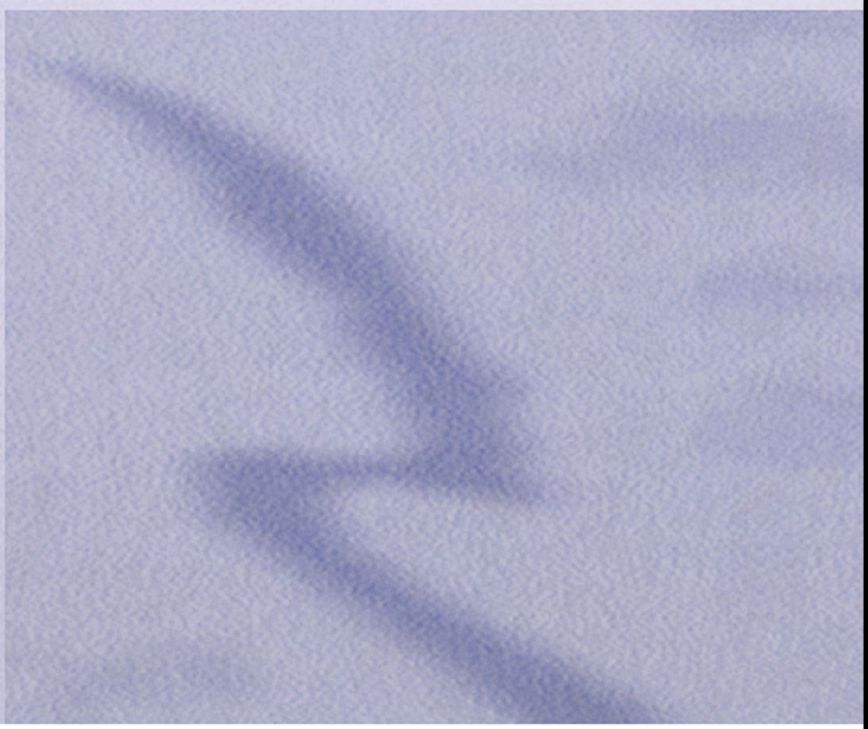
Practical reasoning and ethical decision

Robert Audi

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group



Practical Reasoning and Ethical Decision

What role does reason play in our actions? How do we know whether what we do is right? Can practical reasoning guide ethical judgment?

Practical Reasoning and Ethical Decision presents an account of practical reasoning as a process that can explain action, connect reasoning with intention, justify practical judgments, and provide a basis for ethical decisions.

The first part of the book is a detailed critical overview of the influential theories of practical reasoning found in Aristotle, Hume, and Kant. The second part examines practical reasoning in the light of important topics in moral psychology—weakness of will, self-deception, rationalization, and others. The third part describes the role of moral principles in practical reasoning and clarifies the way practical reasoning underlies ethical decisions. Audi formulates a comprehensive set of concrete ethical principles, explains how they apply to reasoning about what to do, and shows how practical reasoning guides moral conduct.

Practical Reasoning and Ethical Decision provides the most comprehensive account of the topic in the current literature and is essential reading for anyone interested in the role of reason in ethics or the nature of human action.

Robert Audi is the David E.Gallo Chair in Ethics and Professor of Philosophy at the University of Notre Dame. He is the author of Moral Knowledge and Ethical Character (1997), The Architecture of Reason (2001), Epistemology (Routledge, 2003), The Good in the Right (2004), and many papers in ethics, moral psychology, and the philosophy of action.

Robert Audi

Practical Reasoning and Ethical Decision

LONDON AND NEW YORK

First published 2006 by Routledge 2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX 14 4RN

Simultaneously published in the USA and Canada by Routledge 270 Madison Avenue, New York, NY 10016, USA

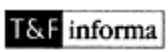
Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group
This edition published in the Taylor & Francis e-Library, 2006.
"To purchase your own copy of this or any of Taylor & Francis or Routledge's collection of thousands of eBooks please go to http://www.ebookstore.tandf.co.uk/."

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data Audi, Robert, 1941– Practical reasoning and ethical decision/Robert Audi.—1 st ed. p. cm. Includes bibliographical references and index. ISBN 0-415-36462-0 (hardcover: alk paper)—ISBN 0-415-36463-9 (pbk: alk paper) I. Practical reason. 2. Ethics. 3. Decision making. 4. Aristotle. 5. Hume, David, 1711–1776. 6. Kant, Immanuel, 1724–1804. 1.Title. BC177.A84 2005 I70'.42–dc22 2005018550

ISBN 0-203-01568-1 Master e-book ISBN

ISBN 10: 0-415-36462-0 (Print Edition) ISBN 13: 978-0-415-36462-1 (hbk)
ISBN 10: 0-415-36463-9 (Print Edition) ISBN 13: 978-0-415-36463-8 (pbk)



Taylor & Francis Group is the Academic Division of T&F Informa p/c.

Contents

Preface

This book is intended as a wide-ranging contribution to moral psychology—conceived as including the theory of action—and normative ethics. It is a sequel to Practical Reasoning, published by Routledge in 1989. It contains three new chapters that connect my theory of practical reasoning with ethics, and the content of the earlier volume has been expanded in many places and revised—often in major ways—in part with the idea of placing my account of practical reasoning in the context of an ethical theory that I have developed in The Good in the Right (Princeton, 2004) and elsewhere. Most of the content of the earlier, much shorter book is preserved, but some points have been eliminated. Many of the revisions reflect my thinking and writings in ethics and the theory of practical reason since the earlier book, and Chapter 8 draws heavily on my "Reasons, Practical Reason, and Practical Reasoning" (Ratio 17, 2, 2004).

In many places the revised chapters take into account various developments in ethics and the philosophy of action during the past fifteen years. This book is not, however, about major figures in the literature, apart from Aristotle, Hume, and Kant. It is intended as an independent contribution to moral psychology and normative ethics. Even in exploring their positions, then, I have concentrated on what seems philosophically central rather than on historical or textual questions.

Readers in either ethics or the philosophy of action will find many discussions in the book that bear on central problems in those fields. Among these are the moral standards that govern practical reasoning in ethical matters; the status of moral reasons in comparison with other practical reasons; the dimensions of reasoned ethical decisions; the structure and explanation of action, and the conditions for its rationality; the nature and dynamics of weakness of will; and the connection between practical reasoning and such psychological notions as inference, self-deception, rationalization, and unconscious motivation.

Readers interested in the history of ethics will find interpretations of major elements in the three immensely influential positions explored in Part I: Aristotle's, which remains central in virtue ethics; Hume's, which is central for understanding instrumentalism—and, in my view, naturalism—in the theory of practical reason; and Kant's, which is currently the leading deontological view in modern ethics. These three positions, both as they bear on practical reasoning and in their implications for ethics, are kept in view throughout the book.

The writing style and narrative elements of the book are meant to make it accessible to serious students in any of the areas just mentioned. The aim has been to combine adequate clarity and concreteness to help readers coming to the topic for the first time with sufficient rigor and originality to reward professional readers.

For those with background in the subject, any of the three parts may be read separately, but this applies to Part I for virtually any reader. Most of the references to Part I that come later in the book are quite intelligible in their context or easy to pursue using

the index. Readers particularly interested in normative questions and ethical decision should find Part III largely self-contained. Indeed, Chapters 8 through 11 (or even 8 or 9 through 10) are largely understandable on their own. The Introduction provides a sense of the scope of all three parts; each chapter has a summary of its major points; and the Conclusion draws together main ideas developed throughout the book.

Acknowledgments

Given how much of its predecessor is preserved in this book, it is appropriate to note my gratitude to those who helped me in that earlier project: Richard Lee, Raimo Tuomela, Michael Zimmerman, and, especially, Hugh McCann and Alfred Mele. Each commented on the draft that preceded the 1989 publication. For comments during the same period I am grateful to Nelson Potter for comments on the first three chapters, Ralf Meerbote for helpful remarks on Chapter 3, and the late Robert Hurlbutt for detailed discussion of Chapter 2. I benefited much from conversations with Karl Ameriks on Chapter 3, David O'Connor on Chapter 1, and W.David Solomon on Chapter 2.

I particularly want to acknowledge again the value of conversations I have had, over a number of years, on practical reasoning and related topics, with William Alston, Michael Bratman, Carl Ginet, Hugh McCann, Alfred Mele, and Raimo Tuomela. I regret that space constraints made it impossible to take adequate account of their work. On one or another topic in the book, I have profited from discussions or correspondence with Frederick Adams, Bruce Aune, Lewis White Beck, Myles Brand, Richard Brandt, Paul Churchland, Norman Dahl, Stephen Darwall, Richard Foley, William Frankena, Brian McLaughlin, Alvin Plantinga, Amélie Oksenberg Rorty, John Searle, James Sterba, Judith Thomson, and Peter Vallentyne. Numerous discussions with my students have also contributed much to my thinking on topics addressed in the book.

Since 1989 I have also benefited from conversations on practical reason or related ethical topics with many philosophers, including some in audiences for papers I have given. I cannot list them all but would particularly like to mention Julia Annas, John Broome, Roger Crisp, Garrett Cullity, Jonathan Dancy, James Dreier, John Fischer, Richard Fumerton, Berys Gaut, Bernard Gert, Allan Gibbard, John Greco, Gilbert Harman, Brad Hooker, Philip Kain, Jaegwon Kim, Christine Korsgaard, Christopher Kulp, Scott LaBarge, Noah Lemos, Alasdair MacIntyre, Joseph Mendola, Michael Meyer, Christian Miller, Elijah Millgram, Thomas Nagel, Mark Nelson, Martha Nussbaum, Onora O'Neill, Derek Parfit, John Perry, William Prior, Elizabeth Radcliffe, Bruce Russell, Geoffrey Sayre-McCord, Tim Scanlon, Russ Shafer-Landau, Walter Sinnott-Armstrong, Michael Smith, Robert Solomon, Ernest Sosa, Philip Stratton-Lake, Eleonore Stump, Mark Timmons, William Tolhurst, Mark van Roojen, R.Jay Wallace, Ralph Wedgwood, and Michael Zimmerman. Roger Crisp, Derek Parfit and Sean Patrick Walsh generously provided helpful comments on a draft of the entire book.

For advice and support at many points I am grateful to Tony Bruce, Lucie Ewin, Sonja van Leeuwen, and, for copyediting, Tony Nixon.

Introduction

Human life is pervaded by problems. Reasoning is a common response to problems we care about. We do it more than we notice; it is natural, often automatic, and need not call attention to itself. Reasoning is often associated with intellectual problems, such as what constitutes a just state, or whether a system of axioms is free of contradiction. But we also reason in response to everyday problems about how to get on with ordinary business. Confronted with a request for help at a time when we have planned something else, we must decide whether to decline or to adjust our schedule; given a roadblock, we must choose among detours.

Reasoning appropriate to problems of the first kind has often been called theoretical; reasoning appropriate to problems of the second kind has often been called practical. These terms do not imply that every theoretical problem is connected with an actual theory, such as a philosophical or scientific one, or that every practical problem is unrelated to theories. Indeed, a theoretical problem may be as routine as determining the cause of a fire, and a practical problem may be as scientific as constructing a safe tunnel. Historically, the main point of the terminology is to suggest that practical problems are addressed to us as agents and concern what we are to do, whereas theoretical problems are addressed to us as knowers, or potential knowers, and concern questions of what is (or is not) true. The former problems are solved by "practice," say by taking the right detour; the latter are solved by "theory," typically by our forming, or bringing to bear, the right belief, say by our constructing a sound proof that an axiom system is consistent.

Another way to draw the contrast is through distinguishing between practical and theoretical reasons. Practical reasons might be said to be reasons for acting; theoretical reasons might be described as reasons for believing. If, for instance, I have promised to attend a certain conference in London, then I have, and my want to attend it expresses, a practical reason for going to London. If, accordingly, I go to London in order to attend it, my going will be done at least partly for that reason: to attend. On the other hand, suppose I believe that the topic is Hume's ethics. I have, and my belief expresses, a prima facie theoretical reason for believing that Hume's idea of reason as the slave of the passions will be discussed. If I believe the latter proposition on the basis of the former, I believe it at least partly for the reason in question: namely, that the topic is Hume's ethics.

Perhaps we might say that whereas theoretical reasons in some sense point toward truth, practical reasons in some sense point toward action. The idea, in part, is that a good theoretical reason in some way supports a proposition for which it is a good reason and also supports, though it need not entail, the rationality of believing any such proposition; a good practical reason supports an action for which it is a good reason, and also supports, though it need not entail, the rationality of performing the action for that reason.

It is clear that desires can express—in the sense that their content can constitute—practical reasons. Avoiding a dispute with a friend may be what I want to achieve in a delicate situation and may be my reason for not raising a problem that divides us. But beliefs—which, unlike desires, are true or false and might be thought to be "theoretical" attitudes—can also express practical reasons. Consider the belief that I would avoid a dispute with a friend if I did not mention the impending divorce of a colleague. This proposition is a clear case of one I might cite if asked my reason for avoiding that topic for an entire evening among mutual friends concerned about the likely break-up. Taking beliefs to express practical reasons leaves open whether they can do this only by indicating something other than the proposition believed, such as a goal of the action in question. Whether this is so or not, beliefs as well as desires figure in expressions of the reasons crucial for practical reasoning and ethical decision, which is the central topic of this book, and both beliefs and desires will be examined in some detail.

A related problem on which the book bears (though it too will be discussed only in relation to practical reasoning) is whether practical and theoretical reasons may be objective, in the sense that they may be reasons for anyone to act or to believe accordingly, or just subjective, in the sense that they are reasons only for a particular person. That a conference on Hume's ethics will be in London may be a reason for me to go there; it is not a reason for just anyone to do so. But perhaps an action's being cruel is a reason for anyone to abstain from it. Moreover, that a conference is on Hume's ethics perhaps is a reason for anyone, or at least anyone generally informed about Hume, to believe that reason and passion will be discussed, though of course one could have such an objective reason without realizing one does.

Practical and theoretical reasoning have both been much discussed by philosophers, but the latter has had a larger share of their attention. It is often treated, if only implicitly, in the course of teaching logic; it is stressed in many epistemological works; and it figures centrally in numerous discussions in the philosophy of science, metaphysics, and other areas of philosophic inquiry. This book mainly concerns practical reasoning, especially in contexts of moral decision, but practical reasoning can be adequately understood only in relation to theoretical reasoning. Indeed, a satisfactory account of practical reasoning must enable us to see both why it is appropriately called reasoning and how it is related to theoretical reasoning. At several points, then, I will discuss similarities and differences between these two kinds of reasoning.

A special problem we face in discussing practical reasoning is that no everyday expression can guide us in clarifying it, in the way terms like 'explanation', 'knowledge', and 'justice' can guide us in understanding the concepts they express. As philosophers use 'practical reasoning', it is—like 'practical reason' and 'theoretical reason'—a term of art. It has little life in ordinary parlance and a multiple personality in philosophical literature. Fortunately, there are terms crucial for understanding practical reasoning, such as 'reasoning', 'inferring', and 'concluding', which do have sufficiently settled uses to help us focus certain of our ideas. Furthermore, there are several problems that, in discussing the nature and role of practical reasoning, philosophers have wanted to solve. We can also use these problems in guiding our inquiry, and I will discuss them in detail.

To get a better sense of the problems to be addressed by an account of practical reasoning, consider an example. Suppose I enter my living room and find two guests, a husband and wife, quarreling. I am disturbed. I like them both, and I have a problem: how

to reconcile them, or at least temporarily make peace between them. I listen to see if there is simply a misunderstanding. I find the matter more complex: she, Janet, has criticized him, William, for not making time to do something with their children on the weekend, and they are beginning to argue about who is responsible for various aspects of the children's activities on the coming weekend. It seems that they each made weekend plans on the assumption that the other would take over the children, and both are trying to make minimal adjustments. I begin wondering how I can help.

It now occurs to me that I could do something with their children and mine, thereby helping with the problem. I think about this prospect a moment and become convinced that I can manage all the children. I come to believe that offering to do something with all the children this weekend would help end the quarrel, and I conclude that I should offer this. Though slightly restrained by my awareness of all the extra effort, I quickly decide to propose my plan. I wait a bit for a good time to interrupt them, and I then suggest that I might help this weekend by getting all the children together at my home. Making this suggestion is my (attempted) solution: I am trying to resolve the reconciliation problem by removing an obstacle to their harmony.

The example shows a number of important elements in what we might broadly call practical thinking, using this term to encompass not only practical reasoning, but also less structured reflection on the same problem to whose solution the practical reasoning is directed. First, I am confronted by a problem of what to do. It is a (felt) problem for me because of what I care about: very roughly, there is something I want, here harmony between friends, and I take it that I cannot have it unless I do something appropriate, or at least I suppose that I may be able to get it by doing the right thing. Second, I deliberate about how to achieve what I want, a process which includes such things as reflecting on apparent options, recalling facts, and reasoning theoretically. For instance from the supposition that I take their children over on the weekend, I may conclude that telling William and Janet that I will do so would likely remove an obstacle to their harmony. Third—and perhaps simultaneously—I form the belief that offering to take the children over would help end the quarrel. Fourth, I judge, partly on the basis of this belief, that I should offer. And finally, after waiting for a good opportunity, I act on this judgment: I suggest to Janet and William that I get all our children together.

If, in a stretch of such practical thinking, we try to isolate something that it is natural to call practical reasoning, there need be no one piece of reasoning which clearly fills this role. Suppose, however, we are guided by the thought that we should identify a piece of reasoning that is a response to a practical problem and concludes with an answer to the problem—in the sense of an answer to the associated question, which is here roughly this: "How can I reconcile Janet and William?" The best candidate is probably my reasoning from the premise that I want to reconcile them, together with the related premise (itself arrived at by theoretical reasoning) that suggesting I take over all our children this weekend will reconcile them, to the conclusion that I should suggest it. I have reasoned to an answer to my problem; the answer is practical in the sense that it indicates an action of mine which it represents as a means of solving my practical problem; and my acting in accordance with that answer is my attempted solution.

In different terminology, my reasoning both arises from a motivational state expressing a practical reason—from my wanting to reconcile my friends—and generates another practical reason, by concluding with the judgment that I should suggest taking

over the children. Finally, my acting on that reason—by making this suggestion—is what I take to be my solution to my problem. In speaking of generating a practical reason, we need not deny that there may have already been an objective reason to do what I judged I should do; but until I in some way become aware of this reason, it will not be, for me, a practical reason that motivates my solving my problem.

There are, however, many other strategies for identifying practical reasoning, and in examining some of what philosophers have said about such reasoning I want to compare other strategies with the one just illustrated. If practical reasoning' had a sufficiently settled use, then one good way of choosing among the various accounts of such reasoning might be to appeal to intuitions about the application of the term. In the absence of such a use, we need a different way to ascertain what constitutes practical reasoning.

As it happens, there are certain major problems that give the topic of practical reasoning its special interest. These are philosophically important in their own right, often in relation to making decisions in ethical matters. But one or another of them has also been a main concern of philosophers writing on practical reasoning, and all seem discernible in Aristotle, who is, historically, the most important writer on the topic. This book aims above all at developing at least partial solutions to these problems. If this end is achieved, then even if the specific account of practical reasoning that is offered does not capture all the plausible conceptions of it found in the philosophical literature, we shall at least have a framework for understanding those conceptions.

The problems that seem central to the topic of practical reasoning can all be illustrated with respect to our reconciliation example. Let me briefly sketch each one.

The first problem is to connect practical reasoning with the kinds of questions that provide the occasion for it. Above all, how is a practical question rationally answered? The problem is to give at least a partial account of how a rational person—say the kind Aristotle called a person of practical wisdom—answers a practical question, such as "What am I to do to reconcile Janet and William?" Clearly, practical reasoning, as described above, constitutes one way that a rational person produces an answer. I take it that such a question can arise for an agent without being asked, whether by that agent or anyone else. Simply through confronting a practical problem, one can feel the need to answer a practical question. Thus, the occasions that call for practical reasoning go far beyond cases in which a practical question is explicitly asked. The context may be social, as in our example, or personal, as where one is planning a quiet afternoon. The question may be instrumental, say about how best to make up for time lost in a detour; or it may concern intrinsic ends, for instance when, with only enjoyment in view, one considers which of several books to read on a weekend. And one's options may, like alternative vacation trips, call for complex planning, or they may arise spontaneously, as where we are offered a choice of desserts, or come upon two equally appealing paths on a woodland walk.

The second problem centers on the question, "What is it for an agent to act for a reason?" Since reasons on which one acts are (in at least a minimal sense) practical—and any practical reason can in some way be acted on—this is roughly the question of how a practical reason grounds an action based upon it. Clearly, I act for a reason when, in order to help reconcile Janet and William, I suggest my taking over all the children on the weekend. Acting on the basis of practical reasoning is a paradigm of acting for a reason. It may indeed turn out that either actions so based are the only ones performed for a

reason, or, at least, in giving an account of action based on practical reasoning, we can exhibit the crucial elements in acting simply for a reason. The central question here is whether, to some extent at least, action for a reason can be explicated as action based on practical reasoning. More broadly still, to what degree do reasons for which we act operate through reasoning?

The third problem is structural. Is there a pattern of reasoning by which all intentional actions can be explained, including actions exhibiting weakness of will? (I take actions exhibiting weakness of will to be—roughly—uncompelled, and normally intentional, actions against one's better judgment.) There are two main difficulties here. One is to ascertain how reasoning processes might figure in producing our actions. Call this the explanatory problem. The other is to determine whether all intentional action is intelligible in terms of a pattern that applies to the agent's psychological state at the crucial time, whether or not this pattern is expressed in a reasoning process. Call this the intelligibility problem. Suppose that my desire to avoid extra work had prevailed over my judgment that I should suggest taking over all of the children on the weekend. By keeping silent and thereby failing to act on that judgment, I might have exhibited weakness of will. We need an account of how the motivational pattern causing me to keep silent can interact with the pattern of motivation and judgment corresponding to my practical reasoning. How, in a generally rational person, can weakness of will prevail over a conflicting judgment regarding what one should do?

Suppose, on the other hand, that I had not reasoned my way to the judgment that I should take over all the children, yet simply made that judgment as an immediate "intuitive" response to my problem. Both the judgment and my action based on it might still be intelligible in relation to the motivational and cognitive elements (roughly, belief elements) that are represented in practical reasoning. The same kind of intelligibility apparently characterizes what underlies the imagined weak-willed failure to act on my judgment: the relevant omission is intentional and seems attributable to a similar (prevailing) pattern. As these cases suggest, our structural problem is both to ascertain the explanatory role of practical reasoning and to determine how the patterns it exhibits may render intentional actions intelligible.

By contrast with the third problem, the fourth concerns the dynamics of action: the events or processes or whatever that produce an intentional action, given the agent's reasons for it. Specifically, what is it that causally mediates between practical reasons and actions? The question here is what it is that causally links one's motives, intentions, beliefs, and other psychological elements that express one's reasons to act, and, on the other hand, the actions one performs for those reasons. Consider my (rationally) wanting to reconcile Janet and William, and thereby having a reason to act toward that end. This motivational state does not automatically yield such action; I may, for instance, have no thought which points toward an available means to accomplish my end. Practical reasoning that concludes in favor of a specific action seems to fill the bill perfectly: it is a process with both the right sorts of constituents to motivate and direct the action, and the right kind of content and conscious manifestations to trigger the action. For instance, in some way the reasoning embodies adequate motivation, and it concludes with a judgment that I should suggest taking over all the children.

The fifth problem concerns the rationality of action. Can we so specify the structure of acting for a reason that actions for a reason can be seen, in the light of that reason, as not

only intelligible but also prima facie rational: roughly, rational apart from certain defeating conditions, such as may occur in certain cases of weakness of will? If actions for a reason are always based on practical reasoning, or are even somehow undergirded by a motivational and cognitive pattern of the kind that yields practical reasoning, then it seems plain why they should be (at least weakly) prima facie rational: they are grounded in reasoning and to that extent guided by reason. This is especially likely to seem a plausible explanation of their prima facie rationality if we presuppose a notion of practical reasoning which, as in our example, makes it minimally acceptable by appropriate standards for evaluating the cogency of reasoning. Suppose my reasoning proceeds from (1) my positing an end not overridden by any competing end of mine, and (2) my reasonable belief that doing a certain thing will easily accomplish that end, to (3) the conclusion that I should do it. If, for instance, I presently want to reconcile Janet and William more than to do anything that might compete with this aim, and I believe (for adequate reason) that offering to take over the children will accomplish my end, then judging that I should offer is a prima facie quite reasonable inference to draw, making the offer is a prima facie quite reasonable thing to do, and actually offering to do this is a prima facie rational concrete action.

The last problem I want to stress concerns the degree of unity of the notion of reasoning in general. Specifically, how can we account for both the similarities and the differences between practical and theoretical reasoning? In virtue of what, for instance, are they both reasoning? Do they differ in relation to the standards appropriate to their evaluation, or even in respect to what sorts of items constitute their premises and conclusions? Or do they differ mainly in the kinds of reasons they give us, or perhaps simply in the sorts of problems that motivate our engaging in them? Here, too, there is a considerable diversity of views in the philosophical literature.

If I were to add another problem giving special interest to the topic of practical reasoning, it might be to understand Aristotle's views on practical thinking and the nature of human action. Aristotle appears again and again in discussions of practical reasoning, especially in relation to ethical questions, and neither the history of the topic nor the current literature can be understood wholly in abstraction from his work. It is appropriate, then, to begin a study of practical reasoning with him. It is also appropriate to explore other important historical figures, though this book is not historical and is concerned chiefly with the six general questions just raised and their significance in ethics. In the literature that addresses or bears on practical reasoning, Hume and Kant are, after Aristotle, perhaps the most important. They are certainly major figures in this literature; each contrasts sharply with the other; and each has significant similarities to Aristotle, though they both depart from him in major ways. There are, of course, other important historical figures I simply cannot take up. My hope is that if they are as important for the topic as Hume or Kant, their positions can either be seen as, in good part, combinations of elements of those of Aristotle, Hume, and Kant, or at least as understandable largely on the basis of the treatment of practical reasoning and ethical decision which, beginning with those three philosophers, this book will give.

Part I
Historical and conceptual background

Practical reasoning in Aristotle, Hume, and Kant

One
Aristotle on practical reasoning and the structure of action

Aristotle's principal writings on practical thinking are in the Nicomachean Ethics (NE), and this will be my main Aristotelian text, though some references will be made to others of his works. The Ethics is a densely packed, rich text, and I cannot hope to formulate the Aristotelian position on practical reasoning, if there is just one such position. Nor can I even begin to do justice to the large body of valuable literature on Aristotle's account of practical reasoning. My aim is simply to formulate and interpret one plausible Aristotelian conception (or range of conceptions) of practical reasoning, particularly as it appears in the Ethics, and to identify, through exploring Aristotle, some major concepts and problems crucial for understanding practical reasoning in general.

Aristotle did not use any term that can be literally translated as 'practical reasoning',[1] and what he called practical syllogisms may represent a narrower category than what I have so far called practical reasoning. In his treatment of practical thinking in general, however, he said a great deal about deliberation, which some commentators take him to equate with practical reasoning.[2] Moreover, deliberation is plainly a kind of practical thinking; and, as illustrated by the reconciliation example in the Introduction, deliberation may embody what I have called practical reasoning. It may be wise, then, to begin with Aristotle's views about deliberation and work from what we learn there toward an understanding of his views of practical reasoning.

1 DELIBERATION

Regarding the objects of deliberation, Aristotle makes both positive and negative points:

> [W]e deliberate about what results through our own agency, but in different ways on different occasions, e.g. about questions of medicine and money-making…. We deliberate not about ends, but about what promotes ends; a doctor, e.g., does not deliberate about whether he will cure, or an orator about whether he will persuade, or a politician about whether he will produce good order, or any other [expert] about the end [that his science aims at]. Rather, we first lay down the end, and then examine the ways and means to achieve it. If it appears that any of several [possible] means will reach it, we consider which of them will reach it most easily and most finely; and if only one [possible] means reaches it,

> we consider how that means will reach it, and how the means itself is reached, until we come to the first cause, the last thing to be discovered.[3]

To illustrate with one of Aristotle's examples, if I am a physician treating a patient, my governing end as physician (leaving aside the issue of euthanasia) is to cure, and I do not deliberate about whether I will (or should) cure the patient. I do, however, deliberate about means, say about whether I should give medicine or simply recommend rest.

At least two conceptions of deliberation are consistent with this passage. On one, the deliberative chain contains a series of decisions leading to the final decision which is, or is at least closely tied to, the first thing in the order of causation. In this first instance, the deliberative chain is decisional: if I decide to prescribe medicine, doing so becomes a subsidiary end, and I may then deliberate about what medicine I should give. If I decide on penicillin as a means of cure, I have another subsidiary end and may deliberate about how I should carry that out, say by tablet or injection. If I now decide on tablets, I may realize that they are in the cabinet to my left. Suppose I decide to give some of those very tablets; then, aware that I need only reach for them, I do it. On the second conception consistent with the passage, although I make the same final decision, the deliberative chain is cognitive: instrumental beliefs (or other cognitive elements, such as judgments) express the subsidiary ends; for instance, I do not decide to prescribe medicine, but do judge prescribing it to be best and thereby proceed to identify the best medicine, and then the best vehicle for giving it. I finally decide to do the thing that is warranted by the entire sequence: reaching for the tablets.

Schematically, the difference between the two kinds of chain is the kind that exists between (1) deciding to A, which one believes one can well achieve by B-ing, deciding to B, which one believes one can well achieve by C-ing, and so on until one decides on something here and now, such as reaching for the tablets, and (2) forming the beliefs that A can be well achieved by B-ing, that B-ing can be well achieved by C-ing, and so on until one reaches something one can do here and now, which one decides to do. In both kinds of chain there will be appropriate instrumental beliefs. They are in fact required to explain the subsidiary decisions. But in one kind of chain there are subsidiary decisions; in the other, not.

The decisional interpretation of the chain may be more often what Aristotle had in mind in speaking of such chains. Moreover, it is quite consistent with his overall views to allow cases in which the decisions are conditional. There, when one reaches the end, action will follow only on a further condition; for instance, if one decides to give tablets provided there are enough, then one would check before giving them, and give them only if one finds enough. I prefer the decisional interpretation for most of the relevant passages; but the more economical, cognitive reading may better fit others. In any case, no major point below turns on which interpretation is taken.

The descriptions just given seem to encompass the completion of the process of deliberation, but they do not indicate what, exactly, is the first link in the chain of causation. If that is the last step in the order of discovery, one would think it is my final means to realizing my end, say reaching for the tablets. For this is the final means I take to be necessary, and it seems to originate the causal chain leading (if I succeed) to a cure. But the text is not without vagueness on this matter:

> What we deliberate about is the same as what we decide to do, except that by the time we decide to do it, it is definite; for what we decide to do is what we have judged [to be right] as a result of deliberation. For each of us stops inquiring how to act as soon as he traces the origin to himself, and within himself to the dominant part; for this is the part that decides…. We have found, then, that what we decide to do is whatever action among those up to us we deliberate about and desire to do. Hence also decision will be deliberative desire to do an action that is up to us; for when we have judged [that it is right] as a result of deliberation, our desire to do it expresses our wish.
>
> (NE: 1113a2–12)

If decision is "deliberative desire", how can it be identical with something that is, in an active way, made, as decisions are? A decision is, if not an action, at least an event, whereas desires are not events, in the usual sense in which the occurrence of an event entails that of change (the existence of a desire does not entail that of change). One possible answer may be that 'deliberative desire' should be taken to be (in English) a technical term, and the weight should be put on 'decision', which does appear to designate action or at least behavior (the Greek term in question, prohairesis, is also commonly translated 'choice', which confirms this actional reading).[4] Decision, moreover, entails desire. The decision would be deliberative by virtue of its rootedness in a deliberative process; it would be conative by virtue of expressing "our wish." If we add that it is an active expression of that wish, we may think of it as action-like.

Such an interpretation may be developed in at least two different directions. First, in cases like this, in which we deliberatively reach, and immediately perform, a bodily action in our power as the final means to our overall end, Aristotle may have thought of the decision to do the thing in question and the doing of it as the same action under two different descriptions. One need not decide to reach for the tablets and then do so; one's deciding to give them to the patient coincides with reaching for them; it occurs straightaway upon one's realizing that the tablets are in the cabinet on one's left. If this is correct, then a patient who was aware of the chain of deliberation and thus said, observing one's taking them from the cabinet, "I see you decided to give me the tablets," would be saying nothing beyond what the passage licenses, and would preserve the vagueness of the reference of 'decide'. On the other hand, we might instead suppose that decision is, or is a precursor of, volition, understood as an act of will.[5]

To be sure, we might treat volition as ordinary action under a special kind of description, and in that case this interpretation would be quite similar to the first. But volition is more commonly taken to be a kind of doing that is not action, or as a sort of active intending to do something here and now.[6] In what follows, we need not choose either interpretation; indeed my main points about Aristotle concern what happens prior to decision and will in any event be consistent with both interpretations, and indeed with taking decision to be a volitional state as opposed to an event of any kind.

2 THE PRACTICAL SYLLOGISM

If we can locate what Aristotle called the practical syllogism in relation to his deliberative chains, this may give us a better idea of the sort of reasoning he conceived as practical in the sense sketched in the Introduction. In discussing weakness of will (which will be considered shortly) Aristotle said much about the practical syllogism. Here is an important passage about such syllogisms in general:

> One belief (a) is universal; the other (b) is about particulars, and because they are particulars perception controls them. And in the cases where these two beliefs result in (c) one belief, it is necessary in purely theoretical beliefs for the soul to affirm what has been concluded, and in beliefs about production (d) to act at once on what has been concluded.
>
> If, e.g., (a) everything sweet must be tasted, and (b) this, some one particular thing, is sweet, it is necessary (d) for someone who is able and unhindered also to act on this at the same time,
>
> (NE: 1147a25–31)

where (c), the "one belief" that is a "result" of (a) and (b), is presumably the belief that this must be tasted. If we now recall the deliberative chain leading to reaching for tablets to cure the patient, we might take, as a clue in locating a practical syllogism like this one in the chain, the closeness of the syllogism to action—a feature of such syllogisms which Aristotle emphasizes elsewhere too.[7] Perhaps such a practical syllogism begins when I reach the conclusion (from previous reasoning) that diseases of the sort this patient has are to be treated with penicillin tablets. With this goal in view, I realize, perceptually, that they are in the cabinet to my left and judge that I must give them. I am bound to "act on this at the same time."[8]

It is noteworthy that Aristotle speaks in this passage both of the souls being bound to affirm the conclusion—which in the example we are considering would be that this must be tasted [by me]—and of the agent s being bound to perform this act at once. If the act is tasting, we need a behavioral referent to make sense of what Aristotle is saying; if it is the soul's affirming the conclusion, we need a mental referent. The view that the crucial action is a decision (or a choice) conceived as also capable of bearing a physical behavioral description gives us precisely what we need. But Aristotle rightly refers to each category in distinct terms, since the crucial decision need not bear a physical act description, say where—as Aristotle realizes is quite possible—the agent is prevented from tasting the food.

