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The indifference argument

Nick Zangwill

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Abstract I argue against motivational internalism. First I recharacterise the issue over moral motivation. Second I describe the indifference argument against motivation internalism. Third I consider appeals to irrationality that are often made in the face of this argument, and I show that they are ineffective. Lastly, I draw the motivational externalist conclusion and reflect on the nature of the issue.

Keywords Motivation · Indifference

Introduction

What is the connection between moral judgements and motivation? Is the motivational force of self-directed moral judgements *internal* to them? That is, are self-directed moral judgements intrinsically motivating, as 'internalists' say? Or does their motivational force derive from a distinct desire, as 'externalists' say?

This issue sits close to the dispute between *cognitivism* and *non-cognitivism*. Cognitivists hold that moral judgements are beliefs with the content that people (or their actions, intentions, desires or emotions) possess moral properties; non-cognitivists, by contrast, hold that moral judgements are (or 'express') desires or emotions, as opposed to beliefs.

For the moral cognitivist, the issue of motivation arises as a problem: *how can* cognitivism account for the internal motivating force of moral judgements? Hume is usually credited with inventing the argument that cognitivism can give no such account (Hume, 1888, book III.3.1). But this argument assumes an internalist point

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N. Zangwill (✉)
13 Langland Gardens, London NW3 6QD, United Kingdom
e-mail: nickzangwill@yahoo.com

of view. It assumes an answer to the question we are considering here. We will only be in a position to assess such an objection to cognitivism after we have considered internalism on its own merits.

I use the phrase 'moral judgement' where I want to be neutral between cognitivism and non-cognitivism; and I shall assume that we are talking about self-directed, present- or future-tensed moral judgements. I will sometimes write as if I am privileging cognitivism, but in fact I want to leave open the issue between cognitivism and non-cognitivism.

The master argument against internalism and for externalism is *the indifference argument*. This argument involves an appeal to the possibility and actuality of a certain kind of indifference to moral considerations. I shall argue that the indifference argument, when properly reconstructed, is a powerful argument. Arguments of this general sort have been floated before but with less success than they ought to have had. The precise formulations of the argument suffered from various deficiencies; and for the most part the wrong sort of examples were foregrounded. I want to make good these deficiencies and reveal the argument in its best light. First, the argument needs to be clarified so that we can appreciate the precise force and status of appeals to indifference. Second, when we clarify the argument, we will see that there are stronger arguments of this kind than have hitherto been pursued. And third, we need to address possible and actual replies. In particular, it has recently been popular to appeal to the rationality of being moved by one's moral judgements, which allows that we may not be moved when we are irrational. This reply defuses some but not all indifference arguments. The articulation of the indifference argument that I provide is immune to this common reply. I shall also reflect, more than is usual, on exactly how the issue over motivation should be formulated, and on what sort of issue it is. The pursuit of the debate will be facilitated by such reflection. I shall spend the first of the three parts of the paper probing the issue itself. The second part will be devoted to a precise statement and elaboration of the argument, as well as some clarification of what the argument is not. The third part assesses the impact of considerations of rationality on the argument. The fourth part draws conclusions and reflects on the argument.

My view is that motivational externalism is correct. I think that there is *no* internal connection between moral judgements and motivation. However, in this paper, I shall restrict myself to arguing against internalism. I shall be travelling only in one dialectical direction. I shall not be concerned with the development of the externalist theory and its defence against anti-externalist arguments. I have pursued this elsewhere (Zangwill, 2003).

1. Motivation menu: variations and refinements

1.1. Internalism about motivation and about practical reason

I use the word 'internalism' to describe a thesis about what *motivates* us to act on our judgements about what we ought to do. However, the word 'internalism' is also used in philosophy to describe the thesis that what *makes it the case* that we ought to do something depends on our desires (see for example Williams, 1978). So, at least to begin with, we should distinguish between *motivational internalism* and *internalism*

about practical reason.[1] Since I shall for the most part be concerned with motivational internalism, I shall usually drop the qualification 'motivational'.

It might be objected that on some views, motivational internalism and internalism about practical reason are closely connected. But whether this is indeed so, and exactly how it is so, is a matter that can only emerge later in the discussion. It is true that one set of issues is sometimes appealed to in arguments concerning the other. But issues about motivation and issues about practical reason are *prima facie* distinct. So I think that we should begin by definitionally separating the two issues. Only then can we use one issue to bring argumentative leverage to bear on the other. I shall return to the connection between the two issues later on. However, the definitional separation allows us to respect views that connect the two issues by seeing them as making interesting substantive claims. And it allows us the freedom to consider the motivational issue in isolation if it turns out that such substantive claims are false.

1.2. Varieties of motivational internalism

Internalism (motivational internalism, that is) is a position that comes in various guises, which need to be distinguished.

Perhaps the most extreme view is that the moral goodness of a proposed action moves us to act by itself. This view is grossly implausible: surely the goodness of some proposed action cannot generate moral motivation unless we are aware of its goodness. And surely we are motivated just as well by incorrect moral judgements about actions. Jonathan Dancy embraces a view that *looks* like this view. He says that one is usually moved by facts in the world, not by psychological states (Dancy, 2000). I suspect that this amounts to the thought that our motivational states usually have non-psychological propositional contents. However, the important issue is over the mental conditions under which someone is motivated who has a belief with certain contents.[2] It may be that a person who has one kind of propositional attitude with a certain content cannot be motivated unless he also has some other kind of propositional attitude with the same content, even though the *contents* of both propositional attitudes are states of affairs in the world, not psychological states. But the extreme view I want to dismiss here is the thesis that the goodness of an act does or can motivate a person irrespective of the moral judgements he makes, whatever their content. It is this view that is obviously false.

Putting this extreme view to one side, a very strong internalist line is that if we make a moral judgement, we inevitably act on it. So a moral judgement is a motivational state that deactivates other motivations (if there are any). The view is that moral judgements must actually yield action. R. M. Hare may have embraced this view (Hare, 1963). Call the view that we inevitably act on our moral judgements *Strong Act Internalism*.

A slightly more modest neighbouring view concerns *motivation* instead of *action*: the view is that if someone makes a moral judgement, his *strongest motivation* is to act in accordance with it, even if he does not always succeed in *acting* on his strongest

[1] The latter is sometimes called 'reasons internalism', but I dislike that label for reasons I will mention later on.

[2] Dancy's view runs into difficulties with accounting for different motivational attitudes to the same content.

motivation. Due to failures of rationality or opportunity, a person might fail to act on his strongest motive. Call this *Strong Motivational Internalism*. On this view, as on Strong Act Internalism, the motivation that springs from the moral judgement necessarily overrides all other sources of motivation. The difference is that Strong Motivational Internalism allows that our strongest motivation may not lead to action.

The most common sort of internalism does not go this far. It claims only a connection between moral judgement and *some* motivation. But this motivation need not override other motivations.

> Motivation is essential to a moral judgment; it is essential to a moral judgment that it has motivational force built into it.

Call this *Weak Motivational Internalism*—abbreviation: ''WMI''. On this view, when we are motivated by a moral judgement, no additional desire is necessary; moral judgements alone motivate us. Thomas Nagel is a cognitivist who has occupied this position (Nagel, 1968).[3] This implies that a moral judgement *can* yield action, by itself, but only if there are no stronger countervailing motivations and no failures of rationality. On the WMI view, a moral judgement has motivational tendency built into it but it may not be our strongest motivation. Nevertheless, a moral judgement can generate action by itself, in the right circumstances.

Strong Motivational Internalism is implausible: it is surely common for moral motivations to be outweighed by non-moral motivations. For example, it is not uncommon for people to think that they should not take bribes and to be motivated to some extent by that thought, and yet they are sometimes tempted by particularly large bribes, and indeed they sometimes succumb. WMI is more plausible since it allow such cases. Let us now proceed to refine WMI in various ways.[4]

1.3. Refining weak motivational internalism: essence, modality, constitution

For WMI, it is at least *necessary* that moral beliefs motivate. But the internalist needs a stronger thesis. Kit Fine argues (persuasively) that we should distinguish modality from essence (Fine 1994); for there can be necessary connections that are not essential connections. The internalist needs to claim not just that moral beliefs are *necessarily* motivating, but that motivation is *essential to* moral beliefs. Imagine

[3] In some moods, this also seems to be John McDowell's position (McDowell, 1978; see also McDowell, 1982). However, in other moods McDowell seems to lean towards a Strong Motivational Internalist position, especially when he speaks of the way moral reasons can 'silence' other motivations, in the sense that moral judgements can lead to action without needing to be stronger than other motives (McDowell, 1978, pp. 25–26).

[4] A neighbouring, less familiar, weak internalist position would be that motivation is a *causal consequence* of a moral judgement. On this view, when we are motivated by a moral judgement, it is because a new desire is causally generated by the moral judgement alone. On this view, the judgement and the desire are metaphysically distinct states, but there is a causal path from the judgement to the desire. This desire may then yield action if there are no stronger countervailing desires. We might call this *Causal Weak Motivational Internalism*. On this view, moral judgements have a less *direct* connection with motivation than they do for ordinary Weak Motivational Internalism. I do not know if anyone has embraced Causal Weak Motivational Internalism. It seems to be a *possible* position that someone might occupy. On the other hand, it is difficult to see what could motivate it. I shall ignore this view since it makes no difference to the dialectic.

that it were somehow necessary that everyone has moral desires. In that case, all moral beliefs would *necessarily* be motivating, without that being the *essence* of moral beliefs. However, if motivation *is* essential to moral beliefs, that would *explain* why moral beliefs are necessarily motivating. At root, WMI is the thesis that motivation is essential to moral beliefs. But it is often dialectically useful to foreground the key modal commitments of WMI as a way of debating essentialist issues. There is more to motivational internalism than the modal claim, but it has been standard to debate the motivation issue in modal terms.

Another way that the issue is sometimes characterised is to say that we want to know whether moral beliefs are *constituted* by desire. We should not express WMI in these terms. For the point of the constitution relation is to allow that things can be constituted in different ways. So the constitution relation fails to support a necessary connection, whereas the essential relation does.

1.4. Further refinements of weak motivational internalism: degrees and determination

To say only that motivation is essential to or is necessitated by moral judgements is too simplistic. In fact, it handicaps the entire debate to cast it in such terms. For not all moral judgements are alike. We need to know *how* motivation is 'tied to' or 'built into' *different* moral judgements. For our purposes, the most important nuance is that it is not the case that either we believe something or we don't or that either we desire something or we don't. Beliefs come in degrees and desires come in strengths. Intuitively, we want some things more than others, and we believe some things to a greater degree than others. (We are more confident of some claims than others.) Our mental world is not black and white. This is often overlooked in the motivation debate. We must reformulate WMI, and its modal consequences, so as to take account of this. We need an account of how strength of motivation is built into moral beliefs of different degrees.

