-seeking example, it was our epistemic ends (or what we wanted to know) that determined the context: we talked to the demolition expert when we wanted to know the structural engineering explanation for why the buildings fell, the political scientist when we wanted to know the political explanation for why the buildings fell, and a member of the group responsible for a justification for why they made the buildings fall. In the reason-ascription example, it was my practical ends that determined the context: in the first situation my end was to win the game, while in the second my end was to avoid harm. We thus come to an important conclusion: since reasons-talk is determined by context and context is determined by ends, reasons-talk is determined by ends.

Because only reason-ascriptions are important when it comes to the internalism/externalism debate, we can ignore information-seeking reasons-talk from here on out and focus only on reason-ascriptions. Let's begin with a simple inference from the conclusion we just drew: since reasons-talk is determined by ends, reason-ascriptions are determined by ends.

Now this makes complete sense given Finlay's end-relational theory of reasons: since facts count as reasons only relative to ends, which makes reasons and ends a conceptually-packaged deal, we can appropriately ascribe certain reasons to people only given certain ends. But how are these ends "given"? They are *presupposed by the speaker*, or the person ascribing the reasons. Returning to the second chess situation above, I said that it was appropriate to say that I did not have a reason to make a certain move; and this judgment is based on my end of avoiding harm. But in order to make this judgment, the speaker must know what is really going on in the situation. So if Jane stumbled upon the scene and thought that Moe and I were playing a friendly, genuine game of chess, she might say that I do have a reason to make the move. And while this is inappropriate given the end of avoiding harm, it is completely appropriate given the end of winning the game. Appropriate reason-ascriptions thus depend on the ends presupposed by the speaker, or *from where* the speaker is speaking.

We are now ready to see why Finlay rejects internalism. According to him, internalism says that appropriate reason-ascriptions are determined by the ends towards which agents are already motivated. However, it is not the agent's ends, but the ends presupposed by the speaker that determine the appropriateness of reason-ascriptions. Thus, while internalism is right to relativize reason-ascriptions to certain ends, it is wrong to relativize them to the agent's ends.[53]

Although Finlay's views about normative reasons being end-relative and reasons-talk being context-dependent and determined by ends seem accurate, it does not follow from them that internalism is mistaken. The problem with Finlay's rejection of internalism is that it is based on his theory of *appropriate* reason-ascriptions, while internalism is a position pertaining only to

[53] Finlay, op. cit., pp. 14-15.

accurate reason-ascriptions.[54] But these positions are completely compatible with each other: specifically, the internalist can agree with Finlay that there is a large set of reason-ascriptions that can be appropriately made to people relative to certain ends and nonetheless insist that only a subset of these ascriptions are accurate by being based on the ends that people actually have. To put the point another way, internalism is a position that can accept Finlay's view of appropriate reason-ascriptions but then goes beyond it by saying which of these appropriate ascriptions are accurate. Consider again Jane, who stumbles upon the "chess match" between mob boss Moe and me. Because she is speaking from within the game of chess and therefore presupposing the end of winning the game, we can agree with Finlay that she makes an appropriate reason-ascription to me relative to her presupposition. The same would also hold of her reason-ascription if she is in the audience watching me at the chess world championship match.[55] So as far as Finlay's theory goes, the internalist can agree that the reason-ascription is appropriate in each situation. However, it is a further question as to whether these ascriptions are accurate, and the appropriateness of the ascription in each situation is equally compatible with the ascription being accurate or inaccurate. In fact, the reason-ascription is accurate in the world championship situation because I have the end of winning the game, whereas it is inaccurate in

[54] Finlay's characterization of internalism in the previous paragraph is thus a bit misleading. While internalism can be described as a position on appropriate reason-ascriptions, the only ascriptions that are appropriate are those that are accurate. By omitting this detail, Finlay gives the false impression that internalism and his theory of appropriate reason-ascriptions are working with the same sense of appropriateness.

[55] This is only a hypothetical example, not a clever way to broadcast my chess abilities. So do not challenge me to a game of chess thinking that it would be some great feat to win.

the situation with Moe because I do not have the end of winning the game (I am not really playing the game, but simply pretending to do so in order to avoid harm). Since internalism is a position on the accuracy of reason-ascriptions and this is a completely independent issue from the appropriateness of such ascriptions according to Finlay's theory, internalism should not be rejected on the basis of Finlay's theory.

4. Intuitive Support for Externalism: Moral Reasons

The next two challenges to internalism that I will address come in the form of intuitive support for externalism. According to Finlay, one of the main objections from externalists is that internalism must deny that people who morally ought to do certain things nevertheless have no reason to do these things if they have no interests served by doing them, which flies in the face of common sense and ordinary intuitions, forcing us to reject many of our first-order judgments about reasons people have that even internalists are disposed to make.[56] Put succinctly, internalism denies that moral reasons are external ones, which is deeply counterintuitive. I therefore need to argue that this counterintuitive result does not constitute a good reason to reject internalism.

To present this intuitive support for externalism, I will draw from Russ Shafer-Landau's recent paper, "A Defense of Categorical Reasons for Action."[57] In this paper he gives two

[56] Finlay, op. cit., p. 4.

[57] Russ Shafer-Landau, "A Defense of Categorical Reasons," *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, Vol. 109, Part 2, (2009), pp. 189-206.

arguments for external reasons,[58] both of which rely on the familiar example of the dedicated, successful immoralist whose priority is to cause harm to others despite the prospects of an early death or incarceration. His second argument hinges on matters of moral culpability and will be dealt with later on. For now I will focus on his first argument, which is nothing more than an intuitive support argument for externalism.

After directing our attention to the cruel immoralist, Shafer-Landau appeals to our intuitive beliefs about this person: besides thinking that he or she is morally obligated to refrain from wrongdoing, we also believe that there are excellent reasons for him or her to refrain—namely, the considerations that constitute the wrongness of his or her actions.[59] In other words,

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[58] Shafer-Landau uses the term "categorical reason" instead of "external reason," but I do not see any difference between the two. On p. 189 he defines categorical reasons as "reasons that obtain independently of their relation to an agent's commitments;" and he continues by saying, "Such reasons do not depend for their existence on their being instrumental to the achievement of any of an agent's desires, goals, or cares." It is also evident from his two arguments that the "obtaining" of categorical reasons independently of an agent's commitments is to be understood as the agent *having* them independently of their commitments. As such, these categorical reasons look just like external ones. Moreover, Shafer-Landau's second argument for categorical reasons is an extended presentation and defense of an argument against internalism that he briefly presents in his book-length defense of moral realism (the one cited in footnote 12), where he only talks about externalism about reasons. This further suggests that his defense of "categorical reasons" is a defense of external ones, and so I will treat it this way.