Affirming the conclusion of a practical syllogism seems an essentially cognitive act (even if it normally has a motivational element); it is roughly an endorsing of a proposition, whereas decision, by virtue of being a deliberative desire and apparently entailing an intention to do the thing decided on, is essentially motivational. Nevertheless, clearly Aristotle is thinking of the relevant kind of judgment—roughly, that one must (or ought, all things considered) do something—as normally implying a decision to do it.

In part, the connection between the two kinds of decision might be expressed in terms of a relation between cognitive and behavioral decisions. Cognitive decision, decision that, which is the kind one might identify with the concluding judgment, tends to produce a behavioral decision, a decision to do, particularly insofar as the latter decision is understood as a deliberative desire. This is not to say that Aristotle employed the relevant term in these two ways; but it is noteworthy that it has both functions. The cognitive function is appropriate to decision's playing the role of emerging from (and even expressing the conclusion of) reasoning; the behavioral function makes it practical, either in the direct sense that it is itself action or in the indirect sense that it expresses at once a reason for acting and some degree of motivation to act.

If this reading is correct, then the kind of reasoning that normally instantiates a practical syllogism is practical reasoning in the broad sense of reasoning that concludes with an answer to a practical question, such as, paradigmatically, "What am I to do?" asked in the context of a felt problem. If my problem is to cure the patient and I deliberate toward that end, then upon concluding (cognitively deciding, one might say) that I should reach for the tablets to my left, I have arrived at an answer to my problem. I then solve the problem by reaching for the tablets and giving them to the patient. Since Aristotle took the action constituting a solution to occur at once given the agent's unimpeded ability to do the crucial thing, he sometimes talked as if the action itself were the conclusion. But I do not believe we must take the text to assert precisely this.[9] It is noteworthy that he speaks of the physician's deliberating about "what he will" do rather than simply about what to do. This may suggest that the concluding element in the reasoning is a cognitive item (roughly, one that, like belief, has a truth-valued object and may be called true or false), say a resolution (or judgment or perhaps cognitive decision), to the effect that one will (or should) do something. The decision to do it, which may or may not be behaviorally instantiated by the immediate performance of the action, might then be seen as the appropriate action to be performed in response to the drawing of this conclusion.

3 WEAKNESS OF WILL

If Aristotle took concluding in favor of an action normally to imply deciding to perform it, then we must ask how he allowed for weakness of will, in the sense of acting (normally intentionally) against one's better judgment, where this is precisely the sort of judgment which, like "This must be tasted," concludes a practical syllogism.[10] We might call actions of this kind incontinent for short. In discussing them, I cannot present his overall account of weakness of will, if indeed he offered a fully unified account. Since my concern is with his view of practical reasoning, I simply want to indicate how he saw practical reasoning as allowing for incontinent action.

From this point of view, the following passage is especially important:

> Suppose, then, that someone has (a) the universal belief [say, that sweets are to be avoided], and it hinders him from tasting; he has (b) the second belief, that everything sweet is pleasant and this is sweet, and this belief (b) is active; and he also has appetite. Hence the belief (c) tells him to

> avoid this, but appetite leads him on, since it is capable of moving each of the [bodily] parts.
>
> The result, then, is that in a way reason and belief make him act incontinently. The belief (b) is contrary to correct reason (a), but only coincidentally, not in itself.
>
> (NE: 1147a31–1147b2)

It looks as if one piece of reasoning presupposed here is prohibitional: from a universal premise, say that (a) sweets are to be avoided, to a negative judgment, say that (c) this is to be avoided, which "hinders" but does not prevent the tasting. Its minor premise is presumably a partly perceptual one to the effect that this, being sweet, is to be avoided.

Moreover, while we need not suppose that there is a second piece of practical reasoning, there are possible cases in which there is also competing, appetitional reasoning: from the premises that (1) everything sweet is pleasant [to taste] and (2) this is [would taste] sweet, to the conclusion that (3) this must be tasted. But positing a second piece of practical reasoning is apparently not Aristotle's way of viewing the case. For then there would be an opinion, namely, (3), opposed to right reason, since reason dictates that things of this kind are not to be tasted.

Furthermore, Aristotle specifically tells us that it is appetite, for instance a ravenous desire for sweets, that opposes right reason. Even if we take this opinion to represent appetite, we still have a problem: how can appetite prevail if a properly drawn practical conclusion, such as that this is to be avoided, at least normally implies acting accordingly when one can? Incontinent agents are not, after all, unable to act rightly. The agent here is simply weak-willed, yet appears to have also reasoned in accordance with the first syllogism, from (say) the premises that sweets are not to be tasted and this is such a sweet, to the conclusion that this is not to be tasted. Thus, even assuming the passage should be read as implying competing syllogisms like the pair I have formulated, there remains the question why the syllogism on the side of right reason does not prevail in action. Indeed, the problem is pressing even if an incontinent action is imagined as opposed to a judgment not arising from practical reasoning. Suppose right reason is represented only by a judgment not (at least at the time) based on any practical reasoning? How can right reason not prevail even then?

Aristotle's treatment of the problem draws—fruitfully, I believe—on a distinction between kinds of knowledge:

> And since the last premise (b) is about something perceptible, and controls action, this must be what the incontinent person does not have when he is being affected. Or rather the way he has it is not knowledge of it, but, as we saw, [merely] saying the words as the drunk says the words of Empedocles…the knowledge that is present when someone is affected by incontinence, and that is dragged about because he is affected, is not the sort that seems to be knowledge to the full extent [in (c)], but only perceptual knowledge [in (b)].
>
> (NE: 1147b9–17)

Appetite can overcome one's (partly) perceptual knowledge that this is sweet and not to be tasted, but it cannot overcome what constitutes one's "knowledge to the full extent" that things of this sort are not to be tasted. It is as if appetite detached the perceptual knowledge that this is sweet—which Irwin suggests (p. 352) may be what Aristotle referred to as the belief which is 'active'—from the universal known through right reason, and instead attached it to the object of desire. If there is competing reasoning, that object may be expressed in a universal, say that sweet things must be tasted; if there is not, then appetite may affect action more directly. Still, we may ask, how in either case is it possible for the knowledge that should direct action to be relegated to this ineffectual position?

Here it is essential to consider what Aristotle says about such knowledge. One important point is that

> Saying the words that come from knowledge is no sign [of fully having it]…. Further, those who have just learnt something do not yet know it, though they string the words together; for it must grow into them, and this needs time.
>
> Hence we must suppose that incontinents say the words in the way actors do.
>
> (NE: 1147a18–24)

In these and other passages, Aristotle is distinguishing both different kinds of knowledge and different ways of having it: one reading of his suggested distinction between kinds of knowledge—or perhaps one of the two or more distinctions of kind he had in mind—is that it holds between a form of recognition—knowing what, for instance what one is eating—and a kind of conviction—knowing that, for example that things of a certain kind are to be avoided.

The former, recognitional knowledge, represented in the minor premise, is in a way overshadowed, and it operates under the control of appetite; the latter convictional knowledge, the conviction of right reason, represented in the major premise, is not. We can act against our better judgment precisely because we do not clearly grasp what we are doing, or at least do not grasp it in the right way. We may realize we are eating cake, or even a sweet, but we at best imperfectly know we are eating something not to be tasted. This may occur even if we initially decided to act on the judgment that we are to avoid tasting this. That point might account for our being initially hindered in acting. It may also be true that even the "knowledge" representing right reason can in some sense be overcome, since it is not unqualifiedly present in the first place, in the sense that the knowledge is not, at the time, fully possessed.

On this reading of Aristotle, one kind of weakness of will is possible because agents can act against their better judgment (incontinently) when that judgment, or some other factor crucial in the genesis of the action, is, though not forgotten, obscured by appetite or other elements in the situation and so, in some way, inadequately known. Call this an obscured knowledge reading. One possible case here is inadequate knowledge of the major premise, as some of Aristotle's examples suggest; and we might speculate that if one's knowledge of that, or of other relevant principles of conduct, were fully adequate, one's knowledge of the minor would not be inadequate.

In the light of Aristotle's remarks about knowledge of the major, we can see another plausible reading of his position on incontinence, which yields a different interpretation: even if the major is in one way unqualifiedly known, it is not fully integrated into one's character. The latter possibility, at least, is illustrated by Aristotle's comments, quoted above, about beginning students, who may have just learned something, yet do not (fully) know it, since it "must grow into them."[11] Thus, incontinent agents may know the major, yet not have integrated that knowledge into their motivational systems, say because they lack the required motivation to act on the knowledge, or lack certain habits, or both. The explanation need not be that they are like novices in the subject matter. Aristotle seems to leave open how deep knowledge can be in us intellectually without being integrated into our motivational systems. It may be that even if incontinent agents do fully know both premises, they can still act incontinently; for their knowledge of the major (and perhaps also of the minor) is not integrated into their character, and they do not use it.

This interpretation is particularly plausible so far as Aristotle stresses using knowledge, as when he says that

> [W]e speak of knowing in two ways, and ascribe it to someone who has it without using it and to someone who is using it. Hence it will matter whether someone has the knowledge that his action is wrong, without attending to his knowledge, or both has and attends to it…wrong action when he does not attend to his knowledge does not seem extraordinary.
>
> (NE: 1146b31–5)

Unused knowledge is (at least at the time) unintegrated; on the other hand, knowledge not attended to is especially likely to be unused. When incontinence occurs in cases of unused knowledge, however, it is still intelligible. For since "reason and belief make the agent act," there is some kind of reasoning and opinion, a kind that matches practical reasoning in its means-end structure, yet represents only emotion (or appetite), rather than right reason, in its major premise. Indeed, this same passage suggests that obscured knowledge, at least of the content of the particular judgment against which one is acting, can itself account for some kinds of incontinence, even if lack of integration—which Aristotle implicitly distinguishes from obscured knowledge—does not occur.

On the insufficient integration reading, weakness of will can apparently occur despite an awareness of an inconsistency (or incongruity) between one's (incontinent) action and one's practical judgment, since the failure is not in the clarity of one's knowledge but in its integration. Doubtless Aristotle emphasized lack of integration as a factor in at least some cases of incontinence; and the view in question helps to explain why incontinence is naturally called weakness of will, since failures of will are clearest where the agent definitely realizes what reason directs. But—particularly if we do not take him to be making a radical break with Socrates on this issue—it is doubtful whether he would countenance the possibility of such "clear-eyed" weakness of will.[12] Possibly he took failure of integration to occur only when the relevant knowledge is either not fully had or not adequately attended to. In any event, each reading may give us part of the truth: both a deficiency in the quality of the agent's knowledge and an inadequacy of its motivational integration (or some other kind of integration in the agent) can provide Aristotelian explanations of how weakness of will is possible.

4 PRACTICAL AND THEORETICAL REASONING

On one interpretation of Aristotle, practical and theoretical reasoning contrast sharply in virtue of having different sorts of conclusions: an action in the first case and, in the second, something quite different (presumably a cognition such as a judgment). Anscombe has plausibly argued for this view. She maintains that

> we may accept from Aristotle that practical reasoning is essentially concerned with "what is capable of turning out variously," without thinking that this subject matter is enough to make reasoning about it practical. There is a difference of form between reasoning leading to action and reasoning for the truth of a conclusion. Aristotle however liked to stress the similarity between the kinds of reasoning, saying [De Motu Animalium VII] that what "happens" is the same in both. There are indeed three types of case…the theoretical syllogism and also the idle practical syllogism [NE: 1147a27–8] which is just a classroom example. In both of these the conclusion is "said" by the mind which infers it. And there is the practical syllogism proper. Here the conclusion is an action whose point is shewn by the premises, which are now, so to speak, on active service.[13]

One may wonder, of course, how reasoning, which is normally conceived as having as its conclusion something capable of truth or falsity, can have an action as its conclusion. On the other hand, though actions cannot be true or false, they can be supported by premises, particularly premises that show their point. Let us pursue the action-as-conclusion view further.[14]

The passage that perhaps most strongly supports the action-as-conclusion interpretation is De Motu Animalium 701a4–25. Consider this part of it first:

> What happens seems parallel to the case of thinking and inferring about the immovable objects of science. There the end is the truth seen (for, when one conceives the two premises, one at once conceives and comprehends the conclusion), but here the two premises result in an action—for example, one conceives that every man [in this situation] ought to walk, one is a man oneself; straightaway one walks.
>
> (701a8–14)

Aristotle is here drawing an analogy between what results from conceiving the (accepted) premises of a theoretical argument and what results from conceiving those of a practical one; and clearly he puts acting parallel to conceiving and comprehending the conclusion of one's theoretical premises. But he does not say that the action is the conclusion. Indeed, he leaves open the possibility that the action is the indirect result of conceiving the premises, where the direct result is the same sort of thing we have in the theoretical case—namely, drawing, as one's conclusion (in a sense normally implying accepting), the practical proposition implied by the premises, say that I ought to walk.

If this seems to make the parallel inexact, note that on the assumption that Aristotle distinguished conceiving from believing, he might be read as having left room for

incontinent belief, as where one conceives a conclusion which, in the light of one's premises, one judges one ought to believe, but, because it is highly distasteful, one does not believe. Granted, in 19–20 he goes on to say that "the conclusion, the 'I have to make a cloak', is an action" (Martha Nussbaum's translation). But it is important that here the conclusion, though called an action, is apparently truth-valued and is not described as something done—unless he is thinking of the drawing of it as the action here referred to or perhaps of what we might call setting oneself to make a cloak. Certainly the idea that drawing the conclusion is the action would fit the parallel he is making, for the drawing of a conclusion, if taken to be like making a judgment or forming a belief, is no less behavioral in theoretical reasoning than in practical reasoning.

This reading is supported by a number of points. One is that it makes good sense of the way Aristotle emphasizes the parallel between the practical and theoretical cases; if the contrast is as strong as the action-as-conclusion view has it, one would expect him to stress the differences both more than the similarities and more than he does. Second, I have already quoted him as saying, of the case where two premises are combined as they are when a universal rule is realized in a particular case, that "it is necessary in purely theoretical beliefs for the soul to affirm what has been concluded, and in beliefs about production to act at once on what has been concluded" (NE: 1147a27–8, emphasis added). Here he apparently distinguishes between the drawing (or affirming) of the conclusion and the action that results from drawing it, specifically, is taken "on what has been concluded."

One might ask why he does not single out drawing the conclusion as a separate act. Since it is self-evident what the conclusion is in the simple instances imagined, in which a universal role is realized in a particular case, he has no need to mention drawing the conclusion as a separate act. But that the conclusion is distinct from the action seems implicit in his maintaining that the action occurs at once for someone who "is able and unhindered" (NE: 1147a30–1). When inability or prevention occurs, apparently the conclusion is drawn, but not acted on.[15]

Indeed, if it is not possible for the agent to conclude the reasoning without acting on it, then it becomes at least more difficult to account for some of Aristotle's points about weakness of will. For in that case it certainly appears that emotion overcomes practical reasoning precisely in the sense that one completes it—if without appropriate knowledge of its constituents, particularly its major premise—and fails to act on it. One might argue that in cases of incontinence it is only the premises, not the reasoning as a whole, that the agent fails to act on. But Aristotle does not say this and speaks of the "reasoning" as if it were completed.[16] Often, at least, incontinent action represents not uncompleted practical reasoning, but unsuccessful practical reasoning.

There are, to be sure, problems for the suggested interpretation of Aristotle's conception of practical reasoning. One is that, as Anscombe quite rightly brings out, from Aristotle's point that practical reasoning concerns what can turn out variously, we must not infer that this restriction of subject matter was his criterion for what constitutes practical reasoning. We can surely do theoretical reasoning about any subject (though where the reasoning is scientific—as at least the paradigm cases are—it must concern matters that admit of the appropriate necessary connections). Another problem is how to take Aristotle's point that "the last premise is a belief about something perceptible, and controls action" (NE: 1147b9–10, emphasis added). This point makes it appear that

nothing else, such as drawing a conclusion, controls action (though some commentators have taken he teleutaia protasis here to mean ‘conclusion’ rather than ‘last premise’—a reading which, though I am not adopting it, certainly supports my interpretation as against the action-as-conclusion view). Aristotle’s point here may also seem to leave action as the only candidate for the conclusion. Let us consider these problems in turn.

On the interpretation I have suggested, it is not merely subject matter that accounts for the practicality of practical reasoning. If the reasoning occurs in the context of pursuing an end, and if this pursuit includes commitment to a judgment of what one ought to do, then its conclusion may indeed be expected to lead to one’s acting “at once” provided one is able and unhindered. Thus, practical reasoning may be seen as undertaken for a practical purpose—achieving some end—and normally as issuing in action. Furthermore, its conclusion is not just any judgment, but a practical one, to the effect that one must do something. On this view of Aristotle’s conception of practical reasoning, then, we have both a significant contrast between practical and theoretical reasoning and an account of his emphasis on the parallels between them.

The other difficulty—that, since the acceptance of the minor premise controls the action, the action is the only conclusion for which there is room—can be resolved by three points. First, acceptance of the minor premise can determine our action even if it does not do so singly or, more important, directly, that is, without the mediation of some other psychological element. Second, even if the minor (or our conceiving and accepting it) should directly determine action, it does not follow that we do not also in some way draw a propositional conclusion, perhaps as a result of conceiving both premises. Drawing this conclusion might have a guiding role with respect to how the action is carried out even if the minor in some sense plays the genetic determining role.

The third point is more positive. Since perception is crucial in fully conceiving of the minor premise, which characteristically concerns a means one perceptually grasps here and now, it is appropriate that the premise play a crucial role in determining the action: the chain from one’s ultimate goal, such as healing the patient, back to oneself is completed at the point where one accepts that premise (at which point one also normally judges in favor of the means it identifies); and given the background motivation that underlies one’s reasoning, say the desire to heal one’s patient, one now acts if one can and is not prevented. Perception can, then, in a way control action without the action’s having to be a conclusion of the reasoning. The action may issue from the reasoning at the same time as the conclusion favoring it; the perception both calls for the conclusion and guides the action.

In my view, then, Aristotle may be emphasizing the determination relation he describes in accounting for incontinence, precisely because, when incontinence occurs, a conclusion is drawn—in accord with right reason—on which the agent fails to act, and the failure seems explainable by appeal to a similar determination. One main case is appetite’s simply overriding the practical judgment, as where one’s realization of the minor premise—that this is a sweet—is not integrated with one’s belief of the major; such incontinence may or may not bespeak impetuosity. Another kind of incontinence involves a competing practical syllogism, say with a major premise to the effect that sweets are delectable, which does prevail in action, presumably in part through the force of the same minor premise. In short, the determination relation is stressed as part of the causal account of incontinent action; it does not preclude, and is not in tension with, the

view that (normally, at least) practical reasoning has both an obviously implied judgmental conclusion as its terminal element and, typically, an action as its issue.

5 THE EXPLANATION OF ACTION

Clearly, practical reasoning as I have suggested Aristotle conceived it provides a way to understand and explain actions. It makes actions that are based on practical reasoning intelligible as conduct in accordance with practical judgment. These actions, in turn, are based on at least one proposition (the major premise) held as a guiding principle and, in a reasonable person, at least prima facie correct.

Aristotle's conception of practical reasoning also yields a causal account of actions based on such reasoning. There are at least two important points here. First, the agent is reasoning in the context of a desired end, at least typically in a way that includes a commitment to some principle; this provides motivation for the action issuing from the reasoning. Second, the minor premise expresses a perceptual grasp here and now of what the agent takes to be a means[17] to the end (or to acting in accord with the principle); this provides guidance for the action.

The guidance provided by the minor premise is twofold. It is exercised in part by a belief to the effect that the end can be achieved by a certain kind of action, say reaching for a sweet; and it derives partly from a perceptual event with a kind of causal power that enables the belief to initiate action. The perception starts one off in acting in an appropriate way, for instance reaching into the cabinet; the belief helps to sustain and guide the action, say to keep one searching the shelves until one finds the right container. The whole process may be virtually instantaneous, as where, driving at high speed, we see a tumbleweed in our path and decide to drive over it rather than risk swerving.

If Aristotle takes all our intentional actions, as opposed to merely voluntary ones, to arise from practical reasoning, as he sometimes appears to,[18] then his view of practical reasoning provides a good account of how intentional action in general is to be understood and explained. Suppose, however, that he should be read as placing practical reasoning only within the context of deliberation and he also allows for the possibility of intentional action that occurs outside this context, as where, after a concert in which one heard Finlandia, one starts humming its melody for pleasure. Whether or not he is to be so read, there surely seem to be intentional actions that do not arise from practical reasoning,[19] and if so it is important to consider how Aristotle might account for them.

The first point to note here is that at least the paradigms of intentional actions are all of a kind that can arise from practical reasoning. If so, then it may be open to Aristotle to hold what we might call the correspondence thesis: the view that to every intentional action there corresponds at least one practical argument whose premises (in some way) express motivation and belief jointly sufficient to explain the action.[20] For instance, even if I spontaneously eat an apple because I am hungry, and without doing practical reasoning, I may eat it in order to reduce my hunger, which Aristotle might have taken to imply that, with no change in my motivation or beliefs, I could have reasoned from practical premises to a conclusion favoring eating one, say from the premises that eating apples relieves hunger and that eating this apple before me will relieve my hunger.

6 INTRINSICALLY MOTIVATED ACTION

There is, however, some difficulty with this approach to defending the correspondence thesis. Consider actions performed for their own sake, such as playing tennis for pleasure. Let us start by setting aside an argument which, though unsound, can cause confusion: actions performed (entirely) for their own sake are ends in themselves, and if so they are not such that we can deliberate about them; hence, practical reasoning cannot be directed toward them either. Now even if it should be true that for Aristotle practical reasoning is deliberation, or is possible only for actions subject to deliberation, this argument is defective. For Aristotle's view that we do not deliberate about ends plainly permits deliberation about what means to take to an intrinsically motivated action, and in that way we can deliberate about the action.

Aristotle's view also allows that an end final in one context, say healing a patient, may be a means in another, say a means to making a living. His position is that every deliberation is relative to some end that governs the context and is not therein a subject of deliberation; but it is only the end final in the context that we cannot deliberate about in that context. Moreover, it is only the absolutely final end, happiness, that, in any context, cannot (or at least cannot rationally) be pursued as a means to something further.

So far so good. But consider action both performed for its own sake and basic—basic in the sense that it is not performed by performing any other action. Not only is it not aimed, in any obvious sense, at anything further; as basic, it is not performed by doing anything else; the deed is done "at will." Hence, there appears to be no room to reason either about what means will achieve it or about how to make it a successful means to anything else. We have already seen one Aristotelian response to the latter point; there is simply no need for deliberation to apply to every action qua means to something further, since not all actions are properly performed for a further end. This truth may be misleading, however, unless more is said. There is, for all intentional action, a final end—namely, happiness—and even actions performed for their own sake may be argued to be performed directly, even if not self-consciously, in order to realize part of that final end conceived as activity (as, for example, NE: 1098a–9a); hence, the action may be conceived as a constitutive means to happiness.

How are we to understand happiness as an end? It is not a further end of an action performed "for its own sake," such as a deed done simply as the magnanimous gesture; happiness is the intrinsic end of such an action. While the action itself, qua activity partly constitutive of happiness, might be the only relevant end, it is, ultimately, performed for the happiness it yields (or is expected to yield). This is not to say that it must be pursued under a conception that explicitly links it to happiness, for instance being conducive to my happiness. Aristotle is best read as allowing that it be simply the kind of thing that is partly constitutive of happiness and, on the basis of reflection, may be so viewed and accordingly sought. This allows, however, that it be pursued in some way as a constitutive means, say as honorable.

These points about the sense in which intrinsically motivated actions can be constitutive means to happiness do not indicate how anything can be conceived as a means to them when they are basic. This is not a problem for the correspondence thesis. A proponent of that thesis needs a way to exhibit basic action performed for its own sake as in some way reasoned, but not as done by performing some more basic action. If, for

all intentional action, there is a corresponding practical argument, then all such action must be in some sense aimed; but this does not imply the possibility of being aimed at by some other action, and for basic action there is no distinct action capable of being so aimed. (Granted, one can do something—such as free one's schedule—to cause oneself to do something basic, such as swim across a pool, but this is not trying to swim by doing something else as a means, as one locks a door by turning a key.) It is not entirely clear, however, how intrinsically motivated actions can even be aimed; they are certainly not aimed at any further action or at causal consequences. Let us explore in more detail how such actions might be conceived in an Aristotelian framework.

Consider humming for pleasure, which is a special case of doing something for its own sake and would not normally seem to correspond to practical reasoning. Although one is not humming for a further end, one is humming because of something about doing so, say the distinctively pleasing sounds. If humming may be viewed as a (constitutive) means of experiencing these sounds, then there might after all be a corresponding practical argument. Its premises might be that these pleasing sounds are to be enjoyed in one's humming (roughly, enjoyably realized in humming), and that humming now (perhaps in a certain manner) constitutes the way to enjoy them. This may seem artificial, but it is intelligible. Indeed, acceptance of the minor premise may readily be seen to yield an Aristotelian decision, manifested in (or indeed identical with) the agent's acting straightaway.

The idea here is twofold. First, even when one is doing something for its own sake (and basically), there is something about it, such as its pleasing sound, which one wants. Second, one can believe, without triviality, that doing it (in a certain way) constitutes getting that, if only because it is possible, and perhaps all too easy, to do the thing in question without achieving what one wants, say the pleasing sound. One's pleasure (or other end sought for its own sake) is constituted by doing the thing in a certain way, not just by doing it. Hence, it is intelligible for the minor premise to connect the action with the intrinsic character that action has when performed in a relevant way. The intrinsic end supervenes on the humming, which is a constitutive means to it; but it does not supervene on just any humming. This is why, even in humming for its own sake, one can be doing so as a 'means' to the supervenient pleasure. The suggested account is consistent with Aristotle's view of pleasure,[21] so if it is successful then the correspondence thesis can be extended to all intentional action, including intrinsically motivated basic action.

7 THE STRUCTURE OF ACTION

The correspondence thesis rests on the idea that intentional action has a certain structure, whether it actually issues from practical reasoning or not. Even if the correspondence thesis as developed in section 5 does not provide an account of how Aristotle could use his conception of practical reasoning to understand intentional action in general, other views he held about action might accomplish this, and they can also clarify his account of practical reasoning.

As Aristotle conceives action, a central element in understanding it is the good. He first considers what we might call subsidiary goods, the kinds that govern deliberation in

a given sphere, yet are not final in the sense that they could never be sought as a means to something further. He says that in each art the good is

> that for the sake of which other things are done…in medicine this is health, in generalship victory…in every action and decision it is the end.
>
> (NE: 1097a18–21)

But the best good must be something that is complete:

> Now happiness more than anything else seems unconditionally complete, since we always [choose it, and also] choose it because of itself, never because of something else.
>
> Honor, pleasure, understanding and every virtue we certainly choose because of themselves, since we would choose each of them even if it had no further result, but also choose them for the sake of happiness, supposing that through them we shall be happy.[22]
>
> (NE: 1097a28–b5)

Happiness, then, in the sense of flourishing, stands as our final unifying end: we may seek other things for their own sake, but only when we believe that "through them"—as constitutive and not merely instrumental means, I take it—they will bring happiness.

More specifically, in a given context, say medicine, we may not have happiness in mind in acting, for example in prescribing a remedy. For here our deliberation and practical reasoning are governed by the end of health. But that end in turn is sustained by the final end, presumably in the sense that our seeking the former end is explained by our desire for happiness, together with our belief that achieving the relevant virtue, say the medical virtue that commits us to healing, conduces to happiness. This explanatory sustaining relation does not require that there be in our minds any inferential chain from our final end to our action, nor even from our main subsidiary end, say to practice healing, to the action. That is, we need not actually infer, in each case of action, from the ultimate premise that happiness is to be achieved, to the intermediate conclusion that (say) health is to be promoted, to the practical judgment that (for instance) I should prescribe this medicine. Given the large number of both our subsidiary ends and our instrumental beliefs, this would create a false, and un-Aristotelian, picture of rational action.

Whether or not there is ever such an inferential chain there, there is always a psychologically less intrusive causal chain—a purposive chain—that unifies all our actions in relation to our final end, which, at least in a mature, reflective agent, is their ultimate ground. The existence of such a purposive chain underlying an action implies at least this: if challenged as to why we are doing the thing in question, the chain is always accessible to us as an explanatory device (provided we are both rational and are not, for instance, acting in ignorance). For ordinary purposes, citing a single practical argument may serve to explain an action. But to an agent with sufficient self-knowledge, a full explanatory story is always available.

A natural interpretation of purposive chains is to take each link to be constituted by a practical basis relation analogous to the theoretical basis relation by which one belief is

grounded in, and in that way based on, a second when the latter expresses an evidential reason for which the former is held. Thus, if I prescribe medicine in order to heal, the former action is based on my wanting (or being in some way motivated) to heal. If I want to heal in order to fulfill my medical obligation, the chain has another link, and my healing is based on my wanting to fulfill my obligation. There will be further links until we come to one anchored in the intrinsic desire for happiness, or at least to an intrinsic desire for something that, like virtuous activity, is part of happiness and can be so conceived on reflection.

The practical basis relation has a special feature that is easily overlooked. It is non-transitive: I can, for instance, heal in order to fulfill my medical obligation and do that in order to contribute to my happiness, even if I am not healing in order to contribute to my happiness. For I need have no belief (or minor premise) to the effect that by healing I will contribute to my happiness. No such connection need be made in every case of intentional action; and if I make none, my action is only indirectly grounded in my desire for happiness, a point that has by no means always been appreciated.[23]

8 THE ULTIMATE GROUND OF ACTION

The importance of the indirect eudaimonistic grounding of actions, as we might call it, should not be underestimated. It is essential if we are to avoid taking Aristotle to be committed to an implausible psychology of motivation. When an action is so grounded, it still has both a causal link to the desire for happiness and, since that desire sustains it (e.g. via sustaining my wanting to fulfill my obligation), a potential explanatory link to that desire. In short, purposive chains ground all intentional actions in the desire for happiness (or for its constituents), directly or—far more often, it would seem—indirectly. (There are counterpart relations between the corresponding abstract entities, for example between the content of my desire to heal and the actiontype, prescribing tablets, a type whose concrete realization is warranted by its capacity to realize that content; but my concern here is mainly with the concrete entities related by singular causal connections.)

For Aristotle, explanation is linked not only to causation, but also to reasonableness. This is in part why he wants to ground our characteristic actions in syllogisms and thereby in "right reason." From this point of view, it is not our desire for happiness, but the identity of happiness with the good, that is crucial. Happiness is not only our motivationally final end; it is also the good, and thereby rationally pursued for its own sake. Aristotle's reasons for identifying it with the good are rooted in his teleological conception of nature as a realm in which the good of things is constituted by their proper functions. I am not concerned to evaluate his resources for defending this conception. My point is simply that by virtue of purposive chains, the good unifies his normative theory of what constitutes reasonable (including moral) action, as well as his theory of motivation.

Moreover, if it is by a use of reason that we come to know that happiness is the good, then reason is normatively practical, in the sense that it suffices to discover truths expressing at least one non-instrumental evaluative standard of conduct. (Beliefs of such truths may constitute knowledge; I am simply not building truth or knowledge into the basic characterization of reason as normatively practical.) If, in addition, reason's leading

us to form a normative belief must generate in us some motivation to pursue as an end (for its own sake) the goal it expresses, say happiness, then reason is also motivationally practical.

Given the grounds Aristotle offers for taking happiness to be our appropriately fundamental end—including the point that as rational beings we by nature seek it for its own sake—there is some reason to say that he took reason to be motivationally as well as normatively practical. His apparent unwillingness to allow that we ever act against our better judgment without a defect in our knowledge also suggests that he took reason to be motivationally practical. If these points are correct, then both our desire for happiness and our knowledge about what contributes to it are sources of practical reasons. Our knowledge, moreover, would be doubly practical: it provides motivation for action we see to be conducive to happiness, and it yields a normative ground for such action. It would thereby give us both motivating and normative reason to act. Yielding reasons that are practical in both ways, such knowledge is itself practical.

If this section is correct, Aristotle holds three mutually supporting theses crucial for understanding practical reasoning. Each concerns the centrality of the good, conceived as happiness, in human life. The first two are explanatory, the third normative.

The first is motivational foundationalism: on the assumption that there is a use of 'want' sufficiently broad to cover motivation in general,[24] the thesis may be briefly expressed as the view that there is at least one thing we want for its own sake, and everything else we want is wanted by us, directly or indirectly, for its contribution to something we want for its own sake. (If 'want' is too narrow, we may substitute 'are motivated to realize'.) The second thesis simply roots action in the motivational framework just described; it says that all intentional action is linked by a purposive chain to at least one thing the agent wants for its own sake. Call this behavioral foundationalism. Both are suggested by Aristotle's remark that "Hence it is always the object of desire that produces movement, but this is either the good or the apparent good" (De Anima III10.433a27–9).

Aristotle's version of both foundationalist doctrines makes happiness central and is thus eudaimonistic: we all desire (our own) happiness for its own sake, and everything else we desire is desired, directly or indirectly, at least partly for its contribution to our happiness, where this may, but need not, include explicitly taking it to be partly constitutive of our happiness. Assuming that actions are rooted, by the practical basis relation, in some kind of desire, all of our actions are explicable in this unifying framework.