The modal doctrine that should accompany WMI is what we can call the 'Proportional Determination Thesis', according to which strength of moral desire is proportionately determined by degree of moral belief:

PDT The degree of a person's moral belief that he ought to do something proportionately determines the strength of his desire to do it.

Such a Proportionate Determination Thesis has three modal consequences:

PDT1 Given that a person has a certain degree of belief that he ought to do some action and a certain strength of desire to do it, there could not be another person who has a similar degree of belief that he ought to do the action but a different strength of desire to do it.

PDT2 Given that a person has a certain degree of belief that he ought to do some action and a certain strength of desire to do it, then he could not remain unchanged in respect of the degree of belief that he ought to do the action but change in respect of his strength of desire to do it.

PDT3 Given that a person has a certain degree of belief that he ought to do some action and a certain strength of desire to do it, then it is not possible that he has the same degree of belief that he ought to do the action but a different strength of desire to do it.

Three relatively obvious comments:

First: PDT is not the thesis that the degree of a person's belief that he ought to do an action determines his *overall* strength of desire to do it. For there are often *other* desires in play in our mental economy. PDT is only the thesis that having a belief of a certain degree that an act is right determines that we have *a* desire of a certain strength to do it. For example, the fact that I believe (to a high degree) that I ought to repay some money might not mean that my *strongest* desire is to repay it, since I might have an even stronger desire to keep that money for some pleasant purchase for myself. But PDT says that a moral belief of a certain degree generates a proportionate desire, even though there may also be stronger contrary desires. Extraneous beliefs or desires might offset the proportionately determined strength of desire.

Second: exactly what degree of belief or strength of desire is depends on what beliefs and desires are. For example, suppose that propositional attitudes are essentially dispositional states of the sort that functionalists envisage. Then, presumably, the degree or strength of such states is a matter of the strength of the relevant dispositions. Some things are more inflammable (soluble, fragile) then others. One thing has a stronger disposition than another if it takes less to trigger the manifestation of the disposition in the first thing than in the second. So if propositional attitudes are dispositional states, some states of mind have greater or lesser dispositional powers of the relevant sort (see further Mele 1998, who offers a dispositional account of motivational strength). Alternatively, suppose that propositional attitudes are normative states—so that propositional attitudes are states that essentially impose rational obligations or permissions (or perhaps conditional rational obligations or permissions) on other propositional attitudes. Then a stronger desire or greater degree of belief is one that imposes a greater normative requirement upon us to modify our propositional attitudes in the relevant ways (see Zangwill, 1998, 2005). Presumably one obligation is stronger than another just in case it would win out in an all things considered obligation if there were no other obligations in play.

Third: strength of motivation is also proportional to the degree to which we believe that the moral property to be instantiated. But this is a different and relatively uncontroversial claim, which both internalists and externalists would agree on. It is not the controversial and dialectically interesting determination thesis that we are examining.

The determination theses, PDT1, PDT2, and PDT3, are explained by the essentialist claim of WMI: something's being a belief of a certain degree necessitates its being a desire of a certain strength *because* it is essential to being a belief of that degree to be a desire of that strength.

1.5. Motivation and rationality

In the last two decades, many philosophers have come to think that rational action cannot be fully understood without reference to practical rationality, which is an

factor over and above the beliefs and desires in play (e.g. Korsgaard, 1995). The idea is that moral judgements motivate *when we are rational*. There are also closely related theses: that there must be some reflective endorsement of the action; or that there must be an act of will that is independent of both beliefs and desires. Let us allow that internalists can add such clauses to their theory. Call such enhanced motivational internalist views Rational Weak Motivational Internalism—abbreviation: ''RWMI''.[5] Whether or not we add such considerations into the internalist equation, internalist and externalist accounts are fundamentally different. They differ over whether a distinct desire is a *necessary* condition of being motivated. The rationality point is that a moral belief is not *sufficient* for motivational efficacy. But that point bypasses what most concerns us, which is whether a distinct desire is necessary. Contrary to what many have thought, we shall see that adding rationality requirements and the like does make much difference to the issue over motivation. I shall argue (in part 3) that we can finesse the issues that this generates.

1.6. Externalism

All internalist views turn their back on an *externalist* model of motivation, which is this:

> Moral judgements are motivationally inert. Motivation is not essential to moral judgments. When moral judgements motivate us, they do not do so alone. They motivate us only in conjunction with distinct non-cognitive states, typically desires.

For WMI, motivational efficacy springs from a moral judgement alone. Motivation is internal to a moral judgement. By contrast, on the externalist view, a moral judgement has no motivational efficacy by itself *whatsoever*. In particular, for a moral cognitivist, the motivational efficacy of a moral belief must be supplied by a *distinct desire*. This distinct desire is a desire that does not depend on the moral belief; it would exist even if the moral belief did not. Of course, for such an externalist cognitivist, the existence of the motivating desire may depend on *some* beliefs. For example, the desire to improve one's financial situation depends upon having beliefs about what money is. The claim is not that the existence of the motivating desire is independent of absolutely *all* beliefs. That would be implausible. It is merely the claim that the desire that motivates us to act on a belief is independent of *that* belief. The existence of the desire to improve one's financial situation may be dependent on many beliefs, but it is independent of the belief that buying a travel pass is a good investment.

So far, we have the following competing views about how moral judgements are connected with action: Strong Act Internalism; Strong Motivational Internalism; Weak Motivational Internalism; and Externalism. And within each of these categories we can separate views that are, and those that are not, augmented with a rationality requirement, or rational endorsement, or acts of will. I shall argue against

[5] To move from WMI to RWMI is actually to concede quite a lot. It is to concede that actual motivation is not of the essence of a moral judgement: some motivate and some do not. The fact they necessarily motivate a person *if he is rational* does not change that.

WMI and RWMI. I focus on WMI and RWMI because if I can show that they are false, then Strong Act Internalism and Strong Motivational Internalism will also fall.

1.7. Externalism and the Humean belief/desire model of motivation

Externalism about moral motivation means that moral motivation, for a cognitivist about moral judgements, tidily conforms to the standard 'Humean' model of action explanation according to which we explain action by attributing distinct beliefs and desires. (I leave open whether the 'Humean' model is in fact Hume's.) It is controversial whether it is the essence of propositional attitudes to figure in such explanations (Zangwill, 1998, 2005). But it is common sense that we do often appeal to distinct beliefs and desires in order to explain and predict actions. The particular roles that beliefs and desires play in much of our common-sense explanatory practice, and in all of it according to Humeans, is that they are thought of as distinct states that mesh together in a particular way to yield action: beliefs function to supply the means to the end specified in the content of desires, or they inform us of the existence of what we desire. So distinct beliefs and desires are each necessary for motivation; neither can motivate without the other. Only together can they motivate.[6]

To use a couple of old examples: I believe that if I step on the ice I will fall through and become wet and cold. I do not want to become wet and cold. These two states can motivate me not to step on the ice. But the belief that the ice is thin and that I will fall through if I step on it will only motivate me not to step onto the ice if I don't want to get wet and cold. If I liked being wet and cold, I would no doubt leap onto the ice with abandon. A second old example: I wave my arm. Why? Because I want to attract a friend's attention and I believe that I can achieve this by waving my arm. If I had not wanted to attract his attention, I would not have bothered to wave my arm (other things being equal). In these scenarios, beliefs and desires are assumed to be distinct states. This Humean belief/desire model for explaining action is certainly one that we commonly deploy. The Humean belief/desire explanatory model at work here is firmly entrenched in common sense (Fodor, 1987). On the basis of it, we manage to predict the behaviour of others with great success in many cases.

As I mentioned, some philosophers say that for a full explanation of free intentional action, we must add that our beliefs and desires combine in a *rational* manner. We act because the beliefs and desires are present *and* we do not suffer from irrationality. Some theorists also add a degree of reflective self-consciousness or an act of will. Perhaps we must be aware that our beliefs and desires together count as a reason for us (Velleman, 1990, chapter 7; Korsgaard, 1995). But all this makes no fundamental difference to the standard Humean belief/desire model because even if we add that the agent is rational, or that he is self-reflective, or that he has performed acts of will, it might still be true that distinct beliefs and desires are both necessary. Rationality, reflective self-consciousness and will are all extras, on top of the usual Humean belief/desire model. For example, it is true that we can be irrational in desiring the end and knowing the means to attain it, but failing to desire the means. But Hume, or at least a Humean, *could* happily admit

[6] In the Humean model, it is assumed that if something is a belief then it is not a desire, and vice versa; and one is not part of the other.

this, even if Hume occasionally seems to write as if he denies it (Hume, 1888, p. 416). Korsgaard is right that practical reasoning must itself be *a* force in the mind since it gets us from premises to conclusion in practical and theoretical reasoning. But this does not at all threaten the view that a distinct desire is a *necessary* causal condition of our being motivated by a belief. The Humean claim need not be that beliefs and desires are jointly a *sufficient* condition. Perhaps rational 'instrumental practical reasoning' is also a necessary condition of standard cases of motivation. A Humean could agree with Korsgaard that the normal motivational influence of desires can suffer from all kinds of quirks and that rationality plays a distinctive causal role. This does not mean that a desire does not, in addition, play a distinct causal role.

Clearly we deploy the Humean belief/desire model a great deal. The question is whether it is *always* applicable. Does moral motivation conform to it? Or is it an exception? Perhaps that model applies in many cases, but the model does not have full generality.

It might be argued that there should be a presumption in favour of the standard Humean model unless we are given a good reason to reject it. But it is not clear that the onus is on motivational internalism about morality to prove its case. Perhaps morality is different from other cases of motivation. Motivational internalists about morality reject the standard Humean model as a quite general model of action-explanation. So we cannot use that quite general standard model as a premise in a non-question-begging argument against motivational internalism.

I shall argue not only that we do not have reason to reject the Humean distinct belief/desire action-explanation scheme in the case of morality, but also that we also have positive reason to accept it. We do not have reason to think that moral motivation differs in a significant way from the standard Humean model of action explanation, and we have reason to think that moral motivation conforms to that model. If this is right, we can infer that the most plausible model of moral motivation is the externalist model according to which moral beliefs cannot motivate without distinct desires.

1.8. The status of the issue

Before we proceed to examine the indifference argument, I want to register that there is an important meta-issue about what *sort* of issue the issue over motivation is. In fact, this is not agreed among the parties in the debate. The meta-issue is rarely addressed directly but it is in fact crucial because it affects the sort of arguments that we bring to bear and that could be effective.

My view is that the issue between the various views of moral motivation is primarily a *causal-explanatory* one; it turns on the causal origin of certain motivations and actions. If so, it is an empirical matter. I shall argue that it is empirically plausible that moral beliefs motivate only given distinct desires. The Humean principle that a belief alone *cannot* move the will is a truth about our psychology. And arguments for or against it must be empirical ones.[7]

[7] Along with most philosophers of the post-Kripke/Putnam era, I think that one can discover metaphysical necessities and essences on empirical grounds.