[59] Shafer-Landau, op. cit., p. 190: "We intuitively regard such a person as (at the least) morally obligated to desist from the cruel treatment he longs to impose. Don't we also believe that there

we believe that there is something to be said against the immoralist's actions. If he or she were to ask, "Why should I refrain from doing such fun things?", which is a request for reasons, we would most definitely be able to answer this question; and we would do so by citing the wrong-making properties of the immoralist's actions. But these moral reasons, like moral obligations, apply to the immoralist regardless of whether or not moral behavior serves his or her interests—that is, we would still ascribe moral reasons to this person even if he or she has no interests that are served by acting morally. As such, these reasons are external ones. The argument is summed up by Shafer-Landau when he says, "So long as we think—as we all do—that there are genuine considerations to oppose their cruelty, and also think that such considerations obtain independently of their commitments…that would be enough to establish the existence of categorical reasons."[60]

Despite the intuitive appeal of this argument, I think the internalist can mount a strong response to it. Specifically, I think that a parody of Shafer-Landau's argument can be constructed that should cast significant doubt upon it. Let's begin with considering the institution or normative activity of gender, specifically that of *being a "real man."* Such an activity is like other normative activities in that it is dictated by certain rules of conduct that one must follow in order to succeed in this endeavor and thus qualify as a "real man." Because successfully qualifying as a "real man" is the end of this normative activity, it generates reasons for action. For example, in our culture the institution of manhood contains a prohibition against crying, which means that, according to this normative activity, there is a reason for males not to cry;

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are excellent reasons for him to so refrain—namely, all of those considerations that constitute the wrongness of the action?"

[60] Shafer-Landau, op. cit., p. 192.

namely, because crying is not being a "real man." But even though this is the case, surely it is not the case that all males in our culture have this reason not to cry because some of them, like me, do not have an interest in being a "real man" or any other interest that might be served by acting like one. In other words, because we are not committed to this normative activity and have no other interest that is served by trying to succeed in this activity, the fact that crying is not being a "real man" does not constitute a reason *for us* to refrain from crying. Instead, it only constitutes a reason for those males with an interest in this normative endeavor or some other interest that is served by success in this endeavor.[61]

But what might the aspiring or actual "real men" of the world say about my internalism about "real man" reasons? I can easily see them rejecting my position based on their intuitive beliefs, claiming that I still have the reason not to cry even though I have no interest in being a "real man" or any interest that might be served by acting like one. Like our intuitive moral beliefs about the immoralist, the aspiring or actual "real men" of the world surely hold me subject to gender requirements that prohibit my crying and intuitively believe that there is an excellent reason for me to refrain from crying—namely, that crying is not being a "real man." In other words, these guys believe that there is something to be said against me crying, as they would certainly be able to answer me asking, "Why shouldn't I cry?" And this "real man" reason, like "real man" requirements, applies to me regardless of whether or not being a "real man" serves any of my interests[62]—that is, they would still ascribe this "real man" reason to me

[61] So if I were in jail and acting like a "real man" would save me from severe mistreatment, then I would indeed have the "real man" reason not to cry.

[62] While gender requirements are certainly different than moral ones, they are just as inescapable (or categorical) as moral ones: people who do the gender socializing do not check with those

even if I have no interest served by acting like a "real man." This reason is thus an external one. They might sum up their argument by saying: "so long as we think—as we all do—that there is a genuine consideration to oppose Ryan's crying and that this consideration obtains independently of Ryan's interests, then we have established the existence of external reasons for action."

Now this externalism about "real man" reasons seems clearly mistaken because being a "real man" seems to be like any other normative activity that revolves around being a certain kind of thing. For example, being a philosopher, a scientist, a lawyer, a dancer, a ventriloquist, or a detective are all ends that generate reasons for action, but it seems patently absurd to think that these reasons apply to anyone regardless of their interests. The practical reasons involved in these normative activities, like those involved in games and pie-making, are internal ones because people have them only if they have an interest in succeeding in these activities or some other interest that is served by success in these activities. So as someone who has the goal of being a good philosopher, which for me is part of having a good life, I have philosophy reasons: for example, I have a reason to study hard and grapple with difficult philosophy texts. However, these philosophy reasons certainly do not apply to most people because they have no interest in being a good philosopher or any other interest that might be served by being one. Just imagine trying to tell your local cashiers, bank tellers, burger-flippers, and couch potatoes that they have a reason to read the work of Hegel, Wittgenstein, Korsgaard, or McDowell. It is highly likely that these individuals will get nothing but a headache or a rush of annoyance from wasting their time with such difficult scholarship—they will probably not get anything positive or beneficial

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being gender socialized to see if they have any interests served by performing gender-appropriate actions. Instead, the ones socialized are simply obligated in a non-moral sense to act in accordance with their respective gender.

from doing so. And while they might learn something, they probably have no interest in learning useless and uninteresting philosophical musings or any interest that will be served by such learning; instead, their interests are probably focused around leading a simple, unreflective, non-academic kind of life. Because these people probably have no interest that is served by reading difficult philosophy or doing anything related to being a philosopher, they probably have no philosophy reasons. Now the same kind of internalist reasoning will apply to the reasons involved in the normative activities of being the other things I mentioned above, including a "real man," which are all structurally similar to the normative activity of being a philosopher. As such, externalism about "real man" reasons seems mistaken despite its intuitiveness to the aspiring and actual "real men" of the world.

The force of this argument should be obvious. The appeal to intuitive beliefs about "real man" reasons being external is just like Shafer-Landau's appeal to our intuitive beliefs about moral reasons being external, and yet the intuitions of the aspiring and actual "real men" about "real man" reasons seem to be mistaken. This should cast considerable doubt on Shafer-Landau's intuitive support argument: for if the intuitions of the aspiring and actual "real men" about "real man" reasons are mistaken and they are very similar to our intuitions about moral reasons, then there is probably something wrong with our intuitions. Moreover, our intuitions are called even further into question by the fact that morality is a normative activity that revolves around being a morally good agent, which makes it look structurally similar to the other normative activities I mentioned above that revolve around being certain things. If morality is just one of these normative activities, as it appears to be, then moral reasons are internal ones after all despite our intuitions that say otherwise.