The normative counterpart of this motivational view is a third major thesis in Aristotle's theory of action, concerning what is good: axiological foundationalism. It says, in outline, that the intrinsically good is fundamental in the theory of value and hence basic to all other goods. On Aristotle's eudaimonistic version, whatever is good is either good in itself, and hence identical with either happiness or some constitutive means to it, or instrumentally good by virtue of making a suitable contribution to happiness, as practicing medicine may do by restoring health and thereby contributing to happiness as an exercise of the appropriate virtue (s). On the assumption that it is reasonable to act in pursuit of the good, Aristotle thus provides a eudaimonistic framework both for judging the reasonableness of actions, and for explaining them.

9 CONCLUSION

We can now summarize where Aristotle, as interpreted here, stands on the six questions that largely guide our inquiry into practical reasoning.

First, a rational person characteristically answers a practical question by deliberation and, given sufficient knowledge, by producing a practical syllogism which yields a conclusion in favor of an action that the agent judges, in the light of the end governing the deliberation, to be suitable. The action may be represented by the premises as necessary for achieving the end, but Aristotle also allowed for other cases, such as those in which the agent simply takes the action to be the best means, or just a good way, to achieve the end. There may also be more than one syllogism favoring the same action, and there may be conflicting syllogisms, one of which prevails over the other in yielding action.

Second, to act for a reason is to act in order to achieve (briefly, to act for) an end, whether ultimate or, more often, subsidiary, as when we prescribe medicine in order to cure. Actions performed for a reason commonly issue from practical reasoning; and if Aristotle does not think they always do, he at least holds that they are motivationally anchored by a purposive chain which terminates in a desire for happiness and can be associated, link by link, with practical arguments that concern the relevant want, belief, and action. This conception of the motivational unity of action, or at least of all action performed for a reason, is summarized by the thesis of behavioral foundationalism.

Third, the existence of purposive chains connecting actions with their ultimate sustaining basis constitutes the motivational structure in which intentional actions can be explained. Even when intentional actions exhibit weakness of will, they remain in the structure by virtue of a desire, say for pleasure, ultimately traceable (even if through mistaken beliefs) to a desire for happiness. This is one reason why such actions, like other intentional actions, can express, or at least provide a basis for appraising, the agent's character. But such actions are normatively in conflict with other elements in the structure, since they oppose one's better judgment and arise because of an inadequacy in the agent's knowledge of (at least) the premises of the practical reasoning in question. They are thus causally intelligible but, if rationally intelligible at all, not unqualifiedly rational.

Fourth, what mediates between reasons and actions based on them is apparently a perception of (what one takes to be) an appropriate means to the end governing the action, say the end of healing a patient. This perception yields an actual conceiving of the end at which the action aims and, at least in practical reasoning, also produces a judgment. But if (as I have left open) Aristotle's view allows that an action for a reason need not be performed on the basis of practical reasoning, he would have a good case for some sort of perception operating in the former case too, in a similarly causative way.

Fifth, acting for a given reason can be seen to be at least prima facie rational in the light of that reason because the relevant minor premise connects the action with achieving the end that is associated with the reason and, on the Aristotelian assumption that all our reasons are connected by a purposive chain to happiness, the action is at least indirectly subordinated (if sometimes inaccurately) to the quest to realize the good. If, for instance, the reason for an action is to administer penicillin, then reaching for the tablets is connected with that end by one's belief that it will lead to realizing it. Moreover, every

action performed for a reason is ultimately (though often indirectly) rooted in the final, and presumably rational, desire for happiness.

Sixth, practical reasoning is like theoretical reasoning in exhibiting an inferential pattern of drawing a conclusion from premises.[25] But it differs both in being undertaken in the service of an end to be realized in conduct and in concluding with a practical judgment. Its origin is a different kind of problem, and its concluding element is correspondingly different as well. Its upshot, moreover, is, when the reasoning succeeds, action that realizes the end in whose service it is done; the upshot of successful theoretical reasoning, by contrast, is knowledge (or at least belief that meets an appropriate standard). In the context of the premises, a practical judgment normally plays a causal role in producing, and may help to guide, the action it favors. It also normally plays a justificatory role in warranting that action. If parallel points hold for theoretical reasoning, then knowledge or belief, and not action, constitutes the object of the causal and justificatory influence exercised by the premises of that reasoning.

As I understand these Aristotelian views, they are all plausible. But they suggest a variety of problems that an account of practical reasoning should address. Is all intentional action grounded in practical reasoning, as Aristotle may have thought, and, if so, how? Is motivation intrinsic to a practical judgment, say that one must avoid eating sweets, and, if so, what is the implied degree of motivation relative to the agent's other desires? Connected with this is the problem of just how clear an incontinent agent's practical knowledge can be and whether, as Aristotle apparently thought, incontinent action is always irrational.

All of these and related questions will be addressed in Part II. This is not to suggest that one could not find answers to them in Aristotle's work. It may in fact contain excellent answers. There is certainly more to say about his account of practical thinking in general and of practical reasoning in particular. An entire book could easily be devoted to these matters, but I cannot pursue them further here. If, however, what has been said about Aristotle in this chapter is sound, it shows him as developing a generally consistent, highly plausible, and powerful account, and it gives us a basis for understanding later treatments of the subject.

Two
Hume and the instrumentalist conception of practical reasoning

David Hume said much about the nature and scope of reason, but spoke little of what I have called practical reasoning, and the term seldom if ever occurs in his major works. He did say much about kindred topics, however, and his writings implicitly contain a conception of practical reasoning. In formulating it I shall concentrate on A Treatise of Human Nature, but in places it will help to consider An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals. I shall also connect Hume's view on some points with Aristotle's and, later, Kant's; but my purpose in discussing Hume is not mainly comparative. His views on practical thinking are among the most important in the field. As in the case of Aristotle, I make no claim to give a detailed overall interpretation; I seek only to offer a plausible reading of a number of his central points.

1 THE INSTRUMENTAL ROLE OF REASON

The paradigms of practical reasoning are clearly cases of means-end reasoning. This point presupposes inclusion of constitutive means, as where we are reasoning about how best to enjoy a free evening. Here we seek something that would constitute such an evening. There is no question that Hume took what he called reason to have a role in means-ends reasoning. The following is a good expression of the core of his account of that role:

> It has been observ'd, that reason, in a strict and philosophical sense, can have an influence on our conduct only after two ways: either when it excites a passion by informing us of the existence of something which is a proper object of it; or when it discovers the connexion of causes and effects, so as to afford us means of exerting any passion. These are the only kinds of judgments which can accompany our actions, or can be said to produce them in any manner; and it must be allow'd, that these judgments may often be false and erroneous…. They extend not beyond a mistake of fact, which moralists have not generally supposed criminal, as being perfectly involuntary…. No one can ever regard such errors as a defect in my moral character. A fruit, for instance, that is really disagreeable, appears to me at a distance, and thro' mistake I fancy it to be pleasant and delicious. Here is one error. I choose certain means of reaching this object, which are not proper for my end. Here is a second error; nor is there any third one, which can ever enter into our reasonings concerning actions.[1]

The main point here is that reason, conceived in part as a source of beliefs about instrumental relations, influences our conduct only in two ways: (1) through arousing a passion by informing us (perhaps erroneously) of the existence or properties of something it is a passion for, say tropical fruit, and (2) through giving us information (again perhaps erroneous) about how we can attain the object.

Hume confirms and develops this twofold point. A few paragraphs later, for instance, he says that while "reason alone is incapable of an influence upon our actions," still "Reason and judgment may, indeed, be the mediate cause of an action, by prompting, or by directing a passion" (462, emphases added). Clearly passion is the motivating force behind action; reason simply arouses or directs passion.

This second point, and Hume's conception of what unifies the passions, are evident in a passage about the relation between will and, on the other hand, desire and aversion. As the passage suggests, he apparently takes them to be equivalent to, or at least the central motivational elements in, the direct passions:

> Desire arises from good consider'd simply, and aversion is deriv'd from evil. The will exerts itself, when [the agent considers that] either the good or the absence of the evil may be attain'd by any action of the mind or body.
>
> Beside good and evil, or in other words, pain and pleasure, the direct passions frequently arise from a natural impulse or instinct, which is perfectly unaccountable. Of this kind is the desire of punishment to our enemies, and of happiness to our friends; hunger, lust, and a few other bodily appetites. These passions, properly speaking, produce good and evil, and proceed not from them, like the other affections.
>
> (439, emphasis added)

On the plausible assumption that (intentional) action is (or in some way represents) an exertion of the will, the first paragraph suggests that (1) desire for some good and aversion to some evil (which may be roughly considered desire to avoid it) are the fundamental motivators (passions) and (2) our desires to act, or at least our desires that lead us to act, arise when we take some action to be a means to achieving something we want. Roughly, desire, guided by belief, is what produces action. This idea is the core of the Humean theory of motivation.

When Hume adds that good is equivalent to pleasure and evil to pain, it looks as if he is committed not only to the valuational hedonism with which that claim is normally identified, but also to psychological hedonism, the view that all our actions are motivated, directly or indirectly, by desires for pleasure, or to avoid pain. This impression is reinforced by his saying such things as that "the passions, both direct and indirect, are founded on pain and pleasure" (438). We need not take him to have a narrow view of what constitutes pleasure or pain. But however he conceived them, they appear motivationally central for him.

Later in the same paragraph, however (and elsewhere), Hume qualifies his apparent psychological hedonism. Not only does he acknowledge nonhedonistic direct passions, such as the desires for punishment of one s enemies and for the happiness of one s friends, that arise from a "natural impulse"; he also says that these passions produce good

and evil, rather than proceeding from them, as do the other direct passions (this is not to suggest that an action could not both arise from a motive and produce another motive of the same kind, but there is no evidence that Hume is here thinking of this double causation). His point is apparently that satisfying the desire for ones friends' happiness can produce one's own happiness, whereas "the other affections" arise through getting pleasure or pain from experiencing their objects, for example from eating delicious foods.

If this is part of his point, then he is not only implicitly rejecting psychological hedonism as an account of what we intrinsically want, but also genetic hedonism—the view that what we intrinsically want arises from our experiences of pleasure and pain—as an account of why we intrinsically want what we do. He suggests that the satisfaction of a natural impulse may also produce such wants. This is consistent with that satisfaction's being generally pleasant, but Hume seems to be denying that the satisfaction produces them only by producing pleasure. Roughly, he holds both that we have intrinsic desires directed toward what we naturally find pleasurable and that we take pleasure in doing or experiencing certain things because, antecedently, we have an intrinsic desire to do or experience them.

It appears, then, that Hume's theory of motivation is best conceived as pluralistic, in the sense that there is no one thing which he takes to be the sole kind of entity we desire for its own sake. To be sure, if pleasure is essentially tied to, and determined in its specified nature by, the experience or activity that yields it, then, like Aristotelian eudaimonism, even hedonism is perhaps only superficially monistic. There would be as many kinds of pleasure as there are enjoyable experiences and activities. But unlike Aristotle, Hume does not conceive pleasure in that way. Nonetheless, desire remains his fundamental motivational notion, as seems implicit in what I have quoted.

If passions are roughly desires (including aversions as a kind of negative desire), how does Hume conceive the "indirect passions"? He says of these that they "arise from a double relation of impressions and ideas…. Thus a suit of fine clothes produces pleasure from their beauty; and this pleasure produces the direct passions, or the impressions of volition and desire" (439). The idea, I think, is that the desire for the fine clothes is indirect in the sense of being based on the desire for their sartorial beauty, which in turn is based on the direct passion for the pleasure of contemplating that beauty This passion is direct because it is not based on any further one; the agent desires such sartorial pleasure for its own sake.

In An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals, Hume describes the motivational structure in question quite clearly:

> Ask a man why he uses exercise; he will answer because he desires to keep his health. If you then enquire, why he desires health, he will readily reply, because sickness is painful. If you push your enquiries further, and desire a reason why he hates pain, it is impossible he can ever give any. This is an ultimate end, and is never referred to any other object.[2]

The overall view seems like Aristotle's in being a motivational foundationalism: some of our passions, the direct ones, are fundamental and not based (in the instrumental way just illustrated by Hume) on others; and all our other, indirect passions are instrumentally based on one or more of the former by virtue of our believing, of each indirect passion,

something to the effect that satisfying it will (or that it might) realize one of our direct passions. Hume often talks hedonistically; but his considered view allows for foundational desires whose objects, though wanted for their own sake, are not wanted for pleasure.

Indeed, Hume even allows for what seems a distinctively moral kind of motivation, though he insists that "Since morals…have an influence on the actions and affections, they cannot be deriv'd from reason…. Morals excite passions, and produce or prevent actions. Reason is utterly impotent in this particular" (457). Passions are still the fundamental motivators; but some are aroused by moral judgments, such as that an action is a duty, as others are by factual judgments, such as that a fruit is delicious.

2 REASONING AS AN ELEMENT IN THE GENESIS OF ACTION

Hume's conception of practical reasoning can be located within the pattern I have described, namely, the foundationalist account of motivation in which reason plays the indicated instrumental role, by virtue of arousing and directing our desires. To see how he conceived practical reasoning, we might first of all note some of his points about probable, as opposed to demonstrative, reasoning. He maintains that

> all probable reasoning is nothing but a species of sensation. 'Tis not solely in poetry and music, we must follow our taste and sentiment, but likewise in philosophy. When I am convinc'd of any principle, 'tis only an idea which strikes more strongly upon me…. Objects have no discoverable connexion together; nor is it from any principle but custom operating upon the imagination, that we can draw any inference from the appearance of one to the existence of any other…. A person, who stops short in his journey upon meeting a river in his way, foresees the consequences of his proceeding forward; and his knowledge of these consequences is convey'd to him by past experience…. But can we think, that on this occasion he reflects on any past experience?… No, surely; this is not the method in which he proceeds in his reasoning. The idea of sinking is so closely connected with that of water…that the mind makes the transition without the assistance of memory. The custom operates before we have time for reflexion.
>
> (103–4)

A major point here is that the reasoning which leads the agent to stop short of entering the river is neither reflective (since there is no time for "reflexion") nor based on a "discoverable connexion" between jumping into a river and sinking. I do not know, and cannot discover, a priori, that whoever jumps into a river sinks. Moreover, at least normally I do not apply such a generalization to my circumstances and infer that if I jump in, I will sink. Instead, the agent is assumed to associate the jumping and the sinking so closely that the idea of the former elicits, by a customary, and presumably in some sense inferential, transition, the idea of the latter. The latter idea, on the basis of past

experience, gives rise to knowledge[3] of the consequences of proceeding forward, and that knowledge prevents one's doing so.

There apparently is, then, a kind of reasoning—or at least of inference—here; and, even if it results in action only through a transition of thought rooted in custom, the reasoning is surely practical. Plainly the minor premise would be something like this: if I go forward, I'll sink. What would be the major? Given Hume's view that reason, which is the "discovery of truth or falsehood" (458) and is in itself "perfectly inert" (458), affects action only through arousing or directing desire, we would expect the major premise to concern some object of desire (or aversion). This is what we apparently do find; for in the same passage Hume describes the idea of sinking as closely connected with that of suffocating (104), and we may certainly take him to be assuming that the agent is averse to suffocating. Thus, the major might be something like: I must avoid suffocating.

There are at least two kinds of conclusions that would fit the context. The first would be in some sense normative and might thus be readily seen, from Hume's perspective, to have motivating power, since if he took moral judgments to have such power it is to be expected that he might regard other normative judgments as similarly motivating. Taken together with the minor premise that (say) not going forward would prevent sinking and suffocating, the major premise that suffocating must be avoided would probabilistically imply the (judgmental) conclusion that one should not go forward. Given the motivation underlying the major, that concluding judgment in turn would normally lead to acting accordingly. The reasoning would then be practical in much the way Aristotelian practical reasoning is. If, on the other hand, we think of reason as inert, we may want to construe the conclusion of Humean practical reasoning more narrowly, say as a judgment to the effect that one must either stop or else sink and suffocate. Making this judgment, together with the agent's desire to avoid suffocating, can be seen to motivate stopping. The judgment thus plays a practical role without itself having normative—and in that sense practical—content. Similarly, on this narrow interpretation, even the major premise should not be taken to be in any way normative. That suffocating is to be avoided, for instance, should be taken to express something like this: I want to avoid suffocating.[4]

We must be cautious here. Although Hume himself uses the terms 'reasoning' and 'inference', he does not tell us what the major premise would be, nor specify the conclusion. Indeed, in this passage he is at pains to show how we automatically act on information suitably connected with our desires. How are we to square the psychologically plausible idea that we often 'automatically' respond to information with the suggestion that the actions in question may be based in some way on practical inference?

3 REASONING CONCEIVED AS ESSENTIALLY COMPARATIVE

It is possible that Hume took as obvious what sort of content the major and the conclusion would have. This idea receives some support from a quite general point he makes about reasoning:

> All kinds of reasoning consist in nothing but a comparison, and a discovery of those relations, either constant or inconstant, which two or

> more objects bear to each other. This comparison we may make, either when both the objects are present, or when neither of them is present, or when only one.
>
> (73)

In Hume's example, there is an implied background comparison—which one makes rapidly and unreflectively—one's entering the river and one's sinking. Perhaps 'association' would in some cases be a better term. This comparison may be based on a more general comparison or association, itself grounded in past experience, of people's entering such a body of water and their sinking in it. The comparison of one's own entering with its associated effect leads to formation of the general belief that the former would produce the latter. Moreover, we cannot understand, in terms of Hume's theory of motivation, why the agent stops at the river bank unless we suppose that there is a comparison of going into the river with sinking (or perhaps suffocating). If there is no major premise concerning sinking, then with what is going forward into the water compared? And if there is no conclusion, what represents the result of the comparison?

It is natural to suppose that there is something like enthymematic reasoning here: the major premise—say that suffocating is to be avoided—only tacitly accepted by the agent on the basis of desire, and so is not expressed or even entertained in the reasoning process; and the conclusion—say that to avoid suffocating I must stop going forward—is not explicitly drawn, if only because, first, it is both too obviously implicit to need affirmation and, second, one is in a position to act on it at once, without "reflexion." On this view, while we cannot be sure just what forms Hume would take the major and the conclusion to have—and several are open to him—he is taking practical reasoning to occur in at least some cases of action based on a desire and on a belief to the effect that a certain action will realize the desire.

This interpretation accords well with another passage in which Hume appears to be thinking of practical reasoning. He says:

> 'Tis obvious, that when we have the prospect of pain or pleasure from any object, we feel a consequent emotion of aversion or propensity, and are carry'd to avoid or embrace what will give this uneasiness or satisfaction. 'Tis also obvious, that this emotion rests not here, but making us cast our view on every side, comprehends whatever objects are connected with this original one by the relation of cause and effect. Here then reasoning takes place to discover this relation; and according as our reasoning varies, our actions receive a subsequent variation.
>
> (414)

The case imagined (which Hume does not illustrate in the immediate context) appears to be one in which the satisfaction of desire is only in 'prospect' and deliberation may be appropriate. Deliberation is certainly one way to "cast our view on every side" in order to determine an appropriate means. Here we reason in order "to discover this [causal] relation." Hume may well take it that in this kind of case we conclude our reasoning with a judgment (or belief or other cognitive element) indicating a means to avoid the "uneasiness" or to realize the "satisfaction." It is still unclear what the major premise

would be. But if what we desire is in prospect, it might well be something like "That is to be obtained" or, more personally, "I've got to get that."

There is, however, a weaker interpretation of Hume. He might have held simply that when one has a suitably strong desire, such as to avoid suffocation, then one's simply forming an appropriate instrumental belief, say that one must stop in order to avoid suffocation, normally leads to the action. We may be said to reason because we see, on the basis of experience, that if we proceed we will suffocate, associate proceeding with suffocating, and are thereby motivated to cease proceeding. This interpretation of Hume would give him an instrumental account of intentional action and would be consistent with his overall views on reason and motivation.

It is quite possible that Hume would apply the weaker account, which I shall call the simple instrumentalist account, to automatic or at least non-deliberate actions and use the stronger account, which I shall call the inferential instrumentalist account, for deliberate actions and, certainly, for those that arise from reflection. That is, non-deliberate intentional action is simply based on appropriate desire (s) and belief(s), and thus arises from practical reasoning only in a weak, associational sense, whereas deliberate and reasoned actions are based on practical reasoning in the full-blooded, inferential sense.

It is certainly open to Hume to hold this twofold account, as indeed Aristotle might have. Both points are harmonious with behavioral foundationalism, which Hume, like Aristotle, seems to have held. It may not be possible to tell whether, in accounting for at least some intentional actions, Hume invoked practical reasoning in the inferential sense apparently illustrated by Aristotle's typical examples. We may, however, conclude that if Hume does imply that there is such practical reasoning, then, although it is not clear just what forms he would attribute to the major premises and conclusions, the former would in some way concern the object of the motivating desire (s) and the latter would in some way favor the action which, according to the minor, would (or might) realize the desire (s).

4 REASON, RATIONAL ACTION, AND MORAL JUDGMENT

Hume is famous for his striking remarks about the limited power of reason. To understand his views of rational action and his resources for dealing with weakness of will, we must consider some of these views against the background of the positive account so far given of how Hume conceives reason as a force in human action.

Two of Hume's famous pronouncements about reason are that "Reason is, and ought only to be, the slave of the passions" (415), and that "'Tis not contrary to reason to prefer the destruction of the whole world to the scratching of my finger" (416). These statements are closely connected with his views concerning the relation between reason and morality. On this relation he says, in another famous passage, that

> [M]en are often govern'd by their duties, and are deter'd from some actions by the opinion of injustice, and impell'd to others by that of obligation.

> Since morals, therefore, have an influence on the actions and affections, it follows, that they cannot be deriv'd from reason; and that because reason alone…can never have any such influence.
>
> (457)

As to how morals influence action, Hume's view is quite understandable in the light of one of his important statements about the meaning of moral judgments. He says that

> [W]hen you pronounce any action or character to be vicious, you mean nothing, but that from the constitution of your nature you have a feeling or sentiment of blame from the contemplation of it. Vice and virtue, therefore, may be compar'd to sounds, colours, heat and cold, which, according to modern philosophy, are not qualities in objects, but perceptions in the mind.[5]
>
> (469)

Calling an action vicious does not identify a quality in it, but expresses a connection between the object and one's own sentiments. These sentiments, however, have a 'passional' (certainly motivational) component. Hence, it is to be expected that, unlike judgments of reason proper, they can lead one to act. Moreover, insofar as the making of the judgment produces or arouses such sentiments, say a feeling of blame with a constituent desire to censure, the judging may indirectly generate action. But the direct motivator of action in the moral case is not judging (or at least not judging as reflecting reason); it is something passional.

How are the other two pronouncements to be explained? In the light of the quotations from Hume in sections 1 and 2, it is clear that in calling reason the slave of the passions he does not mean that it cannot influence them. As he repeatedly says, it is only "reason alone" that "can never have any such influence" (457), though even this may be too strong to accord with all of his considered views. His most important view here, I think, is this. Reason can arouse a passion by discovering an appropriate object, such as a kind of fruit for which one has a desire; and given a passion (or desire), it can direct action toward the satisfaction of that passion. It can, for instance, lead us along a chain of means to what we want until we achieve that.

There are, moreover, at least two ways in which reason may arouse passion. One is identificational generation: reason informs us (perhaps falsely) of the existence of something which we intrinsically want. Here it identifies a particular appropriate thing, usually but not necessarily an object of a standing desire, such as a glass of water that we want when we are thirsty, or it identifies a kind of thing we antecedently want, or simply like, for its own sake, say a chance to see a beautiful painting: in this case we may come to want the identified thing, even if at the time we had no standing want for a thing of that sort, say to see a beautiful painting. The other kind of arousal is instrumental generation: reason informs us of the existence of an object, or indicates a possible action, that is (in some sense) a means to something we want, whether we want that for its own sake or not. In producing both kinds of arousal—and perhaps yet other kinds—reason serves passion by aiding its satisfaction. But it is a servant without which the passions would be satisfied only at the whim of fortune. The master is blind, and reason is the only sighted servant.[6]

The second pronouncement must be understood in the light of the first. If I have no desire which reason shows me will be thwarted by the destruction of the world, then given my natural desire to avoid pain it is not contrary to reason to prefer the destruction of the world to the pain of a mere scratch. Hume of course did not suppose that we have no desires that would be thwarted by the destruction of the world. His point, or at least the point implicit in his theory of motivation, is that reason does not give us any such desires non-instrumentally: it yields them only if we have some foundational desire whose satisfaction reason shows us would be thwarted by destruction of the world.[7]

There are two important Humean doctrines here. One is that reason is not motivationally practical, in the sense that by itself it cannot originate, as opposed to arousing or directing, desire. The second—which Hume takes to be implied by the first—is that reason is not normative!/ practical, in the sense that by itself it cannot tell us what is (non-instrumentally) good or bad, or what (non-instrumentally) ought to be. If it did, it would have to have at least some motivational force, and passages like those just cited argue that it does not. In these two respects, reason is not practical; and on both points we have a substantial departure from Aristotle. In contrast to Aristotle, Hume holds in effect that reason provides no ultimate premises for practical reasoning. It may direct passion, but it can never tell us what constitutes a fitting object thereof.

One could put the point more strikingly and say that for Hume there is no practical reason.[8] This formulation goes well with the slave metaphor and other vivid statements Hume makes in assessing the power of reason. But those statements are easily misinterpreted, and it may be preferable to say simply that Hume's account of practical reason is wholly instrumentalist, in the ways I have illustrated. This view still allows reason a powerful influence on action. The motivational influence, through arousing and directing desire, is clear. However, since Hume acknowledges that we may be mistaken about (1) the nature or (2) the existence of an object desired, as well as about (3) how we may attain it, his account also makes room for reason to have a threefold normative role, even if the normative force of its directives is conditional on one's basic desires: an action may be said to be instrumentally unreasonable if it is based on a mistake of any of the three kinds just mentioned (and possibly in other ways, though Hume does not seem to deal with others).

To be sure, Hume says at one point, "Actions can be laudable or blameable; but they cannot be reasonable or unreasonable" (458). But in the context he is denying the non-instrumental causal power of reason, not the point that actions can exhibit mistakes due to the inadequate use or the insufficient influence of reason. Indeed, earlier he makes room for this point about action when he acknowledges two senses in which

> any affection can be called unreasonable. First, when a passion, such as hope or fear…is founded on the supposition of objects, which really do not exist. Secondly, when in exerting any passion in action we choose means insufficient for the design'd end, and deceive ourselves in our judgment of causes and effects.
>
> (416)

The same points apply to action; indeed, the second seems an even better indication of when an action is instrumentally unreasonable than of when a passion motivating action

is. Whatever his terminology, then, Hume's overall view provides the materials for an instrumentalist conception of rational action.

5 WEAKNESS OF WILL AND HUMEAN INTERNALISM

Suppose that weakness of will is construed as acting incontinently: roughly, as acting freely and intentionally (or at least knowingly) against one's better judgment, for instance in doing something which one takes to be contrary to what one ought to do. How might Hume account for it, or indeed for incontinence conceived in any similar way? He apparently did not talk of weakness of will using that phrase itself. But he certainly discussed the general issue, and there is much we can see from considering some of his main points.

In one passage, Hume seems unhesitatingly to affirm the possibility of a kind of weakness of will:

> Men often act knowingly against their interest: For which reason the view of the greatest possible good does not always influence them. Men often counter-act a violent passion in prosecution of their interests and designs: 'Tis not therefore the present uneasiness alone, which determines them. In general we may observe, that both these principles operate on the will; and where they are contrary, that either of them prevails, according to the general character or present disposition of the person. What we call strength of mind, implies the prevalence of the calm passions above the violent.
>
> (418)

Unlike Aristotle, Hume does not elaborate on the kind of knowledge involved when we act against our interest, but he seems to be thinking of some of the same kinds of cases Aristotle presented, in which violent passion prevails over one's better judgment.

Moreover, Hume's position at least leaves room for incontinence in such conflict situations. Consider competing practical reasonings, say one yielding the conclusion that I should not indulge in another drink, the other the conclusion that this indulgence would be delightful. Hume's view accommodates the possibility that I act, intentionally and freely, against the former, cool judgment, which, we may suppose, represents both my calm passions and my interest. In addition, where Hume speaks of "strength of mind" he is clearly not talking about intellectual strength, and we may reasonably suppose he means something like strength of will.

At least two problems remain, however, before we can formulate a Humean account of weakness of will. First, suppose that, as one might assume from Hume's point of view, knowingly acting against one's interest implies conduct about which one believes something to the general effect that it will yield less overall desire satisfaction than abstaining from the action in question. How can one so act? How could the strongest set of desires not prevail? Second, in the moral case (as the passage quoted from p. 457 indicates), Hume held a form of motivational internalism: for him, a sincerely held moral judgment, say that one ought to vote against a friend, implies (has internal to it)

motivation to act accordingly.[9] How, then, can we act against our moral judgments, as people surely do in certain cases of weakness of will?

The first difficulty is serious, but Hume has various resources for dealing with it. He may have in mind a notion of what is in one's interest which gives that notion some degree of independence of the concept of what one actually desires. In An Enquiry, for instance, he speaks of virtue as "desirable on its own account…merely for the immediate satisfaction which it conveys."[10] This seems to imply that something can be desirable because of satisfaction it would bring, even if the thing is not at the time desired by anyone for whom it is desirable (such statements also suggest that Hume is not unqualifiedly a valuational hedonist, since the relevant satisfactions need not be unqualifiedly construed as matters of pleasure; but I leave that issue aside). Since desire rather than perceived desirability is what actually determines action, we can fail to do the thing required by the latter—a thing that our best interest favors and a sufficiently strong will, assisted by the "calm passions," would bring about. What would in fact give us most desire satisfaction, or what we should rationally believe will do so, need not be an object of our strongest desire—or even of a prevailing desire.

6 HUMEAN INSTRUMENTALISM

Contrary to appearances, the notion of desirability here is still instrumentalist; it does not entail than anything is intrinsically good or that there are things we ought to desire other than what we already do desire or what would satisfy our desires. Rather, Hume may simply go beyond narrow (or categorical) instrumentalism, which makes desirability entirely a matter of satisfaction of actual desires, to broad (or mixed hypothetical) instrumentalism, which makes desirability a matter of both actual desires and suitable hypothetical ones. Hume can employ the broader instrumentalism, or at least appeal to the relevant hypothetical desires, in explaining weakness of will. For he might point out that reason need not always arouse desire for a thing the agent regards as (say) enjoyable or essential to avoiding pain—or at least a strong desire for it—when it tells us that certain conduct, such as abstaining from indulgence, would obtain the thing and hence is instrumentally desirable in the broad sense. Incontinent action may then occur because the stronger passion, though for the less desirable end, prevails in action.

On this view of incontinent action, reason fails to prevent it because there is no existing passion—or no sufficiently strong one—that it can direct against the incontinent action, which itself is motivated by some overriding actual passion. Actual desires direct action; but it may be assessed in part by appeal to hypothetical desires suitably related to actual ones, for instance desires likely to be formed by reflection on how to maximize satisfaction of one's present desires. Hume might, then, hold a narrow instrumental view of the explanation of action and a broad instrumentalist account of its assessment.

There is an analogy to Aristotle here. On the suggested Humean account of incontinence, its occurrence is possible because reason, like Aristotelian practical knowledge, is inadequately integrated into the agent's motivational system. One may, for example, realize that exercise would save one suffering in later years, yet simply fail to want to avoid that suffering enough to overcome one's resistance to undertaking the required regimen. Suppose my expectation of future suffering fails to arouse motivation

strong enough to produce abstinence, even though, if that suffering were an immediate prospect, I would have a desire strong enough to produce resistance. Then reason, as yielding the well-grounded expectation of future suffering, is insufficiently integrated into my motivational system. A narrow instrumentalism would, however, be unwarranted in criticizing the indulgent act, since it would maximize satisfaction of present desires. A broad instrumentalism, as I suggest Hume may perhaps be taken to hold, could justifiably criticize it.

Hume's resources for understanding weakness of will include his plausible point—which supports the broad instrumentalist reading—that "The same good, when near, will cause a violent passion, which, when remote, produces only a calm one" (419). (Some such idea may underlie the restaurateur's practice of presenting a beautiful dessert tray for viewing after the main course.) At least in the common cases of weakness of will in which one acts incontinently for immediate pleasure (or immediate avoidance of pain), there often is what Hume would call a violent passion. This could well prevent one's reason, manifested in instrumental beliefs, from having its usual effect of evoking desire, or at least sufficiently strong desire, to experience the less immediate but greater desire satisfactions that are to be ultimately obtained through abstention.

There is a further parallel with Aristotle. For here, too, it seems that reason may be obscured by passion, particularly violent passion. That it is the master who interferes with the servant does not make the resulting action acceptable as a way of furthering the master's ends. Violent masters, or masters in a violent state, are certainly no more worthy of service than calm ones.

Given these two resources for dealing with the first difficulty, our finding a Humean solution to the second one—how an internalist view of moral judgment would allow one to act against such a judgment—should not be as hard, provided Hume is not taken to hold strong internalism, that is, the view that (sincerely) judging that one (morally) ought to do something implies that one desires, on balance, to do it, i.e. has a desire for it stronger than one's desire (or set of desires) for things that one believes to be (individually or collectively) incompatible with doing it. (A similar internalism can be formulated for moral beliefs, but we need not consider other formulations here.) If, for instance, I judge that I ought not to insult someone, Hume's position implies that I have some motivation to abstain. It does not imply that this motivation is stronger than my desire to retaliate (by the insult). This vengeful motivation may represent my desire on balance. Moreover, especially if this desire is violent, it may prevail over my recognized best interest, in the sense of what I see would be the greater desire satisfaction I would achieve by abstaining.

There is, however, at least one textual obstacle to this account of Hume's resources for dealing with weakness of will. In the quoted passage concerning the influence of reason on action, Hume says, of judgments that excite a passion by "informing us of the existence of something which is a proper object of it," and of judgments that afford us "means of exerting any passion," that "These are the only kinds of judgment, which can accompany our actions, or can be said to produce them in any manner" (459, emphasis added). These points raise a problem. They make it appear that "Hume failed to notice [a third instance] in which reason shows us that the achievement of a desired end will probably result in the occurrence of something which we have a greater desire to avoid."[11] On my interpretation, it appears that this third sort of judgment, a kind that is at

least implicitly comparative, can in some sense accompany action. Indeed, acting against such a judgment can be a paradigm of incontinence.

This difficulty can be resolved in the light of the following points about Hume's understanding of the relation between judgment and motivation.