There are, however, some philosophers who think of the issue in more 'conceptual' terms.[8] We shall see that this does not make any difference. It might be said that if it is conceptually impossible for a moral belief to fail to motivate then considering empirical evidence is beside the point—like looking for evidence for the existence of square circles. But this is a serious strategic mistake. First, one should not be over sanguine about the ease of showing that something is conceptually impossible. If empirical evidence *seems* to be relevant to a claim, then one has a good reason for doubting whether the issue is a purely conceptual one. We do best to keep an open mind about the status of doctrines about motivation.[9] And secondly, the issue is one about real flesh and blood people. It is not about abstract relations between concepts, and if it were it wouldn't be very interesting. Suppose we became convinced that there is a conceptual connection between moral judgements and motivation. It would then become an open question whether we make moral judgements. Or suppose we explicitly define two notions, one of which did and the other of which did not include such a conceptual component—'Yoral judgements' and 'Zoral judgements'; the question of real flesh and blood people would be whether they make Yoral or Zoral judgements. And *that* issue could not *possibly* be a purely conceptual question. Empirical evidence *has* to be relevant to the question of what actual flesh and blood people are like.[10] But all I intend at this point is to raise the status issue, and to ask for tolerance about how the issue should be conceived.

2. The basic indifference argument against internalism

2.1. The basic argument

Let us now turn to examine the indifference argument, which I take to be the most powerful kind of argument against motivational internalism of any sort. Varieties of the argument can be found in the writings of Philippa Foot, Michael Stocker, David Brink, Al Mele and Sigrun Svavarsdóttir. I begin with a *basic* version of the argument. This basic argument will then be refined in the light of various attempts to side-step it. We will then see that there is just one version that succeeds against the counter-arguments. Foot probably presented the bare bones of this superior version in 1972. Surprisingly, some time later Foot disowned this argument. Indeed she went as far as to call it ''a bad mistake'' (Foot, 2002, p.3). On the contrary, I think her 'bad mistake' was a heroic insight, which she should have been proud of and stayed true to. Calling her insight ''a bad mistake'' was, I submit, a bad mistake. The argument I develop from her suggestion survives the counter-arguments, unlike the arguments

[8] For example, Mark Platts reconstructs Hume as claiming that it is *impossible* for a belief rationally to generate a desire (Platts, 1988, p. 199), as an *a priori* claim—one that is supposed to follow from the concepts of belief and desire (Platts, 1988, p. 201). Putting aside the intrinsic implausibility of this claim, it is extraordinarily unlikely to be true to Hume. Al Mele says that the issue is about what actual human beings are like (Mele, 1996, pp. 743–745). But in fact this doesn't figure in his positive argument, which turns on a thought experiment.

[9] Even if the issue is more properly cast as one about whether belief alone can *rationally* cause action, the issue is still broadly empirical. Rational causation is, after all, a species of causation, not something quite different. I return to this issue in part 3 when I discuss the views of Christine Korsgaard, Rachel Cohon and Michael Smith.

[10] Unfortunately I have not been able to find any quantitative psychological research on this matter.

of Stocker, Brink and Mele. The argument has more in common with Svavarsdóttir's argument. But I shall also distinguish the argument from hers' and argue that the argument I develop is more fundamental and more powerful than her argument.

The argument begins with an appeal to the range of phenomena, which can be collected together under the label 'moral indifference'. There are many variables involved in describing cases of indifference, some of which we will explore below, but perhaps the most neutral statement is that it is the phenomenon of *not caring very much about the demands of morality*. The argument against internalism is that this phenomenon is best explained by externalism.

This argument—if it goes through—obviously subverts the Humean motivation argument against cognitivism; for if moral judgements do not have an inevitable motivating force, then it cannot be objected that the trouble with moral cognitivism is that it cannot account for that inevitable motivating force.

So far as I know, Foot was the first to draw our attention to the phenomenon of indifference and to marshal this phenomenon in defence of externalist cognitivism (Foot, 1978, essays X–XIII). Following Foot's lead, Michael Stocker also appealed to indifference (Stocker, 1979), David Brink appealed to 'amoralism' (Brink, 1989, chapter 3), and Al Mele appealed to 'listlessness' (Mele, 1996) and Svavarsdóttir appeal to cynicism (Svavarsdóttir, 1999). However, there is more to say about exactly what these phenomena are. I shall distinguish between significantly different indifference phenomena and distinguish different indifference arguments corresponding to the different indifference phenomena that they deploy. And I shall consider the responses that internalists can and do make. I endorse something like the general drift of the Foot/Stocker/Brink/Mele/Svavarsdóttir's argument, but I think that the argument needs considerable refashioning if it is to be an effective anti-internalist argument.

2.2. Kinds of moral indifference

Different kinds of indifference phenomena need distinguishing. One group of examples is of two-person comparative cases, which are counter examples to PDT1. In such a case, two people are alike in respect of their moral beliefs, but unlike in respect of how much they care about moral matters. That is, the desire for what is morally better is stronger in one person than in the other, even though they have similar moral beliefs.

But the phenomenon of indifference is not necessarily a matter of a comparison of two people; it might also be a matter of a person ceasing to care as much as he used to while his moral beliefs remain unchanged (thus clashing with PDT2). Or it might be the possibility that a person at a time cares less than he actually does at that time while his moral beliefs remain constant (thus clashing with PDT3). Indifference phenomena are diverse.

It need not be quite as dramatic as the fact that one person cares while another person does not care *at all*, or that a person completely ceases to care, or that it is possible for a person not to care at all. It might be a difference of degree. This is one reason why I prefer to talk in terms of 'indifference' rather than the 'amoralist'. The amoralist is someone who does not care at all. He is completely indifferent. But whether such a person is actual or possible is much more controversial than whether there are or can be significant differences in how much people care about morality.

So much for what moral indifference would be if it were possible. But are these indifference phenomena really possible? It certainly seems that moral indifference is no mere abstract philosopher's possibility, but a common *actual* phenomenon. There are two kinds of actual indifference phenomena: trans-personal cases, and trans-temporal cases. On the face of it, people *differ* from each other in respect of how much they care about morality, and people *change* in respect of how much they care about morality. The argument for the possibility of indifference should turn on actuality of indifference. That is, PDT3 is false because PDT1 and PDT2 are false.

2.3. Three examples

Let us have some actual examples to think about, which seem to illustrate trans-personal and trans-temporal variable enthusiasm for morality. The examples are not supposed to be naïve counter-examples that establish the point decisively, but are put forward as putative phenomena that need explanation.

First, the following newspaper report illustrates moral indifference.

> A drunk driver who knocked down and killed two girls then told police: 'Look at the state of my car,' Stafford crown court was told yesterday. Later, Jason Cartwright, aged 20, who had drunk six pints of beer, also told officers: 'It was only a poxy accident'.[11]

Jason was more concerned with his car than with the two dead girls (a morally relevant consideration).

Second, a prosaic example from my own case: when I wake in the morning, before I have had my morning coffee, I care *less* about morality than I do later in the day, because I care less about more or less everything (besides coffee). My main evidence for this is introspection, but friends have been kind enough to confirm this description. There are some people who spring out of bed in the morning feeling alert and positive, ready to seize the day and do their duty. Others, like myself, take some time to evolve before we graduate to such an enthusiastic state.

Third, a mercenary I once met on vacation exuded moral indifference. He was in control, reflective and articulate. Everything he said convinced me that he was perfectly aware that his vocation was genuinely morally wrong, not merely what people conventionally call 'wrong'. He fully understood the wrongness of his vocation. But he was not very concerned about that. He was more concerned with his immediate interests and concerns, that is, colloquially, looking after number one. There was no moral cognitive lack. He made that quite clear. Indeed he insisted on it. The mercenary was unusually indifferent to the demands of morality; but he shared moral beliefs with the rest of us, and with his former self. He insisted on that.

Many other examples of the same sort could be provided.

Three comments on these examples:

First, I have *not* chosen examples of depression, listlessness or psychotic disorders as other cognitivist externalists have done. I focus on particularly self-conscious, honest and self-aware cases rather than on the more pathological cases that have

[11] *The Guardian*, April 3rd, 1993. The car was a BMW. Newspaper interviews in *The Guardian Weekend* (February 5th, 1994) details many such cases.

figured more prominently in some of the recent literature. Focusing on the later is a dialectical mistake, for many reasons (as we shall see later on in part 3). Neither the drunk driver nor the deprived coffee addict nor the mercenary suffered from depression, listlessness or psychosis.

Second, the examples all turn on the *strength* of moral motivation. This is why it is important to cast the whole issue in terms of degrees and in terms of the Proportional Determination Theses. This helps a great deal because we are not forced to deal in mere thought experiments or extraordinary or unusual cases of people with absolutely no moral concern at all: the dreaded amoralist. The sorts of cases that I have in mind are actual and ordinary.[12]

Third, the examples are not merely ones where other things matter more to us than morality. Moral concerns may indeed be 'outweighed' or 'overridden'. That possibility refutes strong-internalism; but it poses no problem for a weak form of internalism. For even if our moral judgements necessarily yield desires, these might or might not be overridden by other distinct desires. But to explain why the desires evoked by moral judgements are sometimes overridden is not to explain what needs to be explained, which is the varying nature of the way the moral judgement that I should do something is conjoined with the desire to do it, irrespective of other desires. Irrespective of extraneous desires, it seems that we care more or less about morality. This is not merely the weaker point that moral desires might or might not be outweighed. What is notable about the drunk driver, deprived coffee addict, and mercenary is not the strength of their self-interested desires but the weakness of their moral motivations. Foot's fundamental point was that we may care more or less about morality; it was not just the weaker point that we may care more about other things than we do about morality. She wrote, in my view heroically:

> ... one [can] be indifferent to morality without error. (Foot, 1978, p. xiv.)

and

> ... [a man can] reject ... morality because he sees no reason to obey its rules. (Foot, 1978, p. 161.)

The idea that someone can be indifferent to morality or that he can reject it suggests the stronger point that such a person cares about morality less than is usual. (For moment I am ignoring the ''without error'' and ''sees no reason'', although those qualifications will be important later.) Unfortunately, many of Foot's *examples*, as opposed to her statements, suggest only the weaker outweighing scenario. For example, she gives the wonderfully everyday example of hosts who know that morally they ought not to give their guests too much to drink, yet do so all the same (Foot, 1978, p. 184; see also pp. 183–84). It is not that they don't care about morality at all; to say that would be, as she says, ''a bit stiff''! It is just that, at that moment, they are more concerned with being a good host. The demands of etiquette often weigh with us more than those of morality. But this might be an example of caring so much about etiquette that our concern with morality has been overridden. This

[12] Mele speaks of the ''conceptual or metaphysical possibility'' of being unmoved by a moral belief (Mele, 1996, p. 735). He goes to 'planet X' to describe that possibility. But most mornings I actually instantiate this possibility before I have had my coffee! I don't need to go to planet X.

example, nice though it is, threatens only Strong but not Weak Motivational Internalism. Someone who sees little reason to be moral is not someone who sees reason not to be moral. If all cases of indifference could be explained on an outweighing model, the argument against WMI would be in jeopardy. But, at least at first sight, intuition and the common observation of life (drunk-drivers, deprived coffee-addicts, mercenaries, and their sort) speak for the possibility and actuality of a variable connection between moral judgement and desire; and the outweighing model does not cover this possibility and actuality.

