# THE UNITY OF NORMATIVE THOUGHT

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*Abstract*. *Practical cognitivism* is the view that practical reason is our will, not an intellectual capacity whose exercises can influence those of our will. If practical reason is our will, thoughts about how I am to act have an essential tie to action. They are intentions. Thoughts about how others are to act, though, lack such a tie to action. They are beliefs, not intentions. How, then, can these thoughts form a unified class? I reject two answers which deny the differences between such thoughts about myself and those about others, one of which says that all such thoughts are intentions, the other that all are beliefs. I then reject a shared assumption which says that a class of those is unified only if all its elements are all of one type of thought. I instead argue that this class is unified even though some elements are intentions, others beliefs, because such beliefs depend on those intentions in various ways.

## 1. Unity and uniformity

1.1 What is practical reason? Is it an intellectual capacity possessed by human beings in addition to a will? If so, what makes us animals—a will—is not what makes us rational—practical reason. Is it instead our volitional capacity? *Practical cognitivists* say 'yes'. According to them, as I do not have a four chambered heart in addition to a heart, so I do not possess practical reason in addition to a will. Practical reason is instead our type of will, and practical cognition is our type of volition. What makes us animals makes us rational.[1]

This essay is about whether practical cognitivism can unify the class of normative thoughts. We have such thoughts about our actions, actions of other animals, instances of digestion, hearts, wineglasses, tree roots, land as a site for a vineyard, and so on. One challenge is to unify the *standards* invoked in these thoughts.[2] How is their variety compatible with the fact that all are normative standards? Another is to unify the *thoughts* that invoke these standards. How is their variety compatible with the fact that all are normative thoughts? I focus on this second challenge with respect to the restricted class of normative thoughts about human actions.

The puzzle is that if practical reason is our will, practical thoughts have an essential link with acting. Only certain normative thoughts, though, seem to have such a link. First person present tense ones do. That is why thinking I should φ but not so acting without excuse is irrational. Others do not. Nothing irrational in not acting when I think you should φ. What would it even be to 'so act'?[3] Normative thoughts about our actions thus seem to come in two

1. See McDowell (1979), Korsgaard (2009$_B$), Boyle and Lavin (2010), Fernandez (2016), Ford (2016), Lavin (2017), Marcus (2018), and Fix (2018).
2. See Fix (2021).
3. I focus throughout on present tense thoughts about my and your actions. Take discussions of the former to also

types, intentions and beliefs.

If practical reason is our will, though, it only accounts for those intentions. How, then, is this class unified and not a motley crew which arbitrarily yokes together unrelated thoughts? Without an answer, we lose the relationship between my and your thoughts about your action and the one between my present and past thoughts about my actions. We lose the possibility of advice, agreement, apology, criticism, dissent, excuse, forgiveness, rebuke, reconciliation, regret, remorse, and the rest of the whirl of human life. We lose our grip on ourselves.

1.2 Two responses try to unify that class by denying the differences between normative thoughts which are intentions and those which are beliefs. *Volitionism* says that all such thoughts are tied to acting. When I think you should φ, the appearance of belief would mask the reality of intention. The class would be unified because it would include all and only intentions.[4] *Evaluationism* says that no such thought is tied to acting. When I think I should φ, the appearance of intention would mask the reality of belief. The class would be unified because it would include all and only evaluative beliefs about our actions.[5]

I reject both. Volitionism cannot account for interpersonal normative thoughts. In such a thought, I grasp what makes your exercise of practical reason correct. Since you and I are separate persons, to do so is not for me or, for that matter, for you to exercise practical reason. These thoughts are not intentions. Evaluationism, in contrast, cannot account for first-personal normative thoughts. In such a thought, I grasp what makes my exercise of practical reason correct. Since I am one person, to do so is for me to exercise practical reason. These thoughts are intentions. So I shall argue.

Although volitionists and evaluationists disagree about what type of thoughts constitute this class, both accept what I call the *unity as uniformity thesis*, which says that a class of thoughts is unified only if its elements are of one type. I reject it. I shall argue that this class is unified even though some elements are intentions, others beliefs, because these beliefs are unintelligible without reference to those intentions and their correctness conditions depend on those for those

concern *future* tense thoughts about *myself*. Take those of the latter to also concern *future* tense thoughts about *others* and *past* tense ones about *anyone*.

4. A variant says that although the thoughts are evaluative beliefs, a belief is evaluative because an intention partially constitutes it. This complication does not matter. My criticism is that there are not enough intentions to go around, which entails a paucity of beliefs partially constituted by them.

5. The natural label for these beliefs, 'normative beliefs', is too close to 'normative thoughts'. I use 'evaluative beliefs' because they are the subject's evaluation of actions. This label is imperfect since many theorists divide normative concepts or properties into the evaluative, deontic, and fitting. No such contrast is intended in my use.

intentions. It is unified because its diverse elements form an intelligible grounded system.

1.3 Two caveats. First, most philosophers who think that normative thoughts are beliefs are not practical cognitivists and thus are not evaluationists. They instead construe practical reason as a species of theoretical reason whose exercises influence those of our will. I ignore this view here.[6] Second, I never use terms like 'reasoning'. Such terms invoke a process of sussing something out which precedes and concludes in an act like judging or a state like belief or intention. As I explain in a bit, this process is inessential to the exercise of practical reason. I thus rarely discuss it. When I do, I use 'deliberation'.

## 2. The self-conscious will

I here outline practical cognitivism and emphasize the aspects which matter for my criticisms of volitionism and evaluationism and for my constructive arguments later.

2.1 Human beings are animals. As our digestion is a species of animal nutrition alongside canine and equine digestion, so our agency is a species of animal agency alongside feline and bovine agency.[7] As the nature and proper exercise of our digestive capacity specifies the generic function of animal nutrition in a certain way, so the nature and proper exercise of practical reason specifies the generic function of a will in a certain way. What is that function? How is practical reason a capacity to do it in a certain way?

A will is a capacity to act. Its proper exercise unites thinking and doing such that what the animal does realizes the thought. Say my cat sees a mouse and pounces. He has an end, catching the mouse, and takes means, crouching, chasing, and so on. He succeeds only when he does what he thinks by taking sufficient means to his end. His will is thus a capacity to think and thereby do.

My cat is not self-conscious. I am. He does not represent and take means to ends knowingly. I do. That is why I can be irrational but he cannot, as only a being who can follow a rule of rationality can be subject to it. Still, my will is a capacity to think and thereby do. As I am self-conscious, when I exercise it, I knowingly represent and thereby take means to an end. I succeed only if I do what I think by knowingly taking sufficient means to my end.[8] Practical

6. For criticism, see Korsgaard ($2009_A$: 24-30; $2009_B$: 64-7), Fernandez (2015), and Fix (2018).
7. Put otherwise, *human agency* is a categorial species of *animal agency*. See Ford (2011: 83-90).
8. See Fix ($2020_B$).

reason is thus in part the self-conscious capacity to think and thereby do.[9]

2.2 One important aspect of this capacity is that its exercise has two interdependent parts, thinking and doing. To understand why, contrast it with theoretical reason.