First, in the passage in question Hume is talking about judgments that excite a passion or instrumentally direct action, as though he had in mind only passions which actually yield action. In the case of weakness of will, however, whatever passion there is on the side of one's "interest" does not yield action; hence, judgments representing one's interest would not be included under his description of those that "produce" action.

My second point is that, on my interpretation, Hume does not deny that a passion can be aroused by a judgment or belief to the effect that a satisfaction would be lost if one did a certain deed. All he need deny in order to solve the problem is that the judgment must arouse a passion as strong as the one on which the agent acts. He makes room, for example, for reason to identify—even in a single situation of decision—objects of both calm and violent passions. A common case of weakness of will can occur when the latter passions prevail over the former.

Third, we might stress Hume's notion of judgment that "can accompany" action. Acting knowingly against one's interest does not require and is harder to understand if we assume—one's rehearsing the very judgment against which one is acting, say the judgment that indulging in another double Scotch now should be avoided on pain of a hangover later. Knowingly acting against one's interest simply requires holding the betrayed judgment and having it sufficiently in mind to act against it rather than merely inconsistently with it, as one might do by unknowingly imbibing vodka thinking the drink to contain only spicy tomato juice.[12] This is acting in a way against the content of one's judgment, since one does the proscribed thing; but it represents cognitive error, not incontinence.

Finally, if we are to make good sense of either Hume's notion of knowingly acting against one's better judgment or his apparent references to deliberation in the genesis of action, it is difficult to see how we can avoid taking him to make room, if only implicitly and in assessing the rationality of actions, for judgments concerning the effects of one or another action on the satisfaction of desires besides the ones that actually produce action.

7 CONCLUSION

Enough has now been said in interpreting Hume to suggest where he stands on the important questions guiding much of this book. But, more than with Aristotle, I must be conjectural regarding his overall conception of practical reasoning.

First, for Hume, a rational person answers a practical question within the constraints of a foundationalist psychology of motivation and an instrumentalist conception of rational action. Thus, above all, agents in some way consider what they want (though not necessarily under a description specifying wanting) and seek appropriate means to getting it. If the question is, say, how to reconcile quarreling friends (which we may suppose one wants to do for its own sake), one considers the situation, draws on one's experience to arrive at various means of reconciliation, and selects a promising one. Whether the action must emerge from reasoning, as opposed to arising in a simple non-inferential way from

the desire and the belief, Hume does not make plain. But particularly if our standing habits or relevant experiences do not make the choice automatic, Hume could allow that such an action might emerge from practical reasoning and even from a stretch of deliberation.

Second, to act for a reason, on Hume's view, is to act instrumentally in the service of a desire. This is not to say that he called desires reasons; the point is that he took desires to provide purposive explanations of why, and in a way, at least, to be reasons why one acts and grounds for action that can render it rational in the way he took optionally serving one's calm passions to be. Actions for a reason include the special case in which one acts for pleasure, though Hume does not address specifically how the relevant means here—simply doing the thing in question—is constitutive.[13] The desire may, but need not, be for pleasure. But it is either a desire for something wanted for its own sake or traceable to such a desire through a chain of instrumental beliefs. Here Hume is, I think, Aristotelian. On Hume's overall position, practical reasoning may or may not be necessary to acting for a reason, but the most important textual evidence, including his emphasis on the pervasive influence of habit in action, suggests that, in his considered view, it is not necessary.

Third, intentional actions are explainable in the motivational structure just described. All are performed in the service of one or more desires. Hume seems to be both a behavioral and a motivational foundationalist. Weakness of will is possible in this structure, with or without practical reasoning in the genesis of the incontinent action or of the practical judgment it contravenes. Weak-willed action is explicable because the desire (s) for something against one's better judgment can outweigh whatever desires support that judgment. This seems possible in at least two cases. First, calm passions that motivationally support practical judgment may be overridden by violent ones. Second, such judgment may be based on an assessment of one's best interest, say of what would be desirable in the future, and a judgment of this kind may lack support from any actual desires.

Fourth, in describing what mediates between reasons and actions based on them, Hume mentions perception, say of the waters we judge will engulf us if we proceed. But his framework for understanding action allows that drawing a conclusion of practical reasoning, such as the conclusion that we must not enter the water, may also mediate. His overall view seems to be that the central mediating factor is some event, typically perceptual or volitional, that brings into clear view, or moves one towards, something one takes to be a means to realizing the desires preponderant in the situation of action. Where the agent acts upon the external world, this event is presumably perceptual. The event might be simply seeing fruit; and given an appetite for fruit, taking some might follow straightaway upon perceiving it. For simple bodily action, such as moving a limb, the mediating event might be volitional. It may be, moreover, that Hume took volitions invariably to mediate between motivation and intentional action, as suggested by his saying that "The motion of our body follows upon the command of our will."[14]

Fifth, if acting for a reason fits into the Humean framework as suggested, it is clear how, for Hume, such actions can be seen to be at least prima facie rational in the light of the motivating reason (s). A motivating reason is conceived as a desire, and an action for that reason is, in the agent's view, a way (or possible way) to satisfy that desire. From the point of view of instrumental rationality, this will make the action prima facie rational;

for the only constraints on rational action concern its suitability for overall desire satisfaction.

There is, then, a sense in which Hume's conception of rationality is functionalist: the function of reason, and, I have suggested, implicitly of action, is to serve intrinsic desire. The rationality of our intrinsic desires is not in question. As an instrumentalist about rationality, he leaves little if any room for their assessment in this dimension, though he might well have considered them unreasonable if it is impossible to realize them, or at least if the agent should see that this is impossible.

Indeed, I have argued that he might have been a narrow instrumentalist in his psychology of action, taking all action to be explainable in terms of means-end relations to actual desires, and a broad instrumentalist in his normative theory of action, taking the rationality of action to be determined both by actual desires and by hypothetical ones suitably related to the former. Whatever the kind of instrumentalism best attributed to Hume, he does not give us a calculus, say a maximization of expected desire satisfaction (utility) view on which a rational action is one that scores at least as high in expected utility as any alternative the agent has. That is, if one (1) notes the (subjectively) possible (relevant) outcomes of each alternative action—say for the action of drinking whiskey, the pleasure of the drink and the pain of the hangover—(2) multiplies the positive or negative satisfaction value of each outcome by the probability one takes that outcome to have, and (3) adds these products, then the rational thing to do is an alternative with the highest total score. But this view of rational action, though it is not quite implicit in Hume, seems consistent with at least most of his main points.[15]

As to the sixth general question I have represented as important for an account of practical reasoning—concerning the degree of unity between reasoning directed to practical questions and reasoning directed to theoretical ones—it is difficult to see where Hume stands. He stresses that reason is concerned with the true and the false, but he also goes to great lengths to show how, through its relation to desire, reason influences action. When it does, and when reasoning occurs as an element in reasons influencing action, Hume gives us no good grounds for thinking that the reasoning must differ in kind from reasoning on theoretical matters. It might, after all, simply identify, in the major premise, something as desired, and, in the minor, assert that some action is a means to it. He does seem to regard the practical case as at least typically involving probable reasoning, in part because it is concerned with causal relations and, more important, because the practical arguments he apparently had in mind (and it is difficult to formulate Humean practical arguments) do not in general seem deductive. But without a definite range in which to locate the major premise, it is hard to see how, in detail, he would draw the contrast.

There is, then, much that the text enables us to say about Hume's conception of practical reasoning and, especially, about his view of the operation of reason in practical contexts. But on some points we are forced to offer several possibilities and speculate on which best represents his overall views. Moreover, we are left with a number of pressing questions about practical reasoning. Is Hume correct in denying that reason has normative authority in practical matters? On the other hand, does moral judgment have the kind of motivational force that his internalism posits, and, if it does, would this prevent such judgment from being in some sense based on reason? And if he differs from Aristotle, who offers a more detailed dynamic account of the genesis of action—through, for instance, his discussion of the chain of causation terminating in choice and effective

through perception—how might the apparently volitionalist dynamic view that seems to fit Hume's overall position be developed, and how plausible is such an account? These issues will be treated in Part II, which defends a conception of practical reasoning and rationality quite different from Hume's and more like Aristotle's.

Hume is, to be sure, like Aristotle in many important respects, particularly in his conception of the structure as opposed to the content of motivation. But Hume's views about the scope and power of practical reason are very different from Aristotle's. Its normative as well as its motivational power is wholly instrumental. Ultimate ends cannot be evaluated as reasonable or unreasonable, except, possibly, insofar as achieving them can be made a means to realizing other such ends, in which case, unlike happiness as Aristotle represented it, they are not purely ultimate. Moreover, for the many actions to which Hume would apply psychological hedonism, their believed contribution to the agent's pleasure or pain is the only Humean basis of their rational appraisal.

Three
Kant and the autonomy of practical reason

Immanuel Kant wrote voluminously about practical reason, but his view of practical reasoning, like Hume's conception of it, is largely implicit. It must be formulated through a study of his examples in the light of his doctrines about reason in relation to motivation and action. For this purpose, the most important text is his Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals (the Grundlegung or Groundwork) and this will be my primary, though not my exclusive, Kantian source. In addition to representing his overall position on the relevant problems, it is important and very influential in its own right. It is probably Kant's work most closely associated with the Kantian account of practical thinking in general. It is that account which, in part, this chapter attempts to formulate.

1 PRACTICAL REASON IN THE MORAL SPHERE

Kant's most developed examples of practical thinking are in the moral domain. A central element in that domain is good will. He opens the first section of the Groundwork with the thesis that "Nothing in the world—indeed, nothing even beyond the world—can possibly be conceived which could be called good without qualification except a good will."[1] A good will, moreover, is intrinsically good: "not because of what effects it accomplishes or because of its adequacy to achieve some proposed end; it is good only because of its willing, i.e., it is good of itself" (394). Now reason is what determines the goodness of the will; for

> [R]eason is given to us as a practical faculty, i.e., one which is meant to have an influence on the will. As nature has elsewhere distributed capacities suitable to the functions they are to perform, reason's proper function must be to produce a will good in itself and not one good merely as a means, for to the former reason is absolutely essential. This will must indeed not be the sole and complete good but the highest good and the condition of all others, even of the desire for happiness.
>
> (396)

Reason, then, through its influence on the will, is the central underpinning of goodness, although there are apparently other (intrinsic) goods besides good will, which is not "the sole and complete good."

If good will is not the only thing that is intrinsically good, it is the only thing unconditionally good. Kant does not explicate this unconditionality. But from the contrasts he draws we might suppose that one basis of the unconditional goodness of good will lies in this: unlike pleasure or even happiness, it cannot be undeservedly

possessed. It is itself the condition for the worthiness to possess it.[2] As one would expect from the centrality of good will among the things that are good, moral goodness in persons is in some way traceable to the will and hence to practical reason; a thing's goodness does not consist, for example, simply in its contribution to happiness. If we can understand how moral goodness is traceable to the will, we shall be in a position to locate practical reasoning in Kant's philosophy of action.

In order to connect morally good actions—those having "moral worth"—to the will, we should note what Kant introduces, in the first section, as the three propositions of morality. The first, which he often reiterates, is that "to have moral worth an action must be done from duty" (400). This is in part an explainability requirement: the action must be explainable as performed in order to fulfill a duty.[3] The second is that

> An action performed from duty does not have its moral worth in the purpose which is to be achieved through it but in the maxim by which it is determined…the principle of volition by which the action is done…. The third principle, as a consequence of the two preceding, I would express as follows: Duty is the necessity of an action executed from respect for law.
>
> (400)

Roughly, our duty is what we must, from respect for (moral) law, do; doing one's duty has moral worth only if the action in question is done from duty; and the reason for this condition of moral worth is that only such actions arise from the volitions ('willings' or perhaps intendings) which constitute a good will and thereby enable its unconditional goodness, as expressed in a morally sound maxim, roughly, principle of action, to endow those actions with moral worth. Actions done from duty stem from good will. They can thereby inherit moral worth from the goodness of the volitional elements underlying them.

What, then, is it to act from duty? Kant's answer is evident in his contrast between acting in accordance with duty and acting from it. Most people, he says,

> preserve their lives according to duty, but not from duty. But if adversities and hopeless sorrow completely take away the relish for life, if an unfortunate man, strong in soul, is indignant rather than despondent or dejected over his fate and wishes for death, and yet preserves life without loving it and from neither inclination nor fear but from duty—then his maxim [his principle that even in such circumstances it is his duty to preserve his life] has a moral import.
>
> (398)

As I understand Kant, the action in question may be taken to be preserving one's life; it need not be conceived as preserving-it-from-duty conceived as a kind of aggregate of motivation plus behavior. To see this, note that "preserving it from duty" reports both the action and its explaining motive. It answers two different questions—indeed, two that Kant distinguished: "What did the agent do?" and "From what motive did the agent do it?"

Granted, Kant sometimes speaks as if specifications of operative motives belonged in the crucial act description, as they may seem to in certain Kantian principles and maxims, for instance the "law" that an agent "ought to promote his happiness, not from inclination but from duty" (400). But I do not think the view that specifications of motives belong in the crucial act descriptions is supported by the most plausible account of the relation between Kant's overall position in the Groundwork and his four famous examples in 422–4.

It is important to see that if Kant is read as taking motivational specifications to be part of act descriptions, then on the plausible assumption that our (direct) duties are to do things which are under direct voluntary control (roughly, performable at will), we should take him to hold an implausible view: that agents have such control over the motive from which they act, in the sense that they can bring about at will their acting on a particular motive, or at least on one motive from a perhaps limited range, such as the set of their present motives satisfiable by the action they are considering. It is not clear that he held this, and his overall view does not require it. His view may require, and is more plausible if taken to presuppose, that by and large we have only indirect voluntary control over such motives, for instance the capacity to cultivate both certain other-regarding motives and a tendency to act on them.[4]

We might say, then, that what is essential for the moral worth of an act is not that the agent determine its having the right motive, but that the right motive determine it. The crucial point is apparently that (considerations of) duty be both what provide a motive to perform the act and constitute the agent's actual reason for performing it. This is why Kant stresses the contrast between actions motivated by duty and those motivated by inclination or fear. It is not enough that the agent have a motive of duty, say an awareness of a duty or even a respect for duty; the action must be based on duty in the sense that it is performed for the relevant reason of duty.[5]

Kant's example is particularly apt for illustrating the idea because the agent seems both to be using reason to arrive at what his duty is and to be consciously pursuing that duty against his wish for death. This attempt is an expression of the autonomy of the rational will against the heteronomy of ignoble inclination. Even if there is no such conflict, however, acting on a maxim seems a clear case in which it would be natural to engage in practical reasoning. Let us consider how, in other Kantian examples, practical reasoning might occur.

2 PRACTICAL REASONING AND INTENTION IN THE APPLICATION OF THE CATEGORICAL IMPERATIVE

In illustrating his fundamental principle of morality, the Categorical Imperative, Kant gives four famous examples. In one formulation, the principle is this: "Act only according to that maxim by which you can at the same time will that it should be a universal law" (422), hence a principle that is followed by everyone.[6] One example concerns a man who needs to borrow money and knows he will not be able to repay it:

> [H]e also sees that nothing will be loaned him if he does not firmly promise to repay…. He desires to make such a promise, but he has enough

> conscience to ask himself whether it is not improper and opposed to duty to relieve his distress in such a way. Now, assuming he does decide to do so, the maxim of his action would be… When I believe myself to be in need of money, I will borrow money and promise to repay it, although I know I shall never do so…. He changes the pretension of self-love into a law and then puts the question: How would it be if my maxim became a universal law? He immedi-ately sees that it could never hold as a universal law…. For the universality of a law which says that anyone who believes himself to be in need could promise what he pleased with the intention of not fulfilling it would make the promise itself and the end to be accomplished by it impossible.
>
> (422)

This example suggests what sorts of premises Kantian practical reasoning has. Clearly the agent—S, let us say—is reasoning; and if S decides to make the false promise, then the major premise, on Kant's view, would be the maxim Kant states, and the minor premise would be the instrumental proposition that making an insincere promise to repay the money to be borrowed will get one that money. Moreover, Kant suggests that both S's decision to act, and, later, the action itself, would be based on this maxim. It would be so based because the intention with which S acts is to deceive by making an insincere promise, and what motivates both that intention and the promise which is its object is the desire to borrow money and the belief that such a promise is the only way to do so.

The role of S's intention (or at least primary intention) is especially important here. That intention reveals what description of the action is crucial in determining on what maxim S acts. We might call this Kantian view the descriptive primacy of intention. If, for instance, one hands a creditor money with the intention of fulfilling a moral duty to repay it, one is—given a suitable commitment to a maxim that one should repay money one owes—acting on that maxim; whereas if we repay it simply with the intention of avoiding punishment, no moral maxim underlies the action. Our maxim might instead be that one must repay borrowed money if this is required to avoid punishment.

Kant does not make clear how a moral maxim itself must figure in the genesis of a moral action, but much of what he says suggests that acceptance of a maxim partly underlies both the crucial intention and the resulting action. The idea is roughly that the action is intended under a description, such as "fulfilling a moral duty to repay," or at least under a concept expressible by such a description, and thereby intended in a way that brings the action under the maxim. In our example, commitment to the maxim is at least part of what produces the intention to fulfill the duty to repay; and because the action is performed with (on the basis of) that intention as grounded in the maxim, the action has moral worth.

The example is typical of intentional action as Kant conceived it. He apparently took intentional action in general (or at least the kind that is in some sense deliberate) to be governed by maxims, at least in a tacit way— he did not think that all intentional action requires reciting them. He says, for instance, that "The will is thought of as a faculty of determining itself to action in accordance with the conception of certain laws" (427) and that maxims—which he takes to be subjective expressions of laws (or at least of certain

kinds of them)—"arise from desires and inclination under the cooperation of reason" (427).

Kant even goes so far as to speak of intentions as "maxims of the will" (435), and he holds that "in the use of means to every end I should restrict my maxim to the condition of its universal validity" (438). His view seems to be that the will moves us to action only if some principle informs it: the principle figures, at least tacitly, in the content of, or perhaps as a presupposition of, the intention to do the thing in question; and if we do it with that intention, we tend to take our doing it to realize the principle. If Kant did not regard all intentional action as rule-governed in this way, he at least so regarded a huge range of cases, including both moral and prudential action, and apparently the entire category of rational action.

There may, of course, be more than one maxim applied by an agent to the same situation, say a maxim of morality and one of prudence. If so, both may be reflected in the content of the crucial intention or—though this seems less likely—Kant might suppose that such an action is performed with two or more intentions, each reflecting a different maxim. But if the agent acts on two maxims, then Kant's position would seem to imply that the action is moral only if the role of the non-moral intention is such that the action is still from duty, whatever else may jointly influence it. This point is speculative, however, since Kant did not treat such cases in detail and usually assumed that for each intentional action that is to be morally assessed there is just one intention with which it is performed, and its content is either moral or not, as opposed to moral and prudential. As he says in speaking of actions grounded on a sound moral principle, "What is essentially good in it [the action] is the intention, the result being what it may" (416).

It is less clear what the conclusion of Kantian practical reasoning is supposed to be, but Kant is certainly talking as if it is a judgment appropriate to underlie both deciding to do the deed and the doing of it. In his fourth example he actually embeds the maxim in what appears to be a judgment of what one will do. He represents an agent who intends to practice indifference rather than do benevolent deeds as concluding (or at least closing) his deliberation with the thought, "I will not take anything from him or envy him; but to his welfare… I have no desire to contribute" (423). Having this thought is not merely predicting what one will in fact do, while disavowing desire. It is the expression of (1) an intention, or even a resolution, regarding what, as a matter of policy, one should do, (2) disinclination to contributing to the needy ("have no desire to" in such contexts commonly means "desire not to"). In Kant's first example, moreover, the agent's question to himself is "whether it would not be contrary to his duty to himself to take his own life" (422). Given his "despair" that motivates his asking the question and inclines him to act on his answer to it, we can suppose that even if the answer his reasoning yields is that it would not be contrary to duty, that answer will obliquely express an intention to act accordingly (to dispatch himself). If the answer is positive, it will of course be a statement of duty (which is to abstain).

To put the point broadly, Kant apparently takes the conclusion of practical reasoning to be a judgment favoring the action that the minor premise represents as fulfilling the maxim contained in the major. The major premise might even contain the Categorical Imperative itself, or at least an approving reference to it, since an agent might take a specific action to be required by it (through a specific imperative that passes its universalizability test) and might thereby conclude in favor of so acting.

To be sure, in a situation of difficult moral decision, one would typically settle on a specific action only by first applying the Categorical Imperative to arrive at a subsidiary principle. One might, having done this, subsume the projected obligatory action under the master principle itself. Thus, in deciding which of two students to aid when there is time to help only one, I might frame a description of their degree of need and my relation to them, formulate a universalizable principle expressing a priority of one kind of case over the other, and judge that in such cases I should aid the less advanced one. I might then act accordingly, and might or might not think of my action as according (indirectly) with the Categorical Imperative itself. But I would at least be acting from the subsidiary moral principle.

When practical reasoning is genuinely moral (and not just couched in moral terms), the conclusion will be a judgment of obligation or duty, to use the term more common in translations of Kant. The judgment will be based on premises the agent takes to show that there is an obligation. If the reasoning is not moral, the conclusion is an expression of intention, of resolution, or perhaps just of strong motivation, as in the indirect expression of aversion, "I have no desire to expend my energies doing deeds of charity." In any of these cases, one's drawing the conclusion can, given one's acceptance of the premises, explain both why one decides to do the thing in question and, normally, why one does it.

Practical reasoning so conceived may be viewed as having a means-end structure, provided we include constitutive means. Consider preserving one's life despite depression, and let this be from the sense of the duty to do so. Preserving one's life is not an ordinary causal means to fulfilling that duty; it constitutes fulfilling it. Kant also seems to envisage practical reasoning that is both outside the moral sphere and concerns ordinary causal means. Speaking of happiness, he says:

> To secure one's own happiness is at least indirectly a duty…. But the precept of happiness is often so formulated that it definitely thwarts some inclinations, and men can make no definite and certain concept of the sum of satisfactions of all inclinations which goes under the name of happiness. It is not to be wondered at, therefore, that a single inclination, definite as to what it promises, can outweigh a fluctuating idea, and that, for example, a man with the gout can choose to enjoy what he likes and to suffer what he may, because according to his calculations at least on this occasion he has not sacrificed the enjoyment of the present moment to a perhaps groundless expectation of a happiness supposed to lie in health.
>
> (399)

The man described here calculates the pleasure of indulgence and the possible bad effects of it and concludes that he should (or will) "enjoy what he likes." Kant speaks of this as a case in which "the universal inclination to happiness" determines the agent's will. Thus, despite the presence of a duty to secure his happiness, the action is not performed from that duty, and hence is not of moral worth even if it happens to conform to the agent's duty.

In addition to calculation, the case also exhibits deliberation; for the agent both calculates and assesses the effects of his various options. Presumably he acts from a maxim, accompanied by an underlying desire, that he should enhance his pleasure. His

minor premise, in the reasoning that leads to his action, might be something like: having this rich meal will produce enjoyment without seriously impairing my health. His conclusion might be to the effect that he should (or will) take the food. The case might also exhibit weakness of will, but I leave that topic for section 4.

3 THE MOTIVATIONAL AND NORMATIVE POWER OF REASON

Following Kant, I have stressed the importance of acting from duty. An action's being performed from duty is a condition of its having moral worth. But acting from duty as opposed to other motives, such as a desire for pleasure, is possible only if duty—or the judgment that one has a duty or sense of duty—has motivational power. Kant's considered view seems to be that judgments of duty—roughly, judgments that an act is one's duty—do have such power (presumably by necessity). He is indeed an internalist regarding judgments of duty (and obligation), a deontic internalist.

Kant is, indeed, more than a (deontic) minimal internalist, one who holds that judgments of duty have some motivational power inclining the agent to act accordingly, but less than what I shall call a strong internalist, one who holds that judgments of duty yield overriding motivation to act accordingly. What he seems to hold is moderate internalism: the view that judgments of duty (or obligation) are sufficient (in the context) both to produce and to explain the action in question.

On the assumption that making a judgment of duty provides a motive of duty, we could also express Kant's internalism as a thesis about motives of duty, to the effect that judgments of duty entail motives of duty. Moreover, regardless of how we express the motivational component in his internalism, it is apparently an unmediated internalism, one that views the appropriate motivation as embodied in accepting the judgment, as opposed to a (less plausible) mediated internalism, an impure internalism that takes the motivation to be internal to accepting the judgment only in the weaker sense that it is in some (indirect) way entailed or otherwise implied by accepting it. Such mediation might occur where, say, a desire to keep one's promise is implied in judging it to be a duty, not because the desire is a constituent in accepting the judgment, but because as a moral agent one has a general tendency (possibly grounded in benevolence or even prudence) to want to do one's duty.[7]

Since the maxims of duty are both derived from reason and also motivating, Kant's internalism commits him to the view that reason itself is motivationally practical, a position he in fact states. He says, for instance, that will is

> nothing else than practical reason. If reason infallibly determines the will, the actions which such a being [a rational being] recognizes as objectively necessary are also subjectively necessary. That is, the will is a faculty of

> choosing only that which reason, independently of inclination, recognizes as practically necessary, i.e., as good.
>
> (413, emphasis added)

Clearly, then, as rational beings, we can act on the basis of the dictates of reason. When we so act, the will is autonomous; when we act from inclination, it is heteronomous.

There is another respect in which reason is practical. It is normatively practical. Speaking of philosophical principles in general, Kant says that "reason alone dictates" them:

> These fundamental principles must originate entirely a priori and thereby obtain their commanding authority; they can expect nothing from the inclination of men but everything from the supremacy of the law and due respect for it…. Thus everything empirical is not only wholly unworthy to be an ingredient in the principle of morality but is even highly prejudicial to the purity of moral practices themselves.
>
> (425–6)

As for the fundamental principle of morality, the Categorical Imperative, Kant says of it not only that "it must arise from pure reason," but also that

> By this principle all maxims are rejected which are not consistent with the universal lawgiving of will. The will is thus not only subject to law but subject in such a way that it must be regarded as self-legislative and only for this reason being subject to the law of which it can regard itself as the author.
>
> (431)

As practical reason, will can be conceived legislatively, as the author of the Categorical Imperative and thereby of the subsidiary principles of duty. But since, in addition, "will is a kind of causality of living beings so far as they are rational" (446), it is self-legislative, and in that sense autonomous. It is also a powerful creative force. In one capacity, it provides the principles expressing its own rationality and moral commitments; in another, it provides its own executive powers. By virtue of these two capacities, rational beings are doubly autonomous.

I propose to call the twofold doctrine that reason is both motivationally and normatively practical the thesis of the autonomy of practical reason. First, reason need not derive motivation from any other source, such as inclinations to seek pleasure or avoid pain; second, it lays down, independently of empirical considerations, such as facts about human psychology, the basic moral principles which it motivates rational beings to obey.

Here Kant contrasts with Hume, who explicitly rejected the first view and implicitly denied the second. In one important way, however, Kant is like Aristotle, who apparently accepted the second view, though without specifying that reason lays down moral principles a priori (he may indeed not have employed the relevant notion of the a priori).

But Kant differs from Aristotle on the status of practical reason in at least two ways, which I take up in turn.

First, Kant maintains a stronger internalism. Aristotle held at most a weaker form, a form requiring only that practical judgment, including moral judgment, implies some degree of motivation to act accordingly. Indeed, in some passages Aristotle seems to endorse motivational externalism: the view that practical judgments motivate one only if they are appropriately connected with one's (independent) desires.[8] It is difficult to tell whether Aristotle is a kind of externalist, in part because the desire for happiness is both motivationally omnipresent and appropriate to explain, by virtue of one or another purposive chain, any intentional action. Hence, this desire will in some sense accompany—and will be difficult to sort out from—a practical judgment even if the judgment is in no way grounded in the desire. By contrast Kantian moral motivation is grounded in the agent's judgment, say that something is a duty here and now, whether or not the agent has an independent desire to act dutifully.

Second, there are various ways in which reason may be normatively practical, and Kant differs from Aristotle here too. Reason may be epistemically practical, in the sense that it provides knowledge (or at least justified beliefs) of normative truths. It may be legislatively practical, in the sense that it lays down such truths as standards of conduct. And it may be constitutively practical, in the sense that its deliverances create normative standards. Both Aristotle and Kant take reason to be practical in the first sense; but, unlike Kant, Aristotle apparently does not conceive it as practical in the second.

In part, this difference reflects the contrast between a virtue theorist and a rule theorist. Aristotle is not a rule theorist: right action, for him, flows from character suffused by reason, not from application of principles or maxims; and although this allows virtuous agents to use rules, rule following is not the basic notion underlying his conception of rational conduct. If reason can be, for Aristotle, legislatively practical, it is retrospectively so, in that it enables us to draw normative generalizations from previous experience. But in Kant reason is prospectively legislative: there is no moral action (at least in the strong sense of action that is both right and has moral worth) apart from following rules expressing our duties, hence no field of moral action not already performed in obedience to rules and thereby appropriate for retrospective generalization.

Regarding constitutive practicality, it is not clear that even Kant attributed this power to reason, but there are places where it might seem so, for instance in the third section of the Groundwork.[9] To be sure, even if dictates of reason somehow constitute normative standards, these dictates may still be based on premises, or at least supportable by propositions we can know. The constitution need not be written without cognitive raw materials. Nonetheless, although it is not clear to what extent Kant saw reason as normatively constitutive, he contrasts significantly with Aristotle, and sharply with Hume, by taking it to be both epistemically and legislatively practical.[10]

The practical reasoning that occurs in the background of moral action, then, is both subject to a priori standards of adequacy and capable of motivating action independently of inclination. Inclination may of course also yield practical reasoning; and when it does, ordinary desires apparently carry motivating force, though it is perhaps not inconsistent with what Kant says to read him as also holding prudential internalism, the view that judgments that one ought, prudentially, to do something have independent motivating force and hence, without the help of motivation from another source, can explain action

in accordance with them, or can at least produce an inclination to act in accordance with them.

Kant may not be committed, however, to the inferentialist claim that every intentional action emerges from practical reasoning. In places he talks as if he holds this, however, and he apparently does hold it for rational actions, at least if an action's being rule-governed, in the way he imagines rational actions are, implies practical reasoning in its genesis. In any case, he is committed to the correspondence thesis that a practical argument corresponds to every rule-governed intentional action. On this correspondence view, there need be no actual deliberation or calculation: the agent may act from duty, and certainly from inclination, even if the relevant maxim is simply presupposed and the action is in some sense automatic. But there is still a practical argument corresponding to the structure.

4 WEAKNESS OF WILL AND THE CONFLICT BETWEEN REASON AND INCLINATION

If Kant affirms the autonomy of practical reason as full-bloodedly as I have suggested, then at least in moral cases there is some question whether his view can accommodate weakness of will. Suppose I judge that it is my duty to keep a promise. If this judgment has motivating power sufficient to explain my doing so if I in fact keep the promise, how can it lack motivating power sufficient to produce the action, even when I have strong contrary inclinations?

One might think that Kant could simply say that, despite the power of reason, inclinations opposing it can motivate an agent more strongly. But in places he sounds like a strong internalist and seems to rule out this solution. In discussing the imperative to develop one's talents, for instance, he says of the agent in question that "as a rational being, he necessarily wills that all his faculties should be developed, inasmuch as they are given him for all sorts of possible ends" (423). If developing my faculties is my will and is thus backed by volition and presumably also by intention to act accordingly, how can I want more to do something contrary to that?

The answer might seem to lie in the difference between willing (or intending) that, in general, my faculties be developed and willing that some particular faculty, such as my piano technique, be developed. Here we would have a failure of volitional integration: owing perhaps to a failure of my motivation to extend from an end to a means, my overall will is not sufficiently integrated into one system of volitions regarding particular actions. But Kant cannot unqualifiedly appeal to this view because of his doctrine that "Whoever wills the end, so far as reason has decisive influence on his action, wills also the indispensably necessary means to it that lie in his power" (417–18). If I know I need practice for my technique, and (without losing this knowledge from view) will to develop that technique, I must surely will to practice, even if I intensely dislike the exercises. Thus, the problem of accounting for incontinence persists.

There are at least two solutions open to Kant. One is to say that even what one quite specifically wills need not be motivationally overriding; hence, contrary motivation can prevent one's doing what one wills. This would locate weakness of the will in its executive power and not in its conformity to reason. However, in Kant, as well as in most

other philosophers, before and after him, who use the notion of volition in dealing with weakness of will, volition is normally the immediate determinant of action, or at least taken to prevail in action unless the agent is prevented from acting. This move, then, is unlikely to be Kant's response.

Locating weakness of will in the suggested way has a further drawback. It seems to assimilate weakness of the will as normally understood, to weakness in the will. The first is a volitional failure to conform to reason and is consistent with ability to do otherwise; it is a deficiency of volitional content, not volitional power, a failure to will the right action rather than a lack of sufficient energy to bring about that action. A good Kantian example might be judging that one should punish one's child, yet failing to do so because one "cannot" overcome one's compassionate inclinations to let the matter pass with a scolding.

The second phenomenon, weakness in the will, is a matter of inadequate volitional power, a failure to produce the right action once it is willed. A paradigm case would be that of a decision to do something difficult but within one's capacity—say to move a boulder—followed by setting oneself to do it, yet failing to muster the effort to mobilize one's full power. The failure is not a result of failing to overcome opposing motivation, but rather of mustering the motivation or energy to meet a challenge. Fatigue or inertia may be the only obstacles. This is not the main kind of weakness that a theory of practical reasoning should explain. I think, then, that Kant would instead propose a second solution. He might note that it is only when reason has "decisive influence" on our action that we must will what we take to be an available necessary means to our end. Thus, weakness of will is, if not a species of irrationality, at least a failure of reasonable self-control. It is possible because of limits on the extent to which reason influences action.

I take this interpretation to be broadly Aristotelian, at least insofar as failure of integration is central to understanding Aristotle's views on weakness of will. In any case, the interpretation is supported by other passages in Kant. Commenting on what it is like to "observe ourselves in any transgression of a duty"—which Kant seems to conceive as at least sometimes a case of observing our own weakness of will—he says that

> since we regard our action at one time from the point of view of a will wholly conformable to reason and then from that of a will affected by inclinations, there is actually no contradiction, but rather an opposition of inclination to the precept of reason…. Although this cannot be justified in our own impartial judgment, it does show that we actually acknowledge the validity of the categorical imperative and allow ourselves (with respect to it) only a few exceptions which seem to us to be unimportant and forced upon us.
>
> (425)

This passage occurs in the context of the four examples and might apply, for instance, to neglecting a talent. Here, too, Kant's emphasis is on inclinations as affecting the will in competition with reason, presumably in a way that leads (with or without competing practical reasoning) to a volition, and thus action, that is contrary to a judgment one makes (or belief one forms) in accordance with the Categorical Imperative. On the other

hand, we "allow ourselves" the transgression; this suggests that Kant is not speaking of compulsion, but of something more a matter of insufficient exercise of will.