2.4. Denying examples

As most philosophers know, from frustrating experience, appealing to examples is far from being a decisive mode of argument. For a common response to proffered examples is just to dispute the interpretation of the examples. In fact, arguing with internalists about examples of apparent indifference is like arguing with psychological egoists about examples of apparent altruism. Present *prima facie* cases of altruism to a psychological egoist and the response comes: ''Ah ha: in fact, there are hidden selfish desires at work''. Similarly, present *prima facie* cases of indifference to an internalist and the response comes: ''Ah ha: the people do not in fact have real moral beliefs, or else they do in fact care, deep down''. The proffered examples get redescribed so that they no longer threaten the theory. Just as the psychological egoist says that the apparent altruist does not really have altruistic desires, so my mercenary is to be told, in spite of his protests, that he does not really have genuine moral beliefs or else that he does really care about morality. And the deprived coffee addict is to be told, or lectured or hectored, first thing in the morning, that he does not really have genuine moral beliefs or else that he does really care about morality. We are to suppose that these characters are defective in self-knowledge. We are to say to them: ''You may think you know you will put yourself in the wrong but you don't care, but either you don't really believe it or else you do really care.''

By this time—and in spite of his dubious character—I begin to feel sorry for the poor mercenary! We may not approve of his profession, but do we want to be quite this patronising?! If the mercenary *says* that he knows but doesn't care, then that is surely good evidence that this is how it is with him. Why not take his word for it? (It takes far less for me to sympathise with the coffee addict.) Denying indifference, like denying altruism, flies in the face of common sense and common experience—or in other words, it conflicts with the usual sources of evidence that we have to go on when we explain and predict the behaviour of other people.[13] Denying indifference phenomena, therefore, is empirically implausible. It involves adding *ad hoc* epicycles in order to exclude cases that threaten the internalist theory. It is simpler to shed the epicycles, accept the cases, and reject internalism.[14] (The methodology here is not Popperian. The examples initially look like decisive falsifications of the internalist thesis. The internalist can then squirm a little by trying to deny counterexamples. But only at a considerable cost.)

In the three examples, I foregrounded what people *say*. People, quite a few people—some people I know—utter sentences like ''I don't give a damn and I don't

[13] And it is not that we have empirical evidence to postulate the requisite sub-conscious states.

[14] Those internalists who think that they can avoid their problems by simply denying the possibility of amoralism and the actuality of indifference are unimpressively cavalier.

see why I should''. I take it that that is good evidence that they don't give a damn and I don't see why they should! We may wish that people did give a damn and that how much of a damn they gave did not vary. We may wish that people were all piously and steadily motivated by their moral beliefs. But we should not pander to that idealistic wish by denying the unpleasant phenomena. Realism, in the everyday non-philosophical sense, is the path of wisdom, even if it is somewhat depressing.[15]

2.5. Generality: the virtuous early foot

I gave three *actual* examples. In this I parted company from the usual philosophical past-time of indulgence in thought experiments. But the indifference argument cannot rest with an appeal to a few cases. For what we are interested in is a general fact. The real issue concerns human beings, and lots of them. We are interested is what would once have been called 'human nature'—and that means that what we say has consequences for about *six and a half billion* currently living flesh and blood people, never mind people past and future. Brink's, Mele's and Svavarsdóttir's indifference arguments are weak, since they rely on thought experiments, and Stocker's indifference argument is weak since it appeals to a handful of actual cases that are highly unusual. Thought experiments or a rare handful of rare actual cases are a weak inductive basis for a general conclusion about human nature. By contrast, *Foot's* argument, or a version of it, is, or has the potential to be, far stronger, since it deploys *general* observations about human beings. The indifference argument can be rescued, and enhanced by explicitly marshalling general claims. As my hero, the early Foot, so pointedly says of internalism:

> ... if the Martians take the writings of moral philosophers as a guide to what goes on this planet they will get a shock when they arrive. (Foot, 1978, p. 186.)

And I think the Martians would also be disappointed by Foot's recantation of her earlier views. Foot had in mind general observations about actual human beings, not particular examples or thought experiments. In that respect her indifference

[15] John McDowell discusses but never comes to grips with Foot's indifference argument in his 1978. He thinks that to satisfy Foot, he only has to allow that to lack an aspect of our cognitive faculty need not be 'irrational' (McDowell, 1978, pp. 23–24). But this falls far short of Foot's observation, as I have reconstructed it, which concerns those who *share* the relevant sorts of cognition but differ in respect of desire. McDowell simply denies that this is possible. He insists that *really*, there *is* always some cognitive difference between the indifferent and the non-indifferent person. But this is *ad hoc*. An unpleasant fact of life does not go away if we close our eyes to it! McDowell sometimes alludes to the 'clarity' or 'blurredness' of our moral 'perceptions'. They can—he tells us—be more or less 'vivid' or 'cloudy'. He presumably intends to describe features of our cognitive faculties. Such talk is itself very cloudy and indistinct. But even if it makes sense, and a clear and vivid belief is, let us suppose, one that is fully present to the conscious mind, this is still a hopeless tactic for explaining away the obstinate cases of moral indifference. For the mercenary's moral beliefs were as clear and vivid as can be. Or is he to be told, in spite of his protests, that *whether he likes it or not* his beliefs were in fact cloudy and indistinct?! Although McDowell sees that the possibility of indifference is at least a potential threat to the internalist view that moral beliefs are intrinsically motivating, his response is just to deny the possibility (McDowell, 1978, p. 16, p. 23 and p. 26). But this claim is completely unsupported and is very implausible. At one point McDowell offers the defensive statement that the externalist view that a distinct desire is always necessary for motivation is a 'scientistic' dogma (McDowell, 1978, pp. 18–19). But this is merely rhetorical: for if being 'scientistic' is being empirically well founded, then one should be proud to be scientistic; and if 'scientism' is the idea that the methods of physics are appropriate to all subject matters, this is not assumed by externalism.

argument is clearly superior to that of Stocker, Brink, Mele and Svavarsdóttir. Few of us are extreme amoralists, few of us are utterly listless and depressed, and few of us are completely cynical, and the theoretical understanding of listlessness and depression is controversial. The appeal to a few actual people, or even worse, to merely possible people would be an inductively weak basis for a general claim.

The sort of phenomena we should focus on are precisely those that Foot had in mind when she put forward her 'bad mistake'—which she disowns but I celebrate. Such general observations are dialectically powerful with respect to a general conclusion. In particular, we should marshal general claims about the actuality of cross-personal and cross-temporal variation in moral enthusiasm. One way we can put Foot's observation is the following: it is quite common for people to treat moral considerations as *quite* important as far as they go, but also think that there is more to life than morality; they are more concerned with other things, such as their own interests, fashion, drugs, etiquette, or their children's welfare. Many other people put morality first, not because they care any the less about themselves, fashion, drugs, etiquette, or their children's welfare, but because they care more about morality. The observation that *many* people *actually* vary in this way is surely enormously plausible. It is not a question of a few isolated cases or of thought experiments. Nothing less than such a general observation would allow us to reach a conclusion about six and a half billion living people.[16]

As I have said, my three examples are actual examples, not merely possible examples. (PDT1 and PDT2 have non-modalised versions to which these examples all seem to be actual counter-instances.) Furthermore, all three of my examples can be generalised. Dangerous drink driving is actually quite common. So is early morning coffee syndrome. And mercenaries ('soldiers of fortune') have been around since the beginning of recorded history. It is these general claims that do dialectical work in the motivation debate.

Let us dwell on mercenaries. Mercenaries are a very common phenomenon. The ancient Egyptians, Hittites, Israelites, Greeks and Romans all used mercenaries extensively. A quarter King Darius' 'Persian' army was mercenary. The army with which Hannibal invaded Italy was almost entirely composed of mercenaries. The Black Prince hired 12,000 of them. In the Thirty years war, Count Ernst Von Marshfield employed 20,000. And so on. (Thompson & MacSwan, 1985.) A mercenary fights for a living in an army. Thus they are among those who kill for a living. While no doubt mercenaries act for a variety of reasons, many don't much mind killing people even though they know it is wrong. Some mercenaries may join a cause out of ideological conviction. And many like fighting for its own sake. But many lack ideological conviction and don't have a very strong intrinsic desire to fight. Their basic reason for fighting is simple: *money*. I do not assume that the psychology of mercenaries is simple or uniform. But it is surely very plausible that many mercenaries—a significant proportion of them—do it for the money, despite believing that they act contrary to morality. They make a choice: money or morality, and money wins.

[16] Could it be that of the six and a half billion people now living, realist internalism is true of two billion, realist externalism is true of another two billion, and expressivist internalism is true of the other two and a half billion?! Why not? Why the universality assumption? I raise this not because I think that the universality assumption is false but because it bears on the *kind* of arguments that are in play in the motivation debate. Some universal claims are dubious (Nisbett, 2003). But other universal claims are worth believing.

Such choices and decisions are common in the lives of non-mercenaries too. We all face such choices on a regular basis. And as Foot rightly observed, we quite often, clear-headedly, make the less worthy choice. For better or worse, this is what actual human beings are like. This is what I am like. This is what my family are like. This is what my friends are like. This is what my colleagues are like. This is what everyone I have ever met is like. Only in philosophical and religious writings do we meet people who are not like this!

2.6. Cynicism

In her paper ''Moral Cognitivism and Motivation'', Svavarsdóttir argues against motivational internalism and for motivational externalism by foregrounding the character of the *moral cynic*. I find her conclusion and argument broadly congenial. We are both batting for the same team. But I want to take issue both with her conception of cynicism and the way she uses cynicism in the dialectic. I shall locate a significant flaw in her argument; but I indicate how it should be repaired.

Her example is an imaginary one, of Patrick, who says of himself that ''...he has long ago rid himself of any aspiration to live by moral standards'' (Svavarsdóttir, 1999, p. 178). And Svavarsdóttir's gloss on Patrick is that ''... he is completely cynical about moral matters; he knew what was right to do in the circumstances, but could not have cared less'' (Svavarsdóttir, 1999, p. 178). The example is imaginary, but the real phenomenon is surely familiar. Patrick has much in common with my mercenary, except that my mercenary has the advantage of being real as opposed to imaginary. Cynicism is definitely an interesting phenomenon. And it is *broadly* relevant to the motivation debate. But exactly how needs spelling out, and we will learn some important lessons by doing so. I doubt whether the possibility or actuality of moral cynicism *by itself* has dialectical efficacy. However, when supplemented as I suggest, the argument does support externalism.