While my argument so far should be sufficient to cast considerable doubt on our intuitions about moral reasons being external, I think that I can strengthen the internalist response even more by offering an explanation for why our intuitions and those of the aspiring and actual "real men" of the world go awry. The first step here is to point out that the intuitive allure of moral reasons as external ones stems from *our commitment to the normative activity of morality*.[63] As such individuals, we are committed to realizing its end of rightness, and so facts pertaining to the right-making or wrong-making features of actions will certainly constitute reasons for doing or not doing them. Furthermore, we are committed to the part of morality's conceptual framework that people may not choose to endorse or not endorse moral requirements. Instead, all capable individuals, including the immoralist, are bound by these requirements regardless of whether or not they are accepted by these individuals or suit their personal ends.[64] In other words, we are committed to morality's placing every capable agent, regardless of his or her personal interests, into the uniform (or substitutable) position of "moral agent" that is *required* to realize the institution's end of rightness.[65] Such situating of all capable individuals as realizers of rightness can result in thinking that considerations of rightness and wrongness

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[63] The "our" here is not all-inclusive, but only refers to those of us who are so committed.

[64] Joyce, op. cit., chapter 2.

[65] It should be noted that the ends of institutions can be objective things like truth, which means that calling morality an institution need not impugn its alleged objectivity: there could be objective, stance-independent rightness that can be realized in motives, characters, actions, and public policies; and the realization of this rightness would be the end of the institution of morality.

constitute excellent reasons for each one of them, including the immoralist, to do or not do certain things.

Something similar can be said for why the aspiring and actual "real men" of the world might intuitively think that "real man" reasons are external. For as individuals committed to the institution of manhood, they are committed to realizing its end of being a "real man," and so facts pertaining to the manly and anti-manly features of actions will constitute reasons for doing or not doing certain things. Furthermore, these individuals are committed to the part of manhood's conceptual framework that males may not choose to endorse or not endorse "real man" requirements. Instead, all capable males are bound by these requirements regardless of whether or not they are accepted by these males or suit their personal ends. In other words, they are committed to manhood's making every capable male, regardless of his personal interests, into one that is *required* to realize the institution's end of being a "real man." Such situating of all capable males as realizers of real manliness can result in thinking that considerations of real manliness and not real manliness constitute excellent reasons for each one of them, including those like myself, to do or not do certain things.

So what, then, is the problem with the intuitions in each case? I suspect that it relates to the fundamental requirement of both morality and manhood that all capable agents *must* or *are required* to realize its end. By being committed to these institutions, we and the aspiring and actual "real men" of the world believe that all capable agents are to adopt their ends and thereby *impose* these ends onto them. And because these ends generate reasons for action, all capable agents inherit the reasons generated by the ends imposed on them. But this, according to internalism, is mistaken because an agent has reasons for action in virtue of ends he or she *actually has*, not those he or she *is supposed to have* from a moral or manly perspective. Indeed,

such perspectives are located *within* these particular institutions, neither of which is an appropriate place to mount a metaphysical argument or make philosophically sound judgments about the practical reasons we have. In order to do so, we must step outside of these institutions and do some metaphysics.[66]

At this point, the externalist will probably try to blunt the force of my internalist response by locating a relevant difference between the institutions of morality and manhood in order to explain why our intuitions about moral reasons being external should not be rejected along with the mistaken intuitions about "real man" reasons being external. I will consider only one possibility here, as I cannot think of any other promising ones. First of all, most (if not all) externalists are moral realists, which means that they believe in genuine, objective moral requirements that bind all capable agents independently of their interests. In other words, these requirements are not human constructions or in any way dependent on our attitudes; they are part of the fabric of the objective world that makes demands on us. However, gender requirements are not really objective or genuine ones at all—they are instead human constructions, or purely conventional in nature. As such, they do not *really* bind all capable people regardless of their interests, but are actually like the requirements of things like games, clubs, pie-making, and being a philosopher that bind people and thereby give them certain reasons for action only in virtue of their interests. So this is the real reason why the intuitions of the aspiring and actual "real men" of the world were mistaken: they were based on the false belief that "real man"

[66] This is not to say that we "step outside of these institutions" in the sense that we begin disregarding their requirements and stop being moral or manly. All I mean is that the issue of the nature of our practical reasons is a metaphysical one that requires us to do metaphysics, which is a different normative activity from being moral or manly.

requirements really bind all capable males independently of their interests. But this does not apply to moral requirements: they really do bind all capable agents independently of their interests and therefore supply them with external reasons for action.

While this externalist response seems to be a pretty good one, it nonetheless faces a few problems. For starters, it hinges on the truth of moral realism, which is itself a central metaethical issue shrouded in controversy. In fact, this issue has at least been around since Plato,[67] if not earlier; and so to assume the truth of moral realism is a rather big assumption to make. People like Richard Joyce and Gilbert Harman who have used internalism to argue for the falsity of moral realism would surely charge the externalist with begging the question here. On the other hand, it is always necessary to beg the question to some extent in any philosophical discussion; and since moral realism is the default position in ethics, such an assumption seems to be prima facie reasonable. However, such an assumption in this context is still quite dubious to make. For if the institution of manhood is purely conventional in nature despite intuitions to the contrary, then how can the externalist be so sure that morality is not a matter of convention as well? If gender requirements do not really apply to all capable individuals despite intuitions to the contrary and instead apply to people only in virtue of their interests, then doesn't this threaten to be true about moral requirements as well? After all, gender requirements are very similar to moral ones in that they both (1) are inculcated and enforced by other people; (2) are treated as being categorically applicable to capable individuals independently of their interests; (3) are generally thought to be "just the way things are," with no locatable source of human construction; and (4) vary across human cultures to some extent. Given these similarities, it

[67] Plato takes up this issue in the *Euthyphro*.

seems to be a case of special pleading to assume that moral requirements are the real deal while gender requirements are simply human fabrications.