The text does not tell us whether the imagined case occurs following practical reasoning, or simply against the background of a judgment which may have been made either without practical reasoning or through practical reasoning occurring much earlier than the weak-willed action and no longer actively in the agent's memory. It appears that Kant is thinking of a situation in which the agent, who is after all considering a moral question, does do practical reasoning. In any event, Kant can certainly countenance weakness of will even where one has just inferred, from premises that clearly support it, a practical judgment against which one then acts.

Granted, if we were perfectly rational, weakness of will would not occur, nor would we ever act immorally, in the sense of performing acts with no moral worth; for our actions would be not only in conformity with reason but also based on it, and actions with both of these properties cannot lack moral worth: we would act from duty, hence in a morally creditworthy way (even if it is possible that, through no fault of our own, we fail to do a deed of the right type, as where we prescribe a medicine with unforeseeable bad side-effects). But Kant is certainly not imagining the offending agent as perfectly rational.

Although Kant's main interest in action is rooted in his concern to develop an adequate moral theory, he apparently allows for weakness of will in non-moral cases. The structure of his account would be as just indicated: the agent would act against a judgment (or belief) that accords with the relevant imperative, and the explanation would be one or another kind of influence by contrary inclination. If the imperative is one of prudence, for instance the agent might fail to heed its warning because of desire for immediate pleasure. Kant's gout example (cited above) might serve here.

To be sure, we cannot tell from Kant's description whether it is a case of weakness of will or simply self-indulgence, in the sense, roughly, of pursuit of pleasure in accordance with corrupt judgment, or without the agent's making any serious judgment, pro or con, regarding it (Kant's case sounds more like self-indulgence). But suppose that the man simply wants to nourish himself and draws the prudent conclusion that he should decline sweets in favor of fruit. Imagine that he then yields to his inclination and, trying to keep his prudential judgment out of mind by talking intently as he reaches for the pastry, takes several pieces. This is incontinent action that Kant could describe as such. It is not that moral principles, such as those concerning self-preservation, are irrelevant to the action; the point is simply that Kant's overall view allows for weakness of will where the agent does not consider a moral principle and acts against only a non-moral imperative.

If these points of interpretation are approximately correct, then Kant can explain some incontinent actions as due to a failure of volitional integration, others as attributable to obscured knowledge, still others as due to inadequately integrated knowledge, and some as combining all three defects. Weakness of will, moreover, may be moral or prudential or indeed a breach of any kind of normative standard. What marks the actions in question as instances of weakness of will is above all the agent's failure to conform the incontinent actions to reason.

5 THE UNITY OF PRACTICAL AND THEORETICAL REASON

I have already stressed that Kant conceives reason as practical. Is reason as it manifests itself in theoretical matters fundamentally the same faculty, and how is theoretical reasoning (which is paradigmatically what Kant calls speculative) different from practical reasoning?

In the Preface to the Groundwork Kant says:

> I require of a critical examination of a pure practical reason, if it is to be complete, that its unity with the speculative be subject to presentation under a common principle, because in the final analysis there can be but one and the same reason which must be differentiated only in application. (392)

The crucial difference in application Kant took to concern what he called the objects of the two uses of reason. As he said in the Lectures on Ethics,

> Philosophy is either theoretical or practical. The one concerns itself with knowledge, the other with the conduct of beings possessed of a free will. The one has Theory, the other Practice for its object—and it is the object which differentiates them…. Practical philosophy is such not by its form, but by reference to its object, namely, the voluntary conduct of a free being. The object of practical philosophy is conduct.[11]

It is important to see that in these passages (among others) Kant may be implying—and is certainly providing for—a twofold distinction: between the practical and theoretical aspects of reason as each appropriate to different subject matters, and between theoretical reasoning as undertaken in order to acquire knowledge and practical reasoning as undertaken in order to ascertain what to do, or at least as part of one's overall effort to determine what to do. Each distinction corresponds to a different kind of "application" of reason.

Take the first distinction. If we reflect on what moral imperatives are true, we are doing practical philosophy because we are concerned in some way with the voluntary conduct of free beings, whereas if we reflect on whether there is a necessary connection between cause and effect we are doing theoretical philosophy. Here, then, is a distinction of content.

What I take to be Kant's second distinction between the practical and the theoretical cuts across this one. The latter is a distinction of purpose: when he says that the object of practical philosophy is conduct, he has in mind, I think, more than its object conceived as its subject matter; he also has in mind philosophy done in order to guide conduct. Now one might reflect on what moral imperatives are true simply out of intellectual interest in ethics; in that case one's thinking might be described as practical in content and theoretical in purpose. To be sure, one's thought is not narrowly practical in content; it concerns action in general and not the options any specific agent faces or has chosen. Yet

even narrowly practical reflection need not be aimed at guiding action. We should also grant that there is a sense in which theoretical reasoning may be thought to guide belief formation. But although belief formation is an event, it is at least not normally an action.[12]

How should practical reasoning be located in relation to these two distinctions? If my sketch of Kant's conception of practical reasoning is correct, such reasoning is both contentually and purposively practical. It concerns voluntary conduct, but it is also undertaken to determine, or at least as an element in one's effort to determine, what to do. In part because it is undertaken in this way, and in part because it is subordinate either to an imperative one accepts or to an inclination one has, its conclusion is motivating and thus tends to produce conduct.

Insofar as it tends to produce conduct, Kantian practical reasoning is also genetically practical. It is like theoretical reasoning in being inferential,[13] but it differs from some theoretical reasoning in content and from all such reasoning in its purposive and genetic character. It is in virtue of this second, sharper difference that it represents a substantially distinct "application" of reason, one in which reason is, in the widest sense, instrumental—not in the instrumentalist sense that it is subordinate to "passion," but in the sense that it functions to guide conduct to ends worth seeking. Reason in this practical sense, if not prevented, expresses itself in conduct as well as in belief. [14]

6 CONCLUSION

Enough has now been said about Kant to show where his views, at least in the Groundwork, stand with respect to the guiding questions I have stressed in discussing Aristotle and Hume. In answering these questions in relation to Kant, I shall consider mainly the moral sphere, but it should be clear how to extend my points about his thinking to non-moral cases.

First, Kant is very explicit (at least in the Groundwork) about how a rational person answers a practical question. It is by reliance—quite possibly tacit in an experienced person—on an appropriate principle or imperative. Rational creatures are rule-following beings. Answering a practical question may demand, especially in a situation of conflicting moral considerations, that one formulate a new principle, where this requires bringing to bear many relevant facts about the situation. If the practical problem is moral, the overarching principle is the Categorical Imperative. But commonly a moral question, say whether to make an insincere promise to avoid a crisis, can be settled by reflecting on a subsidiary, but also unconditional, imperative concerning the kind of conduct at issue.

Second, to act for a reason is to act from that reason. So acting implies that the reason actually motivates the action and is sufficient to explain it. In the moral case, the reason must be one of duty. This is consistent with acting from a desire to do one's duty for its own sake, but it does not require this desire in particular; a desire to keep one's word might be the immediate motivator. But whatever specific motivator underlies acting from duty, it must be grounded in—and presumably must also be a constituent of—the agent's acceptance of the Imperative. The crucial motivation cannot be grounded in inclination, even if it can be accompanied by, and perhaps even supported by, motivation that is.[15] Moreover, if, when we act in accordance with duty, we have a non-duty-based inclination

to perform the action in question, either the inclination must play a limited role if any, or the action is not done from duty. Kant seems to rule out the inclination's being motivationally necessary or sufficient, but leaves open whether it can play some lesser motivational role. If it is present with a motive of duty, we may be unable, at least by simply willing this, to prevent its influencing the action. It may be unharnessable, at least by anything short of special efforts of self-intervention. Whatever Kant's view here, he maintains that we cannot in general know that an inclination has been unharnessed.[16] His paradigms of acting for a moral reason, then, are actions against inclination.

Third, the Kantian structure for explaining actions is a means-end framework in which constitutive means, as opposed to merely instrumental means, are a central element. It is to that extent like Aristotle's. But some of the ends are dictated by reason a priori. No such view seems to be expressed in Aristotle; Hume explicitly rejects this view; and the Kantian conception of action, in emphasizing motives grounded in the a priori application of reason, is radically different from Hume's thoroughgoing instrumentalism. Like both Aristotle and Hume, however, Kant leaves room for weakness of will; and for him, as for Aristotle and probably Hume, it exhibits a kind of irrationality. But whereas in Hume weakness of will simply represents the victory of one set of desires over another set, or over a judgment not backed by actual desires, for Kant it represents, at least in the moral case, the contravention of an end laid down by reason as normatively correct. There are normative as well as motivational practical reasons. The former are grounded in truth and discoverable by reason; they provide a normative basis of action; and they endow with moral worth actions that are performed from duty and thereby express commitment to an appropriate imperative.[17]

Fourth, on the question of what mediates between reasons and actions, Kant says little in the Groundwork. That work is not much concerned with the dynamics of action. But he certainly speaks of willing as if its occurrence can trigger action; and he leaves open a place for perception—say of opportunities to get what one seeks—to play a major role. Since practical reasoning as he conceives it concludes in judgment (or at least in belief formation), we may suppose that where actions arise from practical reasoning, a mental event of judgment or of belief formation will be available in the Kantian picture as a potential proximate cause of action, or at least of a decision or a volition which, in turn, leads directly to action.

Fifth, in exhibiting actions for a reason, and particularly moral actions, as rational in the light of the agent's reasons for them, Kant presents a powerful account. The actions can of course be instrumentally rational, in the sense that they appropriately contribute to satisfying the agent's rational desires. Beyond that, however, an agent's basic desire—or motive if 'desire' is too narrow a term—underlying the action may be laid down by an a priori and necessary principle, such as one licensed by the Categorical Imperative. The desire itself is thus rational; and in virtue of being based on that desire, in the sense of being performed from the motive constituted by the desire, moral actions and other actions for reasons may be said to be, as they are for Aristotle, telically rational: appropriately grounded in the pursuit of a normatively proper end. Moreover, since reason itself has motivating power sufficient to yield actions independently of inclination, those it does produce may be motivationally rational: appropriately grounded in a rational judgment.[18]

Sixth, these points bring us to Kant's account of practical reason in relation to theoretical reason. For they emphasize his unification of the two: the a priori truths that determine our duties are accessible to theoretical reason, yet their apprehension, at least when we apply them to our own potential conduct, motivates and is thereby practical. Reason operates as an a priori force, then, in both the domain of speculation aimed at simply ascertaining truth and the sphere of human conduct. This applies despite differences between the two uses of reason; and it holds even where reason is both motivationally practical—being a purposive force that tends to advance the aim of acting in response to concrete problems—and contentually practical—being concerned with what conduct is appropriate to free beings. In both the practical and theoretical spheres, moreover, reason, conceived as a capacity with causal power, may issue in an actual process of reasoning; and when the reasoning is practical, its motivational power need not derive from inclination.

However Kant might have filled out the details of his account of practical reasoning, he conceived it as a process in which reason applies maxims to specific actions and thereby guides conduct in the light of normative standards. For him, reason is both motivationally and normatively autonomous. Rejecting the externalist view that reason can motivate only with the aid of independent desire, and the instrumentalist view that allows practical rational appraisal only of means to ultimate ends which are beyond the reach of rational assessment, Kant gives us a ringing affirmation of the scope and power of practical reason.

There remain many problems to be explored in appraising Kant's conception of practical reasoning. One of his most important and most controversial theses is the view that reason can determine, a priori, a set of correct normative principles. One may grant this, however, and still question Kant's motivational internalism. And one may question whether, in order to be truly moral, an action must be performed from the appropriate motive, as opposed to being, say, performed with a suitable awareness that it is obligatory for the reason expressed by that motive. Supposing that it must be done from the motive, there remains the question whether it must arise from practical reasoning in the application of a moral rule; and similar questions arise about the way, if any, in which non-moral intentional action must be rule-governed.

These and related issues concerning the foundations of practical reasoning and the grounds of rational action will be explored at several points in this book. My concern will be more with Kant's position on practical reasoning than with his views on the status of practical reason, but that issue, too, will be considered. The problems I address will not in general be discussed in relation to his work—nor indeed to that of Aristotle or Hume. But it will be clear that the account of practical reasoning I develop is an attempt to respond both to many of the problems they raise and to a number that they leave unsolved.

Part II
Practical reasoning, practical arguments, and intentional action

Four
The varieties and basic elements of practical reasoning

Historically, practical reasoning has been conceived as a kind of means-end reasoning. This conception is prominent in Aristotle, and we saw it, though less explicitly, in Hume and Kant. But even in Aristotle the conception is not developed sharply, and we certainly have not noted any specific means-end pattern that all three take every instance of practical reasoning to have. The unifying notions I have used in characterizing practical reasoning also leave open just what pattern, if any, is unique to such reasoning. Those notions are chiefly (though not exclusively) these: first, practical reasoning is undertaken in order to determine, or at least plays a purposive role in determining (or in trying to determine), what to do; second, it expresses at least one reason for action (at least a reason of a motivational kind); third, it is, in some way, suitable for producing action that is in line with its content.

On all three counts, practical reasoning contrasts with theoretical reasoning, conceived as undertaken in order to ascertain, or at least as playing a purposive role in ascertaining (or in trying to ascertain), what is true. This is not to say that no instances of practical reasoning can be conceived (if with some artificiality) as having one of these properties; the point is rather that practical reasoning need not have any one of them and characteristically has none of them.

If these notions are, as they seem, among the main elements influencing one's conception of what practical reasoning is, it should be no surprise if there are many views of what constitutes such reasoning. There are indeed so many that it is difficult even to sharpen the threefold characterization just given without eliminating some cases plausibly taken to represent practical reasoning. This chapter will first explore the variety of cases and, in that light, formulate an account of what practical reasoning is. My aim is to be as inclusive as possible, yet also to bring out the features that seem, on historical and other grounds, to be central for practical reasoning. Fidelity to examples, however, is not my only concern. An adequate account of practical reasoning should also represent it in a way that enables us to give at least partial answers to the six questions I have stressed as central in locating practical reasoning in the philosophy of human action.

1 THE DIVERSITY OF PRACTICAL REASONING

A philosophical account of practical reasoning should exhibit the role that reason plays in human conduct, particularly though not exclusively through reasoning. This demand is reflected in the question (which I have raised for Aristotle, Hume, and Kant) of how

practical reasoning might exhibit the structure of acting for a reason so that actions for a reason can be seen as prima facie rational in the light of the agent's reasons for them. If this question guides our understanding of practical reasoning, it should be useful to group conceptions of it according to the kind of relation they take the agent to envisage between the action in question and the goal expressed in the content of the reasoning.

Using the variables 'S' to range over agents, 'A' to represent actions, and the Greek letter φ to stand for the agent's goal as expressed in the reasoning, we can schematically describe conceptions of practical reasoning. Perhaps the most widely illustrated are necessary condition schemata, which represent S as taking A to be necessary for realizing φ; sufficient condition schemata, which represent S as taking A to be sufficient for this; sufficient reason schemata, which represent S as taking A to be a (sufficiently) reasonable way—for instance a probable way, even if not necessary or sufficient—to realize φ; and rule schemata, which represent S as taking A to be required by a particular rule.[1]

Let me illustrate these schemata with examples, most of them from the literature. A necessary condition schema might be this one (from von Wright):

> (a) From now on S considers that, unless he does A no later than time t^1, he cannot bring about φ at time t.
>
> Therefore, no later than when he thinks time t^1 has arrived, S sets himself to do A, unless he forgets about the time or is prevented.[2]

A necessary condition schema might also specify, in its premises, a duty, as in many Kantian cases, or a need, purpose, plan, or various other things realizable by action. What is crucial is that the action be conceived by S as necessary for realizing whatever goal (φ in von Wright's example) governs the reasoning. S may certainly see other actions as also necessary, but if S is rational, no other action will be seen as an alternative way to realize the goal.

It is important to add that if the agent does not conceive A-ing at least as making it more likely that the goal will be achieved, the reasoning is at best not full-bloodedly practical. A-ing, then, must normally figure as a contributory necessary condition, not merely as a trivial one. Staying awake is necessary for achieving many of our goals, but—apart from such cases as those in which we are driving a long distance at night—we would not often take as a premise that we must stay awake. Doing so is a trivial necessary condition for writing a letter. Similarly, I know that a necessary condition for dining at a downtown restaurant is going downtown, but in practical reasoning about how to dine there tonight I would not consider going downtown if I think that the restaurant is booked for the whole evening. Doing this would not contribute to achieving my goal. It would be different if I thought I might find a friend there whose table has room.

A similar diversity of goals may be exhibited by sufficient condition schemata. Let us consider some. Here is a sufficient condition schema with an optative goal representation:

> (b) Let it be the case that I convince my examiner that I am a competent driver. If I signal for a turn, I will convince my examiner that I am a competent driver. [Hence]
>
> Let it be the case that I signal for a turn.[3]

S might also do practical reasoning in the service of a felt need:

> (c) I really need a peaceful visit in the country. Accepting their invitation for a weekend in the Catskill Mountains would be a good way to have such a visit, so I'll accept it.[4]

A sufficient condition schema may be developed beyond this, with the idea of representing the reasoning as valid, in the sense that the truth of the premises entails S's A-ing (and presumably also entails that in some sense S should A):

> (d) I want φ
> A-ing is a way for me to bring about φ under these circumstances. There is no other way to bring about φ now which is as preferable to me as, or more preferable to me than, A-ing.
> There is no sufficient reason for me not to bring about φ under these circumstances.
> Therefore, let me do A.[5]

The validity of practical reasoning is not always of much concern to philosophers in their discussions of practical reasoning. This is one reason why sufficient reason schemata have been taken to represent at least some practical reasoning. It has been suggested, for example, that the simplest schema is:

> (e) Doing A would be desirable (or, would bring about a desirable situation); I can do A; so I ought to do it.[6]

In other sufficient condition schemata, prima facie (pf) qualifications may be explicit in the premises, though the conclusion is unconditionally accepted because S presupposes that the reason expressed in the major is not overridden:

> (f) pf(x is better than y, [given that] x is a refraining from fornication and y is a fornication); A is a refraining from fornication and B is an act of fornication; so A is better than B.[7]

Where agents reasoning in this way take the prima facie superiority of refraining not to be overridden, it is natural for them to conclude unqualifiedly in favor of refraining and to act accordingly.

A common source both of perceived necessary conditions for a goal and of sufficient reasons for actions is rules. Here is a good representation of a rule schema, where the rule is formulated, as is common in practical reasoning, in the first person:

> (g) I'm in circumstances C.
> If I'm in C, then I ought to do A.
> So, I ought to do A.
> Therefore, I shall A.[8]

The description of circumstances may be complicated and may exhibit conflicting reasons. Take the case of Antigone. She believes she is in circumstances in which, legally owing to King Creon's prohibition, she ought not to bury her brother Polyneices and, religiously, she ought to do so. Her comparative rule is that in such circumstances the decrees of the gods override the laws of kings. She concludes that she ought, all things considered, to do what the gods decree, and resolves, "I shall bury Polyneices."[9]

At least one other notion of practical reasoning should be mentioned. It may lie in the background in some passages in Aristotle and in other historically important figures; but it has been explicitly articulated only in recent years. This is a functionalist view of practical reasoning, on which it is conceived in terms of what fulfills a certain role. Here is a description of the relevant role:

> Practical reasoning…is, basically, the process by which intentions are formed from beliefs and desires…[where] A subject's desire matrix includes his preferences about Aing, as well as his preferences about alternatives to Aing. Similarly a subject's belief matrix includes his beliefs about his opportunity and his ability to A.[10]

Thus, given Antigone's desires to obey the gods and to avoid breaking the law, together with her beliefs about her options, she forms the intention to bury Polyneices, and her forming it on this basis may be an instance of practical reasoning on the functionalist view whether or not she consciously reasons in the usual sense implying the drawing of a conclusion on the basis of one or more premises.

On the functionalist view, since any of the kinds of schemata just cited can play the appropriate role in representing the relevant beliefs and desires, no one kind is favored as uniquely fitting the functionalist notion of practical reasoning. It will indeed be an empirical question what kinds of schemata are typically instantiated when intentions are formed from beliefs and desires in the way supposed to constitute practical reasoning. Moreover, since intentions can be formed in this way without S's considering premises or a conclusion, the functionalist view does not require these propositions' being recited or even entertained in the weakest sense of that term, and it leaves open what sorts of processes are required, if indeed any conscious mental processes are required, for practical reasoning to occur.

Given the diversity of the examples just offered and those taken, or reconstructed, from Aristotle, Hume, and Kant, how can we generalize about practical reasoning? Let us start by trying to ascertain what are its basic elements. They are of three kinds, one corresponding to the major premise, one to the minor, and one to the conclusion. The major (broadly motivational) premise can surely be taken to represent a goal, even if the goal is not indicated by an expression of, say, a desire or intention, but only implicit in S's commitment to a rule, for instance that one must place religious obligation above legal obligation if they conflict. The minor (broadly instrumental) premise clearly represents a belief that indicates how S sees the action in relation to the goal, say as necessary or as sufficient for realizing it. The conclusion is the most difficult to characterize. I have cited diverse examples of conclusions, ranging from judgments of what one should do, to the optative (and artificial) "Let me A."

One obstacle to generalization is that we tend to think of the conclusion in a double role: as a proposition concluded on the basis of the premises (drawn from and supported by them), and as motivationally and normatively practical—it is motivationally practical in tending to produce, or to play a major role in producing, the action and thereby in solving the associated practical problem, say what to do given Creon's forbidding burying one's brother; and it is (apart from such defects as irrationality may cause in the reasoning) normatively practical by virtue of having content that in some way supports the action it tends to motivate.

To get a more detailed account of what practical reasoning is, we must observe some important distinctions and bring them to bear in understanding examples. One is the distinction, not always noticed, between practical reasoning and practical argument (in one use of 'argument'). A related distinction is between the conclusion of S's argument, say the judgment (conceived as a proposition) that S should A, and S's concluding that argument, say by judging, on the basis of the premises, that S should A. Judging so understood is a kind of affirmational mental event. These and other distinctions must be developed and connected with the notion of practical judgment. This is the main task of the next section.

2 PRACTICAL REASONING, PRACTICAL ARGUMENT, AND MEANS-END INFERENCE

Like 'argument', 'practical reasoning' may designate either a process or the corresponding abstract structure to which we refer when we logically appraise someone's practical argument (or, derivatively, reasoning process) as valid or invalid. It is essential that we distinguish between a practical argument as a structure of propositions (or other bearers of truth value) and the process of passing, in the way we do in reasoning, from the premises of such a structure to its conclusion. The same dual usage is exhibited by 'practical reasoning'. To avoid confusion, I generally use 'practical argument' for certain structures of propositions, 'piece of practical reasoning' for an instance of the corresponding process, and 'practical reasoning' for processes of that kind.

Similarly, we must distinguish between the conclusion of a practical argument, which I take to be a proposition, and what corresponds to it in S's reasoning: concluding that reasoning, by inferring the conclusion from the premises. Typically, the conclusion will be the kind of proposition we think of as a practical judgment, and the concluding of the reasoning with that judgment will be an instance of judging that the action in question is, say, the thing to do.

If, as I have suggested, we may think of practical reasoning in general as a way of responding to a practical question, a parallel distinction suggests itself. We might call the conclusion of my practical argument my (actual or possible) answer to the relevant practical question, and my drawing that conclusion my (specific) response to that question. My general response is the entire piece of reasoning, of which my drawing the conclusion is the terminating element. There are at least four categories in which responses to practical questions may fall. If one's drawing the conclusion is the making of a practical judgment, such as Antigone's judgment that she ought to bury Polyneices, the response is cognitive. If drawing the conclusion is forming an intention, the response

is intentional. If drawing the conclusion is making a decision (which apparently implies but is not implied by forming an intention), the response is decisional. Lastly, if drawing the conclusion is the action itself, the response is behavioral.

In making these distinctions, I have spoken of the process corresponding to the practical argument. It turns out to be difficult to say what the corresponding process is. Clearly it involves some kind of representation of the argument. We might call it a tokening of that argument, though no particular sentence-tokens, such as specific sentences of English, need be used: indefinitely many different sentences could express the relevant propositions. (We need not restrict the notion of tokening to linguistic items; but on the assumption that practical arguments are in principle linguistically expressible, only linguistic tokenings will be considered here.)

Moreover, surely one could express a practical argument, whether to oneself or aloud, enthymematically: one need not state or even entertain, for each of its propositions, a token of some sentence (or other representation) expressing that proposition. If S says, "That river is swift enough here to carry me away, so I've got to find another crossing," S has expressed practical reasoning even though S leaves tacit an instrumental premise (which S could formulate if necessary) to the effect that finding another crossing is required to avoid getting carried away. The example also illustrates the indirect way in which the goal—here, getting safely across—can be expressed in actual tokening of a practical argument. I leave open the difficult question of what mental events other than sentence tokenings might play the necessary representational role. The events must be in some sense conceptual, but the most typical representations, at least, and those of most interest here, are apparently linguistic.

In the light of these distinctions, we can consider the schemata set out above as candidates for representation of either the forms of practical arguments or, on the other hand, of the actual tokening process that partly constitutes a piece of practical reasoning. The former aim—exhibiting the abstract structures of practical argument—seems closer to what the proponents of the schemata had in mind in proposing them, and I want to consider the schemata primarily in that light.

If our goal is to frame a comprehensive schema that indicates a kind of argument appropriately thought to underlie all the plausible examples of practical reasoning, then none of the schemata is wholly satisfactory. Necessary condition schemata, for example, fail to do justice to cases in which S regards A-ing as sufficient (in the circumstances), but not as necessary, for realizing φ. Sufficient condition schemata have the converse defect. As is evident in more than one of the schemata we have considered, S need not believe that the action will definitely achieve (is sufficient for achieving) the goal.

Schema (e) is broad in leaving open the point of view from which S considers A-ing desirable but too narrow in implying that the goal must be viewed by the agent as desirable. Certain cases of weakness of will show that practical reasoning in the service of inclination need not contain a major premise to the effect that the thing wanted is desirable, unless—implausibly—seeing something as desirable is taken with such great breadth that it is implied by simply wanting it.

Schema (f) is restrictive in a different way, and some of our examples suggest that it is also too narrow. It requires, for instance, that S make a comparative judgment, if only between A-ing and not A-ing, and draw a comparative conclusion. But surely we can

simply judge that an action will realize a goal which we non-comparatively seek,[11] and on that basis conclude that we should perform it.

The rule-following schema is narrow in still another way. It requires one to conceptualize one's circumstances in relation to a normative rule. The minor premise is then taken to describe the action as a (constitutive) means to obeying the rule. Kant may well have so regarded practical reasoning; and apparently rational action, as he conceived it, is grounded in adherence—which may often be of a tacit kind—to an appropriate rule. But, granted that some rule can be formulated to correspond with any kind of goal—say the rule that good fruit is to be tasted by a hungry person who has it available—it does not appear that we are always acting on a rule when, in envisaging a goal, we do practical reasoning, arrive at a way to achieve our goal, and act accordingly.

To be sure, we may be disposed to justify (or even explain) such action by a relevant rule if the appropriateness of the action is questioned. But that would only show that such practical arguments are available in retrospective reconstruction, not that they represent the structure of our actual practical reasoning. The rule to which we appeal may be one we are formulating, or perhaps even accepting, for the first time as we think about the matter. Reflection on why we did something, or on why it was appropriate to do it, does not merely elicit beliefs we had at the time; it creates new beliefs and even new knowledge.

Suppose we now ask how well schemata (a) to (g) represent, first, the process of S's tokening the premises and, second, whatever it is that constitutes S's drawing the conclusion. From what has already been said, it is plain that none of them is fully adequate to capture the diversity of processes we surely want to call practical reasoning. Since not all such reasoning embodies (or even enthymematically presupposes) beliefs of the sort indicated by the premises of any one of the schemata, for example beliefs to the effect that A-ing is necessary for φ, no tokening of these premises need occur in every case of practical reasoning.

3 CONCLUSIONS OF PRACTICAL REASONING

Concerning the conclusions of the schemata, there is the deeper issue of what constitutes the concluding element. As mentioned in discussing Aristotle, some commentators take him to conceive the concluding element as action. In schema (a), for instance, it is setting oneself to act; and on the functionalist view cited, it is forming an intention which might be conceived as a minimal case of action. Let us first consider the view that the conclusion is an action, beginning with its resources for explaining what it is to conclude practical reasoning.

Recall Kant's gout example. Suppose it occurs to Jan that he would love some sweetbreads, and suppose he realizes that to get some he must go out before six. He might conclude that he should go out before six. Surely this is one way a piece of practical reasoning can be concluded: with a judgment in favor of a future action. Making this judgment, however, if it is an action as opposed to a mental doing not properly considered action, is not the action in favor of which the reasoning concludes: going out before six. Moreover, that action which, on the action-as-conclusion view, is supposed to be the conclusion need never occur; he might later change his mind and not go.

The action-as-conclusion view, then, does not provide a necessary condition for concluding practical reasoning. Practical reasoning can be concluded both with an element not plausibly considered an action and, in addition, without the agent's acting on it. The view also seems not to give us a sufficient condition for concluding it. Suppose Jan does not infer from the propositions in question that he should go to the store, but, thinking of the high cholesterol content of sweetbreads, instead resists their influence and does practical reasoning on the basis of which he resolutely adopts, as the conclusion of his reasoning, the judgment that he should not go. If, being weak-willed, he later goes in spite of himself—and without judging that he should—must we say that he nonetheless completed his practical reasoning though perhaps in a weak-willed way? Surely he has performed no action plausibly considered the conclusion of this reasoning: its conclusion is his judging that he should not go. He has (arguably) acted in accordance with one set of practical premises he accepts, the set representing appetite; but where it is his dietary self-discipline that yields his practical reasoning he stopped short of drawing the conclusion that his appetitional premises supported, and instead drew a different, incompatible one on which he did not act. The incontinent action he performs, then, arises (as Kant might say) from his inclination, not his reasoning.

One might reply that where S completes practical reasoning that favors A-ing, yet does not A, S at least decides to A, and decision is then the practical response that constitutes concluding the reasoning.[12] But surely the same range of examples already given argues that S can complete practical reasoning without even deciding to A. Susan might conclude that she should do some heroic deed, yet fail to decide to because, in view of the high risk, she gets cold feet and, from weakness of will, backs off.

Granted, the action-as-conclusion view has the virtue of closing the gap between practical reasoning and the action it indicates—by making the action itself the concluding element. This implication may indeed be the chief attraction of the view. But the view has serious defects. It makes prac-tical reasoning a hybrid process composed of what is, intuitively, reasoning and, on the other hand, action based on it. It leaves us with no adequate account of the concluding of that reasoning. And it fails to accommodate cases in which the action that should be the concluding element does not occur. There is of course more to be said on this issue. But rather than present further direct arguments against the action-as-conclusion view, I propose to develop an alternative account of practical reasoning that deals better with the relevant problems. Let us start by asking what, besides the action, might be the concluding element.

I have already proposed one important guiding idea: drawing the conclusion should be a good candidate for S's response to a practical question, both by having a content appropriate to answer it and in being such that accepting this content on the basis of the premises is a prima facie response to the question. The most general notion that seems to fulfill these requirements is that of judging. In particular, it is making a practical judgment, generically, a judgment that one should A. I say 'generically' because S's point of view may be moral or prudential or something else again. Moreover, we should include relativized judgments, such as "Given what I know, A-ing is best." For we want to include all the judgments favoring A such that, normally, S's accepting them on the basis of the premises can constitute responding to the practical question and expressing a reason for action.

To account more fully for the sense in which reasoning may be practical, we should identify something whose occurrence can also help both in explaining S's A-ing simpliciter and in explaining why S As straightaway. Practical judgment—strictly, judging—is appropriate here, since judging an action in the relevant favorable way often provides both kinds of explanation. Moreover, the view that such judging is the concluding element captures part of the Aristotelian idea that (successful) practical reasoning concludes in action, just as theoretical reasoning (typically) concludes in belief. For judging that, say I must repay a loan, is doing something, though it is probably not action under direct voluntary control, i.e. performable at will.[13]

Where we can judge at will, as where we are asked to judge the distance between two observable trees, judging does not imply believing the proposition judged. We may or may not accept such an estimate. Granted, if one holds the judgment that something is so—in the sense implying that it is true on one's judgment—this implies belief. But there are cases in which simply making a judgment does not entail belief. It may, for instance, be self-deceptive (in ways I shall later discuss). We may also judge that something is so on the basis of premises we do not believe, but have only supposed in order to see what they imply. Here we may judge only suppositionally that the inferred conclusion is true. But typically we believe the conclusion of our practical reasoning, just as typically we have the motivation and cognition expressed in its premises, and our judging the conclusion to be true thus tends to motivate and guide our action.

4 A COGNITIVE-MOTIVATIONAL CONCEPTION OF PRACTICAL REASONING

It is time to characterize practical reasoning in more detail. Keeping in mind the six theoretical questions that largely give the topic its special interest, we should proceed in the light of the threefold distinction made in section 2. There are (1) practical arguments as structures of propositions; (2) pieces of practical reasoning as appropriate tokenings of such structures; and (3) actions, as well as decisions, intentions, and other motivational states or events, based on practical reasoning. Moreover, (4) the conclusion of a practical argument is an answer to a practical question; (5) S's drawing that conclusion constitutes (in part) responding to a practical question; and (6) S's doing the thing favored by the conclusion is, from S's point of view, normally an appropriate solution to the practical problem motivating the question.

Let us first work towards framing a very inclusive schema for practical arguments. There is wide (though not universal) agreement that the major premise expresses (possibly by explicitly reporting) some want of S's, in the broad sense of 'want' encompassing any kind of motivation, extrinsic or intrinsic.[14] The relevant notion of expression must allow for the premises to express a want one does not have. (The term 'desire', though not fully synonymous with 'want', may often be used in place of it to express the same concept.) Just as, in presenting practical reasoning to others, S may lie, S may also mistakenly, for instance self-deceptively, express a want. In this way we can falsely attribute desires to ourselves.