Theoretical reason is our capacity to know the world. An exercise about my cat slinking across my garden, say, is correct only if he is so moving. He does not move because I so represent him. I so represent him because he moves. As I am self-conscious, I recognize that what he is up to, and indeed whether he is up to anything, is independent of my thought about it.

Practical reason, if it is our will, is our capacity to act in the world. An exercise about taking a dive, say, is correct only if I represent taking one and thereby do. I do not represent taking a dive because I am doing so. I instead am taking a dive because I represent doing so. That is why I am not taking a dive if I trip while walking or if I lose consciousness and fall even if my body moves as I move when I take a dive. As I am self-conscious, I recognize that what I am up to, and indeed whether I am up to anything, depends on my thought about it.

The doing which is part of the exercise of practical reason thus depends on the thinking which is the other part. The thinking also depends on the doing. Consider how such a thought is correct only if I can act as I think. To will to fly to the edge of the earth without mechanical aid, say, is incorrect. The earth lacks an edge, and I wings. To wish or want to so act or to wonder about so acting, though, is fine. This is because in willing, I think so as to thereby do. In wishing, wanting, and wondering, I do not. That is why willing without acting can be practically irrational but wishing, wanting, or wondering without acting cannot, or at least not in the same way. Since I am self-conscious, I recognize that this relationship to doing is part of what makes the thinking which is part of an exercise of practical reason the type of thought it is.

The thinking and doing which constitute an exercise of practical reason are thus interdependent. I use 'intention' for such a thought. So practical cognitivism says that the thinking which is part of an exercise of practical reason is an intention which is interdependent with the doing which is the other part.

2.3 Another important aspect of this capacity is that its exercise is essentially first-personal. To

9. 'In part' because I am not trying to say everything about the nature of practical reason. In particular, I am not trying to ground non-instrumental standards for exercises.

think so as to thereby do is to represent my own actions.

Say you and I independently intend to catch the same cat. Although my exercise of practical reason succeeds only if she is caught, it matters how. If I am too lazy to set a trap or if we each set traps but she ends up in yours, only your exercise succeeds. I did not trap her. Say, though, that I do not want to buy the trap, set it, and all that jazz but instead intend to get you to catch the cat. If you trap her without communicating with me, my exercise of practical reason still fails. If, though, you trap her because of my command or request, my exercise succeeds. I do as I think, which requires thinking something for me to do.

This is why Christine Korsgaard says that an "action is an essentially intelligible object that *embodies* its reason, the way an utterance is an essentially intelligible object that embodies a thought" (Korsgaard [2008] 228). As only *I* can directly voice my thoughts, so only *I* can directly embody my intentions, and as I can directly voice only *my* thoughts, so I can directly intend only *my* embodiment of them. My thinking is immediately about my doing.

Another way to recognize the first-personal character of intentions is to consider cases in which I think that someone should act without realizing that I am that someone. Say I think that the junior member of the faculty should lead the strike, but I am ignorant of my juniority. I then cannot intend to lead, nor am I practically irrational for not leading. In fact, to lead would be irrational. If I recognize my juniority, though, I intend to lead. To not lead, without excuse, is irrational. Intentions have an essential tie with doing that explains the possibility of this irrationality. Such irrationality is possible only when the thought is not only about me but recognized as such by me. Intentions are thus essentially first-personal.

2.4 A third important aspect of this capacity is that to exercise it correctly is to base its exercise on what licenses that exercise. An agent correctly exercises practical reason in part by grasping what makes so exercising it correct.

Say I am walking to the store to get bourbon because I am throwing a party for my partner's new job. This explanation is true only if I take his newfound employment as my ground for throwing a party with bourbon-based cocktails. That is what it is for that 'because' to be the 'because' of rational basing. Schematically, to exercise practical reason correctly is to intend to φ and thereby φ because of Γ, where 'Γ' both is what licenses so exercising practical reason and is my basis for so exercising it.[10] This is part of what distinguishes self-conscious

10. See Neta (2018; 2019). Two comments. First, I can correctly exercise practical reason because of evidence of or

capacities from others.[11]

Here is a way into this idea. Consider a question which asks for my grounds for acting. According to G.E.M. Anscombe, to accept such a question is to acknowledge that I am acting intentionally. To answer 'because of Γ' is to explain what I am doing in terms of why I am doing it. In contrast, to reject the question because I was unaware that I was φ-ing shows that I was not φ-ing intentionally. Readiness to answer is thus a mark of intentional action.[12]

To answer, though, is not (just) to express theoretical knowledge about my exercise of practical reason. Were it, I would therein recognize the independence of what I represent from my representation of it. What I was up to, and indeed whether I was up to anything, would then not depend on the thought expressed in my answer. Readiness to answer would not be a mark of acting intentionally any more than readiness to answer the questions 'Why is your foot discolored?' or 'Why are you losing your hair?' determines whether I have a birthmark or a bald spot. Accepting the question would at best be evidence, for me as well as you, that I was acting intentionally, rejecting it at best evidence that I was not, because the fact or lack of an exercise of theoretical reason is at best evidence as to reality of what it represents.

In contrast, if what I express in such an answer is part of the exercise of practical reason, that answer expresses the thought on which the doing which is the other part of the exercise of practical reason depends. Readiness to answer is then criterial of acting intentionally. To answer a question which asks about the basis of my exercise of practical reason is thus not (just) to express theoretical knowledge. It is to articulate part of the exercise of practical reason. Hence, practical reason is the capacity to think and thereby do on the basis of what licenses so exercising it. Everything after 'to' characterizes the nature of this capacity and its proper exercise, not something independent of that exercise which might accompany it.[13]

## 3. Volitionism and the separateness of persons

Consider the following argument:

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testimony as to what licenses it. This qualification does not matter here. Second, since I am talking about correct exercises, I talk about what *licenses* them. To talk about incorrect ones, I would talk about what I *take to license* them. I focus on correct exercises because I think they are prior to incorrect ones. See Fix (2020$_A$) for an interpretation of the error condition which spells out this priority with respect to standards for our agency.

11. See, among others, Moran (2001), Korsgaard (2009$_A$), Boyle (2011$_A$), and Marcus (2012).

12. See Anscombe (1957: §5), Moran (2004), Ford (2015), and Lavin (2015).

13. Here is why if practical reason is our will, deliberation is inessential to the exercise of practical reason and never exhausts that exercise. Were it essential, the mark of acting intentionally would be having asked and answered a question about my grounds for action, not my *readiness* to answer. Were it exhaustive, an exercise would not include doing as well as thinking.

Volitionist Inference

(1) My normative thoughts about my present actions are intentions.

(2) If so, all normative thoughts about human actions are intentions.

∴ All normative thoughts about human actions are intentions.

The first premise is true if practical reason is our will and if the thoughts which are part of its exercises are normative thoughts. The second follows from the first if this class of thoughts is unified and if unity requires uniformity. The conclusion follows. That is how to get from practical cognitivism to volitionism through the unity as uniformity thesis. That argument, though, is unsound. Volitionism cannot account for interpersonal normative thoughts.