What is crucial in the debate over moral motivation is the variation of moral desire while moral belief stays constant. In particular, we are interested in cases where someone does not care very much about what they believe that morality requires; perhaps they care less than they used to, or they care less than many others.

Now moral cynicism is not itself so much a state of *desire* as an *intellectual stance*. It is a *view* or *opinion* or *judgement* or *thought*. The moral cynic *thinks* that morality does not matter, or that it does not matter as much as most people think, or as much as he used to think. By itself, this is *not* a matter of desire, although one might expect this intellectual stance to be correlated with a lack of desire. One might have weak moral desires and *rationalise* that with a cynical view. But I doubt that cynicism *has* to be such a rationalisation.

We can see that cynicism cannot be exactly what the motivational externalist needs to appeal to if we consider a not unfamiliar character—the *acratic cynic*. This person holds a cynical view while nevertheless failing to live up to his view (or perhaps down to his view), since he does in fact care about morality. He might pursue all sorts of worthy projects despite *thinking* that they do not really matter and that his moral concern is misplaced. Nonetheless, he has desires corresponding to his moral beliefs. Moral cynicism is compatible with quite a bit of caring about morality! On the other hand—and equally not unfamiliarly—it is also possible not to care about morality, or not very much, despite a non-cynical outlook. One might sincerely

think that morality is very important, perhaps even the most important thing, while not in fact caring much about it. This may or may not involve self-deception. Of course, one might also *think* one is driven by morality when in fact one is motivated by self-advancement or whatever. But one might also think that morality is important, and ought to be desired to a greater extent than one does desire it. I suspect that most mercenaries are non-acratic cynics; they have unusually weak moral desires that they reflectively endorse.

So it seems that cynicism itself is not what we need to focus on, although *many* cases of cynicism are indeed cases of people those who have unusually weak moral desires given their moral beliefs: they also reflectively endorse the weakness of their moral desires, and their desires reflect their reflective cynical doctrine. These cynics are a subclass of those people who have moral desires that are unusually weak. They are the subclass who reflectively endorse their low prioritising of moral considerations and who are also self-knowing and non-acratic.

If cynicism is to be relevant to the motivation debate, it must be self-knowing and non-acratic. People hold all sorts of views that have little bearing on what they actually do and are motivated to do.[17] They are merely idle views. Cynicism must be reflected in a person's desires if it is to be relevant to the motivation debate.

Nonetheless, one thing that is notable about cynics, and which is dialectically significant, is their articulate verbal self-description. The dialectical potency of moral cynicism springs from the fact the cynic utters cynical sentences; and these utterances are strong evidence for his views, which are indirect evidence for the possibility and actuality of varying moral desires. Although such self-description is not infallibly reliable, given certain conditions, such self-description is indeed evidence for the possibility and actuality of desire variation given stable belief, which is what makes trouble for the internalist. Such self-revelatory evidence is not the only sort of evidence that we have for this phenomenon; but it is a particularly good source of evidence. The actuality of verbal professions of cynicism gives us reason to believe that many people are cynical; and, assuming this cynicism is non-acratic and self-knowing, this gives us reason to believe that motivation does vary while moral belief remains constant. In this indirect way cynicism shows that motivational externalism is more true to actual human moral psychology than motivational internalism.[18]

2.7. Non-moral comparisons

One strategy I have deliberately avoided, but which I shall mention here to forestall likely objections, is the *comparison* of moral judgements with other kinds of judgements, such as judgements of prudence or judgements of rationality. There is little dialectical mileage to be had from such comparisons, either in externalist or internalist directions.

Motivational internalism about morality gains no support from motivational internalism elsewhere. Both Nagel and McDowell think that prudence can be a 'companion in guilt' (Nagel, 1968, McDowell, 1978). They think that an internalist model of *moral* motivation is somehow made more plausible if *prudential* motivation also conforms to the internalist model. Presumably a great many motivations are prudential; so if internalism about prudential motivation were correct, then

[17] The political views of some academics, for example.

[18] I discuss cynicism further in connection with rationality in Section 4.6.

internalism about moral motivation would not be especially peculiar. But this move is dialectically limited. For it does not help to support the claim that motivational internalism is true in morality; its only relevance could be to show that that one rather weak argument against motivational internalism does not succeed. But morality and prudence might be different. Perhaps motivational internalism is true of prudence, but not morality. The phenomena of *moral* indifference still gives us positive reason to believe in externalism about moral motivation, however it is with prudence. Removing one weak argument against internalism leaves that powerful positive argument in place.

In the other dialectical direction, it might be claimed that it is an advantage of externalism about moral motivation that the motivational efficacy of many non-moral norms is clearly externalist. It may be that I ought to do such-and-such from the point of view of etiquette, from the point of view of cricket, or from the point of view of the law. Presumably, such considerations only motivate us if we have an independent concern with etiquette, cricket, or the law. Many people knowingly rude, unsporting and criminal, but they do not care very much, if at all. Others care more. If morality were similar, we would have a unitary theory of the motivational efficacy of all normative judgements, and it might be said that this is a point in favour of externalism. This argument for externalism and against internalism about moral motivation would be that moral motivation is like the bulk of ordinary non-moral motivation in being externalist. To make morality an exception seems arbitrary. But then again, according to Kant, this is precisely one respect in which moral norms differ (Kant, 1998). According to some, prudential motivation is also internalist. And according to others, the apprehension of epistemic norms is immediately efficacious in getting us modify our beliefs. So I doubt that this unity consideration has dialectical weight. We should debate the issue over moral motivation without appealing to our motivation by non-moral judgements.

Nevertheless, it is worth noting that there is an indifference argument against motivational internalism about prudence that runs parallel to the indifference argument about morality. It seems that people are more or less prudentially indifferent. Prudential indifference is not plausibly explained as a matter of someone's caring passionately about something else above his own interests. Our normal prudential desires are indeed sometimes outweighed by unusually strong desires for drink, gambling, love, lust, or the like. But people also vary in the strength of their prudential concerns irrespective of their other desires. Some of those who are depressed fall into the category of the prudential indifferent (see Stocker, 1979; Deigh, 1996). Listlessness and depression can cause us not to care much about our own future interests. Moreover, people also vary in how much they care about their own interests, where that variation has nothing to do with depression and associated phenomena. Some people clear-headedly disregard their own interests, to a greater or lesser degree. In particular, many people sacrifice themselves for their families or careers. For example, towards the end of his life, Mozart pursued music to the detriment of his health. And there are many everyday cases of prudential indifference; mothers of large families, to use Iris Murdoch's example (Murdoch, 1970). Many of these people express what we can call 'prudential cynicism', which is also self-conscious and non-acratic. (The use of the word ''cynicism'' with respect to prudence sounds odd since we think that moral cynicism is something nasty or unfortunate, unlike prudential indifference; but that is of little philosophical importance.) Many people's concern with their own interests does wax and wane

irrespective of their other concerns, and some of these people reflectively endorse their unusually weak concern with prudence, and their desires are in line with their endorsements. There may also be certain religions in which one is required, or in which it is thought virtuous, to disregard one's own interests. This may be in order to attain some other goal, which competes with prudence. But perhaps there are also certain ascetic religions (perhaps some forms of Buddhism) in which self-abnegation is a goal for its own sake, not something that is pursued for the sake of some other goal. At any rate, it is plausible that in the absence of competing distractions, non-depressed people vary in how much they care about their own future interests, even though they have the same prudential beliefs.[19] As in morality, this is best explained on an externalist, distinct desire model: the possibility and actuality of prudential indifference make it reasonable to believe that when we are *not* prudentially indifferent and we care about our interests, it is because we have a strong present desire for our future interests.

We do not need to go into the possibility and actuality of prudential cynicism in great depth, since our concern here is with *moral* motivation. But it is worthwhile to see that it seems that the phenomenon of reflectively endorsed and non-acratic rational indifference is not confined to morality.

Motivational internalism about prudence is intrinsically implausible about prudence. But even if it were true, the argument for motivational internalism about morality would be unaffected. In general, there is not much to be learned about moral motivation by considering non-moral motivation.[20]

2.8. Deriving the externalist conclusion

The argument is that moral motivation should be explained by distinct moral desires because doing so gives us the best explanation of the fact that people often vary in their concern with moral matters. What explains the difference is a difference in the strength of their moral desires. The externalist has a simple explanation of the fact that strength of moral desire varies while degree of moral belief stays constant. For if the motivating desire and the belief are two *distinct* things, then they are *independent*. Strength of motivating desire is not *determined* by degree of belief. So we allow two that people may have the same beliefs but different desires; we allow that one person may remain the same in respect of beliefs while changing in respect of desires; and we allow that a person who actually has certain beliefs and certain desires might have had those beliefs but different

[19] Whether or not we stipulate that such cases of prudential indifference are 'irrational' makes little difference, as we will see in part 3.

[20] I cannot see why Foot goes along with Nagel's view of prudential motivation in her ''Reasons for Action and Desire''. Nagel and McDowell sometimes try to explain prudential indifference by the lack of certain indexical beliefs (Nagel, 1968; McDowell, 1978). We do not really see the future situation as one involving *us*. But this is a non-starter. Someone who is indifferent knows full well that it is his future that is in question, but he still cares less than others, or less than he did at other times (Deigh, 1996). There is little plausibility in the idea that it is a matter of some cognitive failing. This point is equally important is morality. Those who are malicious or callous are only too aware of 'the reality of other people'. (Contrast Nagel, 1968, p. 3 and p. 145.) Like altruists, they are fully cognisant of the suffering they cause, only—unlike altruists—it pleases them or leaves them cold. To cognize is not to care! McDowell goes wrong in a similar way when he says that it is our recognition, say, that someone needs comforting, which is the source of moral motivation (McDowell, 1979, p. 345).

desires. Actual examples of the possibilities of cross-personal and cross-temporal motivational variation are common. This is the basic indifference argument. In part 3, we will pursue this argument further by considering the impact on it of matters to do with rationality, which will allow us to refine the argument and be more exact about what it involves.

3. Rationality and indifference

3.1. Failures of rationality?

Some philosophers hope to defuse the indifference argument by appealing to rationality and irrationality. For example, Christine Korsgaard and Rachel Cohon argue that the difference between people who are motivated by a moral judgement and those who are not need not be a difference in a distinct desire (Korsgaard, 1986; Cohon, 1988). Instead they suggest that what explains the difference is rationality: in one case the person is rational and in the other they are not. Thus they retreat from WMI to RWMI. The dialectical significance of this is that a difference in rationality is a candidate alternative explanation to the externalist's distinct desire explanation. Korsgaard writes:

> Rage, passion, depression, distraction, grief, physical or mental illness: all these things could cause us to act irrationally, that is, to fail to be motivationally responsive to the rational considerations available to us. (Korsgaard, 1986, p. 13; see also note 9.)