For the sake of argument, however, let's say that moral requirements are genuine and gender requirements are not. Even if we grant this, there is another crucial assumption underlying the externalist attempt to blunt my internalist response, which is that requirements supply those bound by them with reasons for action. Now this certainly holds true for the things I mentioned above like games, clubs, pie-making, and being a philosopher, as well as for gender since its requirements are not genuine. But it is important to recognize that, in these and other similar cases, we are bound by the normative activity's requirements and thereby have the corresponding reasons for action *only in virtue of our interests*. In other words, it is our interests that make us bound by the requirements in the first place, which in turn supplies us with certain reasons for action. As such, it is our interests that ultimately give us these reasons for action, which makes them internal reasons. But this is not what is supposed to be going on with morality: its requirements bind us and thereby give us reasons for action independently of our interests. So unlike the requirements of the other normative activities, it is *not* our interests that make us bound by moral requirements in the first place and thus not our interests that ultimately give us these reasons for action.

Now this externalist conclusion certainly follows given the assumption that requirements supply those bound by them with reasons for action. However, why should we think that this assumption holds in the exceptional case of morality? That is, why should we think it holds when the requirements no longer apply to people in virtue of their interests? Such a change in the applicability conditions of the normative requirements in the case of morality opens up the possibility that the requirements will not automatically supply reasons for action to those bound

by the requirements.[68] Of course, the assumption in question might still hold in the case of morality, but we have no reason at this point to think that it does rather than does not. It may be theoretically economical to hold it constant across normative activities, but it is just as theoretically economical to be an internalist and hold the connection between reasons and interests constant; and I see no reason to choose the former option over the latter one. For if we choose to be theoretically economical by holding constant the assumption that requirements always supply those they bind with reasons for action, then we end up with externalism to the detriment of internalism, which is itself a theoretically economical position; and if we choose to be theoretically economical by being internalists, then we end up rejecting the theoretically economical assumption that requirements always supply those they bind with reasons for action.[69] As such, theoretical economy cannot help the externalist here. And since I see no other reason to think that the assumption in question holds up in the case of morality instead of breaking down, I see no reason to accept that moral reasons are external even if moral realism is

[68] That is, the disanalogy between manhood and morality that was supposed to save externalism is now causing a problem for it.

[69] Remember from the beginning of the previous paragraph that we are holding moral requirements to be genuine, which is why we would have to reject this assumption by accepting internalism or reject internalism by accepting this assumption. If we were not assuming moral realism here, we would not necessarily have to choose between the theoretically economical positions in question. Indeed, we could be like Richard Joyce and Gilbert Harman and reject moral realism by accepting both of these positions, which would perhaps be the most theoretically economical position of all.

true. Therefore, our intuitions about moral reasons being external remain dubious and so do not constitute a compelling reason to doubt internalism.

5. Intuitive Support for Externalism: Prudential Reasons

In addition to moral reasons, prudential reasons are considered to be another source of intuitive support for externalism. The two examples of such prudential reasons that I have encountered in the literature are health reasons and future well-being reasons, so I will focus on these.[70] Let's start with health reasons. Some people find it intuitive to think that if taking one's medicine will restore or preserve one's health, then this person has a reason to take the medicine even if he or she has no interest in being healthy or any other interest served by being healthy. As such, we have a reason to take health-restoring or health-preserving medicines independently of our interests, which means that they are external reasons. The same thing applies to future well-being reasons. If taking a certain course of action will promote one's future well-being in some way, then it seems like he or she has a reason to perform this action even if he or she has no current interest in the future or any other interest that is served by performing this action. These reasons are thus external ones as well.

Once again, I do not think that these supposedly intuitive cases constitute reasons to reject internalism. One reason for this is that it is difficult to think of an agent that has no interests served by actions prescribed by these reasons, which makes it difficult to see the reasons as clear candidates for being external. Now this does not apply in the case of moral

[70] I will focus on these examples for two reasons: their popularity and the intuitiveness of their being prudential reasons.

reasons. For example, consider the case of Anton Chigurh, the sociopathic villain from the movie *No Country for Old Men*. First of all, he obviously has no interest in being a morally good person: he kills many innocent people (sometimes in a horrific manner), steals cars, and generally does whatever that will best promote his narrow ends. He thus has no interest in morality that is served by performing morally good actions or refraining from the wrong ones that he incessantly performs. Furthermore, he is very dangerous and difficult to even harm, which means that he is likely to squash potential threats by hurting or killing them without getting hurt or killed himself. He is also very difficult to catch and good at escaping when he is caught (he is arrested at the beginning of the movie but ends up choking the officer to death with the handcuffs and then gets away, never to be caught again). Since he is so dangerous and difficult to harm or incarcerate, the threat of incarceration, death, or harm is virtually non-existent. It is thus hard to locate a non-moral interest that is served by behaving morally.[71] Overall, Anton seems to have no interest that is served by refraining from wrongdoing; and yet, as Shafer-Landau rightfully says, it still seems like the considerations constituting the wrongness of his actions are excellent reasons for him to refrain. Thus, moral reasons clearly appear to be external ones. On the other hand, constructing such a character to show health and future well-being reasons to be external is not so promising. For starters, being healthy tends to involve the avoidance of some sort of discomfort or pain, and we all seem to have an interest in avoiding these things. So many (if not most) cases of doing health-restoring things like taking medicine

[71] Perhaps a better way to put this point is that, in most cases of his doing evil deeds, Anton simply will not be caught, incarcerated, harmed, or killed; and thus the interests of not being caught, incarcerated, harmed, or killed will not be served by refraining from his evil deeds. As such, it is difficult to locate a non-moral interest that is served by refraining from wrongdoing.

will serve our interests in virtue of our interest in avoiding discomfort or pain. Also, being healthy is usually a condition that must be met in order for us to do other things besides resting and trying to get better. When we get sick enough, we cannot go to school, work on papers, spend quality time with friends or loved-ones, or do anything that is fun or makes life worth living. Put another way, being healthy allows us to work towards our goals, build and maintain relationships, do fun and enjoyable things, and try to have a good life. As such, doing health-preserving and health-restoring things seems to serve most or all of the interests that we have or could have. In fact, I find it very difficult to think of an interest that is not served by doing things, like taking medicine, that will restore or preserve one's health. But these considerations seem to imply that in order to construct an analogous character to Anton that is supposed to illustrate health reasons as external ones, we need to envision an agent that has a reason to do health-preserving or health-restoring things yet does not have (1) the interest in avoiding discomfort or pain and (2) most or all of the interests that we have or can have. However, it seems dubious that an agent could lack an interest in avoiding discomfort or pain.[72] For having an "interest" in something means having a positive attitude of attraction towards it, while calling something "discomforting" or "painful" implies having a negative attitude of avoidance towards it. But if agents have a negative attitude of avoidance toward something, then they must have a positive attitude of attraction towards the absence of that something; and since they must have a