3.1 Volitionists model interpersonal normative thoughts on first-personal ones. Allan Gibbard develops the most sophisticated version. He claims that "[t]hinking what I ought do amounts to deciding what to do" (Gibbard [2003] 17). "[D]eciding ... is not ... coming to a belief in some special kind of fact" because decisions "on *what to do* have an automatic bearing on what to do" (ibid. 5). He also says that the sense and significance of normative concepts "depends on their place in a broad kind of planning" (ibid. 21). Since 'plan' is his term for thought tied to action, intentions are the basis of all normative thoughts about our action. The simplest way is for those thoughts to be intentions.

What thought do I express in uttering 'you should φ'?[14] Not an intention to φ. That would be about something for me to do. My thought, though, is about you. It does not imply that I am to so act on pain of irrationality but that you are to on pain of incorrectness. There are two problems here. First, the correctness conditions for that thought differ from those for that intention. We or our circumstances might relevantly differ. Second, if that utterance expresses that intention, although you prompt my thought, it is not about you. All my normative thoughts about human action are instead about myself. That is practical solipsism.

What other intention might work? Gibbard says it is an intention to *φ were I you*. That seems plausible because thinking that you should φ without recognizing that I should in similar circumstances is strange. That, though, just indicates an obvious inferential tie between

14. I write throughout about an utterrance expressing a thought. Token utterances, though, rarely express one thought. Context often clarifies. Otherwise, I specify. Similarly, I can perform different speech acts with one utterrance. Unless stated otherwise, all utterances are sincere assertions which all parties know are not commands.

thoughts about you and me. Gibbard claims more. He thinks that I "plan, hypothetically, for the case of being" you even though I am "under no doubt that" I am not and know I "couldn't possibly be" (ibid. 51). Uttering 'you should φ' then does not express a thought about you tied to one about me. It expresses a thought about me like that expressed by uttering 'I should φ were I to survive this ordeal'. It expresses an intention, conditional on my being you, to φ.

Such a conditional intention is impossible. As an unconditional intention has an actual link with acting, so a conditional one has a possible link with acting. My intention, conditional on surviving, to φ does. I can survive this! My intention, conditional on my being you, to φ does not just as my intention, conditional on my not existing, to φ does not. I cannot be you and act as I cannot not exist and act. To entertain 'φ-ing were I you' is to understand the impossibility of so acting just as is to entertain 'φ-ing were I to not exist'. To understand the impossibility of so acting is to understand the impossibility of intending to so act given the interdepedence of the thinking and doing which constitute an exercise of practical reason. I thus cannot intend such impossibilities.

A way to understand the problem is to think about why there is much I can believe but not intend. I can believe that the number 3 is the successor of the number 2 but cannot intend for it to be so because I know that to act so as to realize that property is impossible. Such intentions are impossible because I can intend to φ only if I do not think that my φ-ing is impossible.[15] Likewise, since I know that, necessarily, I am neither you nor the number 2, I know that thoughts about what to do conditional on my exemplifying those properties lack any possible link with acting. Such thoughts cannot be intentions.

Moreover, a conditional intention is about me, not you. In fact, Gibbard claims that such "fantastic contingency planning" is "a kind of play which prepares me for situations I might one day face" (Gibbard [2003] 52). This has three problems. First, I cannot face a situation in which I am you. Second, why would I intend, conditionally or not, when fantasizing? Third, now you merely prompt a thought without featuring in it so that I might become a "better decider[] than [I] otherwise would be" (ibid. 53). In effect, I notice you to strengthen my deliberative muscles in fantasies about myself. My thought is thus about me, not you. Invoking conditional

15. The double negative matters. I need not believe that my φ-ing is possible. After all, I might want to discover whether I can φ and so intend and thereby attempt to do so. Since part of what it is to recognize you as another person is to recognize that I am not you, to think that about what to do conditional on my being you is to recognize the impossibility of so acting and so is not to intend. To be clear, I do not deny that I can have a *thought* with the content 'I should φ were I to you'. I deny only that I can have such an *intention* since intentions have an essential link with the doing necessarily absent in such a thought. For all I say here, I can have beliefs about what I should do in the (impossible) circumstances in which I am you since beliefs lack the relevant connection to doing.

intentions renders normative thought as solipsistic as does invoking unconditional ones.

3.2 Perhaps the solution is for my intention to feature you as do my intentions to sing your praises or accept your proposal. Those intentions are in a way about you. Does uttering 'you should φ' express an intention similarly about you? Yes. Is that enough for volitionism? No. Let me explain.

I express an intention when I utter 'you should φ' because to speak is to act. That utterance realizes an intention as does dancing across the porch as the radio plays. Since an utterance with a second person pronoun is felicitous only if I am addressing you, this intention features you in a specific way. To address you is to speak not about you or at you but to you in a way which manifests my intention to do so.[16] To advise you, then, is to realize my intention to so advise in part by expressing it to you.[17]

Advice, though, does not express *only* that intention. Here are two ways to make this point. First, 'you should φ' and 'he should φ' can express the same thought. Yet I can correctly utter 'he should φ' when advising is incorrect or impossible. I can also think it when I cannot help or hinder your φ-ing. There is then no potential practical irrationality. Without that potential, there is no intention. Yet the thought might be correct and thus is not an intention.

Second, when I correctly intend to advise, I do so because of what licenses so advising. That includes what licenses your φ-ing and what licenses my telling you to φ. Yet they can come apart. Maybe your proposal must come from the heart, from you alone. In recognizing that you should betroth your beloved, I recognize that advice would ruin it. Perhaps instead communicating with you is impossible. Intending to do anything with respect to you is then incorrect. Yet I can know what licenses your φ-ing and have a correct normative thought about your action. Such thoughts are not intentions.

3.3 Finally, maybe volitionists should say that although certain normative thoughts about our actions are not intentions, they are derivative of intentions. Perhaps *wish* is a type of thought which is in effect intention stripped of its tie to doing. When I do not take acting on a normative thought to be impossible, I intend. When I do, I wish, but wishes are as it were incomplete

16. See Moran (2018).

17. T.M. Scanlon is thus wrong to criticize Gibbard on the grounds that "when I offer someone advice, saying that *p* is a reason for him or her to do *a*, I am not expressing a plan" Scanlon (2014: 59). Although the letter of his complaint is wrong, its spirit is along the lines of the criticism I am developing.

intentions, like the desiccated raisin of intention's juicy grape.[18]

While I shall claim that intentions are the basic type of normative thought and others depend on them, this is not the way to go. Wishes have all the formal properties of an exercise of theoretical reason, not some but not all of the formal properties of exercises of practical reason. In an exercise of theoretical reason, I represent something which is independent of that representation as independent of it. My normative thought about your action has those features. I know that whether you should see the doctor does not depend on my representation any more than does whether the sun is warming the stone. I also know that this fact holds independent of my ability to do anything about it. Delete me from existence and still it is so. That is why I can have such thoughts about you when I cannot help or hinder your acting. Such thoughts are thus exercises of theoretical reason, not derivative exercises of practical reason.