These factors can interfere with the connection between moral judgement and motivation. And similarly Cohon suggests that

> An impediment to action could be a mental block, or a mental defect, or a distraction ... (Cohon, 1988, p. 112.)

Korsgaard and Cohon are right about the existence of these kinds of irrationality. Their idea is that we should appeal to them to explain indifference phenomena. If this explanation is good, we do not need to appeal to a difference in a distinct desire in order to explain motivational asymmetries, as the externalist argues.

In one mood, Korsgaard and Cohon appeal to the possibility that the path from motivation to *action* can blocked by various psychological malfunctions. But this would miss the (interesting) indifference phenomena. Indifference, as I have described it, is a weakness in the link between moral belief and moral desire, not between belief and action. It seems that a moral belief that an act is morally required can be conjoined with an usually weak motivation towards doing it, and this is so even if irrationalities sometimes block the path from desire to action or to other desires. Failures of rationality between belief and action do not explain the difference between those who are motivated by a belief and those who are not. The more interesting alternative explanation of indifference concedes that the connection between judgement and desire is variable, but sees that as a matter of the presence and absence of rationality. This is also Michael Smith's view (Smith, 1994) and it is Korsgaard's view most of the time. The idea is that a moral judgement motivates *if* a

person is rational. So a rational person cannot be unmoved by a moral judgement, but an irrational person might be unmoved. This is RWMI.

I think we must concede the dialectical point here: that there is *an* asymmetry between those who are moved and those who are not does not by itself mean that it must be explained by a difference in distinct desire. For a failure of rationality is another possible explanation. However, the question is: what is the most *plausible* explanation of the asymmetries that exist? It is not enough to offer a *possible* alternative explanation. It must be shown that the possible alternative explanation is plausible, or more plausible, than alternative explanations.

When we successfully act on a moral judgement, the externalist says that the better explanation is one that postulates a distinct desire that motivates us to act on the moral judgement; whereas RWMI says that the better explanation is that moral judgements plus rationality together generate motivation, in the absence of a distinct desire. Exactly what the property of being rational is, of course, is hard to say, on anyone's theory. What is important for our concerns is that being rational is not conceived as involving the presence and activation of a distinct desire. Indeed, rationality is not an additional mental state of any sort although it is an aspect of our mental life: it is, at least, the fact that our mental states accord with rational demands.

The dialectical state of play at this point is important. We have not been given a positive reason for doubting Hume's general model of motivation according to which the motivation for acting on a belief must always be traced back to a distinct desire. Instead our attention has been drawn to some interesting phenomena of non-standard motivational influences or non-standard motivational absences. But all that achieves, by itself, is to warn the Humean against some potentially defective formulations of the Humean doctrine. A broadly Humean model of motivation can be supplemented by a rationality requirement. On such a view, a distinct desire is still necessary.

However, it has to be said that while Korsgaard and Cohon have not established their thesis and made their explanation more plausible than the externalist's distinct desire explanation, so long as their explanation is an option, the indifference argument for the externalist's distinct desire explanation has been halted. We need a reason to prefer one explanation over the other. Thus far we have a draw between the two explanations of indifference phenomena.

3.2. Listlessness and rational indifference

As we saw, some philosophers tried to argue against motivational internalism from the possibility or actuality of the psychological phenomena of listlessness, accidie or depression, which cause people to lose their normal motivational concern with morality. Stocker catalogues various psychological ailments that can lead people to lose their enthusiasm for morality (Stocker, 1979). And Mele argues in a similar vein (Mele, 1996). However, the appeal to depression or listlessness is not a good way to critique internalism. This would give us an inferior version of the indifference argument. One reason is that although it is true that, due to listlessness or depression, a person may fail to be motivated to do something that he believes he morally ought to do, Korsgaard and Cohon can easily deal with such cases by saying that such a person is irrational. The appeal to listlessness refutes WMI, but it is no threat to RWMI.

By contrast, the point of the examples I gave was that, on the face of it, they are all *seem* not to be cases of irrationality. So the examples threaten *both* WMI and RWMI. The real threat to RWMI comes from those who I think Foot originally had in mind in what I think of as her heroic phase—people who without irrationality, fail to be motivated by moral requirements. These people are often quite cheerful and content, but they calmly and coolly, and without irrationality, turn their backs, to a greater or lesser degree, on their moral duties. Many mercenaries are like this. And the same goes for early morning coffee drinkers. Unlike cases of listlessness, accidie and depression, cases of rational indifference are incompatible with RWMI. A listless or depressed person is obviously irrational: he has desires (moral, prudential, altruistic, sporting) that he cannot be bothered to pursue. By contrast, the trouble with mercenaries and coffee addicts is that their moral desires are unusually weak; it is not a matter of what they do or don't try to do to satisfy those desires.

Of course, listlessness and depression do explain why *some* people lose their normal moral motivation, but there are many other cases of indifference that they cannot explain. Being morally cold or cool is another explanation. Many who are unusually indifferent do seem to be perfectly content and well balanced. They are not listless or depressed. It is not plausible that they suffer from irrationality in any straightforward sense.

There is an additional point to make about the dialectic significance of appeals to listlessness, accidie, depression, psychosis, and similar phenomena, which is that psychological theorising about such phenomena is highly speculative. There are many different psychological theories about such states and dispositions. How to conceptualise the phenomena is not obvious. In particular, it is controversial whether such phenomena manifest moral indifference. Moral indifference might be a consequence of some theories of these phenomena but not of others. Since the right theory of phenomena like depression and psychosis is controversial, the appeal to such disorders is inconclusive in the moral motivation debate. By contrast, no controversial speculation about the inner psyche of those like my mercenary is necessary. The ugly reality is only too evident—indeed it is flaunted!

We need to have in mind, not Stocker and Mele's casualties—those who are mentally in a sorry way—but much nastier, colder people, are more to the point. They at least seem to be *rationally indifferent*. The mental faculties of these people seem to be in order. They may even be quite happy! They may even feel a sense of *joi de vivre*! Nevertheless they may have a chilling disregard towards morality. These people are more interesting. They are more disturbing—more of a threat; and there is more to be learned from them than can be learned from the miserable and disturbed casualties of human life. We need to think about Iago not Hamlet!

3.3. Addiction and drunkenness

It might be argued that the drunk driver and coffee addict do in fact exhibit irrationality. After all, both involve extraneous substances, which are often thought to compromise rationality. But this is not at all obvious. I agree that Jason, the drunk driver, was not perhaps at his peak of mental focus due to alcohol, although it is hard to tell. I suspect that he would not have been much better sober. But if he was not quite thinking straight, it is not obvious that he was being irrational. If we are to take his words at face value, it seems that what he (then) cared most about was his car,

which means that other things mattered far less to him than we think appropriate. Perhaps being drunk even made him uncannily honest about what was important to him. But I admit that the situation is not clear cut.

Similarly with the early-morning pre-coffee philosopher. Am I the equivalent of someone who is mentally ill or clinically depressed every morning before I have my coffee? Am I a depraved drug addict, in a state of deranged irrational craving?! Am I like the drunk driver, so that at the thought of what I must spring out of bed to do (grading student papers, for example), I think or say 'So what?: It's only a poxy moral duty'?[21] It is beyond question that first thing in the morning, I have immediately present vivid desires for coffee. The question is: do I also have other less vivid desires that I am ignoring in my practical reasoning—so I am after all being irrational? Perhaps only desires for the present or the very near future consciously register themselves, even though other desires are less vividly present, although known about, and are irrationally ignored. Do I have strong non-coffee desires first thing in the morning that I am irrationally ignoring, or do I have less strong non-caffeine desires at that point? It is not easy to decide such questions. However, if I introspect, it seems to me that coffee is of overriding importance, and only later on, after coffee, do other things, including morality, become more important to me. So the strength of my moral desire waxes and wanes. But this piece of introspection may not be very reliable.

It is not particularly controversial that people do stupid things when drunk. But drunkenness is one thing, addiction another. It is a mistake to treat the phenomena alike. The person who is 'under the influence' of a drug is not the same as the addict who lacks his drug. I am inclined to think that when the addict is deprived of his drug, he wants other things less. It is not a matter of failing to factor the other things into his reasoning. However, I do not have an effective argument against those who maintain that addicts still want the other things equally strongly when they are drug-deprived, but they irrationally fail to factor these things into their practical reasoning. Some recent empirical work on addiction favours this rational analysis of addictive behaviour. Rational models of addiction, such as that of the economist Gary Becker, have recently become quite popular (Becker, 1996; for discussion see Elster, 1999, pp. 165–191 and Wallace, 2003). Moreover this view has some support among professionals who work with addicts as patients. But there is a contrary view, which emphasises 'hyperbolic' preferences, which are a set of preferences for something, which decline sharply over time and then flatten out (Ainslie, 2001). Becker's view seems not to make sense of the self-critique and struggles to quit of many addicts.

The distinction between addicts and drunks, on the one hand, and the rest of us 'normal' folk, on the other hand, is clearly unclear. What sorts of things count as addiction? Is gambling an addiction? Is shopping an addiction? How about power? And what counts as a drug? Does chocolate contain a drug? Are the endorphins induced by sport a drug? And what about love: is that an addiction, or a drug? The whole area is controversial and ripe for interdisciplinary investigation by philosophers, psychologists, sociologist and biologists. However, the fact that the distinction

[21] A few years ago, for a couple of weeks, life seemed to me to have lost its lustre; everything seemed in black and white rather than in full colour. Life seemed meaningless. Then I found the problem. In tiny letters, hidden at the bottom of my pack of coffee, lay the culprit word ''decaffeinated''! A cup of real coffee later, colours exploded, flowers opened, and the sun came out from behind the clouds.

between addicts and drunks, on the one hand, and other ordinary people, on the other hand, is not clear, means that it would naive to say that the distinction between them is that, unlike ordinary people, addicts and drunks suffer from irrationality.

The drunk driver and the coffee addict are probably cases of rational indifference and the mercenary certainly is. He was quite alert, articulate, clean-cut and clean-living, in most respects. He was cheerful, quite in control, and disturbingly articulate.