[72] There are of course the cases of people who do enjoy some states of being in pain, but these individuals still have an interest in avoiding other kinds of discomfort or pain that we might consider to be "real pain" for them. As such, they (a) are not the kind of agent that we are looking for to illustrate the externality of health reasons and (b) do not supply a counterexample to my claim that an agent may not be able to lack the interest in avoiding pain or discomfort.

negative attitude of avoidance to discomfort and pain, they must have a positive attitude of attraction to the absence of those things. As such, it seems that agents *must* have an interest in avoiding pain and discomfort. Now if this is true, then we cannot envision an agent without any interest served by health-restoring or health-preserving behavior and thus cannot see how health reasons are supposed to be external ones. In other words, we cannot remove all interests that would be served by health-restoring or health-preserving behavior and still have an agent at all, yet we would need to be able to do so in order to have an agent with external health reasons. Furthermore, we certainly could not remove all of the interests that we have or could have and still have an agent because agents have interests—it is inconceivable to have an agent without them. And if there does turn out to be some interest(s) not served by being healthy, it is not clear that it (they) would be enough to have an agent. So once again, we cannot envision an agent without any interest served by health-restoring or health-preserving behavior and thus cannot see how health reasons are external ones.

Now there may be two worries about what I have said thus far about health reasons. First, one may worry that even if what I have said is true, it only applies to a *subset* of health reasons, perhaps even most of them. This is because there may be unhealthy conditions that do not result in pain or discomfort or interfere with our ability to satisfy our other interests and thus reasons to do healthy things that do not hook up to any of our interests.[73] Second, one may worry that I have simply not been imaginative enough to conceive of an agent with external health reasons.

[73] If it turns out that such a condition is incoherent—perhaps it is a conceptual constraint on something counting as an unhealthy condition that it interrupts our normal functioning or causes us pain or discomfort—then so much the better for my position, as this would render this worry an incoherent one.

But even if these worries are legitimate ones, I do not think that they can show health reasons to be external ones—in fact, I think upon examination that they will show the opposite. Consider first the first worry. If you were to come down with some sort of unhealthy condition that resulted in no pain or discomfort and interfered with nothing in your life, would you have a reason to take medicine to fix this condition even if you have no intrinsic interest in being generally healthy and no other interest served by fixing the condition? It is hard to see why we would have such a reason to take the medicine since having this condition does not seem to make any difference whatsoever to the quality of our lives and thus does not seem to matter at all. As an analogy, I have a tooth that is slightly chipped, but it does not bother me at all or interfere with my life in any way. Now I have no intrinsic interest in fixing the tooth or any other interest that will be served by fixing it and thus it does not really matter that I have the chipped tooth—it is just as if I did not have it. It therefore seems that I have no reason to take measures to restore the tooth, which makes the health reasons in question internal ones.

This brings me to the second worry—that I have not been sufficiently imaginative when it comes to thinking of the agent we are looking for. Now even if this is true, I do not need to be very imaginative. Instead, I can just stipulate that there could be an agent with no interests that are served by being healthy despite my difficulty in conceiving of what this agent might look like. But if this is the case, then being unhealthy must not interfere with or go against any of this agent's interests, which once again makes it difficult to see how being unhealthy makes any difference whatsoever to the agent's quality of life and thus why it would matter at all to be healthy. It therefore seems that this agent would have no reason to be healthy, which would make all health reasons internal ones.

Now that I have argued that health reasons do not even appear to be external ones, I can finally move on to discussing future well-being reasons. In order for these reasons to be good candidates for external ones, we must be able to envision an agent that has no interest served by performing an action that would lead to some future payoff in well-being. As such, we must envision that this agent has no interest in his or her future well-being. However, this lack of an interest in his or her future well-being entails a lack of an interest in his or her *well-being in general*, which includes his or her current well-being. To see why, consider first that agents are temporally extended beings—in fact, they must be this way because being an agent is not a static state of being, but an on-going *activity*.[74] Moreover, since agents are temporally extended beings, their well-being is temporally extended as well—if we have the same agent at time T_1 as we do T_{100}, then the well-being of that agent is the same as well. Therefore, to lack an interest in one's own future well-being is to lack an interest in the single object of one's own well-being that is attributable to the agent both in the future and in the present, which is nothing more than one's own well-being in general.

If the entailment that I just argued for holds, then we need to envision an agent with no interest in his or her well-being in general in order to envision an agent with no interest served by

[74] This temporal extensionality of agents is perfectly consistent with people being able to qualitatively change into different people over time. For even if an agent turns into a different person over time, we are able to recognize the change only because the old person was stable for some length of time and the new person is stable now. In fact, it does not make any sense to talk about "who someone is as a person" if they do not stay stable for some relatively long length of time, as there must be some sort of discernable constancy in order to even refer to the person being so-and-so instead of going through a mere phase or fleeting state of being.

action prescribed by future well-being reasons and thereby see such reasons as external ones. But again, this does not look very promising. For one thing, it is questionable whether an agent can lack an interest in his or her well-being. In fact, if my argument to the effect that agents necessarily have an interest in avoiding pain and discomfort is correct, then it seems to follow that agents necessarily have an interest in their own well-being because pain and discomfort are indicators of not being well. If this is the case, then we cannot have an agent that lacks an interest served by actions prescribed by future well-being reasons, which means that we cannot construct an agent in order to show such reasons to be external ones. Furthermore, being in a state of good well-being is like being healthy in that both allow us to do and enjoy the many things involved in having a good life. For example, the lower my well-being, the more difficult it is to work towards my goals and enjoy things. Also, my well-being is important to those that I care about, especially my life partner; and so the promotion of my well-being simultaneously promotes the happiness and well-being of others that are important to me. As such, actions promoting my future well-being will serve several of my interests. The same applies to other people because they will have many similar interests, which again makes it difficult to conceive of an agent with no interest served by actions promoting future well-being. Finally, it seems rather unintelligible for an agent with interests in different things to lack an interest in his or her well-being. Specifically, it is difficult to render his or her interest in different things intelligible without an overarching interest in his or her well-being. For instance, I have an interest in becoming a philosophy professor, and this is arguably made intelligible by saying that I have this interest because being a philosophy professor will contribute to my well-being. The same can be extended to other interests that we have, perhaps even all of them.[75] If this is correct, then we yet

[75] This is not to say that we are egoistic and therefore think of our goals or relationships as

again cannot have an agent, which must have interests, without the interest in his or her own well-being that makes his or her other interests intelligible. Therefore, we still do not have a clear picture of how future well-being reasons are supposed to be external ones.