Volitionism is thus false. I can have correct interpersonal normative thoughts when I cannot correctly intend because they are about you. While to think what I should do might be to intend, to think what you should do is not because you and I are separate persons.

## 4. Evaluationism and the unity of the individual

Consider the following argument:

Anti-Volitionist Inference

1. My normative thoughts about your actions are not intentions.
2. If so, no normative thoughts about human actions are intentions.

∴ No normative thoughts about human actions are intentions.

The previous section supports the first premise. The second follows from the first if this class of thoughts is unified and if unity requires uniformity. The conclusion follows. It is incompatible with practical cognitivism so long as the thoughts which are part of exercises of practical reason are normative thoughts. That is how to get the negation of practical cognitivism from the negation of volitionism through the unity as uniformity thesis.

What, though, if practical cognitivists deny that normative thoughts are part of the exercises of practical reason? Maybe they can then accept that inference and the following one:

18. See Engstrom (2009: 66-70).

Evaluationist Inference

(1) My normative thoughts about your actions are evaluative beliefs.

(2) If so, all normative thoughts about human actions are evaluative beliefs.

∴ All normative thoughts about human actions are evaluative beliefs.

The previous argument supports the first premise. The second follows from the first if this class of thoughts is unified and if unity requires uniformity. The conclusion follows. This argument, though, is unsound. Evaluationism cannot account for first-personal normative thoughts.

Since this argument is more complex than my criticism of volitionism, let me give the gist of it before I begin. Evaluationists think that exercises of practical reason have rational bases. These bases are my sense of the normative status of my exercise. Evaluationists also think that such a basis is part of that exercise. So my sense of the normative status of my exercise of practical reason is part of that exercise. Yet the thoughts which are part of the exercise of practical reason are, according to practical cognitivists, including evaluationists, intentions. So intentions are normative thoughts, and the second premise of the evaluationist inference is false. Or, put more precisely, a correct exercise of practical reason includes my sense of the normative status of that exercise and so includes my first-personal normative thought about that exercise. Such thoughts are thus not exercises of theoretical reason and not evaluative beliefs, and the second premise of the evaluationist inference is false.

4.1 Evaluationists model first-personal normative thoughts on interpersonal ones. Pamela Hieronymi says that

> I can ... think about whether to φ from your point of view. If I think certain reasons tell decisively in favor of your φ-ing, I will express this thought in the judgment 'you ought to φ'. This claim expresses a recommendation to your will. I can, of course, do the same for myself: I can recommend an action for myself, without actually deciding to act—without forming an intention—by forming a judgment about what I ought to do. (Hieronymi 2009: 213-4)

The parallel between interpersonal and first-personal thoughts means that the thoughts which are part of exercises of practical reason are not normative thoughts. So Hieronymi and Matthew

Silverstein say:

> Judging that [I] have most reason to φ ... is a piece of theoretical reasoning ... . It is theoretical reasoning about a practical subject matter. ... But *practical* reasoning is not reasoning about one's reasons for action. It is reasoning about whether to act. (Hieronymi 2009: 207)

> thinking about what to do does not require one to think about what one ought to, and one may arrive at a conclusion about what one ought to do without settling the matter of what to do. … [N]ormative thought can be analyzed in terms of practical thought: normative reasoning is reasoning about practical reasoning—either one's own or someone else's. (Silverstein 2017: 356-7)

As I have beliefs about the correctness of your exercise of practical reason, so I have them about mine. As my normative thought about you is not part of your exercise of practical reason, so my normative thought about myself is not part of my exercise of practical reason. So evaluationists say.

Why think that intentions cannot be normative thoughts? First, evaluationists think that a thought is a normative thought because a normative concept features in it. As a mathematical thought is such in part because of its subject matter, so, they think, a normative thought is such in part because of its subject matter. Second, they think that normative concepts feature in certain beliefs but not in intentions because while those beliefs concern what I should do, intentions concern what to do.

Although I think that both claims are false, I focus on the first because it gets to the heart of the matter.[19] I grant that beliefs are evaluative and thus are normative thoughts because a normative concept features in their content. However, I shall argue that since to grasp what licenses my exercising practical reason in a certain way is for me to partially exercise it in that way, to have a first personal normative thought is to partially exercise practical reason. This is not because a normative concept features in the content of a rational basis but because my grasp

19. Here is the problem with the second. Say I am your dean and my end is to make it the case that you should do something. I claim that your shabby attire worries the parents and issue an edict that faculty must wear something decent in college. Or say my end is to infuriate you, and you hate arbitrary exercises of authority. Since no one cares about academic wardrobes, I issue that edict and make it the case that you should dress better. The concept SHOULD features in these intentions, in my end in the first, my means in the second.

of the rational basis of my exercise of practical is my sense of the normative status of that exercise.

4.2 In this sub-section, I will criticize evaluationism by starting with its account of practical reason as a self-conscious capacity. Evaluationists take exercises of practical reason to have rational bases. Hieronymi says that to exercise practical reason is to "reason about whether to act, thereby employing certain considerations as reasons" (Hieronymi 2009: 207). Silverstein says that "when I decide … on the basis of some consideration, I act for a reason" (Silverstein 2017 358). That is to "respond to those reasons as reasons" (ibid. 358n11). To employ and respond to *a reason to act as such* is, when I exercise practical reason correctly, to act on the basis of what licenses so acting. So my exercise of practical reason has a rational basis in virtue of my taking something as one.

To grasp the rational basis of my exercise of practical reason is to take what licenses exercising practical reason in some way to license so exercising practical reason. I do not mean that it is to have a thought with the content of the thought is 'Γ licenses φ-ing' or 'I should φ because Γ licenses it'. To grasp the rational basis of my exercise of practical reason as such is instead to intend to φ because Γ, where the 'because' is that of rational basing.

I think that the fact that exercises of practical reason have rational bases is incompatible with evaluationism. To understand the error in evaluationism, consider this passage:

> I firmly believe that I ought to have lunch at home tomorrow. Actually, I know it. When I dine out, I tend to overeat. Plus, money is rather tight at the moment, and even a casual lunch out will cost notably more than a quick meal at home. Besides, I have all the fixings for one of my favorite sandwiches in the refrigerator … . I have firmly resolved the normative question … . I have not, however, decided where to have lunch tomorrow. Frankly, I have not even thought about it. … I have … no intention … . (Silverstein 2017: 357-8)

Grant that an exercise of our agency might go like that. How should we interpret this case? Silverstein interprets it as someone correctly exercising theoretical reason about the correctness of a potential exercise of practical reason without at all exercising practical reason. The normative thought would then be an evaluative belief which is independent of the exercise of practical

reason. That, though, is not the only way to interpret this case. Another option is to interpret it as someone partially and incompetently exercising practical reason. The normative thought would then part of an incomplete exercise of practical reason. Let me clarify the options.