3.4. Indifference and conceptions of rationality

Foot was right, and profoundly so, when she said or suggested that a rational person might be unmoved by the thought of his moral duties. (I quoted her in Section 3.3 saying ''...one [can] be indifferent to morality *without error*'' and ''... [a man can] reject ... morality because *he sees no reason* to obey its rules''—my emphasis added here.) For example: a person might be an aesthete, so that only beauty matters to him; or he might be a egoist, so that only selfish concerns matter to him; or he might be, an 'etiquettist', so that only etiquette matters to him; or he might have an 'authoritarian personality' so that only obeying orders matters to him. The person who rejects morality, or who privileges other things before morality, might be *bad*, like Hume's person who prefers to scratch his finger rather than avert the destruction of the world. But it is difficult to see much plausibility in the idea that such a person is *irrational*. Foot's point was that people can and do, without irrationality, reject the demands of morality, or be less motivated by its demands than many other people. The mercenary, unlike the drunk driver, was calm and collected, sober, friendly, and fully in possession of his rational faculties. There were no grounds whatsoever for attributing irrationality to him—except as a desperate attempt to save an ailing theory! Hence, motivational internalism is implausible, even when modified with a rationality requirement. Internalism with knobs on is not much more plausible than internalism without knobs on.

Now some will reply at this point that arguing in this way presumes a certain view of the nature of practical rationality. It will be said that the view that we can without irrationality fail to pursue what we take to be good depends on a substantive view about rationality—that practical rationality is *instrumentalist* or *desire-dependent*.[22] Such a conception of practical rationality can be elaborated in various ways, while staying true to the original idea, so long as it remains a *necessary* condition of it's being practically rational to do or intend something that one have a desire to do that thing, or another desire that one believes is furthered by doing that thing (Williams, 1995, p. 35). For example, an instrumentalist can admit that we can deliberate about ends (Schmidz, 1995) or that imagination is important (Williams, 1995, p. 38). Such an instrumentalist conception is 'internalist' about practical rationality in the sense we met in Section 1.1. So it might be argued at this point that *externalism* about *motivation* depends on *internalism* about *practical reason*. If one thinks that it *is* a requirement of practical rationality that we pursue what we believe to be good (as Stephen Nathanson and Michael Smith

[22] This instrumentalism is not *sceptical* about practical rationality, as some think Hume was (Milgram, 1994). Let us avoid interpretative questions. The view that only instrumental reasoning or modest extensions of it are practically rational we can call *Humean* or, following Bernard Williams, *sub-Humean* (Williams, 1978).

think (Nathanson, 1985; Smith, 1994)) or if we think that it *is* irrational to pursue what we believe to be bad (as Bernard Gert thinks, for prudential badness (Gert, 1990)) then one will not agree that one can be rationally indifferent to moral or prudential goodness. So many will say that if we assume instrumentalism about rationality, we will permit rational indifference, whereas a non-instrumentalist will deem moral or prudential indifference irrational.

This kind of argument has been quite popular recently, but in fact, by itself, it achieves little. Non-instrumentalists may alter the conditions for rationality, but that means that many people are clear-headedly irrational on a daily basis. Suppose someone were to say to a self-conscious and non-acratic moral cynic ''Look here, not only are you failing to do what morality requires, you are also being irrational''. Such cynic is likely to reply by saying: ''Well, I don't mind being irrational in your sense so long as I am instrumentally rational''. Suppose it were insisted, in response: ''There are nevertheless these other non-instrumental norms of rationality and you are flouting those.'' The cynic would be unimpressed. ''Oh really?'' the cynic will probably reply with a yawn, ''... yeah, well, maybe I am being non-instrumentally irrational, but I don't give a damn for your fancy high-fallutin non-instrumental rational norms any more than I give a damn for morality''. There is now the possibility and actuality of indifference to these alleged norms of practical rationality, and such indifference would at least be *instrumentally* rational. It is only plausible that drunk-drivers, coffee-drinkers and mercenaries are irrational if we stretch our concept of rationality way beyond instrumental rationality—in which case such people will also rudely turn their back on rationality, so conceived. Rejecting instrumentalism about practical rationality, therefore, just moves the bump in the carpet. The morally indifferent person is *instrumentally* rational, at least, even if we choose to say that he is irrational according to *other* alleged norms of rationality.[23] Thus contrary to many writers, the norms of practical rationality that we accept make no difference to the issue over motivational internalism. In particular, it makes no difference to the empirical case for postulating distinct desires of varying strengths. All it affects is how we *describe* moral indifference. The morally indifferent person is either rationally indifferent to morality, or else instrumentally rationally indifferent to morality *and* non-instrumental practical rationality. The morally indifferent person is not instrumentally irrational, and in this sense he 'has no instrumental practical reason' to be moral. Of course, he still ought to be moral in the sense that *moral* norms bear on him. My mercenary did many bad things; but was not instrumentally irrational, and in this sense he 'had no instrumental reason' to desist.[24] Expand the concept of rationality beyond its instrumentalist core and it may well turn out to be irrational, in that sense, not to be moved by moral considerations. But by itself that achieves little beyond a terminological redescription, since someone might not care about rationality, so conceived. The move is stipulative. So it seems that there is no difficulty here for the indifference argument.

[23] An instrumentalist view of rationality is likely to deny the claim that desires are always concerned with the good. See Velleman (1992).

[24] Don't say ''Ah, but the mercenary had *reason* to be moral''. Those who use the word ''reason'' in this way put swarms of flies in fly-bottles. If you insist on saying this, you must be prepared inelegantly to distinguish 'reasons of morality' from 'reasons of rationality'. (See Zangwill, 2003, Section VI.)

3.5. A non-instrumental faculty of rationality

However, the Korsgaard/Cohon/Smith claim is not or should not just be the normative claim that there are non-instrumental rational norms, which someone might or might not respect or reject. Instead, the claim is or should be that there are these norms *and* we have a *faculty* or *power* of adhering to these norms without the aid of desires. A normative claim is conjoined with a psychological claim. We should perhaps admit that there is such a thing as Reason, which is a capacity to conform to our rationally requirements. (There is more to reason than that, but that is a necessary part of reason.) This capacity, it can be argued, gives us an alternative empirical explanatory hypothesis. Given the existence of the relevant non-instrumental norms, the exercise or failure to exercise this capacity explains moral indifference: the variation in moral desire (while moral belief stays constant) arises from the varying degree of rationality involved (however *that* variation is, in turn, to be explained).

However, conceding the existence of these rational norms, and conceding the existence of a capacity to adhere to these norms, there remains the following question: why should we believe that the successful or failed operation of this faculty explains the phenomena of moral indifference?

Korsgaard and others have given persuasive arguments for accepting that there is such a *general* faculty of reason. For example, they argue that instrumental reasoning itself presupposes a non-instrumental faculty of reasoning: when we see that an instrumental norm binds us, and we conform to that norm, we do not do so because we desire to respect instrumental reasoning or because we desire that our desires are satisfied. And similarly, theoretical reasoning does not presuppose a desire to conform to theoretical norms of belief revision or a desire for truth. Granted. But from the actual existence of a *general* faculty of non-instrumental reason we cannot infer its operation in morality as the factor that mediates belief and motivation. This is a major step, which needs special justification.

For example, at one point, Korsgaard maintains that the 'oddity' of motivational externalism in morality can be seen by an analogy: the analogy is with the odd view that in moving from premises to conclusion, it is not enough to believe the argument to be sound, but we must also have an extra belief to the effect that the conclusions of sound arguments are true (Korsgaard, 1986, p. 16). It is not clear exactly what she intends here. But the example is not parallel to the moral case. For one thing, Korsgaard's example is of relations only among cognitive states. But in the case of moral motivation, we are interested in a matter spanning both cognitive and non-cognitive states. There may be reason to postulate an additional mental state in one case but not in the other. Or perhaps the example is supposed to illustrate the fact that the judgement that something is rationally required *can* by itself bring us to modify our beliefs, desires or intentions. If that is the point, then it is a fair one. We should grant that reason can be a force in the mind in its own right. But then it is important that what we are interested in is *moral* judgement, and this makes a difference. Perhaps judgements of *rationality* do move our mindset by themselves, but *moral* judgements do not. Korsgaard's worry that we should not wantonly postulate extra mental states without reason is a respectable one, as a principle of empirical parsimony; but, when it comes to moral motivation, it may be that we do in fact need the added postulated state in order to explain phenomenon that lack

plausible alternative explanations. Perhaps non-instrumental rationality exists but it fails to explain the moral inference phenomena.

Similar comments apply to Pettit and Price when they argue that the externalist argument gets out of hand, generalising to logical inferences and even belief/desire explanations themselves, so that these would all require an added desire (Pettit & Price, 1989). This is a weak argument. For while it is true that all we need in *those* cases is a rationality condition, it does not follow that such a condition explains cases of *moral* indifference. There, we may need a distinct desire. The indifference argument does not generalise because it is specific to morality. It points to a widespread actual phenomenon—not paralleled in our judgements of rationality—the best explanation of which is a distinct desire that has different strengths at different times or in different people.[25]

3.6. Not giving a damn and the best explanation

In all this, the empirical explanatory issue should be kept to the fore. Call the non-instrumental norms of rationality (such as those that Kantians believe in) norms of 'trashionality'. There is little to be gained in the motivation debate from debating the existence of these norms. We can even concede that they exist. The fruitful question is not ''Is there anything *wrong* with moral indifference, and if so what is it?'', but ''*Why* exactly do morally indifferent people fail to be motivated?'' The question is how moral indifference is to be explained. Is it: (a) lack of distinct moral desires? Or is it: (b) the lack of trashionality, where that is the capacity to conform to, or adherence to, the allegedly non-instrumental rational norms? It is equally fruitful to ask of those who *are* motivated: *why* are they motivated? Is it: (c) the presence of distinct desires? Or is it: (d) the presence of trashionality. The choice here, in the motivated person, is between the existence of distinct propositional attitudes (moral desires) and the exercise and failure to exercise a faculty of trashionality. Trashionality would not be a propositional attitude but rather a transition among propositional attitudes in (non-accidental) accordance with the alleged non-instrumental rational norms. Are indifference phenomena to be explained as cases of irrationality in some alleged non-instrumental sense (as RWMI says) or are such phenomena best explained by positing a distinct desire to do what is right, which is unusually weak in some cases (as externalists say)? Korsgaard and her followers say that it is trashionality that connects moral judgements and motivation. Externalists, however, will argue that we can be indifferent to these alleged trashional norms, and this indifference needs explaining.

Now Korsgaard has in mind phenomena such as ''Rage, passion, depression, distraction, grief, physical or mental illness...'' (quoted in 3.1). But these do not look anything like what is afflicting cynics; it is untrue to the brazen, self-conscious indifference of many mercenaries, and those like them. Whether or not there are trashional norms, and whether or not there is a faculty of transionality (the capacity to non-accidentally conform to trashional norms), the externalist case is that the best explanation of many cases of motivational indifference is one that posits distinct

[25] On the motivational externalist story, moral beliefs and desires rationally combine to yield action, and there is no additional need to postulate *another* desire to act on the belief/desire pair. At *this* point, externalists will help themselves to the existence of a mentalistic factor of reason, which does not amount to a mental state, which binds moral belief to moral desire and produces an intention or action.

desires of different strengths and not one that posits the presence and absence of trashionality.