On the other hand, I may again be guilty of being insufficiently imaginative—perhaps an agent could have a collection of interests that (1) does not need to be made intelligible by the interest in one's own well-being and does not otherwise need to include this interest and (2) has no element that is served by actions prescribed by future well-being reasons. While this may be the case, it does not help us when it comes to seeing how these reasons are supposed to be external ones. For one thing, such an agent is so alien to what we are used to that we cannot be sure what kinds of reasons it has at all. More specifically, we cannot simply assume that agents which are extremely different from us have future well-being reasons. For all we know, they do not have these reasons precisely because they are so different from us. Moreover, if these creatures are so different that not being well does not interfere with or go against their interests, then it is hard to see why their well-being matters at all, which in turn makes it hard to see why they would have reasons to promote their well-being. If this is the case, then well-being reasons

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instrumentally valuable to the ultimate value of our own well-being. Instead, the fact that certain things like me becoming a philosophy professor or having friends contributes to my own well-being helps to explain why I have an interest in these things without actually entering into my thinking about such things. In other words, my interest in becoming a philosophy professor or having friends is partly explained by the fact that they would contribute to my own well-being even though I am not becoming a philosophy professor and do not have friends because I came to believe they would contribute to my well-being. The explanatory influence of these facts is an unconscious one as opposed to one of conscious recognition of them.

(which include future well-being reasons) seem to be internal instead of external. Therefore, neither future well-being reasons nor health reasons appear to be external ones and so do not constitute intuitive support for externalism.

6. The Moral Culpability Argument for Externalism

The final challenge to internalism that I will consider comes in the form of a positive argument for externalism that is not based on our intuitions (it is the only such argument that I know about). This is the argument that I mentioned in passing before evaluating Shafer-Landau's intuitive support argument for externalism. As I said then, this second argument from Shafer-Landau hinges on matters of moral culpability. It is presented concisely by the following paragraph:

> "One is blameworthy for an action only if there is some reason to refrain from committing it. Because the killers are blameworthy for their deeds, there is a reason that opposes their actions. Since this reason does not depend on the ends that the killers happen to have, the reason is a categorical one. That they have violated or ignored it is the basis of their blameworthiness."[76]

[76] Shafer-Landau, op. cit., p. 195. The "killers" here are immoralists who commit themselves to blowing up civilians in crowded areas.

Because I agree with Shafer-Landau that these killers are genuine agents that are responsible for their deeds and thus are as culpable as agents can be,[77] my rejection of his argument is based only on rejecting its first premise: that one is blameworthy for an action only if there is a reason for that person to refrain from committing it.[78]

In defense of this premise, Shafer-Landau points out that it seems to be a conceptual truth that someone being deserving of blame entails that he or she has ignored at least one relevant consideration that opposes the action he or she has performed.[79] This is because assigning moral

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[77] Shafer-Landau, op. cit., p. 195.

[78] It should be noticed that, in the quoted paragraph above, the first sentence does not talk about there being a reason *for the person* to refrain (i.e., a reason the person *has*); instead, it just talks about there being some reason to refrain. However, Shafer-Landau's formal presentation of this argument in the next paragraph has as its first premise that "if one is blameworthy for doing something, then there is a reason for that person not to do it," which means that this is how he intended the first line of the quoted paragraph to be interpreted.

[79] Shafer-Landau, op. cit., p. 196. While he only mentions the ignoring of at least one morally relevant consideration that is entailed by moral culpability, it should be noted that improperly weighing or insufficiently regarding such considerations could also be involved in the culpable agent's wrongdoing. Thus, moral culpability entails that these moral considerations were either ignored *or* insufficiently regarded. Of course, this is a minor technicality that does not cause problems for Shafer-Landau. The important point of his premise is that moral culpability entails morally opposing considerations, which constitute reasons for action, that were disrespected in some way; it does not really matter if he failed to include one way in which this disrespect can

culpability is tantamount to morally criticizing someone, and we cannot legitimately level such criticism without a basis. But if an agent who has performed an action complied with all the relevant considerations, or there were no considerations opposing his or her action, then there is no basis for moral criticism and thus no moral culpability. Therefore, in order to have such a basis for moral criticism and thus moral culpability, there must have been (1) at least one moral consideration opposing the action the agent performed that (2) was ignored or insufficiently respected by the agent.

While this is certainly true, it does not establish the premise that Shafer-Landau needs for his argument to succeed. Instead, it only establishes that if an agent is morally culpable for wrongdoing, then there must have been at least one consideration that, *according to the institution of morality*, opposes the action and thus counts as a reason against it. However, it is not necessary for this reason to be one that a culpable agent *has*—whether or not such agents have this reason is a completely independent issue. In fact, the immoralist not having this reason to refrain from wrongdoing is a good explanation of why he or she ignored the morally opposing consideration in the first place. But as long as there is such an opposing consideration that was ignored, for whatever reason, we have what we need for assigning moral culpability. Therefore, an agent's moral culpability does not entail that he or she had a reason to refrain from wrongdoing, which means that the first premise of the argument is false.

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take place. I suspect that since he has the immoralist in mind, who is not committed to morality, his or her moral culpability will be the result of ignoring moral considerations instead of insufficiently regarding them; and so the immoralist's culpability in particular will entail that at least one morally relevant consideration was ignored.

To be sure, Shafer-Landau anticipates this objection and argues that it is ultimately unsuccessful.[80] Specifically, he argues that any system that justifiably assigns blame must allow for legitimate excuses, yet an agent seems to have a legitimate excuse if there was no reason for him or her to refrain from doing what he or she did. Thus, it is illegitimate to criticize someone for failing to obey rules that do not provide him or her with a reason to do so. Furthermore, an agent's moral culpability points to a personal failing, yet there is nothing necessarily amiss with the character of an agent who strays from norms that do not provide him or her with reasons for action. Thus, it would be unfair to criticize a person for not obeying rules that do not provide him or her with a reason to comply. However, the rejection of Shafer-Landau's first premise allows for this illegitimate and unfair criticism and severs the tie between culpability and personal shortcoming, while accepting it avoids these problems. Therefore, Shafer-Landau concludes, we have reasons to accept the premise instead of rejecting it.