Separability can reveal independence. Since a sodium atom can exist without a chlorine atom, NaCl is not fundamental. It consists of two more basic independent parts. However, separability does not always reveal independence. Losing a leg does not show that my body consists of two more basic independent parts. All it shows is that things can break down, that something can be in bad, incomplete shape. Similarly, to slur sounds without sense is usually to partially and incompetently exercise a capacity to speak, not to flawlessly exercise a capacity to produce sound without exercising a capacity to make sense. Separability does not show that what seems in the successful case like the exercise of one capacity is actually an artificial aggregate of exercises of distinct capacities. It just reveals a way that an exercise can break down.

Which form of explanation fits the case in which I consider potential grounds for where to lunch and determine that one action is correct without so acting? Am I exercising theoretical reason flawlessly without exercising practical reason? In that case, the absence of the action would not be a deficiency in the exercise of the capacity which includes the grasp of the grounds to act in the same way that the absence of a chlorine atom is not a deficiency of the sodium atom. Am I instead exercising practical reason partially and incompetently? In that case, the absence of the action would be a defiency in the exercise of the capacity which includes the grasp of the grounds to act in the same way that the absence of a right arm is a deficiency of a human body. So which option is correct? The latter. Here is why.

Consider a dialogue. You tell me why we should eat in and declare that we should lunch at yours. As I get up, you ask where I am going. 'To yours for lunch.' 'Why?' 'You said to given Γ.' 'I said nothing of the sort! I said we *should* eat in given Γ. I said nothing about where *to* eat. The question did not arise!' If you then deliberate about where to eat, citing again everything in Γ, I will not take you to clearly distinguish what I sloppily elide. I will think you mad.[20]

This dialogue is worse as a soliloquy. Yet evaluationists model our agency on it. They formulate two questions, 'What should I do?' and 'What am I to do?' They take my normative thought, construed as an evaluative belief, to answer the first and my intention to answer the

20. Is the oddity pragmatic, based in the fact that we tend to discuss lunch only when deciding where to eat? Were it, you could cancel it. You cannot. Say you propose to ignore the question of where to eat and focus on where we should lunch. You tell me why we should eat in and declare that we should lunch at yours because of Γ. I agree. You then say 'That settled, where to eat?' before reciting everything in Γ. This is as odd as the original.

second. To answer the first, though, is to answer the second.

The issue is not that the answers to these questions are the same. 'What is the sum of 6 and 7?' and 'What is the only prime number between 11 and 17?' have the same answer, but you can ask and answer one but not the other. Nor is the issue that what makes an answer to the first question correct is necessarily what makes an answer to the second correct. Certain questions about heat and kinetic motion or George Orwell and Eric Blair have that profile, but you can ask and answer one but not the other.

The issue is instead that the questions 'What should I do?' and 'What am I to do?' are in effect the same question with a slight difference in emphasis because each inquires into the rational basis for my exercise of practical reason as such and to answer either is to grasp such a basis as such. To ask the question 'What am I to do?' is to inquire into the potential rational bases to determine which exercises of practical reason open to me have such a basis. To ask the question 'What should I do?' is likewise to inquire into potential rational bases to determine which exercises of practical reason open to me have such a basis, though this time I inquire into them in part by *saying* that I am inquiring into them. What 'What am I to do?' leaves tacit, 'What should I do?' makes explicit. That is not a difference in the question asked and answered but merely a difference in framing.

To ask either question is to inquire into my grounds to act as such. To answer either correctly is to grasp a rational basis for my exercise of practical reason as a rational basis for such an exercise.[21] To grasp such a rational basis as such, though, just is to partially exercise practical reason. After all, it is what I articulate when I answer a question which asks for my grounds for acting. Since readiness to answer is a mark of acting intentionally only if that basis is part of the exercise of practical reason, to grasp that basis is to partially exercise practical reason. So in thinking what I should do, I intend. To do so without acting is thus to partially but incompetently exercise practical reason, not to completely exercise theoretical reason without exercising practical reason at all. My sense of the normative status of my action is part of my exercise of practical reason and thereby is not an evaluative belief.[22]

4.3 Since that argument is likely a bit surprising, here is another way to make the same point.

21. To answer incorrectly is to take something as a rational basis for an exercise of practical reason which is not such an exercise. Given the argument I am about to make, such a mistake is to to partially and incorrectly exercise practical reason, not to completely and incorrectly exercise theoretical reason without exercising practical reason at all.

22. I do not mean to claim that *all* incomplete exercises of practical reason are incompetent. For example, I assume

That criticism starts from the fact that practical reason is a self-conscious capacity whose proper exercise includes a rational basis in virtue of the subject correctly taking what licenses exercising practical reason in some way as the basis to so exercise practical reason. This one will start from the evaluationist account of evaluative beliefs as exercises of theoretical reason about the correctness of my actual or potential exercise of practical reason.

Since evaluationists model intrapersonal normative thoughts on interpersonal ones, they think that my first-personal evaluative belief is as separate from my intention as my interpersonal one is from your intention. So they think that once I have the evaluative belief, that exercise of theoretical reason is done and dusted. My exercise of practical reason, as a separate capacity, must then begin if I am to do anything. Rather than an account of the proper exercise of human agency, though, that account depicts a type of practical schizophrenia. According to it, in my exercise of theoretical reason, I grasp the rational basis for my exercise of practical reason as such and then I must grasp that rational basis as such anew in an exercise of practical reason. This turns the mad dialogue from earlier into a soliloquy which is part of the proper exercise of our agency and incorrectly models human agency on a type of alienation. Here is an analogy which helps explain why.

Imagine that I declare that I wish to measure the length of a piece of clothing and pull out a tape measure. I run it along the side of the garment, record the measurement as 81cm, and put my tape measure away. I then take our my tape measure again. You ask what I am doing and I say that I wish to measure the piece of clothing. You ask whether I think that I made a mistake in my first measurement, as you watched carefully and know that I was on point. I say 'no'. You ask whether I am measuring a second time just to make sure, as checking twice, cutting once is a good policy. I scoff at the suggestion. As I run the tape measure along the same side of the garment, record the measurement as 81cm, and put my tape measure away, I explain that the *first* time I *measured the length* of the piece of clothing but the *second* time I *measured* the piece of clothing. I doubt that you will know what to make of this claim, but whatever you make

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that I consider what I am to do this weekend and conclude that if the weather allows, I should head to the mountains to escape from the constant churn of contemporary civilization, but if not, I should mark some more essays. This exercise is partial but competent given the information available at the time. It is a competent conditional answer to the practical question about what to do. Similarly, if I determine that at this time I simply lack enough information to correctly conclude even conditionally, I competently partially exercise practical reason insofar as I leave open the possibility of coming to knowing further information on the basis of which I can correctly conclude. Neither case is similar to Silverstein's case. Neither implies a division between normative thought and volition of the type that supports evaluationism since in both the lack of volition one way or the other tracks the lack of a determinate normative thought one way or the other. Each instead only shows that an exercise of practical reason can occur over time and can involve suspension without conclusion.

of me, you will know that I did not engage in one type of activity in the first measurement and a different type in the second. You will know that despite the slight difference in description, I did the same thing twice.