The fact that the brazen, self-conscious and non-acratic cynic says that he 'does not give a damn' is important. As we saw, the appeal to depression, listlessness and psychotic disorders is inconclusive and dialectically weak in the motivation debate: for RWMI can say that the depressed, listless or psychotic person, who makes a moral judgement but is not motivated, is irrational. By contrast, the advantage of thinking about instrumentally rational indifference, and about brazen, self-aware, non-acratic cynicism in particular, is that RWMI can be seen, relatively uncontroversially, to be inadequate to the empirical facts about motivation, at least if these empirical factors are represented correctly in our folk description of such cases. A self-aware and non-acratic cynic is easily describable in everyday folk psychological terms: he doesn't give a damn and he doesn't see why he should. He is indifferent and proud of it! He insists on that. Indeed, he will say ''I don't give a damn and I don't see why I should''. This is the description that cynics give of themselves. That is, they see the difference between themselves and others, or their former selves, in terms of how much of a damn they give, and that means a difference in a distinct desires. They might explain, saying: ''You see, the thing is, I used to care more about morality than I do now'', for example. That is why they do not think of themselves as (instrumentally) irrational. They would be surprised and sceptical at the suggestion that their problem is they are in the grip of ''... rage, passion, depression, distraction, grief, physical or mental illness...''. ''Look, get a grip'', they would say, ''I may be immoral, but please don't patronise me.'' The RWMI explanation jars with the self-conception of those who are morally indifferent. This means that the onus is on sceptics about their folk-psychological self-description to give a reason why that self-understanding is false. Cynics themselves see their variation in motivation (over time) as traceable to the variation (over time) in distinct desires (the variable 'giving a damn').

Thus the appeal to a non-instrumental rational capacity makes little difference to the motivation argument. Even if non-instrumental rationality exists and is a force in the mind in its own right, independently of the existence of desires, in the sort of cases of moral indifference that we have in mind, which are very far from uncommon, the self-understanding of those who don't give a damn, is precisely that: others give a damn but they don't. That is, they do not care for morality as much as others do; they lack the strength of desires that other have. But if the difference between them and others is that the others give more of a damn than they do, then the difference consists in the existence or absence of some mental state and it does not consist in the exercise or failure to exercise some non-instrumental rational power. Even if such a faculty exists, it is not the folk explanation of these cases. And we have no reason to distrust the folk explanation. That explanation postulates distinct desires. Although a variation in non-instrumental rationality would be an alternative explanation of the variation, it is not as good an explanation. The self-conception of many of those whose motivations vary think of themselves as rational, but nevertheless indifferent. And they do so because they see their motivations are varying in line with their desires. Even if there are non-instrumental rational norms and a faculty of obeying them, such a faculty is not a plausible explanation of many common phenomena of motivational variation.

4. Conclusion and observations

4.1. Externalism as the best explanation

The issue is an explanatory one. Could it be that motivation is sometimes essential to moral beliefs and sometimes not, but there is simply no explanation at all of the difference? All would agree that there must be *some* difference between cases if there is a difference in upshot. The question is what the difference is between the cases. In particular: is the difference something mentalistic or not? And if it is, what kind of mental difference is it? There are three broad possibilities. One possibility is that the only difference between the person who is motivated to a certain degree by a moral belief, and the person who is motivated to a different degree, is a difference in the state of his brain, and there is no mentalistic explanation of the difference. The second possibility is that there is a mentalistic explanation, which is that one rational while the other is irrational. This is the view of Korsgaard, Cohon and Smith, and perhaps of Stocker and Mele. The third possibility is that there is a mentalistic explanation, and it is a rational explanation: one has mental states that make it rational to be motivated to that degree, while the other lacks it, which makes it rational not to be motivated to that degree. This is my view, and I suspect that of Svavarsdóttir.

In particular, the verbal boast ''I don't give a damn and I don't see why I should'' is quite common. And this boast gives us reason to think that the phenomenon itself is quite common. Folk self-description is not infallible. But the prevalence of such description has evidential weight. By contrast, what to say about depression, listlessness and psychotic disorders is more controversial, and therefore far less dialectically potent in the anti-internalist campaign. How to characterise such states and the frequency of their occurrence is a matter of speculation, not a matter of our everyday vernacular folk psychology. Hence the appeal to cold, stark, self-aware, moral indifference is more decisive than the appeal to depression and psychotic disorders. The phenomenon is of indifference is thus straightforwardly understood by means of the common sense categories of folk psychology by the postulation of distinct desires of different strengths. The argument is that it is not plausible that psychological malfunctions and failures of practical rationality explain the difference in many cases. The most plausible explanatory candidate in these cases is a difference in the strength of distinct desire. We have a perfectly good folk psychological schema for explaining motivational asymmetries given cognitive symmetries that applies neatly in non-moral cases, and we have no reason for thinking that the standard belief/desire folk-psychological explanation fails in the moral case, and every reason to think that it applies.[26] So we have no need to reach for some brain explanation or for some non-rational explanation. There is a perfectly good rational explanation. This means that we can argue that the motivational efficacy of moral beliefs should be explained by distinct desires because by doing so, we can have the best explanation of the way that people differ in respect of how much they are motivated by morality. The difference is the difference in the strength of these

[26] Of course, if eliminativism is true and our normal folk-psychological scheme is false (Churchland, 1992), then both internalism and externalism about moral motivation are false since there are no moral judgements and there is no motivation of any sort. The entire debate lapses. All theories of moral motivation are false and we can forget the whole issue.

distinct desires. That difference both explains and rationalises the motivational difference.[27]

4.2. Status once more

I noted earlier that some philosophers want to say that internalism about moral motivation is a conceptual truth. Well so much the better! Conceptual internalism is stronger than empirical internalism. But if the indifference argument defeats empirical internalism, then the conceptual thesis is all the more certainly shown to be false. You cannot just *assert* that a claim is a conceptual truth.[28] If the facts show that it isn't true at all, then it certainly isn't a conceptual truth. And if some philosophers have converted the internalist doctrine into a conceptual truth in *their* minds, then it is a conceptual truth that needs eliminating ('Quining'). (For example, Michael Smith claims that it is a conceptual truth that we would be motivated by a moral judgement if we were rational (Smith, 1994; and see also McDowell, 1983, p. 302). Put aside the 'conceptual' part—is this even true? Like many philosopher's cherished 'conceptual truths', it is not true at all. (See Harman, 1994.)

Since I think that externalism is an empirical thesis, I think that it is epistemically possible that some version of motivational internalism is true. Should I also concede that it is also metaphysically or nomologically possible? Perhaps it is *possible* for a solo moral judgement to move the will, just as it is possible, if some mechanism were implanted in our brain, for a moral judgement to cause a light to go on. But that something is merely possible does not make it likely. However, I am inclined to inflate the empirical claim to the *truth* of externalism into a claim that externalism is nomologically and metaphysically necessary, and also that it states an essential truth about what it is to be a moral judgement. Nevertheless, the warring parties should agree to debate the *mere truth* of the claims under dispute, putting to one side issues about the nomological, modal, essentialist and semantic status of those truths, until their mere truth is settled.

4.3. Externalism and Hume's argument for non-cognitivism

Let us return to Hume's argument for non-cognitivism, which was that there is closer connection between moral judgements and motivation than there would be if moral judgements were cognitive. Hume thought of the claim that moral judgements are 'intrinsically motivating' as an uncontroversial 'observation' given by 'common experience'.[29] But in fact this observation is misleading or false. It is misleading in so

[27] I have advanced *one* explanatory consideration. Perhaps motivational internalism is associated with some more embracing theory—expressivism, for example—and that theory has *other* explanatory virtues that have nothing to do with motivation. Then perhaps the explanatory argument for externalism that I have given here could be outweighed. However, there is little reason to believe that motivational internalism is bound up with a more embracing theory that has clear explanatory benefits of other sorts. Expressivism, for example, has major problems explaining and justifying our common-sense commitment to the ideas of correctness and incorrectness of attitudes and of correctness and incorrectness of combinations of attitudes (Zangwill, 1992, 1994). So while it is true that my argument is only that there are *some* explanatory considerations that favour externalism, I am not holding my breath to see whether those considerations are outweighed.

[28] Not even if you are a Wittgensteinian!

[29] Note that his argument is empirical, as we might expect given Hume's wider philosophical approach of introducing 'the experimental method' into philosophy.

far as the observation leaves open the explanation of such correlations as there are between moral judgement and motivation. And it is false if it is taken as the observation of a universal connection. So I hope to have argued that his motivation argument for cognitivism as a whole is ineffective because this premise is either insufficient or implausible. This also means that to explain how a moral cognition could motivate us to act, there is no need to embrace motivational internalism, as do Nagel and McDowell. If the only motivation for questioning Hume's general theory of motivation is that of making room for cognitivism in moral philosophy, then that motivation is seriously misguided. On the other hand, Hume's quite general premise about motivation—that beliefs are motivational inert by themselves—is fine. At least, nothing we have so far encountered gives us reason to doubt it. We should retain Hume's general theory of motivation, while denying that it has non-cognitive implications for morality.

The bare form of the Humean motivation argument is that moral judgements are said to have a feature that cognitivism renders problematic, while non-cognitivism can explain it. In the case under discussion, the feature in question is the allegedly intrinsically motivating nature of our moral judgements. For some proposed features, a cognitivist ought to agree that moral judgements have the feature in question, and then try to account for it in realist terms. (To some extent, the issue over moral dilemmas is like this (Zangwill, 1999).) But in the case of motivation, we need to question whether moral judgements have the alleged feature. It is often merely assumed that moral judgements *are* intrinsically motivating. Not only is there no reason to believe this, but there is good reason to believe that it is false.[30]

Clearly, with the crucial internalist premise gone, the argument can no longer establish its non-cognitivist conclusion. If moral cognition were intrinsically motivating, that would be a problem for cognitivism. But since internalism is false, moral cognition is not problematic, at least in this respect.[31]

4.4. Last moralising remark

I argued that we have reason to believe in a varying connection between moral judgement and motivation, and also that in many cases this variation is best explained by motivation externalism. I appealed to those who are relatively cold, nasty or cynical, and who are also self-reflective and in control. But let us not comfort ourselves by contemplating these people with too much disdain and distance. For we are all more or less like this at different times. I have admitted my own unpretty flaws in my pre-coffee morning state. Motivational internalism is an awfully cosy and reassuring idea. It is food for the morally smug and complacent. We might well *wish* that it were true! But externalism has psychological realism on its side. And by and large I think we are better off—intellectually and morally—looking the less savoury aspects of human existence in the face, seeing them for what they are, regardless of how disturbing we find them.

[30] So if 'action-guideingness' is taken to be simply *definitive* of 'morality', we should dispute whether there is any such phenomenon.

[31] John Mackie thought that Hume's motivation argument needs to be 'supplemented' by his arguments from 'queerness' (Mackie, 1977, pp. 40–41).

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