What is essential to the adequacy of a tokening as a representation of the major premise is that the conceptual event in question may be properly taken to express

motivation. The same holds for the minor premise in relation to a means-end belief. Suppose Susan reasons: I must not make an insincere promise to do the job Ann wants done, and to avoid making such a promise must decline the payment she is offering me, so I had better decline. This may plausibly be considered practical reasoning even if Susan is in one way just "going through the motions" (somewhat as with suppositional reasoning) and in no sense wants to avoid making an insin-cere promise to Ann and even if, because Susan is deceiving herself about the conditions of the promise, she does not really believe that taking the money without certainty of succeeding in the job would imply insincerity.

At least two important points about practical reasoning are implicit in our discussion so far. One concerns conditions for reasoning; the other concerns conditions for the practicality of reasoning. First, as logical exercises and hypothetical cases illustrate, whether we are reasoning does not depend on whether we believe the premises and conclusion of the inferential process that constitutes our reasoning. Second, our reasoning can be practical in kind, as opposed to expectable upshot, even if we do not have the motivation or cognition expressed in our premises and conclusions. The latter case is of course atypical and bears comment.

Suppose S in no sense wants to realize the goal expressed in the major premise. The practical reasoning would then be motivationally empty: motivationally, S would be just mouthing the words, even if sincere in exploring the prospect it concerns; and the reasoning could not normally be expected to have A-ing as an upshot. Still, S could believe the premises and conclusion. Even apart from the possibility of false self-ascriptions of desires and beliefs, however, we should allow motivationally empty reasoning as a limiting case. It is largely analogous to theoretical reasoning from a proposition one does not believe to another proposition, which one may or may not believe. This occurs in certain cases of drawing out the consequences of a proposed view, with an eye to seeing what it commits one to. Motivationally empty practical reasoning may thus have a practical role. It may clarify our options; it may also lead to ordinary practical reasoning that generates action.

Consider the related case of theoretical reasoning from suppositions to a further supposition. We can find practical analogues of these and similar kinds of theoretical reasoning. We might call practical reasoning motivationally suppositional provided S is aware of lacking accompanying motivation, cognitively suppositional provided S is aware of lacking the belief corresponding to the minor premise, and wholly suppositional provided both conditions obtain. Such reasoning may play an important role in practical thinking—the wider category to which both practical reasoning and practical deliberation (which may or may not embody practical reasoning) belong. For instance, suppositional practical reasoning may play a major part in determining which of several proposed lines of action would best suit one.

Suppose that, as in the normal case, S's practical reasoning is not empty, either motivationally or cognitively. Must S have, corresponding to the major premise, a want on balance, i.e. one stronger than any incompatible want(s)? (I call S's wants for φ and ψ incompatible if and only if S believes that φ and ψ cannot be jointly realized.) As our examples suggest, most writers on practical reasoning talk as if practical reasoners must want φ on balance, or at least must think they do. After all, if the want is to count as expressing a practical reason, our having it should provide a strong motive to act, and our

believing we have it should yield a strong prima facie reason to act. But if we recall that practical reasoning often occurs in the course of deliberation, and that S may be affected by competing practical reasonings at the same time, this restriction seems unreasonable. Let me illustrate.

Imagine that Samuel simply is considering competing options and wants to savor the prospect of realizing φ. This might lead him to reason about how to get it, and thereby to conclude in favor of doing so, even if he wants more to realize something he believes incompatible with φ. It is true that, in that case, he might draw only a conditional conclusion, say that if he wants φ, he must A. We would then have practical thinking that arguably falls short of unqualifiedly constituting practical reasoning. The agent does not judge in favor of any action, but only in favor of one given a change in aim. We could, to be sure, call this conditional practical reasoning. But it seems preferable to restrict that term to cases in which the condition cited in the conclusion is not a change in one's motivation, but an external event, such as someone's helping one buy a rug, which one intends to do if properly funded. In the former case, ones mind is not made up; in the latter it is, and the question is whether external events call for the action.

Deliberation about alternatives may also result in a related phenomenon, a kind of overall conditionalization of the reasoning, as opposed to that of the conclusion alone: roughly, one reasons in order to see where one is led. We might, for instance, just imaginatively try out a means-end sequence in weighing things up. Here the conclusion might be unconditional, though one is quite consciously uncommitted to acting on it: one will act on it only if the prospect seems reasonable enough when it is adequately before one (or meets further tests). The reasoning is conditional in the sense that one's commitment to its (unconditional) conclusion is itself conditional on (say) deciding that the action it favors is desirable from one's overall point of view.

A related case occurs where we do practical reasoning when, unable to choose between two incompatible things we want equally, we construct a practical argument for each, hoping thereby to establish a preference by putting each means-end sequence in prospect. Both cases might be called exploratory practical reasoning. This serves one's effort to determine what to do; but unlike the typical cases it is not produced with a disposition to act on its conclusion without further thought. It is, as it were, conditional in purpose though not in content.

There is less controversy about the minor premise of practical reasoning. If we take 'means' to apply to constitutive as well as instrumental means, we may say that the minor premise is to the effect that A-ing is (or that it may be) a means to realizing φ. It is thus a connecting premise: it links the action to the relevant end. Similarly, S's belief of it is a connecting belief. Many kinds of content are appropriate to such beliefs. Commonly, S believes simply that S's A-ing will realize (bring about, produce, etc.) the goal. But if the goal is very important to S, then even the proposition that A-ing has a slight chance of realizing it can serve as the minor premise, and S may act on this slim chance. One might try to climb a cliff on the slim chance of saving a child who will otherwise fall from it.

The agent may have any of a number of connecting beliefs and sometimes more than one in a single case, say that A-ing is necessary for φ, and that it nonetheless has only a slight chance of realizing it. If S is determined to realize φ, reflecting on this slim hope may result in forming either a conjunctive minor premise, say that A-ing and B-ing together will likely produce φ, or in framing two or more supplementary practical

arguments, say one favoring A-ing and another B-ing, or in other complexities that promise to increase the chances of realizing φ. A parallel point holds, of course, for the case of two or more goals which S thinks can be realized by a single action. S may, for instance, frame a major premise expressing both goals.

Regarding the concluding element in practical reasoning, I have already suggested that it is (in a broad sense) the making of a practical judgment, say that one must find a safe river crossing. I have also indicated how, given the motivation and cognition expressed in the premises, S's making such a judgment is a practical response to the question what to do, both by virtue of its content and in its power to produce, or at least to trigger, intention, decision, or action. We can clarify the view further by applying it to cases in which what seems to be the concluding element is an expression of intention, or even the performance of the relevant action.

Suppose that, wanting to pull a friend from under a tipped motorcycle, Samuel says, "the only way to do it is to lift this straight up, so here goes!" and straightaway lifts it up. Clearly, the propositions that one must free the friend, and that lifting the vehicle straight up is the only way to achieve this, self-evidently entail that one must lift it straight up. This makes it natural not to state the conclusion if there is no need to. In addition, since the action is possible (and needed) immediately, Samuel has some reason not to bother with stating the conclusion. But this does not imply that he does not draw the conclusion that he must lift. Drawing it not only does not require utterance but, given the urgency of the context, can also be expected to lead to action at once. The reasoning thus produces the action immediately. But the immediacy is only temporal: Samuel's drawing the conclusion favoring the action is part of what mediates between his motivation and the action itself. To say that the action is the concluding element is to conflate the practical upshot of the reasoning with its conclusion.

5 SOME BASIC SCHEMATA FOR REPRESENTING PRACTICAL REASONING

In the light of the points made so far, I suggest that a simple (and arguably the simplest) basic schema for practical reasoning—a schema of which there are numerous variants—consists of a motivational premise; a cognitive, instrumental premise; and, as conclusion, a practical judgment. We might represent this schema as follows:

Major Premise—the motivational premise: I want φ;
Minor Premise—the cognitive (instrumental) premise: My A-ing would
contribute to realizing φ;
Conclusion—the practical judgment: I should A.

Several comments are called for here. First, we could also term the motivational premise purposive or indeed end-expressive so long as 'end' is not taken to imply that doing practical reasoning entails taking oneself to have an overriding want for φ. One might so view oneself; I could, for instance, have a want with a comparative content favoring A over all its alternatives, say to fulfill my promise today rather than do any of the other

good things I can do. But the content of φ need not be comparative even where the desire for it emerges from a comparison. Second, I call this schema basic because it has just the three kinds of elements that seem essential. Third, it is arguably simplest because it reflects no qualifications, such as a specification of the strength of the want or of the epistemic or psychological status of the belief, which might, for instance, be represented as justified or as confident. (The notion of simplicity is admittedly vague, but nothing significant in what follows will turn on that.) Fourth, in reasoning that fits this schema, S does not merely entertain the proposition that S wants φ; rather this proposition figures as a premise in the reasoning process. (If the reasoning is enthymematic, so that one or possibly more elements in it are not fully present in consciousness, one or perhaps two propositions need not be entertained, but all must still figure in the process in some appropriate way, as will be shown in Chapter 5.)

My fifth and sixth points concern the kinds of goals that figure in practical reasoning and the judgment in which the agent connects the action with them. If this schema is to be suitably broad, then even for the intuitively simplest cases, φ must be allowed to include S's acting (since we commonly aim at actions and activities), and A must be construed as an action-type which, normally, S believes (or presupposes) S can perform. As to the concluding judgment, 'should' may have either a specific force, such as a moral, prudential, or legal one, or an overall sense grounded on whatever S thinks relevant. It is not implied in the notion of practical reason that any 'should'-judgment is justified; the question here is what constitutes practical reasoning, not the criteria for its evaluation—which will be treated in detail in Chapters 7 and 8.[15]

Finally, the minor premise, as illustrated in many of our examples, can express any of an indefinite range of beliefs, including beliefs that link the action to a complex plan, say by representing it as the first step in a prescribed sequence. Hence, 'contribute to' must be taken to encompass many kinds of beliefs, including such constitutive means—end beliefs as that playing the piano will be enjoyable, where one expects the playing (in a certain way) to constitute, as opposed to causing, the enjoyment.

It turns out, then, that what I am calling the simplest basic schema is doubly schematic. It can itself be instantiated by more specific schemata, depending on how the motivational, cognitive, and judgmental elements satisfy its three schematic representations. These other schemata may also be considered basic, since they will represent particular types of practical reasoning having the same kind of elements but varying along the specified dimensions. By contrast, if certain further details are included in a schema, such as S's judging that S is obligated to realize φ, or S's specifying a second goal in the same premise (say a quite different end S takes A-ing to realize), the result is a more complex schema that is thus not basic.

Many schemata may be constructed, then, by adding specificity to the simple basic one; but when additional cognitive, motivational, or judgmental propositions are brought in, the result is normally a more complex and non-basic schema. Furthermore, practical reasoning can be embedded in a stretch of thinking which expresses many propositions not belonging to the reasoning, possibly including some that are irrelevant to it. The concept of practical thinking is broader than that of practical reasoning.

Practical reasoning can always be seen to contain elements interpretable as fulfilling the basic schema just set out. This applies, I think, even to social practical reasoning, which occurs when two or more people reason together in the way a unanimous

committee might as it decides in favor of collective action, such as voting for a policy.[16] For people can want the same ends, agree on a means to accomplish them, and participate jointly in realizing them by those means.

In non-basic forms, practical reasoning may contain much more than the basic schema indicates. As sufficient condition schema (d) in section 1 illustrates, there may be more than two premises; and as shown by other schemata we have considered, the motivational premise may express S's wanting something through attributing to S a commitment to a rule. Take Aristotle's dry-food example, whose major is "Dry food suits any human." In the context, we may probably take this to express S's wanting to eat food which is suitable for a human being.[17] If so, then the conclusion, "This food suits me," is plausibly thought to express something to the effect that I should eat the food. The 'should' is appropriate in the light of 'suits'; and without some such approbative term it is difficult to see why it is reasonable to expect S to act on the reasoning.

There is another difficulty we must face. If any mental process that instantiates the simple basic schema is practical reasoning, then we must countenance possible tokenings of such reasoning during sleep. It is doubtful that such a dreamlike tokening would be reasoning at all, and it would certainly not seem practical. We need some restriction to rule out parrotings and other incidental tokenings. The central idea is that the schema must be instantiated, in an appropriate way, in determining (or, in a certain purposive way, in the course of trying to determine) what to do. This cannot be made absolutely precise, but perhaps its vagueness appropriately matches that of "practical reasoning" itself.

A further point is that if the words, "I want φ," said by S, express the same proposition as "S wants φ," said by someone else on the same occasion,[18] then even with the restriction just made we might have to countenance second- and third-person tokenings of the basic schema as practical reasoning. For it would then be possible for someone else to token my practical argument. Susan might even do this in the course of trying, by analogy, to decide what she should do. Such arguments are of course practical in content, but reasoning that instantiates them in the second or third person is not what is commonly called practical reasoning. I shall adhere to that usage. In theory, however, there is no harm in countenancing second-and third-person practical reasoning, so long as we bear the differences as well as the similarities in mind; and some writers do seem to countenance them.[19]

6 PRACTICAL AND THEORETICAL REASONING

Practical reasoning, understood as I have proposed, is an inferential process that in some way instantiates (at least) the elements represented in the simple basic schema. On this view, its contrast with theoretical reasoning has special interest. The contrast cannot be formal. Granted, if there are first-person propositions, roughly propositions (e.g. that I am thinking) whose content is intelligible only to the subject, who, in the first person, expresses them, then the form of practical reasoning is intrinsically tied to the agent. But the parallel point holds equally for theoretical reasoning that embodies first-person propositions. Moreover, we must also distinguish between a practical tokening and a mere parroting, and doing so would again take us beyond formal considerations. What

distinction between practical and theoretical reasoning can be made with the resources so far developed?

First, let me indicate what elements in the action-as-conclusion view I do accept. I agree that the kind of concluding element appropriate to practical reasoning is a main point of contrast with theoretical reasoning. The making of a practical judgment (in the widest sense) is essential to practical reasoning, and such a judgment characteristically (apart, e.g., from the influence of irrational desire) expresses a normative practical reason. Although the proposition in question may also be the conclusion of theoretical reasoning, it is not typical of such reasoning to conclude in practical judgment, nor to have the kinds of premises represented in the simple basic schema.

It is true that, logically, both kinds of reasoning may be taken to express arguments, conceived as certain kinds of propositional structures whose premises are viewed as (at least presumptive) grounds for their conclusions. Indeed, in one way, the term 'practical argument', applied to the structures tokened in practical reasoning, is misleading. The typical uses of such structures are practical, in that these arguments serve to guide conduct, and reasoning in accordance with them commonly yields the action judged appropriate; but the arguments, as abstract structures, are not intrinsically practical: they can be used for theoretical purposes. To be sure, this is a functional (and in some sense pragmatic) contrast; but it commonly marks the difference we seek to characterize.

My account of practical reasoning allows, then, for a significant distinction between the two kinds of reasoning process. Practical reasoning is undertaken in order to determine or, in a certain purposive way, in the course of determining (or of trying to determine), what to do; and one's drawing the conclusion will normally count as responding, by making a practical judgment, to the question what to do. This does not apply to theoretical reasoning, even when its underlying argument is the same.

It might be objected that simply in order to find out the truth, one could ask, "Is it true that I should A?" and respond with reasoning expressing a practical argument. Since the proposition that I should A is equivalent to the proposition that it is true that I should A, we apparently have the same question in different words. Hence, one might argue, reasoning that embodies the same arguments and is aimed at answering this question has as good a claim to be considered theoretical as to be practical. This objection is mistaken. For one thing, equivalent propositions need not be identical; and that the two in question are apparently not identical is suggested by the clear difference between reasoning undertaken in order to determine what to do (or even what I should do) and reasoning undertaken in order to determine what it is true that I should do. These are different aims. The latter phrase suggests the detachment of people who want to determine what their duties are and then see if there is any reason why they should fulfill them, or indeed have just an intellectual interest in what they should do. The phrase is at best unnatural as a description of what we do when, in the course of trying to solve a practical problem, we engage in means-end reasoning of the sort that fits the simple basic schema I have proposed and is paradigmatically practical.

Broadly speaking, practical reasoning is guided by a desire, search, or felt need for appropriate action, say action that will end a quarrel; theoretical reasoning is guided by a desire, search, or felt need for appropriate knowledge, or at least belief, say as to who wrote an anonymous note. Both kinds of reasoning are done with a certain sensitivity to reasons for or indeed against their conclusions (and, often, for or against their premises).

But in doing either kind, we need not, and usually do not, consciously aim at finding reasons for action or belief. While a presupposition of our reasoning may be that the appropriate action or belief will be supported by reasons, we need not conceptualize the reasoning as partly a search for reasons, nor is finding reasons usually the main aim even of theoretical reasoning.

The different ways our reasoning is guided by practical versus theoretical purposes are manifested in our dispositions. Above all, we have dispositions to act in different ways in the two different cases and to guide our inferences and actions by different standards. For instance, if I reason to determine what to do, I am, by virtue of my reasoning for this purpose, directly disposed to act accordingly; if I reason to determine what it is true that I should do, I am disposed to act on my answer only if I am motivated to act in accordance with the normative belief in question. If motivational externalism is correct, since the belief by itself need not motivate me, I must be independently motivated to act in the relevant way. Even if, instead, motivational internalism is true, my disposition to act on my answer may arise only as I (believingly) give it. The disposition is not part of my overall motivation in asking the question in the first place, as it is when (in the normal way) I ask the practical question.

Moreover, if we reason in order to determine what to do, then the judgment with which we conclude tends to give us a practical reason in the motivational as well as normative sense, since we are reasoning against a motivational background that makes it likely that we will be at least disposed to act on this judgment. Finally, even if there is no difference of the kind I have suggested, the distinct linguistic forms, together with differences in the kinds of role practical arguments play in human conduct, yield a significant contrast between practical and theoretical reasoning.

In denying that there is an intrinsic logical difference between practical and theoretical arguments, I do not mean to deny that cognitive and motivational attitudes, such as desires and beliefs, may have different kinds of objects.[20] Indeed, I think that they do, and I have spoken of what S wants as a state of affairs. Although states of affairs are sometimes identified with propositions, they need not be. They are not naturally called true or false, for instance. Whether the objects of motivational attitudes are states of affairs or something else, it is noteworthy that we do not use the indicative to express wants and other motivational attitudes: we want to clarify practical reasoning, or that it be distinguished from theoretical reasoning. States of affairs are brought about (realized) or not, just as the objects of desire (however we construe them) are.

Granted, the obtaining of a state of affairs, such as one's keeping a certain promise, is equivalent to the truth of the corresponding proposition, that one keeps the promise (i.e., necessarily, this state of affairs obtains if and only if that proposition is true). But this equivalence does not entail that an existing state of affairs simply is a true proposition. Supposing it is, however, that would show only that there is something special about at least one premise of a piece of practical reasoning: it expresses, at least tacitly, a motivational attitude. But in that characteristic, practical reasoning need not differ from certain kinds of theoretical reasoning. For the motivational attitude is not the premise (a point easily missed if one embraces the functionalist view); the motivational premise is an expression of such an attitude, not the mere having of it.

If my view yields only a functional and broadly causal distinction between practical and theoretical reasoning, at least it has the advantage of giving us a ready account of

what the two have in common: being appropriate tokenings of arguments, subject to rational assessment as such, and, for both reasons, having the potential to ground the justification of their conclusions and of actions based on the reasoning. This seems to me at least as important a merit as providing us a way to make the distinction.

There is a trade-off that we must recognize in distinguishing practical from theoretical reasoning. The more obviously practical our account of practical reasoning makes it appear—say by construing its conclusion as the action it favors—the greater our difficulty in construing it as reasoning; whereas the more obvious our account makes the process appear to be reasoning—say by taking it to be an inferential passage from premises to the drawing of a prepositional conclusion—the less clearly practical it appears. My account is proposed in the hope of yielding optimal results in this trade-off. Some of those results will emerge in the next section, others in the remaining chapters.

7 PRACTICAL REASONING AND ACTIONS FOR REASONS

Given the conception of practical reasoning developed in this chapter, three of the six theoretical questions I have been stressing can be partially answered. One, concerning the distinction between practical and theoretical reasoning, has just been discussed. Let us briefly consider the two others illuminated by this chapter.

Regarding the question of how a rational person answers a practical question, I have suggested that practical reasoning plays a major role. Although it need not occur in such a case, answering a question like “What should I do to free my friend from under the crushing motorcycle?” commonly evokes practical reasoning. In a sense, moreover, a practical question can arise for S without S’s asking it or even confronting a situation evoking puzzlement. It may arise whenever we are aware of certain kinds of resistance to getting what we want, or feel a need to find a means to obtaining it.

To be sure, the less puzzlement there is about an appropriate means, the less practical thinking there is likely to be in the background of practical reasoning. One may quite quickly proceed from thinking about what to do today to reasoning that yields a practical judgment on which one is ready to act. For the options may be few and the best one may emerge quickly. Practical thinking may also occur—often quite briefly—between the expression of the major premise, say that one must contact a friend today, to an expression of the minor, say that only e-mail will succeed in time.

Practical questions can also arise after the fact. Suppose that, from good habits based on long experience, Samuel finds the appropriate means to his end in an automatic way not accompanied by reasoning, and acts to get what he wants. There is still a practical argument corresponding to his motivation and belief leading to his action, say to his simply lifting the motorcycle immediately on perceiving the trouble. Later, what we might call the retrospective practical question “What should I have done?” may come up, say because the friend was injured. That argument is then available to Samuel (if he remembers his reason for acting) and may surface in reconstructive practical reasoning. It may or may not suffice to answer the question correctly.

From here it is a short step to bringing the proposed conception of practical reasoning to bear on the question of what constitutes acting for a reason. In the framework of this chapter, we might say that to act for a reason is to act from motivation and cognition

appropriate to figure as the motivational and cognitive elements expressed in the premises of practical reasoning. (I assume these are some kind of want and belief elements.) Such an action need not actually arise from practical reasoning—as will be argued in the next chapter. But, as Aristotle thought—and apparently Hume and Kant also believed—for every intentional action (at least if intentional action is equivalent to action for a reason) there is a corresponding practical argument. This is what I call the correspondence thesis. When that argument is actually expressed in practical reasoning, and S then acts on the basis of that reasoning, we have a paradigm of action for a reason. It is not enough, as Kant clearly saw, that the action simply accord with antecedent or accompanying reasoning; in order to be based on the reasoning, it must be done from the motivation expressed therein.

Moreover, just as one can act for two or more reasons, one can act on two or more pieces of practical reasoning. The influence of a single piece of such reasoning can also extend far into the future. We may reason to a conclusion in favor of an activity, such as abstaining from sweetbreads henceforth, and the appropriate actions may all arise from the resolution with which we concluded our reasoning. Our reasoning has thus led to long-term acceptance of a practical reason.

A very general point we can now see is this. If practical reasoning need not always underlie action for a reason, it often does, and it may influence one's entire pattern of future conduct. When it does not underlie an action for a reason, the structure of the motivation and cognition that do ground the action may still be expressed in a practical argument, and in principle the agent can appeal to that argument to articulate a reason that provides both an explanation and a prima facie justification of the action.

Practical reasoning, then, is a process by which agents infer judgments favoring action from premises expressing motivation and instrumental cognition. Normally, they have sufficient motivation of the kind in question—whether its basis is self-interest, duty, emotion, or something else again—to enable their concluding judgment to produce action or intention. But that judgment can provide normative guidance for conduct even where, as with weakness of will, it lacks sufficient motivational force to yield action. In the common cases in which the concluding judgment is warranted by justified true premises from which it is inferred, the action may be both explainable and justified on the basis of practical reasoning.

Five
Practical reasoning and intentional action

A paradigm case of intentional action is action based on practical reasoning. The agent considers a goal, realizes that A-ing is required to achieve it, concludes in favor of A-ing, and straightaway As. If the correspondence thesis—the view that for every intentional action there is a corresponding practical argument—is correct, then there is some plausibility in the further claim that every intentional action is based on reasoning which expresses that argument. Call this second thesis inferentialism, since it posits a piece of practical reasoning, thus an actual inference, as essential in the genesis of every intentional action. Inferentialism has been maintained,[1] and there is much to be learned from assessing it. To simplify matters, let us consider it where it is most plausible: for intentional action performed for a further end rather than for its own sake, as where we swim for our health and not simply for pleasure.

1 THE RANGE OF INTENTIONAL ACTION

If intentional action for a further end is too closely associated with deliberate action, the former may be unwarrantedly assumed to arise from practical reasoning. For practical reasoning is often conceived as the final stage of deliberation, at least of deliberations that issue in action. Even if a deliberate action need not arise from a stretch of deliberation culminating in practical reasoning that yields the action, deliberate action is the kind of behavior that typically has this sort of inferential genesis. If there are deliberate actions that do not arise from deliberation, they are still likely to be based on practical reasoning. This is common, for instance, where the practical reasoning occurs in a situation that calls for determination or calculation of means, but not for weighing of alternatives.

Granted, selection of a means may be deliberative, but it need not be. In any event, there are intentional actions that are not deliberate. Walking in the woods, I may push aside a branch without even being distracted from my conversation. This is done in order to clear my way, but it is automatic, not deliberate. Moreover, even if such automatic actions can arise from practical reasoning, such reasoning is not essential to their genesis.

There are also things we regularly do out of habit, such as locking a car. These actions may, but need not, arise from practical reasoning; they are typically performed spontaneously as part of a standing practice. One might reply that an action can be based on practical reasoning even if the agent does not recite a practical argument (even subvocally) before or after performing it.[2] True. But S's doing practical reasoning surely entails the occurrence in S's consciousness of some representation of the relevant argument, even if it is only an enthymematic tokening of it. What occurs in the case of automatic and certain habitual actions apparently falls short of this. When I lock my car,

my consciousness may be virtually filled with other matters. All that is required for my intentionally locking it is the appropriate motivation, belief, and perception. I want to protect it and believe this requires locking it; my vision guides my hand to its accustomed push of the button. The want and belief are standing dispositional states and need not surface in consciousness.[3]

This is not to deny that perception requires space in consciousness; but it does not require space in a way that implies reasoning. My perception shows me where to push the button; it need not be mentally represented in my thinking about the button, and it need not produce in me a thought of an instrumental premise, say that my pressing the button will lock the car. Even if I do lock the car on the basis of practical reasoning, some such perception is required in order for my instrumental belief—that to protect the car I must lock it—to yield action. Here, too, the perception can play the required guiding role without producing such thoughts. Once the role of perception in enabling practical reasoning to yield action is properly understood, there is less temptation to intellectualize that role and to think that since it is crucial for intentional action in general, such action requires practical reasoning.

2 THE PHENOMENOLOGY OF REASONING

My case against inferentialism depends, of course, on what events, if any, must occur in consciousness for practical reasoning to take place. This question is easily neglected if one is preoccupied with the structure or assessment of practical reasoning, or with its role in the explanation or rationality of action. I think it has been neglected. If S can do practical reasoning in a wordless flash, there are fewer obstacles to establishing inferentialism. Is that possible?

In answering, we would do well to keep in mind two questions: what do we experience when we clearly are doing practical reasoning, and what must one say to manifest practical reasoning orally? The second question might seem irrelevant, but I take it that inner and outer instantiations of practical reasoning are both tokenings of the same kind of process and so should have similar structures. Let us consider these questions in turn.

As to the first question, practical reasoning, like any reasoning, requires an inferential passage from one or more premises to a conclusion. This does not imply reciting each premise; but it does require attention to at least one of them. If a proposition or set of propositions (such as a pair of premises) does not come to my attention in some way, then although my believing it can cause me to believe something else, I cannot infer something else from it. This is confirmed by the way we distinguish between why we believe a proposition and reasoning on which our believing it is based. Imagine that I say something you think groundless, such as that FitzJames is stuffy, and—expecting a supporting argument—you ask on what reasoning I base this. If I have not attended to one or more propositions in the light of which I drew this conclusion, I will candidly admit that what I expressed is, say, an impression. If I then pause and recall some points about FitzJames that seem to be the basis—and a reasonable basis—of my belief, I do not conclude that I must have reasoned after all. I back up my belief with an argument, but do not pretend that the argument had already issued in that belief through unnoticed

reasoning. It may have; but it need not have. Retrospectively constructed reasoning need not be recollected; it may be created by the reflections that produce it.

A further point here is that there is a sense in which my reasoning is guided by my premises: it is in the light of one's premise(s) that one infers one's conclusion (even if the reasoning is invalid). It is at best difficult to account for the appropriate kind of guidance without supposing that the premises are represented in some way in consciousness. This kind of representation is tied to the thinking of the premises or in some way entertaining them; it is not implicit in the relation of one belief's being based on another, even when the second expresses a potential premise for the first.[4] The difference is somewhat like that between a guidepost one reads in directing oneself and an unobstructed pathway one simply follows. We have to attend to the guidepost in order to read it; but we can follow a path even if its borders are only in our peripheral vision and we simply go forward with a perceptually grounded readiness to adjust our direction as necessary. Even this analogy is misleading in one way: one belief can be based on a second even if neither the latter nor its prepositional content enters one's mind even in one's mental peripheral vision.

In pursuing the question of what one must say to express practical reasoning orally, we again find confirmation of the view that such reasoning requires both a kind of attending to or, minimally, a thought of, at least one premise and making some passage from the premise (s) to the conclusion. This is obvious where, in explaining oneself to someone, or in thinking aloud, one fully articulates one's reasoning. The troublesome cases occur where we express just one proposition of the reasoning. If someone says to me, "You've got to free him from under that motorcycle," I may accept this, respond with, "The only way is to lift it straight up," and proceed to labor accordingly. Here, this one utterance might suffice to express my practical reasoning. But this is because, in the particular context, it is obvious that the major premise—that I must free him—comes to my attention and that, in the light of it and the minor—that the only way is (for me) to lift it straight up—I draw the self-evidently implied conclusion that I must lift it straight up. (Obligation on balance is not implied, but prima facie obligation is, and is sufficient for the practicality of the reasoning.) Thus, on the plausible assumption that mentally doing practical reasoning can be conceived as an internalization of, or at least an internal version of, what we do in orally expressing practical reasoning, there is good reason to conclude that intentional action can, and apparently often does, occur without underlying practical reasoning.

Some philosophers may find it natural to object that this interprets 'reasoning' too narrowly. It might instead be taken to be equivalent to 'inference' in the broad sense in which some philosophers use that term, one for which it is sufficient for S's inferring a proposition, p, from another, q, that S's belief of p be produced by, in a sense implying that it is based on, S's belief of q. Philosophers do commonly speak of inferential belief (and knowledge) in such cases.

This view is intelligible on the ground that even if S has not reasoned from q to p, S is disposed to do so upon considering their relation. But surely the suggested condition is not sufficient for reasoning from q to p. If it were, we must say that if, on the basis of a visual belief that the snowflakes are furiously swirling about, I believe the wind is blowing, I have reasoned from the first proposition to the second. This simply need not be so. I may not only "just see" that the wind is blowing from my noting that the snowflakes are swirling about; I may also be quite occupied with speaking to someone

about a quite different topic as I glance out the window, sufficiently occupied to preclude my doing anything properly called reasoning on some other matter. We can use 'reasoning' this broadly if we choose, and philosophers sometimes do so use 'inference.' But to do that is to assimilate reasoning, as an inferential process we engage in, to our automatic formations of beliefs on the basis of other beliefs which express evidence too plain to need focused attention in order to yield a cognitive response to it.[5]

It is at this point that the functionalist view of practical reasoning may recommend itself. If practical reasoning simply is whatever process mediates between reasons and actions based on those reasons, say between a want and belief, and, on the other hand, an action performed in order to satisfy the want, then of course inferentialism is true. For intentional action (for a further end, at least) obviously is action for a reason in this sense.[6]

Now it is certainly true that one of the important questions motivating the study of practical reasoning is to account for what plays this mediating role. But this is not the only such question; and both the history of the subject and considerations of the sorts I have stressed argue against conceiving practical reasoning on functionalist lines. Indeed, unless the functionalist view is restricted (as it is not always clearly intended to be) to mediators in consciousness, it would allow that practical reasoning be simply a neurophysiological process with no conscious manifestations at all. That would be an implausible conception; practical reasoning is never merely this.

Nothing said here precludes taking neurophysiological processes to underlie intentional action or even the (purely mental) formation of a practical judgment. Indeed the correspondence view invites us to speculate that there are neurophysiological similarities between cases in which practical reasoning is one's route to a practical judgment and cases in which, without the conscious elements that go with reasoning, such a judgment arises "directly" from other such psychological elements as a standing desire and a perceptual cue. But the concept of intentional action leaves open just what events mediate between motivational and cognitive elements determining such an action and the action itself. The concept of practical reasoning, however, does not leave open the possibility that it need not be manifested in consciousness at all. It requires events in consciousness having sufficient complexity and content to be plausible candidates for tokenings of practical arguments. Nothing of this complexity seems required in the genesis of every intentional action.

On the view proposed, the notion of practical reasoning is not a functional concept, but a process concept; and when the right processes are identified, they can be seen to be paradigms, but not necessary conditions, of episodes generating intentional action. Indeed, I believe that the notion is, in addition, a kind of action concept: we do practical reasoning, often intentionally, and still more often just knowingly as part of our thinking.

If practical reasoning can be done only intentionally, then the view that intentional action must be based on practical reasoning would generate a vicious regress of such reasonings. I do not claim that it is always intentional, but there certainly seem to be cases of it that are intentional, yet do not appear to arise from further practical reasoning. We do practical reasoning naturally in certain situations; we do not by and large do it in response to reasoning to the conclusion that we should. To be sure, it may well be impossible to do it unintentionally, though one can certainly muse unintentionally over the relevant propositions, say where one may have tried unsuccessfully to put the matter

out of mind, and one can engage in reasoning about solving a practical problem when one is trying to listen to a lecture. But if, as I doubt, there is a kind of intentional action, or even a kind of behavior, on which all other intentional action is directly based, it is not practical reasoning. The relation between practical reasoning and intentional action is more subtle than that. This will emerge in the next section.