That is isomorphic to what evaluationists depict. According to evaluationism, to answer 'What should I do?', I consider the grounds to act and conclude *φ given Γ* just as to measure the length of the article of clothing, I take out my tape measure and run it along the side of the garment. To answer 'What am I to do?', I consider the grounds to act and conclude *φ given Γ* just as to measure the article of clothing, I take out my tape measure and run it along the side of the garment. If, after I conclude *φ given Γ* in response to the first question, I run through the grounds to act again while denying that I suspect that I made a mistake in my first answer and scoffing at the suggestion that I am rechecking out of caution, you will be at a loss as to what I am up to. If, after I again conclude *φ given Γ*, I explain that the *first* time I determined *what I should do* but the *second* time I determined *what I am to do*, you will not know what to make of this claim. Whatever else you make of me, though, you will know that I no more exercised different capacities in asking and answering these questions than the tailor engaged in different activities in the first and second measurements. You will know that I exercised the same capacity twice or, perhaps more accurately, that I simply retraced my steps in one exercise of one capacity.

The source of the problem is that in answering each question, I self-consciously think about the rational basis for my exercise of practical reason as such. In thinking about that basis, there is no gap between my grasp of it and my exercise of practical reason because to grasp it just is to partially exercise practical reason. Otherwise, readiness to answer could not be a mark of intentional action, and otherwise, practical reason would not be a self-conscious capacity which I exercise on the basis of what licenses so exercising it, at least when I exercise it correctly.

The trouble with evaluationism is that to model normative thoughts about myself on interpersonal normative thoughts is to offer an account of normative thought about myself as if I were another, not an account of first-personal thought.[23] This is because the only way for me to

23. What about the fact that I can say 'I know that I should φ, but instead I will ψ'? Such cases divide into cases in which the subject is insincere and in effect utters 'I know that I should φ' in inverted commas and cases in which the subject is sincere. I do not "reinterpret the [latter] cases so that the relevant agents turn out not to be acting contrary to their better judgments", as it might seem I must (Silverstein 2017: 357). What I deny is that this form of words entails the common explanation of such cases in terms of two separate capacities which interact in one way in the good case and another in the bad case. I instead interpret akrasia as the partial, incompetent exercise of practical reason. I discuss it further in passing elsewhere (Fix 2018: 516-8). I hope to focus on it in future work. Let me here just get the core of my account across with an example. Say you argue that veganism is obligatory. I say 'To

ask and answer a question about what I should do and yet not at least partially exercise practical reason is for me to not realize that the question is about myself. Such ignorance is possible, as when I think that the junior member of the faculty should lead the strike and yet am ignorant of my juniority and so ignorant that I am thinking about myself. However, the following question is not first-personal:

> What is the correct answer to the question 'What is the junior member of the faculty to do?'

Nor is the thought which I express by saying that the junior member of the faculty should lead the revolution. So although I therein grasp the rational basis for the exercise of practical reason for someone who happens to be me, I do not grasp it as my rational basis for exercising practical reason in some way and so am not exercising practical reason. Once the question about what I should do is first-personal, though, to ask and answer it is to ask and answer the question about what I am to do since to answer either is to grasp the rational basis for my exercise of practical reason as such and so is to at least partially exercise practical reason. To model first-personal normative thought on interpersonal normative thought is thus to confuse one human being for two.[24]

What is possible interpersonally is therefore impossible first-personally. To think about what you should do, I in effect consider the following question:

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Veggie Planet for lunch then?' You reply 'We *should*, but how about The Slaughterhouse for steaks?' In this example, you grasp what licenses exercising practical reason but do not act on that basis. Since that basis is part of the exercise of practical reason, you are partially but incompetently exercising practical reason, as you are if you head to the steakhouse without taking yourself to have a rational basis for doing so. So as I interpret these cases, you do not answer different questions and thus exercise two capacities, theoretical reason and practical reason, in ways which are in tension with each other. You answer the same question in incompatible ways, or offer one incompatible answer to one question, and thus partially and incompetently exercise practical reason.

24. Hieronymi and Silverstein build this confusion into their account of the function of normative concepts. She says that an "ought claim ... may be understood as a recommendation to practical reasoning, rather than a step in it" (Hieronymi 2009: 213-4). He says that "[t]his is what the normative concept *ought* is for. By telling you that you ought to perform some action, I can recommend that action as the outcome of sound practical reasoning" (Silverstein 2017: 375). Such a model of normative concepts rules out the possibility of first-personal normative thoughts. Recommending requires separate persons. After all, I can recommend something to you only if I think that I have an informational advantage over you. This is why I cannot, except as a joke, recommend your cooking to you. Since I cannot have such an advantage over myself, I cannot recommend anything to myself. This is why I cannot dine at Forage on my recommendation, though I can on yours. Normative concepts thus would be out of place in first-personal thought were their function to recommend. The only way for me to have a normative thought about myself would be for me to not recognize it as about myself. That is not a first-personal normative thought. If such thoughts are possible, the function of normative concepts is not to recommend.

What is the correct answer to the question 'What are you to do?''

Since I am not you, I can ask and answer the governing question without anyone asking, let alone answering, the embedded one. To think about what I should do, I likewise in effect consider the following question:

What is the correct answer to the question 'What am I to do?'

To do so, I must recognize that the embedded question concerns me and thus that the grounds for answering the governing and embedded questions are both the rational basis for my exercise of practical reason as such. 'What should I do?' and 'What am I to do?' are then not different questions but the same question asked in slightly different ways. To answer is to grasp the basis for my exercise of practical reason as such. Since to grasp it is to partially exercise practical reason and since it is my sense of the normative status of that exercise, a normative thought is part of that exercise. Intentions are normative thoughts.

Evaluationism is thus false. I cannot have first-personal normative thoughts about my action without intending because they are about me. While to think what you should do might be to just have an evaluative belief, to think what I should do is not because I am one person.[25]

## 5. Diversity and dependence

5.1 Here is how things stand. First, first-personal normative thoughts about action are intentions because for me to grasp the rational basis of my exercise of practical reason is for me to partially exercise practical reason. Second, interpersonal normative thoughts about action are evaluative beliefs because for me to grasp the basis for your exercise of practical reason is not for anyone to partially exercise practical reason. Third, if I can have such beliefs about your action, I can also have them about mine. To say I cannot is like saying I can know your mind but not my own. Fourth, normative thoughts about our actions have something to do with each other. This class of thoughts is unified.