Even though this response strikes me as a rather good one, I do not think it is successful. While Shafer-Landau is surely correct to say that any system that justifiably assigns blame must allow for legitimate excuses, the idea that an agent has a legitimate moral excuse if he or she had no reason to refrain from wrongdoing can be seriously called into question. This can be done by distinguishing between what constitutes a legitimate excuse *in terms of practical rationality* versus what constitutes one *in terms of morality*. That an agent has no reason to refrain from wrongdoing certainly constitutes a legitimate excuse in terms of practical rationality for why he or she did not refrain, and thus he or she cannot be legitimately criticized (for irrationality). However, this need not be the case in terms of morality because the legitimate excuses of this

[80] Shafer-Landau, op. cit., p. 198.

institution need not coincide with those of practical rationality.[81] For example, when considering someone like Anton Chigurh, if we accept that he has no reason to refrain from wrongdoing, are we then to conclude that he has a legitimate excuse in terms of morality for his horrific conduct and thus cannot be morally criticized? While it certainly seems to be the case that he has a legitimate excuse in terms of practical rationality, it does not seem like he has one in terms of morality. For as far as I can tell, the only such legitimate excuses for wrongdoing are (1) if someone was not sufficiently developed or informed so as to be aware of the moral considerations that opposed his or her action and thus did not know what he or she was really doing; or (2) if the wrongdoing was unintentionally performed due to uncontrollable, external influences. Thus, not having a reason to refrain from wrongdoing is not a legitimate excuse. Of course, I may be wrong here; there may be other legitimate excuses that I have failed to see. But even if this is the case, it is nonetheless doubtful that not having a reason to refrain from wrongdoing will be one of these excuses because, in order for not having a reason to refrain from wrongdoing to be such a legitimate excuse, it must be the case that *an agent's moral culpability entails a problem with the agent's rationality*.[82] However, this is probably too strict. While moral

[81] Some philosophers might insist on morality and practical rationality overlapping such that all immoral behavior is irrational, the truth of which would sink my criticism of Shafer-Landau's response. However, this position is not obviously the case and instead seems to be false. For all we need to do is consider the evil villains in movies or history—they seem to be bad people, not irrational ones. After all, is it not their rationality that makes them such dangerous, effective villains in the first place?

[82] That something like this conditional premise is required for an agent not having a reason to refrain from wrongdoing to be a legitimate moral excuse can be seen by looking at the logical

culpability can point to a problem with an agent's rationality in some cases,[83] in other cases it seems to point to a problem with an agent's *character*, not his or her rationality.[84] Returning again to Anton, there does not seem to be any problem with his rationality; instead, there is a problem with his complete lack of interest in or respect for morality's end of rightness. He is simply not committed to morality, which is certainly a character flaw that seems worthy of moral criticism (after all, morality demands that people be a certain way in addition to doing certain things). Thus, because an agent can be morally criticized for character flaws, which in the case of immoralists like Anton is partly responsible for the failure of the rules to provide reasons for

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structure of legitimate excuses in general. Because a legitimate excuse is nothing more than some fact F that *negates* an assignment of criticism, and F cannot simply be the brute negation of criticism, F must be the negation of some necessary condition of assigning criticism. Thus, there is some conditional of the form (criticism → ¬F) underlying every such legitimate excuse. Consider, for example, our excusing a young child from blame for hitting a classmate in order to acquire a toy because he or she is not sufficiently developed to understand why such behavior is wrong. Here the conditional is (moral culpability → sufficient development), and the excuse, which is that the child is not sufficiently developed, negates the criticism by negating the necessary condition of the agent being sufficiently developed.

[83] For example, an agent may be truly committed to morality and thus has sufficient interest in or respect for moral considerations, which results in his or her better judgment pointing towards doing the right thing. But this agent may nonetheless be overcome by a desire to do the wrong thing against his or her better judgment. In this case, the agent's moral culpability stems from irrationality.

[84] In other words, moral culpability entails a problem with an agent's rationality *or* character.

action in the first place, it is not illegitimate to criticize someone for failing to obey rules that do not provide him or her with a reason to do so. Therefore, the rejection of Shafer-Landau's first premise does not necessarily allow for illegitimate moral criticism.

But what about Shafer-Landau's other charges against rejecting his first premise? If it is correct that moral culpability can point to a defect of character, then the tie between moral culpability and personal shortcoming need not be severed by rejecting this premise; instead, it can be preserved by making the agent's personal shortcoming a defect of character. Also, while it seems true that in some cases there is nothing necessarily amiss with the character of an agent who strays from norms that do not provide him or her with reasons for action,[85] there is definitely something amiss with the character of an agent like Anton who, in virtue of his total lack of commitment to morality, strays from moral norms that do not provide him or her with reasons for action. Indeed, his horrific character is the very basis of his moral culpability. Again, there need not be anything wrong with the rationality of an agent like Anton, but since our moral criticism of him is an indictment of his character and not his rationality, we may not be guilty of unfair criticism by holding him morally culpable despite his not having a reason to refrain from wrongdoing (which we would be guilty of if we instead accused him of irrationality). Therefore, the rejection of Shafer-Landau's first premise does not necessarily allow for unfair moral criticism.

On the other hand, those of us who reject Shafer-Landau's first premise may not be able to avoid the assignment of unfair moral criticism. For in order to reject the premise and avoid

[85] For example, there is nothing necessarily amiss with the character of an agent who fails to obey the norms of "being a real man" that do not provide him with reasons for action. Or so I say—the "real men" of the world would probably say otherwise.