3 THE RECONSTRUCTIVE ROLE OF PRACTICAL ARGUMENTS

Inferentialism is not decisively refuted by what I have said, and I have intended only to show that it is far less plausible than the non-intellectualistic conception I have developed. But there is a weaker version of inferentialism that is not directly discontinued by my points. It is partly based on the plausible idea that practical reasoning can conclude in favor of a kind of action and can influence one's actions long after its completion.

To see how the view goes, recall one's locking one's car automatically, though intentionally. It is arguable that this action is traceable to practical reasoning even if not produced by it on this occasion. After all, I presumably have at least once considered whether to lock my car, reasoned about the matter, and concluded in favor of locking it. My now locking it might thus be regarded as ultimately based on that reasoning, in the sense that the reasoning generated the policy I am carrying out and remains, other things equal, a ground of my locking the car. We might call this qualified view linear inferentialism: it posits a causal line, possibly extending far into the agent's past, from every intentional action to at least one piece of practical reasoning favoring an action of that kind. In this sense, then, linear inferentialism implies that all our intentional actions have, at least indirectly, a foundation in practical reasoning.

Where the relevant reasoning is in the past, there are at least two kinds of linear grounding. If the original motivation and cognition that correspond to the generative reasoning have been preserved in memory and indirectly support the action in question, then that reasoning is (to some degree) a sustaining basis of the action and presumably of actions in the same pattern, say lockings of one's car. Roughly, the action is performed for the same reason, and actions in the pattern have been performed for that reason all along, as opposed to one's having dropped the practice and resumed it for the same reason. It is as though a pillar supporting a structure had remained in its role after its initial placement. If, on the other hand, that motivation and cognition cease to exist and, thereafter, some other ends or beliefs of the agent sustain the pattern, then the original reasoning is only the (original) genetic basis of the pattern. Here the actions are not performed for the same reason (except where the agent may again have exactly the same purpose). The architectural analogy here would be to the original pillar's being replaced by another that serves the same function. In either case, the relevant causal lines vary in historical length, in the number of practical reasonings favoring the action, in the number and variety of causal intermediaries between the reason (s) and the action (s) traceable to them, and in other ways. Both cases yield a linear inferentialist version of behavioral foundationalism.

Linear inferentialism is far more plausible than inferentialism simpliciter, which requires reasoning at or just before the time of action. But it still seems too strong. For

one thing, it neglects important social cases, those in which we do things intentionally just because we have been asked to, say by a parent or trusted friend. Particularly with routine basic actions, such as handing someone a book one is holding, we may form intentions, and act intentionally, in response to such directives, without even considering the matter, and certainly without reasoning.

Linear inferentialism also gives too intellectualistic an account of actions that arise from spontaneous discovery. Think of a complex activity like gardening. I may simply observe that narrow nylon string has cut the stems of my laden tomato plants, and remove it. Granted I do so because I want to prevent the cutting of the stems, but we have already seen that there is no good reason to postulate practical reasoning in every such case of motivated action. Suppose, moreover, that as a practice I now avoid narrow nylon string. Must I have reasoned to the general conclusion that I should avoid it, or can this practice be explained by appeal to a general belief, based on the specific belief I originally formed, that narrow nylon string tends to cut tomato stems? Surely reasoning need not be involved at any point here.

A different but related case concerns behavior in unpredictable situations, such as explorations of unfamiliar territory. Here it is not action based more or less directly on discovery, but automaticity that inferentialism does not well account for. Exploring a field, one might step over rocks and walk around, rather than through, patches of unfamiliar tall grass. One does these things out of caution, but not necessarily in carrying out a policy, to which one has reasoned, of staying off rocks or unfamiliar grass. In one kind of case, the behavior simply manifests a kind of Humean custom. In some instances, moreover, perhaps because of a different pacing or mood, one may do the opposite and step on many stones and proceed straight through unfamiliar grasses. To be sure, some unfamiliar grass also looks suspicious, and one may have once concluded that one should avoid suspicious ground. But if, for every intentional action, one must at some time have drawn such a guiding conclusion, the necessity is, I think, psychological, not conceptual.

At this point it becomes evident that the plausibility of the linear view depends largely on how we describe the action. Perhaps every intentional action admits of some correct, broad description such that the agent has, at some time, concluded practical reasoning in favor of actions of the kind specified by the description. A case can be made for this view, even with the proviso that there be an appropriate causal connection between the action and the reasoning. Call this view restricted linear inferentialism.

I shall not argue that this view is false; but it is far from plainly true, and I believe that if it is true, it is not a conceptual truth. Intentional action is intelligible even if it is in no way attributable to actual practical reasoning. It may in any case be attributable in the imagined way without being traceable to practical reasoning, in a sense implying that the reasoning is part of what explains the action. It appears that often we can arrive at a premise suitable for explaining or prompting an action, or at reasoning which becomes the basis of an action, only after we have had experience of acting for the relevant reason, or kind of reason. Imagine that James is surprised at his pronunciation of a certain word, and then realizes that he has heard it so pronounced in a recent lecture and must be trying to correct himself. Perhaps we must perform some actions for reasons before we can take anything to be a reason for acting, or at least before we can respond to something as a reason for action in the way we commonly respond to a reason for action to realize the goal figuring in the major premise of our practical reasoning. If this is so, there is even

less reason to accept restricted linear inferentialism. Acting for a reason, far from being a kind of action based on practical reasoning, would be in some cases prior, at least genetically, to action so based; and some intentional actions, such as the verbal one described, may be of a kind one has not even previously considered, much less of a kind represented in one's practical reasoning.

4 INFERENTIALISM AND THE REALIZATION OF PRACTICAL ARGUMENTS

There is a truth underlying inferentialism, beyond the point, already stressed, that intentional actions are based on reasons. This second truth is the correspondence thesis: if S As intentionally, say pushes aside a branch in order to pass through, there is a corresponding practical argument, one whose premises express motivation and belief jointly sufficient to explain the action (this is true, at least, if acting intentionally is equivalent to acting for a reason). In the case at hand, the argument might represent, in its major premise, S's motivating want (to pass through) and, in its minor, S's guiding belief (that to pass S must push aside the branch). But the correspondence thesis does not imply inferentialism. The relevant correspondence holds whether or not S actually reasoned from these premises to a conclusion.

It is true that intentional action may be plausibly considered action for a reason; and the reason will be expressed in the premises of a corresponding practical argument. But the importance of the point that intentional actions are performed for a reason should not be exaggerated. Suppose S does act for the reason indicated by the premises. That reason need not be good; a reason for which one acts can be a bad one for so acting. It may well be, however, that the wants of normal adults (at least their intrinsic wants) typically provide prima facie good reasons for them to act.[7] But their providing good reasons is not required for the intelligibility of an action to be implied by its being performed in order to realize a want, and my main points do not require the assumption that intrinsic wants automatically provide prima facie reasons to act.

A further truth that gives undeserved plausibility to inferentialism is that acting for a reason may be construed as a concrete realization of a practical argument.[8] The point is not simply that S instantiates the argument, i.e. has the want and belief expressed in its premises and does the thing indicated by the conclusion. There are at least four other factors.

First, the premises represent the structure of the causal and explanatory basis of the action, namely, the set of wants and beliefs—the motivational and cognitive elements—that explain why it is performed. This structure may be called instrumental, but only in the formal sense that the action is seen as a kind of means to realizing the goal, not in an instrumentalist sense implying a desire-satisfaction standard of evaluation.[9]

Second, the explanatory relation which the relevant motivation and cognition bear to the action mirrors a kind of support (or prima facie justificatory) relation which the premises of the argument bear to its conclusion. That S has φ as a goal and believes A-ing will realize it, for instance (types of propositions that commonly serve as premises), provides at least a kind of psychological support to S's judgment favoring the action. The

support may be normatively nil where the goal or belief is irrational, but that is not the normal case.

Third, S is, at the time of action, disposed to appeal to the argument if asked to explain or justify A-ing, rather in the way one may appeal, for explanatory or justificatory purposes, to a rule or practice one has been following. If, for instance, S is asked "Why did you A?" S is disposed to say things like, "Because I wanted φ and believed A-ing would get it".

Fourth, if my A-ing for a reason is a realization of a practical argument, then even if the action is not based on practical reasoning, the explanatory relation between my reason and action is just what it would have been if (other things equal) I had A-ed on the basis of actual reasoning from its premises to its conclusion. I would, for instance, have A-ed for the same reason, though perhaps more deliberately for it, in part because, in the light of the reason, I would have judged that I should A.

If these four points hold, they support an important thesis: even when S does not act on the basis of practical reasoning that expresses the underlying practical argument, such reasoning may be invoked reconstructively by the agent (or indeed someone else). Reasoning is invoked recollectively by S if S takes it to be the basis of the action; but reasoning can also be invoked hypothetically, as where we speculate on what reasoning we might have done as a basis of an action. Call this thesis reconstructivism regarding practical reasoning. Invoking such reasoning is appropriate to the action from the point of view of both explanation and justification. The reconstructive role of practical reasoning, however, does not require it playing a genetic role.

Practical arguments may be realized in different ways. When S simply infers the conclusion of a practical argument from its premises, I call the argument inferentially realized. An argument need not be inferentially realized in order to be behaviorally realized. An intentional action can occur without being based (at least immediately) on practical reasoning. An example would be a spontaneous action that expresses S's motivating want and is guided by an instrumental belief where neither the want nor the belief nor their propositional objects is entertained or otherwise occur rent in S's consciousness.

When a practical argument is both inferentially and behaviorally realized in the normal way that results in an action based on both its concluding judgment and the underlying motivation and cognition expressed in its premises, we have been acting on the basis of practical reasoning. The action is performed both for the right reason—the one expressed in the premises—and in the right way: on the basis of the reasoning process.

Neither kind of realization implies the other. This is why practical reasoning, the inferential realization of a practical argument, can occur without S's acting on that reasoning, as in some cases of weakness of will. There the practical argument is only partly realized, whereas its full realization implies S's doing what its conclusion favors. On this score, we find another respect in which the inferential process view I have presented is superior to the action-as-conclusion view. For on the latter (interpreted without ad hoc qualifications), weakness of will implies that, far from being able to act incontinently against practical reasoning in favor of an action, when we act incontinently we do not even complete practical reasoning in favor of it.

Combined—as it may or may not be—with inferentialism, the actionas-conclusion view also requires that the incontinent action, being intentional, arises from competing practical reasoning. Yet there need not be any such reasoning; and if there always were, we would get a less plausible account of weakness of will, since the incontinent action, no matter how thoroughly one disapproves of it, would then accord with a practical judgment one makes—the one concluding the reasoning on the incontinent side—and in that (admittedly limited) way the action would be consonant with one's will. This judgment would not be one's "best," in the sense of the one expressing a judgment of what, on balance, one should do, but its presence would still reduce the degree to which the incontinent action contravenes one's judgment in general.

In any case, we must surely countenance purely passional incontinence, in which desire simply overrides one's better judgment without the aid of another judgment favoring the object of desire, and so without reasoning that concludes with such a judgment. Passional incontinence provides additional reason to resist inferentialism, which requires some underlying reasoning even for incontinent action.

5 UNCONSCIOUS AND SELF-DECEPTIVE ELEMENTS IN PRACTICAL REASONING

It should now be clear that the inferentialist view of intentional action would have us posit practical reasoning where we notice none, for instance when we act intentionally but automatically. The view thus invites us to suppose that practical reasoning may occur not only without tokening of the constituent propositions in consciousness, but also unconsciously. For if reasoning is unconscious, it is no surprise that it should go unnoticed, as inferentialists must grant it often does. This is particularly likely to be stressed by proponents of a functionalist inferentialism, since the mediating role in terms of which they characterize practical reasoning need not require consciousness of its elements. If practical reasoning is an inferential process, can it be unconscious?

There is an important ambiguity here. The question could be whether practical reasoning can occur without manifestations in consciousness, or whether it can occur without S's consciousness of it as reasoning. In the second case, there are various possibilities: for instance that (1) S simply is aware of it, but not as reasoning; that (2) owing, say, to repression, S is incapable, without special self-scrutiny, of becoming aware of it as reasoning; and that (3) S is incapable of becoming aware of the underlying motivation of the reasoning.

Unlike the functionalist view of practical reasoning, the inferential process conception of it rules out unconsciousness in the first, awareness sense. For S must in some way both attend to at least one premise and draw a conclusion from it; and one must surely be aware of these events. I have not, however, ruled out unconsciousness in the recognitional sense. Let us explore this.

A good place to observe how practical reasoning may involve unconscious elements is self-deception.[10] I take self-deception with respect to a proposition p—say that one will survive one's brain cancer—to be a state in which S (a) unconsciously knows (or has reason to believe, and unconsciously and truly believes) that not-p, (b) sincerely avows, or is disposed to avow sincerely, that p, and (c) has at least one want that explains, in

part, both why the belief that not-p is unconscious and why S is disposed to avow that p, even when presented with what S sees as evidence that not-p.[11] Self-deception centrally involves belief which is unconscious in the recognitional sense: it is not that S cannot come to know S has the belief, but the belief is sufficiently veiled from recognition to make doing so require self-scrutiny or outside help, such as the observations of one's behavior by another person.

It may appear that the inferential process conception of practical reasoning precludes its underlying motivation or belief from being unconscious in this sense. For if a want, say to do something I would be ashamed of, figures in my reasoning leading to a judgment that I should A, it may seem that I must realize that I do want that to which I take A-ing to contribute. But surely I might suppose I am only imagining what it would be like to realize that state of affairs, and could mistakenly take as revulsion the guilty anticipatory flush I feel on contemplating it. Moreover, since one can do practical reasoning enthymematically, without entertaining all its constituent propositions, even the conclusion need not be consciously confronted. One can acquire the belief expressing the minor premise later than the want figuring in the major, and then complete the reasoning when the want, though not manifested in consciousness, motivates the conclusion—judging that one should A. The most common case occurs when we notice a means to an already existing end we have.

If self-deception can occur in practical reasoning, there are many ways we might expect it to affect practical reasoning. Among the most interesting possibilities are these: self-deception might supply a cognitive premise; it might supply a motivational one; it might produce a self-deceptive practical judgment as conclusion; and it might lead to weakness of will. We should briefly consider these possibilities.

Imagine that as part of her self-deception with respect to her feelings about her cousin Ellen, Jane has an unconscious desire (hence unconsciously wants) to hurt Ellen. This may lead her to notice ways of doing so, even if she does not try to find them. Thus, if she discovers from her aunt (Ellen's mother) that Ellen would like to be invited to Jane's graduation, she may form the belief that if she does not invite Ellen, Ellen will be hurt. At some point when the question of whom to invite arises, Jane might judge that she should leave Ellen out. Making this judgment could be the concluding element in practical reasoning whose major premise, expressing the unconscious want, does not enter consciousness but is, in a certain way, presupposed. That is quite possible even if the minor premise—that not inviting Ellen will hurt her—does enter consciousness; for Jane might have a rationalization, say that the guest list is already too long, which shields her from realizing why she excluded Ellen. The reasoning thus illustrates both how self-deception may help to produce a belief expressing the minor premise and how it may supply a motivating want that underlies the major.

Jane's a case is what we might call self-deceptive practical reasoning. For one premise, the motivational one, expresses an element in the associated self-deception, here the unconscious want to hurt Ellen. In addition, the belief corresponding to the minor premise arises in part because of the self-deception; and because it does arise in that way, the reasoning is even more closely connected with self-deception than it would be if only the unconscious want influenced the reasoning.

There are, then, degrees to which practical reasoning may be self-deceptive. I offer no definition of just what constitutes self-deceptive practical reasoning, but we may say at

least this: the greater the number of elements in the reasoning that are embodied in, or (non-accidentally) produced by, self-deception, the more self-deceptive it is, where the self-deceptive elements embodied in the reasoning count more than those produced by it.

The same example can be varied so as to yield another case of self-deceptive practical reasoning. Suppose that, at the time of the reasoning, Jane also wants to do something nice for Ellen, believes that sending a present for Ellen's own graduation would achieve this, and concludes, on this basis, that she should send one. Imagine, however, that she believes sending a present is incompatible with hurting Ellen and wants to do that more than to do something nice for her. Then, although Jane might still engage in the reasoning just described, she might not be wholehearted in judging that she should send the present. Indeed, in making that judgment she may be deceiving herself, just as she is deceiving herself in saying that her exclusion of Ellen from the party is due to the size of the guest list. If Jane then does not give the gift, we could explain this as due in part to her not having believingly judged she should. Her judgment is in one way like the kind that is merely an estimate of the distance between two trees; it is not insincere but is not accompanied by belief. Her practical reasoning is still genuine, however, in that she still draws a practical conclusion and makes the appropriate practical judgment. Nor is she lying (in the ordinary sense) if she says to a friend that she should give it; she is self-deceptively insincere, lying only to herself.

It might be claimed that this kind of case is not really practical reasoning. But it seems artificial to do so; and if we countenance exploratory practical reasoning, whose conclusion need not be believingly drawn, then so ruling would narrow our conception of practical reasoning rather considerably.

Weakness of will has diverse connections to self-deception, and there are several ways in which self-deception can be linked with weakness of will in relation to practical reasoning. It might seem that one way has already been illustrated: if Jane does not act in accord with her (overall) judgment that she should give Ellen a present, she may appear to be acting incontinently and thereby not acting on her practical reasoning. But recall that she did not believingly make this judgment. For this reason, it is unclear that weakness of will occurs.

To be sure, if the judgment is sound, then she does make an error by failing, in the way she does, to act on it. But at least if she holds a conflicting practical judgment which is aligned with her motivation—say with her strong desire to avoid letting Ellen get into the limelight by displaying and cooing over the gift—the error should not be taken to instantiate weakness of will. For in that case her action does accord with her actual, if misguided, practical judgment, say that she should not make positive gestures toward Ellen. Suppose, on the other hand, Jane had believingly made the judgment that she should give Ellen the gift, but simply could not bring herself to give it, because of her entrenched unconscious desire to keep Ellen out of the limelight. We would then have incontinence due to self-deception by virtue of a strong, behaviorally dominant desire embodied in that deception.

This case might also show something that on the face of it would seem impossible given the history of the literature on weakness of will: that incontinent action need not be irrational.[12] Jane's incontinent action need not be irrational, provided that she rationally wants to keep Ellen out of the limelight, that Jane is intelligently contributing to this end

by withholding the gift, and that she has no overriding reason not to withhold it, which is possible if Jane is warranted in thinking that the slight to Ellen is minor.

These possible interactions between self-deception and practical reasoning illustrate the integration of such reasoning with actions that do not fit the everyday instrumental patterns of inference that exhibit us as the manifestly rational creatures we like to suppose we are. If I have opposed the view that practical reasoning is an element in every intentional action, I have also tried not to restrict unduly the range of cases in which it can occur, or the requirements for its manifesting itself in consciousness. Even when it leads to action, there is a sense in which at least one major element in it can be recognitionally unconscious. But even then its role in producing the action may endow that action with some degree of rationality after all. The agent may not be consciously in charge of the motivational process leading to action, but there may still be a good measure of instrumental rationality.

6 PRACTICAL REASONING AND REASONED ACTION

Chapter 4 argued for a cognitive-motivational view of practical reasoning; this chapter argues for an inferential process construal of that view. On the resulting account, (1) not all intentional actions arise immediately from practical reasoning; (2) they need not all be traceable to such reasoning, and (3) they need not even constitute (non-trivially) a type of action in favor of which one has in fact concluded practical reasoning, whether or not it is part of the causal history of the action.

Despite these negative points, if practical reasoning is not genetically pervasive in intentional action, it is reconstructively available, at least for actions performed in order to achieve a further end. This can be so, even if the reasoning contains unconscious elements. For with appropriate efforts or suitable help from someone else, the agent could still formulate and appeal to the practical argument corresponding to the action. To be sure, there is no guarantee that agents attempting to formulate, reconstructively, practical arguments underlying an intentional action will succeed, even with the help of people who know their psychology well. Confusion, loss of memory, rationalization, and other interferences may prevent it. But there is such an argument, as surely as there is a means-end structure underlying intentional action.

I have, then, tried to account for the main points that make inferentialism plausible and have left open the possibility that some restricted version of linear inferentialism may be true. But there is one more point to be made here. There is a common category of action that does at least roughly correspond to action based on practical reasoning. The category is not intentional action; for that can be automatic or spontaneous in ways that do not require reasoning. It is not deliberate action; for that arises from a kind of reflection which is at least implicitly comparative and is not required for every case of action based on practical reasoning. It is not even action that is part of a plan. For one thing, there is some presumption that a plan must emerge from planning, or at least from a kind of prospective consideration of one or more options; if so, a plan is not automatically produced by every minimal episode of practical reasoning. In any case, unless ‘plan’ is stretched, perhaps beyond plausibility, there are actions based on spontaneous practical reasoning which do not fit into any pattern of aims and beliefs of the kind required by a

plan.[13] But action based on practical reasoning does seem at least roughly equivalent to reasoned action. When we speak of reasoned action we refer to action based on a process that includes or, minimally, is constituted by, practical reasoning.

Evidently, then, the account of practical reasoning so far developed in this book bears directly on the question of how practical reasoning is related to intentional action. To every intentional action (at least every one performed for a reason) there corresponds a practical argument—more than one if the action is performed for two or more independent reasons. The agent need not have reasoned accordingly; but the realization of the arguments in actual reasoning is appropriate to produce (or cooperate in producing) such an action whether the agent actually reasons accordingly or not. Practical reasoning, as a type of inference that an agent might instantiate, is thus reconstructively available for any such action, including actions exhibiting weakness of will. Indeed it helps to explain the possibility of incontinent actions, though without forcing us to construe them as rational—or necessarily irrational. Practical reasoning is also genetically fundamental in much intentional action, including all reasoned action. When it occurs, it may be conceived as an inferential realization of a practical argument. It is also something we do, not merely something we undergo. It can produce, guide, and, by virtue of its connection with motivational and cognitive elements, at least partly explain actions. It can do this even when some of its elements are unconscious. If it does not underlie all our actions, it remains a central element in human conduct.

Six
Practical reasoning in the dynamics of action

When actions arise in the normal way from practical reasoning, we can understand them in relation to at least three major characteristics. They are reasoned, end-directed, and in accord with a practical judgment. But this understanding is not the only kind one might seek from an account of practical reasoning. As constituted by a pattern of events, it can help in accounting for the dynamics of actions based on it, above all for what causes them, and for how, in relation to causative events, they come about.

The understanding so far stressed in this part of the book is roughly conceptual. One dimension of this understanding is, in linguistic terms, redescriptive: practical reasoning is conceived as a background against which we can describe not just the agent's observable movements or surface behavior but what the agent is "really" doing, say rescuing a friend or slighting a rival. A related dimension of our subject concerns explanation: how practical reasoning can provide an understanding of why the agent performed the action in favor of which it concludes. The dynamic aspects of practical reasoning are quite different; and they are important for a causal theory of action, i.e. one that represents action as behavior that is in some sense caused by motivational and cognitive elements in the agent. Some version of the causal theory has been dominant since Aristotle, and the theory seems broadly correct.[1] With that theory in mind, I want to consider how practical reasoning figures in the dynamics of action.

1 THE NEED FOR A DYNAMIC ACCOUNT

Historically, philosophers have disagreed about whether actions are deterministically produced, but the picture of actions as simply caused by such states or events as the agent's desires, beliefs, decisions, and other inten-tional elements has dominated both philosophical and common-sense thinking about human action. Given the dominance of that picture, we can see one reason for inferentialism: it postulates a causal factor, namely, practical inference, which genetically unifies actions by constituting a kind of origin they all have in common. Connected with this is a second point. Practical reasoning provides a conception of how the actions we perform arise from the welter of psychological elements internal to the agent.

This second point is particularly important if one accepts the plausible view that, strictly speaking, (1) the causes of events are other events, and (2) events are (or at least entail) changes. For on this view, actions, which plainly are events, cannot be (directly) caused by dispositions, including desires and beliefs, since dispositions are not changes. Something can have a dispositional property, for instance solubility, from the time it comes into being until the time it ceases to exist, without changing in any way, or at least any way relevant to that property, such as dissolving. In large part, a thing's dispositions

are a matter of what, under certain conditions, it would do, not a matter of what it actually does. Hence, a causal theory of action, if it is to be adequately clear, must go beyond talking about the agent's beliefs, wants, and other dispositional properties; it should indicate certain kinds of events as causes of action.

Practical reasoning may help us understand the dynamics of action in another way. Consider intentions. They do not execute themselves. As dispositional states, they presumably do not cause anything except by virtue of some event suitably connected with them, such as their becoming occurrent. For instance, I might have the thought, upon noticing a break in a discussion, that I will now raise my hand; here the thought is what accounts for my executing the intention at this point rather than some other.[2]

Even if we do not conceive intentions and other prepositional attitudes as causal factors, we need an account of the execution of intentions and of how other motivating attitudes generate action. Practical reasoning can help to provide this even if it is not taken to be (as volition has been) that in virtue of which these dispositional states manifest themselves in such a way that they may (indirectly) cause actions. But for any causal theory of action that construes these states as causal explainers, it is desirable—and indeed crucial if only events are strictly speaking causes—to find one or more events that directly cause the action.

Broadly, then, we might think of practical reasoning as a pattern of mental events that mediate between reasons and actions, or, minimally, as containing at least some of these mediating mental events for certain sorts of actions based on reasons. This allows that something further, say volition,[3] can mediate between practical reasoning and action (or at least overt action), for example between a practical judgment that I should offer to help someone, and my extending the offer. But one could bypass such executive events if, like some theorists, one regards the making of a practical judgment, in the context of a suitable belief or appropriate perception, as sufficient to trigger action.

If intentions do not simply execute themselves, they also do not provide in themselves much of a clue as to why they are carried out when they are; and the same applies to all the other action-explaining propositional attitudes. This is an important point. For at least with respect to causation of one event by another, there seems to be an important pattern that a dynamic account should capture. The pattern might be expressed in a principle of the differential temporality of causation. It presupposes that there is an intimate explanatory relation between temporal properties of the cause and of the effect. In a strong but not implausible form, it asserts that the time at which the cause occurs explains why the effect occurs when it does, i.e., the fact that the former occurs at a given time explains why the latter happens when it does. Thus, if we want to know why a gangplank broke when it did, we might point out that it was at that time that it was over-loaded by the added weight of the last person to mount it. Similarly, it seems that often we act when we do because we have just completed the appropriate practical reasoning. Having arrived at a practical judgment, and given the ability and the opportunity to act on it, we do so straightaway.

2 PRACTICAL REASONING AS A CAUSATIVE PROCESS

It has often been argued that reasons are not causes. Here 'reasons' does not designate what I shall call reasons proper, since they are abstract and thus not commonly taken to be even candidates for the terms of singular causal relations. Reasons proper are the contents of propositional attitudes, expressible by propositional and infinitive clauses, as where we say that her reason for not inviting her cousin was to slight her (or that it would slight her).[4] What is usually designated by 'reasons' when reasons are said not to be causes is reason states, i.e. certain propositional attitudes themselves, such as wanting and believing. These, as part of the reasons why people do things, are also properly called reasons. If reasons in the latter, explanatory sense are dispositions, and if causes, but not dispositions, are events, then (explanatory) reasons are not causes. But this does not imply that reasons, conceived as reason states, have no causal power or play no causal role. They certainly do play a causal role when, together with an appropriate event, they produce actions explainable by reference to them, paradigmatically, actions performed because the agent believes they will contribute to achieving something the agent wants.

It is in this context that practical reasoning plays a major role. For instance, if I want to free a friend from under a motorcycle, believe that to do so I must lift it straight up, and conclude with the judgment that I must now lift it, then my making that judgment is well suited to trigger my action. The judgment is a kind of directive: its content directs a particular act. My making it is an impetus to my doing that. Given the want and belief expressed in my premises, my so judging is the sort of event we expect to lead to action straightaway, provided I have the ability and opportunity.

The timing of action is also clarified by this account. My judging that now is the time to lift can explain why I lift when I do. After all, I judged that I must do it now. Even if I had judged only that I should do it, with no specific time built into my judgment, my (partly perceptual) awareness of the circumstances, together with my now judging, might explain why I lift now. The time of a practical judgment, as well as the time indicated in such a judgment, can explain the time of action. Making a judgment now can trigger action, as where I judge that now is the time to speak. But holding a judgment whose content requires speaking now can also partly account for my speaking now: it may lead me to watch the clock and may put me in readiness to speak as the clock tells me the intended time has come. If judging can be a trigger of action, holding a judgment can empower something else to be a trigger.

This is not to say that practical reasoning is itself a cause of action. Even though, as a process, it is in the right category to be a cause, I prefer to call it a causal factor. Drawing the conclusion, which at least in the normal case is equivalent to making a practical judgment, is more nearly what causes the action favored by the reasoning. But even this is not quite right, for the judgment causes it only in the context of the relevant motivation and cognition. Its role is directive, not generative. In talking of the dynamics of action, we are often unable to cite some one event that is the crucial cause of an action. It is usually preferable to speak of various causal factors, their interrelations, and their diverse (partial) contributions.

If inferentialism of any kind is true, then for every intentional action there is an event of judging, or at least of forming a belief of one's practical conclusion, which is a candidate for the triggering role just illustrated. This is another reason for the appeal of inferentialism. However, once we recall that practical reasoning is often concluded in favor of an action which S takes to be impossible at the time, it is plain that we shall still need an account of how intentional actions are produced by practical reasoning when they are temporally separated from it. Presumably, in these cases the judgment yields an intention to act, where this intention either clearly implies in its content, or is accompanied by beliefs which indicate, what would be an appropriate later occasion for action. What, then, later triggers the execution of such future-directed intention?

3 PERCEPTUAL AND MOTIVATIONAL TRIGGERS OF ACTION

Here we do well to recall Aristotle's emphasis on perception. He said, of the genesis of taking a sweet, that "a belief about something perceptible" "controls action" (NE: 1147b9–10) (in the Ostwald translation, the point is that "The final premise, consisting as it does in an opinion about an object perceived by the senses, determines our action").

There are at least two cases which the text does not explicitly distinguish. First, I may be guided in carrying out my practical judgment, say that I should have a sweet, by a perception of a good opportunity, in this instance by perceiving an available sweet. Here, the major premise expresses a desire for sweet things and the minor is the unspecific, though perceptually applicable, proposition that I ought to taste one. Second, the minor itself may be directed toward a perceived object. It might be, say, that taking this sweet will give me the taste I want; and since I perceive it, I can and normally do act at once. There is no need, and scarcely psychological space, for my reciting the conclusion. That is in part why, in this second case, the action itself may appear to be the conclusion. However, the conclusion can be tacit, in ways pointed out earlier.

What I would add now is that both drawing the conclusion and acting on it can be common effects of the same causal factors. These are above all the want and belief expressed in the premises, together with the perceptual events constituent in one's seeing the opportunity to act. Both cases illustrate how the generation of action is aided by perception and practical judgment.

The general picture that has so far emerged portrays both springs of action and its trigger. The springs of action based on practical reasoning are constituted by motivation and cognition; its trigger is often the making of a practical judgment guided by perception, though sometimes perception by itself, whether visual, auditory, or of some other kind, may trigger action. The degree of motivation represents the strength of the spring; the stronger the spring, the stronger the agent's disposition to try to get the thing wanted. The cognition represents the psychological direction of the spring: what S believes S must do to get the thing wanted. Perception guides action physically, and the physical direction of bodily action—what one actually does—is determined by what one perceives, together with environmental factors, such as lighting conditions, obstacles to one's movements, and the like. Motivation without cognition and perception would be blind; cognition and perception without motivation would be impotent.

Mental action, to be sure, does not require a perceptual trigger, though there may be something analogous, such as a thought that now is the time for, say, reflecting on tomorrow's responsibilities. Even mental action, then, seems to depend on events, presumably on triggering by an event; but the events need not be physical.

The picture of action so far given is instructive, but also incomplete, at least in identifying triggers. There are still other events that can trigger action based on practical reasoning. There are at least two kind of cases in which the trigger is motivational change.

First, suppose that Susan is already aware of an opportunity to A, say to help Bonnie find certain books, and believes that suggesting she get them for Bonnie would be the best kind of help to offer. It occurs to her that Bonnie is a person she would like to help, and she imagines, without feeling any aversion, the task of getting the books. She concludes that she really should offer, but does not, because her motivation is still insufficient to overcome her inertia. If her desire to help suddenly becomes strong enough, this motivational change can trigger her action, and she may offer help straightaway. Granted, her thinking, beforehand, that she really must help Bonnie may be what increases her motivation; but unless that motivation is strengthened beyond a certain threshold, we ought not to expect her having this thought to lead by itself to the action.

A different case would be that of resolution of conflicting wants. Imagine that motivational change is needed, not to overcome inertia, but to outweigh opposing desire, say a desire to go to a matinée rather than the library. If both prospects are before her as she looks at her friend in silence, it may be the altruistic desire's becoming stronger than its rival that triggers her action. If she has done practical reasoning favoring her attending the matinée, this case may also illustrate how one piece of practical reasoning can prevail over another. Any of these motivational cases may, of course, represent weakness of will if the dominant motivation leads to action against one's better judgment.

So far in this chapter, I have explored ways in which practical reasoning, together with judgmental, perceptual, or motivational events, figures in the dynamics of action. But examples similar to those used for this purpose also show that practical reasoning is not always needed to account for the dynamics of action. If it were, then contrary to what I have argued, a fairly strong form of inferentialism would be correct. Consider Susan again. If Bonnie is a close friend and sounds really distressed about how many books she needs over the weekend, Susan may offer help without having reasoned about whether to do so. Having a standing want to give Bonnie support, she may simply form the belief that she can give it by offering to go to the library, and straightaway make the offer. Here the formation of that belief may trigger her action, assuming there is a suitable opportunity for her to speak. If the distress is voiced in a conversation difficult to interrupt, the formation of the belief may initially lead only to Susan's intending to offer, and the actual offer may be triggered by her perceiving a break in the conversation. This perceptual event may not only help to explain why she offers, but also may fully explain why, given her governing desires and beliefs, she does so at that time.

Clearly, then, practical reasoning can and often does play an important role in mediating between reasons and actions. Together with associated events, particularly perceptual events and motivational and cognitive changes, it may explain both how an action comes about and why it is performed when it is. But these same kinds of events can mediate between reasons and actions, and can account for the execution of intentions,

even where no practical reasoning plays a part in the genesis of the action. Practical reasoning, then, is just one important element in accounting for the dynamics of action.