Assume the unity as uniformity thesis and the last proposition makes the first incompatible with the second and third. Deny that thesis and the first, second, and third

25. Michael Pendlebury offers a different argument for the similar conclusion that "only simple, first-person, present-tense 'ought' judgments and others which directly imply them invariably carry determinate motivational force which is fixed by the contents of those judgments" (Pendlebury 2002: 193).

propositions are compatible, though compatibility is not enough to unify the class. Moreover, although the first is compatible with the third, given the lack of independence between first-personal evaluative beliefs and intentions, such beliefs might seem idle and superfluous. The challenge, then, is to unify this class despite its diversity and despite the lack of independence between first-personal normative thoughts which are intentions and ones which are beliefs. I shall argue that intentions are the basis of this unity. They are normative thoughts, and evaluative beliefs about our actions depend on them in different ways in interpersonal and intrapersonal cases.[26]

A caveat before I begin. In this section, my focus is on the nature and proper exercise of practical reason. I do not deny the possibility of defective exercises. Just as I exercise practical reason partially and incompetently if I grasp the rational basis for an exercise without acting in the way in question, so I exercise practical reason partially and incompetently if any of the other components which I here discuss go missing. Importantly, though, I think that the nature and proper exercise of a capacity is explanatorily prior to the varieties of error possible with respect to it. As anatomy does not begin with human bodies missing various limbs and as an account of speech does not begin with subjects who slur sounds with sense, so an account of practical reason does not begin with faulty exercises. It begins with the proper exercise because that exercise realizes the nature of the capacity. Imperfection and error are deviance from that proper exercise, and a subject can deviate in a myriad of ways to a myriad of degrees. I shall not try to catalogue the possibilities of error or draw attention to them.

5.2 I here explain the relationship between intentions and interpersonal evaluative beliefs. The correctness conditions for these beliefs depend on those for intentions. Classes of beliefs differ from each other because of their subject matters. A belief is in this class if and only if and

26. I will continue to construe evaluative beliefs as about what someone *should* do. I do not think that a subject must regard the action as best or required. The subject must grasp the basis of an exercise of practical reason, which can construe the action as *good* or *permissible*. This possibility leads to what I call the *puzzle of permissible action*, which concerns the fact that I can think of two incompatible actions as each *good* or *permissible* but do one of them. Some authors think that if so, deciding between them is the exercise of a capacity other than practical reason. Their argument is that to exercise reason is to do something on a rational basis, but since I lack a basis for *doing one rather than the other*, I cannot do either on a rational basis. I briefly address this argument elsewhere (Fix 2018: 517-8; Fix $2020_B$: 453-4). I hope to do so more fully in the future. The basic idea is that if practical reason is our will, I exercise it correctly only if I do as I think. Since I can meet that standard by doing either alternative, I need not have a basis for doing one *rather than the other* to have a basis for doing it as I need not have a basis for paying with a tener rather than two fives to have a basis for paying my bill with a tener.

because it is about the correctness of an exercise of practical reason. Since the correctness of a belief depends on what is up with its subject matter, the correctness of my belief about whether your exercise of practical reason is or would be correct depends on the correctness of that exercise.

Say I believe you should φ. The variable does not pick out a mere bodily movement. If I think you should hit the deck, you do not do as I think you should if you flop to the floor because someone shoves you or because you fall unconscious even if your body moves just as you move when you hit the deck. You do as I think you should only if you are acting that way. Given the interdependence of the thinking and doing which constitute an exercise of practical reason, to act that way is to intend to so act and thereby so act. Hence, to believe that you should φ is to believe that your intending to φ and thereby φ-ing is or would be correct. That belief is correct only if your so intending is or would be correct.

The class of normative thoughts about our actions thus includes interpersonal beliefs about whether intentions meet or would meet their correctness conditions. These beliefs are unintelligible without reference to those intentions, and their correctness conditions depend on those for those intentions. That relationship unifies these thoughts within the class of normative thoughts about our action.

5.3 Turn to first-personal evaluative beliefs. Whereas evaluationists say that they are independent thoughts about the correctness of my exercise of practical reason, I shall argue that they explicate or articulate an implicit or tacit aspect of the exercise of practical reason. I first model what it is to explicate or articulate something. I start with speech acts, move to self-knowledge, and finally claim that these beliefs constitute self-knowledge of the rational basis of my exercise of practical reason.

Consider the following utterances.

| | |
|---|---|
| 'φ' | 'I recommend that you φ' |
| 'φ' | 'I order you to φ' |

To utter something from the first column is to counsel or command. To utter something from the second is to do so in part by *saying* I am doing so. Yet each expresses the same counsel or command. This is why 'Check out the new arcade' and 'I recommend that you check out the

new arcade' can constitute the same counsel. The second utterance in a sense does not add to the first and yet in a sense does not repeat it. Its not adding anything is why it is infelicitous if you understand the first utterance. Its not being repetitive is why it is felicitous if you do not. The second utterance does not *change* the first but *clarifies* it, explicating what was implicit, articulating what was tacit, to secure uptake.

Richard Moran and Matthew Boyle treat self-knowledge on this model.[27] One way into this view is to think about how anyone in a position to assert '*p*' can also assert 'I believe that *p*' and anyone in a position to assert 'I believe that *p*' can also assert '*p*'. This is puzzling since there is no objective link between these propositions. I have no view as to much that is true and am wrong about much of the rest.

Maybe, though, I am in a position to assert '*p*' if and only if I am in a position to assert 'I believe that *p*' because both utterances express the same belief. Since theoretical reason is a self-conscious capacity, I can express an exercise of it by saying *what* I believe and also by saying *that* I believe it. Despite their different truth conditions, I am in a position to assert the former if and only if I am in a position to assert the latter because both assertions express the same take on the world, though in the later I explicate or articulate *that* it is my take on the world.

Consider now this list of utterances:

| | |
|---|---|
| '*p*' | 'I see *p*' |
| '*p*' | 'I hear *p*' |

Here again, uttering something from the second column explicates or articulates something implicit or tacit when I utter something in the first. Utterances in the first column concern the object of cognition, utterances in the second the mode of cognition, and yet the latter is a way of clarifying the former. The first assertion is a claim to know, the second a claim to know in a particular way. Both express the same knowledge.

Although that discussion is about utterances, Moran and Boyle hold a similar view about thought. When I believe that *p*, I am thinking about *p*, not about *my belief*. Still, I am not ignorant that I *believe* it rather than, say, *suppose* or *imagine* it. The type of mental state or act in question is implicit or tacit in that although it is not my focus, I can explicate or articulate it through reflection. To do so is to express self-knowledge by explicating or articulating something

27. See Moran (2001) and Boyle (2009; 2011$_b$; 2019). I cannot do justice to this 'reflectivist' view. Nothing here turns on the ins-and-outs of the debate about it.

implicit or tacit in my thought about the world.

While that self-knowledge concerns *the mental state or act* in question, I can also reflect and articulate or explicate specific aspects of that state or act. In particular, when I believe that *p*, I need not focus on *why* I believe it but that does not imply ignorance of its rational basis. When I reflect and think that I believe it because you told me so, I explicate or articulate that basis. Theoretical reason is a self-conscious capacity, and when I exercise it correctly, I do so because of what licenses so exercising it. I thus grasp my basis in exercising it even when I focus not on that basis but on what it bases, not on what licenses believing *p* but on *p*. To reflect on that basis, then, is to bring into focus and articulate an aspect of the original exercise of theoretical reason, not to replace it with something else. It is self-knowledge of part of the exercise of theoretical reason.