Shafer-Landau's criticism of such rejection, I had to appeal to the idea that moral culpability can be assigned on the basis of an agent's defective character. However, it may be unfair to hold someone morally culpable for character flaws because one's character is arguably not under one's control. But even if this is true, it does not point in favor of Shafer-Landau's first premise. First of all, accepting the premise does not prevent the allowance of unfair criticism any more than does its rejection: because an agent's level of rationality is also arguably not under his or her control, morally criticizing an agent for a failure of rationality or of character, which are both compatible with the acceptance of Shafer-Landau's first premise,[86] is unfair. Thus, accepting the premise does not have the advantage of avoiding unfair criticism. Furthermore, even if accepting the premise does not allow for unfair criticism while rejecting it does, this does not support the

[86] Shafer-Landau's premise only says that an agent's moral culpability entails that the agent had *some* reason to refrain from wrongdoing, not that the agent had *sufficient* reason to do so. Of course, if a culpable agent had sufficient reason to refrain from wrongdoing, then he or she had some reason to refrain from wrongdoing. Thus, an agent who is morally culpable, according to the needed premise, either had insufficient or sufficient reason to refrain from wrongdoing. If the culpable agent had insufficient reason to refrain from wrongdoing, then his or her moral culpability must be due to a failure of character (i.e., insufficient commitment to morality's end of rightness) instead of rationality. On the other hand, if the culpable agent had sufficient reason to refrain from wrongdoing, then his or her moral culpability must be due to irrationality. Therefore, agents can be morally criticized for a failure of rationality or character given the truth of Shafer-Landau's needed premise.

premise *being true*.[87] At best, this supports accepting the premise *as a useful fiction*. Of course, the premise could very well be true, but it receives no epistemic support from the supposed benefits that accepting it confers—such advantage is equally compatible with the premise being true as being a useful fiction. Therefore, the existence of external reasons for action, which require the truth of Shafer-Landau's first premise, has not been established.

[87] I am indebted to Nietzsche for this objection, which can be found in *Beyond Good and Evil*, p. 49, aphorism 39: "But people like to forget—even sober spirits—that making unhappy and evil are no counter-arguments." Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, Walter Kaufmann, trans, (New York: Random House, Inc., 1966).

IV. An Argument for Internalism

Now that I have looked at several arguments against internalism and argued that they do not constitute good grounds for rejecting the view, I can move on to presenting a positive argument in favor of internalism that will hopefully tip the scales in its favor. As I mentioned in the Introduction, I call this argument "The Conceptual Argument for Internalism." This argument is so-called because it is based on reflecting upon the concept of a reason for action.

Given the nature of my argument, I must obviously begin by talking about what reasons for action are conceptually. According to Shafer-Landau, reasons are, "considerations that favor or oppose, that make something appropriate, legitimate, or justified (or the reverse)".[88] In a similar yet simpler fashion, Parfit says, "Reasons for acting…are facts that *count in favor* of some act."[89] What these two definitions (which strike me as perfectly accurate) tell us is that the fundamental property of reasons is that they *favor or oppose* actions. This is evident in Parfit's definition of reasons because this is all that he mentions. And even though Shafer-Landau says more than what Parfit does about what reasons do, he says it in a way which suggests that he is describing what reasons do in two different ways. As such, I will focus only on reasons essentially favoring or opposing actions for the purpose of my argument.

With this conceptual fact about reasons in place, the question arises as to *how* or *in what way* considerations can "favor" or "oppose" an action. The answer is that considerations "favoring" or "opposing" makes sense only against *a background of aims or ends to be promoted* that specify how or in what way they can do so. One way to illustrate this is to show how the

[88] Shafer-Landau, op. cit., p. 191.

[89] Parfit, op. cit., p. 121.

same consideration can be both a reason for and a reason against something. Recall my earlier example of being forced at gunpoint to play chess with mob boss Moe. At some point in the game I have an opportunity to make a move that will guarantee my being able to take his queen on my next move. Now the fact that this move will guarantee the capture of his queen is clearly a reason for making the move (let's call this fact C, and the move M). But why is C a reason to make M? How does C favor M? It does so in virtue of the end of winning the game: because capturing Moe's queen will obviously help me win the game, the fact (C) that M will lead to the capture of Moe's queen counts as a reason for doing M. It is the end of winning the game that makes C favor M. Of course, I am not really playing the game because Moe is a violently sore loser. Instead, I am pretending to play the game. My intent is to appear like I am trying to win when I am really trying to lose the game in order to avoid harm.[90] So C also counts as a reason against doing M. And it does so in virtue of my end of avoiding harm: because winning the game will get me hurt or killed, and capturing Moe's queen will help me win the game, capturing Moe's queen will "help" to get me hurt or killed, which is inimical to my end of not being hurt or killed. It is the end of not getting hurt or killed that makes C oppose M. Thus, considerations favor or oppose only against a background of ends.

Combining the conclusions of the previous two paragraphs gives us the following argument:

(1) Reasons necessarily favor or oppose.

[90] Technically, I cannot really lose the game because a genuine game is not being played in virtue of my pretending to play. This means that I really cannot try to lose the game. What I am really doing here is trying to create the faulty appearance of losing the game in order to avoid harm.

(2) Favoring and opposing requires a background of ends to be promoted.

(3) Therefore, reasons require a background of ends to be promoted.[91]

In other words, considerations cannot count as reasons without a background of ends to be promoted, which means that reasons cannot exist without ends.[92] But if the *existence* of reasons depends on that of ends that generate them, should not the *having* of reasons by particular agents depend upon them also having ends that generate them? If Finlay and I are correct in thinking that reasons and ends are a conceptually packaged deal, then it seems that the having of certain reasons for action by particular agents entails that they have ends that generate the reasons, where these ends are contained in their collection of interests.[93] This would make the reasons we have dependent on our interests, as internalism contends.

[91] This is also the case with epistemic reasons—a belief's truth or plausibility is the end that provides the defining background here.

[92] This clearly supports Finlay's end-relational theory of reasons, which makes reasons relative to ends by definition.

[93] These ends are the objects, or contents, of our interests.

V. Conclusion

In this paper I have offered a defense of reasons-internalism. After introducing the debate between internalists and externalists pertaining to the nature of our reasons for action, I examined David Velleman's challenge to both internalists and externalists—namely, that the debate rests on a false dichotomy—and found it to be without force. Contra Velleman, the debate is a legitimate one, where one side is correct to the detriment of the other. From here I examined several arguments against internalism and argued that they do not constitute good grounds for rejecting the view. Specifically, I defended internalism against (1) the charges by McDowell and others that internalism is too psychologistic, (2) the problem of pathological changes in our motivational sets, (3) Finlay's charge that internalism is false because it mistakenly relativizes reason-ascriptions to an agent's ends, (4) the intuitive support of moral and prudential reasons for externalism, and (5) the moral culpability argument for externalism. Finally, I presented my conceptual argument for internalism, which is based on reflecting upon the concept of a reason for action. Given that internalism can meet its strongest challenges and seems to have positive support in its favor, it emerges as an attractive, philosophically defensible position.

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