5.4 I think that my evaluative belief about my exercise of practical reason explicates or articulates the basis of that exercise. It is self-knowledge of that aspect of my exercise of practical reason.

Consider my evaluative belief about your actions. I believe that your exercising practical reason a certain way is or would be correct because of the grounds for your so exercising practical reason. In the interpersonal case, my belief is independent of your intention because of the separateness of persons. In the intrapersonal case, there is no independence because of the unity of the individual. Still, the thought is about grounds for my exercising practical reason a certain way. It thereby explicates or articulates an aspect of that exercise, focusing on *why* I intend as I do instead of on *what* I intend. Afer all, I articulate it when I answer a question which asks for my grounds for acting, and what I articulate must be part of that exercise for readiness to answer to be a mark of acting intentionally.

In effect, a correct evaluative belief about human action concerns an exercise of practical reason. In the interpersonal case, the correctness of my belief depends on the correctness of your exercise of practical reason and thus the correctness of the intention which does or would partially constitute your exercise. Since the person who believes is not the one who intends, I can believe without your intending. In the intrapersonal case, the correctness of my belief also depends on the correctness of my exercise of practical reason and thus the correctness of the intention which partially constitutes that exercise. Since the person who believes is the one who intends, though, I cannot believe without intending. To grasp what makes my so exercising practical reason correct as such is, after all, part of the exercise of practical reason. In this way,

the evaluative belief, when correct, constitutes knowledge not just of *what* makes my exercise of practical reason correct but also of it *as my basis* for that exercise. It is self-knowledge which explicates or articulates part of the exercise of practical reason.

Such a connection explains why first-personal evaluative beliefs are not redundant even though they lack the independence of intentions characteristic of interpersonal evaluative beliefs. Self-knowledge has various roles to play in our lives. For one thing, when I seek your help or advice on pulling off my end, you need to know the basis for my so exercising practical reason. Otherwise, your help or advice might conflict with what licenses that exercise and undermine its point. That is an essential interpersonal role for first-personal evaluative beliefs. For another thing, when acting, my focus is on the obstacles and opportunities in front of me. I seek and take means to my end given my circumstances and skills. I might, though, need to think about whether so acting still makes sense. Do the means and end connect with the grounds for so acting or have circumstances changed things? To ask and answer such a question, I must articulate or explicate my basis. I need this self-knowledge. That is an essential intrapersonal role for first-personal evaluative beliefs.

While I suspect that this claim about the intrapersonal role for first-personal evaluative beliefs might seem a bit wild, I in fact think that it is the way to understand the common metaphor of 'stepping back' employed by practical cognitivists such as Korsgaard and John McDowell. Take these passages:

> human animals turn our attention ... on to our own mental activities, and we are conscious of them … . I desire and I find myself with a powerful impulse to act. But I back up and bring that impulse into view and then I have a certain distance. Now the impulse doesn't dominate me and now I have a problem. Shall I act? Is this desire really a reason to act? (Korsgaard 1996: 93)

> To count as being able to respond to reasons as the reasons they are, one must be able to step back, as it were, from the fact that a certain circumstance, for instance perceived danger, inclines one towards acting in a certain way, for instance towards fleeing, and raise the question whether one should act in that way. If one resolves such a question and acts in the light of one's resolution of it, one's acting reflects the capacity that distinguishes rational animals from the rest. (McDowell 2010: 6)

Many interpret these passages as if they concern what *must* happen in self-conscious action. So read, reason is like an officer at a sobriety stop, checking desire for fitness to drive, letting the sober continue while locking up the drunk. This is wrong in at least two ways. First, I can correctly exercise practical reason because of what licenses doing so without deliberation. Second, I do not only exercise rational capacities when disengaged. The exercise of reason does not start as I step back and end as I step forward, never to cross the abyss from reflection to action. Were that so, practical reason would not be my will. It would be an intellectual capacity whose exercises could influence those of my will just as the cop does not drive the car and only has indirect influence on the route driven. If practical reason is our will, the realm of reason is not limited to reflection.

Read properly, these passages concern a *potentiality* which distinguishes rational animals from others. They concern something only rational animals can do but not something which is the only expression of rational agency. To 'step back' is to reflect on the exercise of practical reason, to make it explicit or articulate, so as to determine whether to continue. It is the reflective use of the very capacity exercised when 'engaged'. To 'step forward' is to continue or halt the exercise. The exercise of reason does not start with the onset of reflection and cease with its conclusion, never to cross the abyss from thought to action. Reflection is a mode of a single exercise of reason which begins before it and continues after it.[28]

The way to understand the link between the engaged and disengaged perspectives is in terms of the link between intentions and evaluative beliefs. To exercise practical reason is to think and thereby do because of what licenses so thinking and doing. Any being with this capacity can reflect on its exercises. In such reflection, I think about my exercise of practical reason, including its basis. I therein explicate or articulate something which I know but which is not my focus when navigating obstacles and opportunities while taking means to my end. This is not the onset of the exercise of reason. It is the reflective articulation of the tacit structure of an exercise whose purpose is to determine, again but deliberately, the legitimacy of that exercise. To conclude positively is to continue that exercise by avowing the grounds already possessed. To conclude negatively is to abort it by disavowing them.

The type of reflection which McDowell and Korsgaard call 'stepping back' is thus a quotidian version of what Immanuel Kant claims is the point and purpose of the critical system,

28. See Moran (forthcoming) for similar thoughts on the relationship between reflection and volition.

wherein "reason should take on anew the most difficult of all its tasks, namely, that of self-knowledge, and … institute a court of justice, by which reason may secure its rightful claims while dismissing all its groundless pretensions" (Kant 1781/7: Axi). The task of critical philosophy is to come to reflective knowledge of the extent and limit of the proper use of reason. The task of this quotidian reflection is likewise for reason to secure its correct exercises while putting a stop to incorrect ones.

So first-personal evaluative beliefs play essential interpersonal and intrapersonal roles in our lives despite their lack of independence from intentions. They are not explanatorily idle even though they depend on and are unintelligible without reference to those intentions. That explanatory relationship unifies these thoughts within the class of normative thoughts about our action without obviating those beliefs.

## 6. Unity through diversity

Practical cognitivism says that practical reason is the self-conscious will and thus that practical thoughts are intentions. One challenge is to unify the class of normative thoughts about our action. Volitionists, evaluationists, and I all take intentions as the basis of this explanation, but we treat them differently. Volitionists say that all normative thoughts about our action are intentions, but they cannot account for interpersonal normative thoughts. Evaluationists say that all are beliefs about the correctness of intentions, but they cannot account for first-personal normative thoughts. The source of first problem is the separateness of persons, of the second the unity of the individual.

Whereas volitionists and evaluationists accept the unity as uniformity thesis, I reject it and say that intentions are the basic type, but not the only type, of normative thought about human action. Intentions and evaluative beliefs are normative thoughts but are not on a par because those beliefs depend on those intentions, though in different ways in interpersonal and intrapersonal cases. Such is the explanation of the unity of this class of thoughts if we are rational animals and if what makes us animals makes us rational.

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