4 CAUSALITY, LAW LIKE CONNECTIONS, AND INTENTIONAL ACTION

In Chapters 4 and 5, practical reasoning is construed as a causal process. This chapter stresses its dynamic causal role. But this role is not causal in the sense that S's accepting the conclusion is merely caused by S's accepting the premises, nor is its dynamic role in action a matter of its merely causing the actions we think of as based on it. Drawing the conclusion is, in a complicated way, guided by one's acceptance (or at least thinking) of the premises; and acting on the basis of practical reasoning similarly requires guidance by the agent's motivation and cognition. For the purposes of this chapter, then, acting on the basis of practical reasoning must be described further.

Imagine that Susan judges, on the basis of practical reasoning, that she should offer to go to the library for Bonnie. This judgment (given other factors normal in such a context) may cause her to lean forward intently, awaiting a chance to break into the conversation and to raise her hand as if to say, "Stop!" In raising it, she may knock over her glass. This action is caused by her practical reasoning, but is not based on it. It is not even intentional, much less performed for the reason expressed by her major premise, as is required by its being based on the reasoning in the full-blooded sense that interests us. The action is an effect, but not the issue, of her reasoning. It is not the issue because, for one thing, it is not properly guided by the belief expressed in the minor premise—that offering to help is the way to give the friend support. Susan does not, for instance, take knocking over the glass to play a role in offering help. Second, it is not an action she adjusts, or is even disposed to adjust, in the light of beliefs about its contribution to either offering help or giving support.

Moreover, she does not herself have the normal sense of agency in knocking over the glass, a sense which, when one does act for a reason, manifests itself in (among other things) a non-inferential disposition to attribute an action to the reason for which it is performed. For these reasons, the action is not controlled by her practical reasoning, in the sense of being both generated by it through an appropriate trigger and under the control of its constitutive motivation and cognition. The latter kind of control is very difficult to explicate,[5] but what has been said here should clarify, sufficiently for our purposes, what sort of causal relation is in question.

If there is a causal connection between (explanatory) reasons, or reasoning processes, and actions, it is natural to ask whether it is nomic, i.e. instantiates a lawlike connection, even if the relevant law is framed in different sorts of concepts, say neurophysiological notions. On the covering-law theory of causation, which is perhaps the most widely held view of singular causal connections, whenever an event e causes an event e^1, there is some law linking them, even if under descriptions alien to the vocabulary in which the causal relation between them is reported. The question whether reasons are causes has often been discussed in relation to the covering-law view.[6] An important question for understanding this view is whether the covering law must be universal, or may be a tendency or a statistical law. Some who apparently accept the view think that the

nomically relevant descriptions are not psychological.[7] Whether or not this restriction holds, and whether or not the covering-law view is correct regarding singular causal relations, there do seem to be tendency laws (but apparently not universal ones) linking wants and beliefs to actions.[8]

It is arguable that apart from laws of some sort linking psychological states to action, there cannot be a genuine science of psychology, at least not a scientific psychology of action. This book takes no position on that issue. A philosophical account of practical reasoning may appropriately remain neutral on whether practical reasoning itself, or the motivation and cognition that figure in it, are nomically linked with the actions we invoke them to explain. My account is neutral on this score, though it can be coupled with a suitable covering-law account of causal connections. There is no need to develop that point here, but it is important to consider how my causal dynamic conception of practical reasoning allows for weakness of will. The next section will explore that question.

5 THE DYNAMICS OF INCONTINENCE

Incontinent action of the kind that constitutes (behavioral) weakness of will is not merely action inconsistent with one's better judgment. That would allow it to be merely accidental, whereas what is wrong with incontinent action is precisely that it is at once intentional and in a certain way opposes one's better judgment. If practical reasoning has the causal power I have attributed to it, however, it raises puzzles about how weakness of will occurs. That it occurs I have been assuming, and how it can occur I have explained—as I think Aristotle, Hume, and Kant did in their different ways—in part by appeal to the influence of opposing motivation. An obvious principle here is that where two sets of wants conflict, the agent tends to act on the stronger one.

Another principle relevant to incontinence—a principle that also indicates why the former is only a tendency claim—is that one's believed chance of success also tends to figure in any such conflict. We may act to achieve what we desire less provided we believe that our chance of getting it exceeds the likelihood of our getting the thing desired more. Thus, I may want, on balance, to fulfill a duty to finish a report this afternoon more than to see this afternoon's matinée, but might also regard as less than even my chance of succeeding in finishing the report in the time I have. This pessimism about success may cooperate with my desire to see the matinée, with the result that I act against my judgment that I should do the report, and I take the afternoon off.

We could bring this case under the principle that the stronger set of conflicting wants prevails, by supposing the result of my thinking about the matter is formation of a stronger desire to perform the action seen as yielding the originally less desired end, here the action of taking the afternoon off. The idea is roughly that the strongest among conflicting action wants prevails, even if the strongest among conflicting wants simpliciter sometimes does not. I might still prefer actually finishing the report to seeing the matinée, but I prefer leaving my office, which I do in order to see it, over staying at my desk, which I would do to finish the report, since I think the latter action likely to fail. Whether we must view the matter this way or not, it remains true that where the agent has probability beliefs about the options relevant in the context, those beliefs may contribute,

at least in the suggested way, to incontinence. For in either case I act against my judgment of what I ought to do.

From a dynamic point of view, how does my account of practical reasoning help us understand the actual occurrence of incontinent action? There are three kinds of case we should consider.

First, practical reasoning often occurs in situations of either conflict or self-monitoring or both. Being conscientious, Ann may wonder whether she should spend so much of the family's money on opera tickets. She considers other things she wants, realizes that she cannot have them if she buys the tickets, and concludes that she should not buy the tickets. But her powerful desire for them persists. Her eye lights on the pre-season reduced prices, she says to herself that they are a bargain, and she writes the check. Here the opportunity for incontinence is at hand, and the desire underlying it simply overrides the motivation backing the practical judgment. There need not have been practical reasoning favoring the purchase.

A second case occurs when practical judgment favors something specific, while the opposing motivation, unlike a single felt temptation, consists in a number of mutually supporting considerations. This time suppose that Ann is considering an important charity and, aware of her resources and commitments, reasons to the conclusion that she should make a generous donation. On the other side, however, are several legitimate though self-regarding needs. She considers them one by one. Collectively they seem impressive. With discomfort, but without changing her practical judgment of what donation is appropriate, she decides to donate half of what she originally judged appropriate, and, with the other needs vividly in mind and still clouding her discomfort, rushes on to some other activity.

It is important to this case that her thoughts about other needs not alter her original judgment, say in favor of a lesser contribution. If they do, we would not have incontinence but, more likely, a kind of self-indulgence: a collapse of judgment in the face of desire. Rather, it is the consideration of those needs, together with the associated motivation, that enables her to go against the practical judgment she still holds. Reasons overcome reason; a crowd overthrows its would-be leader.

This is not, then, a case of reason overcome by passion. A string of prima facie good reasons for reducing the projected contribution pull together against her practical judgment, which expresses a reason, on balance, for making it. The pull may be dispassionate; but it may still obscure her knowledge of what she is doing in making the lesser donation. It need not do this, however, though certainly there is some defect in her rational self-control; and whether or not it is due to obscured knowledge, it constitutes one kind of deficiency in motivational integration.

From here it is a short step to a third kind of case, rather like one suggested by Aristotle, in which practical judgment is overridden by what seems to be obscured knowledge. This is especially likely in conditions of either aroused desire, or mental unclarity, or both. There are many ways in which knowledge (or belief) can be obscured. A common one occurs with intoxication. Imagine that Tom, who is already partly drunk when a waiter offers another champagne, has a strong desire for more but is too absorbed in conversation to reflect on the matter. Tom nonetheless knows, and has judged, that he should avoid drunkenness. But this judgment—based on that premise and arrived at shortly beforehand through practical reasoning—that he must decline drinks after having

three, may not be entertained at all, and he may take the drink. The point here is that attention to a practical judgment one holds tends to increase its motivational power, just as attention to a perceived object of desire tends, when the object is recognized as the desired thing, to enhance that desire, or at least to lower the threshold for acting to satisfy it.

Hume may have been suggesting something similar when he spoke of the tendency of nearer objects of desire to raise the passions more than distant ones.[9] In Tom's case, however, there is no mental haziness or conscious interference with the understanding of the judgment. The clearly understood judgment simply does not enter consciousness to oppose the aroused desire for the champagne: like the knowledge of the principle that the judgment is based on, the judgment is edged out of consciousness or remains on its periphery, where it is much less likely to influence action. Impetuosity, which Aristotle emphasized as a factor in incontinence, may also cloud judgment, though it also works through the goading or even impelling effect of the perception or imagining of the object of desire.

It may happen, however, that the practical judgment is not straightforward in the first place and the agent's grasp of it is weakened by other considerations. Here we find another variant of the third kind of incontinence, in which obscured knowledge is a major factor. Suppose I am asked to chair a committee. My underlying view is that I should be a supportive member of my team, and I thereby judge that I should take the job. Still, the situation in which I so judge may present various legitimate obstacles, including my own deficiencies. Reflection on those obstacles—say on my inadequate information and poor report-writing skills—can cloud my judgment so that I do not clearly see what is demanded, and indefinitely put off taking over the committee. At some level I know I have failed; but the description of the required act may be vague enough, and the sense of problems with performing it lively enough, to permit failing without a clear sense of going against my better judgment.

Alternatively, I might clearly see that I am not living up to my better judgment, find myself ashamed, and, as if to excuse my failure instead of preventing it, resolve to do better in the future. This might occur where the problem is not the clarity of my judgment or the knowledge (or belief) giving rise to it, but rather a failure to integrate that knowledge (or belief) adequately into my motivational system.

Incontinence may occur, then, in many ways, even when the practical judgment outweighed is backed by practical reasoning from which it arises. The central factor may, for instance, be a single overriding desire, a set of collectively dominating desires no one of which would prevail in action on its own, obscured knowledge of one's guiding principle or of one's practical judgment, a vague and poorly focused practical judgment, a failure to integrate one's guiding principle into one's motivational system, or an impetuous thrust toward the envisaged object of desire.

Still other cases of weakness of will occur despite practical reasoning in support of the judgment against which the agent acts. Moreover, disparities between action and judgment significantly like the kinds sketched can occur without the relevant judgment's arising from practical reasoning. But many of the disparities of both sorts can be understood on the basis of the points made in this chapter.

6 CAUSALITY AND FREEDOM

If there is some kind of causal relation between, on the one hand, reasons and reasoning and, on the other hand, the actions they explain, one may wonder how the associated causal account of action bears on the possibility and extent of human freedom. This section briefly addresses that question.

To begin with, even if one goes so far as to hold that reasons are connected with actions by universal laws, one is not thereby committed to determinism, i.e. the view that every event is subsumable under some universal law and in that way deductively explainable by some antecedent (or simultaneous) set of events. But if we so much as leave open the possibility that actions are subsumable under universal laws, those who take freedom and determinism to be incompatible will tend to think we leave open too much, since actions so explainable seem to them unfree. This is a large issue. I have elsewhere offered a detailed account of free actions which implies that freedom is consistent with determinism,[10] but here I simply assume that the kind of causation required by my account of practical reasoning does not entail the existence of universal laws governing intentional action.

My account of practical reasoning not only leaves room for freedom and moral responsibility; it should also help us understand just what they are. Among the clearest cases of free actions are those based on practical reasoning. It is true that unfree actions can also arise from it, as where the major premise is that one must save one's children and the minor is that giving up one's savings is necessary for their ransom. But even actions thus compelled are reasoned; and in the broad sense associated with being under the control of reason, they are voluntary. (This is the kind of voluntariness, incidentally, which Aristotle apparently had in mind in citing, as paradigms of the involuntary, actions that are neither done of one's own free will nor proceed from the will at all; see, e.g., NE 1109b30–1111b.)

The account of practical reasoning also bears on moral responsibility. Since strongly compelled actions can be based on practical reasoning, it would be wrong to say that the agent is morally responsible for every action so based at least in the sense implying blameworthiness or praiseworthiness. A kind of causal responsibility is implied by an action's being based on practical reasoning; but that does not entail moral responsibility.

If, however, we act freely and on the basis of practical reasoning, then, other things equal, we bear greater moral responsibility than for intentional actions not so based. We thus tend to be more blameworthy or—where moral responsibility applies to laudable actions we have performed—more praiseworthy. The explanation of this difference is apparently that the action is both reasoned and undertaken in the light of a judgment which is itself based on reasoning. This judgment indicates a kind of reasoned endorsement of the action by the agent. It roots the action in reasoning; the action is not merely motivated, as where one spontaneously acts to realize a sudden desire one has never entertained. Other things equal, the action better represents the character of the agent. In a way, at least, it represents both the intellect and the will.

There are other factors relevant to how practical reasoning bears on moral responsibility. If S has the concluding judgment in mind in acting, this tends to contribute to the degree of moral responsibility. For the action is thereby likely to be influenced, perhaps in some way encouraged, by the endorsement implicit in making the judgment.

Related to this point, since the judgment is before the agent's mind, the agent has a chance to reconsider that judgment, and acting in line with it thus tends to confirm the endorsement it expresses.

If the reasoning is careful, this, too, tends to contribute to the agent's moral responsibility for the action it favors, though if a mistaken judgment is sufficiently plausible the judgment may extenuate by providing a rationale for the action. If the reasoning is culpably sloppy, again the moral responsibility for the action may increase: the deed becomes, as it were, a manifestation of an avoidable vice. It is not easy to say just what has to be equal, of course. But my aim here is not to develop the connections in detail; I simply want to suggest some ways in which practical reasoning is important for moral responsibility.

It is, then, not only in producing actions, and in the execution of intentions, that practical reasoning plays a major role. Practical reasoning is also important in determining what sorts of actions the agent performs, for instance incontinent, rational, or responsible. It is a significant generative process; it is associated with motivation and cognition that can explain action; and both the formation of the belief expressing its minor premise and also its concluding judgment can trigger as well as guide actions. Its rationality as an inferential process, moreover, can reveal much about the agent and can significantly affect proper assessment of the action. Practical reasoning is also important in providing an understanding of rational action. It does so in complicated ways that remain to be explored. The rationality of practical reasoning and its bearing on rational action will be central concerns in the remaining chapters.

Part III
Practical reasoning, ethical decision, and rational action

Seven
The assessment of practical reasoning

Chapters 4 through 6 construct a cognitive-motivational account of practical reasoning conceived as an inferential process. They provide an account both of what practical reasoning is and of how it figures in the explanation and dynamics of human action. This chapter considers the assessment of practical reasoning, particularly as it bears on the rationality and, closely related to that, the degree of justification, of the judgment constituting its conclusion.

1 THE RANGE OF CRITERIA FOR APPRAISING PRACTICAL REASONING

Given the aim of facilitating the assessment of practical reasoning, it is important whether we conceive practical reasoning (as I do) within a logically univocal conception of reasoning, i.e. a conception for which the same logical criteria, such as those of standard deductive logic, apply to reasoning irrespective of its content. I grant that a single logic can be devised to cover both practical and theoretical reasoning when they are taken to differ logically and construed as having different sorts of conclusions.[1] But the task of assessing practical reasoning is simplified if standard deductive logic and (so far as there is one) standard inductive logic are applicable to it.

A further simplification would be to regiment our conception of practical reasoning so that every instance can be represented as (logically) valid. Aristotle may in places have wanted to represent them thus, and that might partly account for the naturalness of his using the term commonly translated as 'syllogism'. An advantage of such regimentation is that, although it implies nothing about the rationality of the premises of practical reasoning, it eliminates from actions based on such reasoning whatever irrationality they might otherwise inherit from the invalidity of the practical argument underlying them. But in the light of the examples cited in Chapter 4 and the philosophical problems giving the subject of practical reasoning its special interest, I prefer to consider practical reasoning in a more psychologically realistic way. I therefore countenance all the variety found in its everyday occurrences, despite their not infrequent logical deficiencies.

It is true, however, that a small amount of rational reconstruction can exhibit as valid some of the practical reasonings which, as represented only by the propositions entertained, or at least appearing, in the agents thinking, fall short of validity. In any event, if we can formulate basic criteria for assessing practical reasoning in the diverse forms in which it actually occurs in our thinking, this will give us a broad account of the quality of such reasoning. It should enable us to see how to appraise it in forms that,

though logically invalid, exhibit a relation of significant support between the premises and conclusions.

In approaching the assessment of practical reasoning, it is natural to consider at least four sorts of criteria. Those governing the logical relation of the premises to the conclusion are logical criteria. Those that apply to the relation between the corresponding beliefs—of the premises and, on the other hand, of the conclusion—I call inferential criteria. Those concerning the justification of these beliefs (or of their prepositional objects) are epistemic criteria. And criteria for the truth of the premises and conclusions I call material criteria. I will discuss all of these criteria, though for the most part the material criteria will be considered in relation to the others rather than separately.

Another preliminary point is essential. It is important to distinguish (as do earlier chapters) the assessment of practical reasoning from that of an action taken on the basis of it. We can reason quite cogently in favor of an action relative to one goal but lose sight of another goal and hence do something that, though based on a (limitedly) good piece of practical reasoning, is rationally defective. We can also make mistakes in reasoning which we cannot reasonably have been expected to avoid, as where the reasoning is highly complicated. This may result in an action that is rational by plausible standards though based on defective reasoning.

2 SOME PATTERNS OF PRACTICAL REASONING

It will help to begin by recalling some common patterns—schemata, in my terms—of practical reasoning. There are three elements in what may be the simplest kind of schema: (1) major premise—the motivational premise: I want φ; (2) minor premise—the cognitive (instrumental) premise: my A-ing would contribute to realizing φ; and (3) conclusion—the practical judgment: I should A.The major premise is purposive (roughly, end-expressive), and intention will serve in it as well as desire. The "minor" (as I have stressed) may indicate not only instrumental means but also constitutive means: the kind essential in the end itself, as singing is for the pleasure of singing. Let us consider some of the important varieties of practical reasoning.

In one common kind of practical reasoning, the major premise, say that on balance I must accept an invitation, expresses an overriding need, i.e. one taking priority over all competing ends relevant at the time, and the minor premise says that A-ing, for example making another trip, is necessary to satisfying the need.[2] The concluding element is a judgment favoring A-ing. This schema instantiates a necessary condition schema. Whether an instance of it is plausibly considered valid depends on its conclusion. If the conclusion expresses an overall judgment that one should A, it will not follow except on the assumption that the act would complete the set of necessary conditions or at least put one in a good position to realize the goal.

This assumption that the act would at least put one in a good position to realize the goal would typically underlie the agent's reasoning in this way. We would not typically think of a goal as one we must achieve unless we thought we could achieve it; and we would not focus on an act as a necessary condition for achieving it unless we took it to have significant contributory value. Strictly speaking, however, an act's being a necessary condition for a goal we must achieve entails only a (possibly very weak) prima

facie reason for performing it. Going to Beijing might be necessary for speaking with the Chinese Premier, but might still have no significant chance of helping to realize that goal.

It is more difficult to identify valid schemata where no such necessary condition is represented. Suppose the major premise sets out a (normatively) overriding end and the minor says that A-ing is sufficient for it. This would instantiate a sufficient condition schema. It does not follow from these premises that S should A. An easier alternative might be preferable. Some kind of prima facie judgment does follow, since S has some reason to A (at least where S's belief of the minor is not irrational). I call such judgments practical, but they may often fail to lead to action. Indeed, if there is an obvious alternative means that is far better than A-ing as a way to achieve the end, then at least typically, one would be unreasonable to judge unconditionally that one should A.

Suppose, on the other hand, that the minor premise says that A-ing is the best way to achieve the end. If 'best' has a suitably broad sense, wider than, say, 'most efficient', then it apparently does follow that S should, on balance, A. For that is the overall best way to realize the overall best end. The reasoning would exhibit a second kind of practical reasoning, an optimality pattern. Depending on whether the end is objectively or subjectively optimal, for instance is "really" best or merely best in S's opinion, the practical judgment will express objective or subjective reason for action.

In the more usual instances of practical reasoning, where the major premise does not represent an end as overriding in the strong sense sketched, even an optimality claim in the minor premise would not suffice for validity. For there might be some competing end in the situation in the light of which, all things considered, S's doing something other than A is more reasonable. Granting that we often do posit ends as overriding, we are frequently too cautious to do this and hence can validly infer at best a strong prima facie judgment favoring the action that our minor premise represents as best for achieving our end.

If practical reasoning had only prima facie conclusions, its assessment would be in one way simpler. For these conclusions are often sufficiently weak to follow from the sorts of premises we actually employ, such as that we want to help a student with a paper and, to do so, must work late. However, in dealing with practical problems, we are trying to determine what to do, and here it is often natural to draw unconditional conclusions yielding a definite directive on which we find it natural to act straightaway. Often, then, we naturally conclude practical reasoning with an unqualified judgment even if the judgment is not entailed by our premises. In these cases, inductive—in the broad sense of 'non-deductive'—standards are more appropriate than deductive standards for appraising the reasoning. Here the basic criterion for good practical reasoning is rather loose. It is the reasonableness of the conclusion relative to the premises, by which I mean that given the premises, the conclusion is quite likely to be true, in the sense that it is what is commonly called a "reasonable inference" from them.

The relevant notion of reasonableness is important for the appraisal of practical reasoning.[3] The notion is related to justification as an epistemic concept. If S is rational, relevantly informed, and has nothing to go on but the premises, then where the conclusion is a reasonable inference from them, S has at least minimal justification for the conclusion. Reasonableness is normally the appropriate standard for good practical reasoning, and it goes with justification. This point may be taken to imply that the conclusion is probable relative to the premises; but 'probable' is misleading in suggesting

that we can commonly assign probabilities here. At best, we are likely to be warranted in saying that, relative to the premises, the conclusion is more likely than not.

Regarding reasonableness, suppose the premises make it at least as reasonable to believe the conclusion as to believe its negation (and not unreasonable to believe the former). We might call any pattern that meets this standard a minimal adequacy pattern. This is a quite permissive standard. Practical reasoning whose underlying argument only meets, and does not exceed, this standard is not unqualifiedly adequate. For one thing, such patterns allow that it might be more reasonable to be cautious: to suspend judgment on the conclusion.

Where the premises support the conclusion to the extent that it would be unreasonable not to draw it, we might speak of a standard adequacy pattern. Here, relative to the premises, it would be a mistake to suspend judgment on the conclusion; and though it might be clear that the premises do not entail the conclusion, they would surely provide adequate reason to draw it.

There is still another gradation. Suppose an argument barely meets the demands of standard adequacy, in the sense that, given its premises, it is only just barely unreasonable not to draw the conclusion. One might say that such an argument is short of being cogent. When, on the other hand, the premises give more support than standard adequacy requires, we might speak of a cogency pattern.

Many cogency patterns will also contain a premise implying that A-ing is necessary for realizing the goal. But there will be disagreement, as with theoretical reasoning, over whether cogency in a pattern requires validity. I am inclined to believe that the premises of a cogent argument need not entail, but only give strong support to, the conclusion. I thus characterize a cogency pattern so as to include inductively strong arguments. For most non-skeptics, at least, there are certain good arguments whose premises do not entail their conclusions; cogent arguments may be of this kind.

Consider some examples of adequacy and cogency patterns. Granting that we would not want to base any important judgment on premises that are only minimally supportive, suppose we are choosing between two almost equally attractive small gifts for a friend. Here, believing that one of them is fairly likely to please, and a bit more likely to do so than the other, minimally warrants the judgment that we should give it. It might also be reasonable to suspend judgment and seek a third alternative, but we would be reasoning in a minimally adequate way if we judged in favor of the more promising gift. If the case is varied so that one believes that the more promising gift is very likely to please, we would have a standard adequacy pattern, though not necessarily a cogency one.

Now consider a cogency pattern. Suppose my end is (normatively) overriding, say to protect my children. I would then like to have a minor premise that decisively favors one alternative over another, say by indicating a means that is necessary and sufficient for my end. If I find such a premise, my practical argument would be cogent. In a situation of forced choice, however, for instance between paying ransom and sending the police, one might have to act on a slim difference in overall expectable value, say between a certainty of avoiding financial ruin and a low probability of better protecting the children. A cautious reasoner might then judge that there is no decisive reason for either option. In a situation of forced choice, however, one might infer a weak prima facie conclusion, say that prima facie one should call the police. This would preserve validity and might yield a cogent argument, but only for a weak conclusion with limited power to justify action.

3 CRITERIA FOR ASSESSING PRACTICAL REASONING

In the light of the kinds of practical reasoning noted, the broadly logical assessment of practical reasoning should address at least five patterns it may have—and many distinct subcases of each pattern. There are necessity, optimality, and adequacy patterns, and two kinds of cogency patterns (valid and inductively strong). Some generalizations may be drawn immediately. Where the underlying argument is valid, the broadly logical assessment may be straightforward. It may be easy to tell that a practical argument is valid; but formal criteria alone do not suffice for the logical assessment of practical reasoning: this assessment may also involve difficult questions about what kinds of ends and means imply various sorts of practical judgments. In the case of an underlying argument appropriately assessed inductively, there is no question of the conclusion's following from the premises; the logical question is how much (non-deductive) support the premises give the conclusion. The answer will rarely if ever be quantitative, and it may be difficult to determine.

The criteria for a broadly logical appraisal of practical reasoning concern the relations between the (prepositional) premise and conclusion elements, and thus apply to the practical arguments expressed in the reasoning. But there are also non-logical evaluative criteria concerning practical reasoning processes. Here the problem is roughly how much support S's believing the premises gives to S's believing the conclusion, where the minimal requirement is that the premise beliefs render S at least as reasonable in believing the conclusion as S would be in believing its negation. In cases like this I speak of an inferential criterion, since the concern is transmission of support from attitudes toward the premises (typically beliefs of them) to an attitude toward the inferred conclusion (again, typically belief). This is an epistemic matter. Appraising the overall reasoning process requires using inferential as well as logical criteria.

My main point here has already been suggested: it is that, however good the argument underlying one's reasoning, the reasoning process is not successful overall if it does not meet an appropriate inferential standard. For instance, if it is merely a rationalization, and one holds the conclusion on some basis other than the premises, then the reasoning fails to produce knowledge, or justified belief, of that conclusion. One could still know or justifiably believe it, but not through the reasoning. In short, one's conclusion, even if validly inferrable from the premises, is not inferential on the basis of them. Thus, whatever support the premises might give to one's believing the conclusion, one's believing it derives none from them. A cognition not based on premises is not justified by them. (I omit discussion of partial basing, in which case the justificatory power of the premises relative to the conclusion is "proportional" to the degree of basing, other things being equal.) Let me develop these points in relation to a well-known distinction central in Kant's ethics.

4 A KANTIAN DISTINCTION GENERALIZED: BASIS IN, VS. MERE CONFORMITY WITH, PRACTICAL REASONING

The simplest way to see that the adequacy of practical reasoning is not just a matter of the validity of the corresponding argument is to apply to practical judgment the Kantian

distinction between acting from a duty or from a principle (say one that is a consequence of the Categorical Imperative) and acting merely in accordance with it. Imagine that Samuel reasons from the premises that (1) he ought, all things considered, to do something to relax, and (2) having another drink will relax him, to the conclusion that (3) he ought (prima facie) to have another drink. Assume that he sees that (3) follows from his premises and infers it from them, where this implies that in some way he draws the conclusion in the light of them, in the sense, roughly speaking, that he draws it with an awareness of them and of its following from them. But imagine that he is rationalizing and really accepts the conclusion and the major premise only because he has a strong intrinsic desire for another drink. His reasoning does not ground his practical judgment in a way that justifies his holding it. For, other things equal, he would not hold this judgment if, despite accepting his premises for it, he ceased to have his real reason for holding it, the one in whose clandestine service he is rationalizing. What he judges is justified by the premises, since his abstract practical argument is cogent. But his judging is not warranted by his believing them, since the explanatory basis of his judgment is not his believing the premises but the intrinsic desire for another drink. There is thus a defect in his practical reasoning: he concludes it on the wrong basis, even though he has (but does not "use") a sound basis for concluding it.

One might object that if this is really reasoning, which is after all a causal process, then Samuel must believe the conclusion on the basis of the premises. But this need not be so. Granted, his accepting the premises—or at least supposing them to be true—must play some causal role in his drawing the conclusion. But his acceptance or supposition of the premises can play this minimal role even where the reasons for which he holds the conclusion are not the premises. It might be, for instance, that he would draw the conclusion only suppositionally if he did not want another drink. Samuel is thus like agents who fail to meet the Kantian requirement that they act not merely in conformity with duty, but from it.[4] Suppose I see that apologizing to a friend is required by duty, and, rather in the way one might in a logic book exercise, infer that I should apologize. This allows that it might be only on the basis of my desire to avoid annoying a second friend that I believe I should apologize. I might then actually apologize only for the second reason. Logically, the reasoning is unobjectionable (given a suitable interpretation of "ought"); it corresponds to a valid argument. But inferentially it is not: my holding the conclusion is not based on, but only rationalized by, my premises concerning duty.

We could put the point in part by employing the distinction between the corresponding argument and the underlying argument: here the practical argument merely corresponds to, and does not underlie, my practical reasoning, including my judgment in favor of the conclusion. I have beliefs that are of, and in that sense correspond to, the premises and conclusion; but my premise beliefs do not explain, and so do not provide a (causal) basis of, my believing the conclusion. The beliefs express a reason I have to believe this conclusion; but I am abnormal in not believing it for that reason. In that sense the argument does not underlie my belief of the conclusion even if I comprehendingly go through the motions of inferring the conclusion from the premises. In good practical reasoning, by contrast, a suitable practical argument underlies S's reasoning; it provides a basis of it, not merely a corresponding structure available for use in reconstruction or rationalization.

A further deficiency in the kind of rationalizational practical reasoning just considered is that it lacks an appropriate practical upshot: neither Samuel's acceptance of the premises nor the reasoning as a whole yields a tendency to act accordingly. The premises and conclusion of his reasoning give him normative, but not motivational, practical reasons. This is not just a limitation on how practical the reasoning is. It indicates that the inferring of the conclusion is not backed by the normal motivating force of reason as represented by the agent's believing the premises and drawing the conclusion from them. The agent's tendency to act on the conclusion is grounded solely in a desire that is not expressed in the premises.

We have, then, practical reasoning that is logically acceptable yet inferentially deficient. Its inferential deficiency is epistemic in nature but psychological in origin. The inferential assessment of reasoning, like its purely logical assessment, is indifferent to the actual truth or falsity of its premises, though not to the agent's justification for them. The overall appraisal of reasoning is not indifferent to truth and falsity; and the rest of this section addresses mainly the epistemic assessment of practical reasoning, including, on the one hand, the relations among the truth or falsity of its constituents and, on the other, S's justification for believing them.

Epistemic assessment of reasoning overlaps inferential assessment, since one factor in S's justification for believing the conclusion is the inferential relation this belief bears to the premises. But there are many other aspects of epistemic assessment. Consider first the premises. There are complicated factors that affect assessment of them. These premises may be mistaken without the argument's ceasing to be practical. Moreover, since one may rationally believe certain false propositions, the falsity of a premise does not preclude S's justifiedly drawing the conclusion. If we call a practical argument that is valid and has true premises sound, we may say that unsound practical reasoning may nevertheless confer justification on its conclusion, where this implies, minimally, yielding greater warrant for believing it than for withholding it. For we may have excellent grounds for believing the premises (and conclusion) even if they are false.

Indeed, even an argument that is not valid may instantiate some adequacy pattern and be inductively strong. Moreover, our having sufficient warrant to take an argument to be valid may (given justified beliefs of the premises) justify our believing its conclusion. There may be only a very limited range of cases in which such a logical error concerning a practical argument can have the required degree of warrant (or at least of excusability). But there apparently are some cases. If my premises are true and I justifiably believe them, then if I am mistaken in thinking the argument valid only because I miss a very abstruse source of invalidity, perhaps I can still justifiably believe—though I could not know—the conclusion on the basis of these premises.

5 SOME APPLICATIONS OF THE CRITERIA OF ASSESSMENT

We have considered four kinds of criteria of assessment for practical reasoning. The first two concern the abstract (argumental) element: the embodied argument. It may be viewed logically, in terms of its validity or inductive strength, and materially, in terms of the truth and falsity of its prepositional constituents. The third, the inferential criterion—which is governed by both psychological and epistemic standards—concerns the agent s

justification for inferring the conclusion from, and for believing it in virtue of, the premises. Roughly, the question is how much justification the reasoning process gives to S's belief of the conclusion—typically by transmitting justification from beliefs of the premises to a belief of the conclusion. The fourth, the purely epistemic criterion, concerns the overall justification of S's beliefs of each of these propositions (or, if the reasoning is suppositional, the justification for believing them, roughly in the sense that if S believed them for the reasons constituting this justification, the resulting beliefs would be justified). In a given piece of reasoning, these criteria may yield results that vary independently For instance, certain reasonings offered in rationalizing an error may be logically and materially adequate, yet inferentially and epistemically defective.

One would hope that one's practical reasoning is adequate in relation to all four kinds of criteria. When it is sound (or at least has true premises and is inductively strong) and, on balance, S justifiedly believes its premises and, on that basis, also justifiedly believes its conclusion, it is cogent. This overall notion is quite rich, but the intuitive idea is that in this case our premises provide a cogent reason for our conclusion and we hold it for the reason the premises provide. Such reasoning instantiates some cogency pattern, has true premises S justifiably believes, and yields S's believing the conclusion on the basis of those premises. The reasoning is logically, materially, epistemically, and inferentially adequate. It satisfies all four kinds of criteria. Earlier I indicated how practical reasoning of various sorts may satisfy the logical requirements, and some of the inferential requirements, for cogency. The satisfaction of the (material) truth requirements will be considered in Chapters 8 to 10, but the epistemic requirements for justifiably believing the individual propositions need attention now.[5]

Consider the major premise first. We have seen in discussing logical criteria that there is a trade-off: the stronger our premises (in content), especially in representing our goal as overriding, the better the prospect of validity, particularly if our conclusion is prima facie; yet the stronger the premises are, the less likely it is that we justifiedly believe them. If my major premise says only that I want to prepare a talk, or simply that I have a prima facie obligation to do so, then (if I am in normal circumstances) it is not likely that I am unjustified in believing the premise. Clearly we are often justified in believing that we want something, or that we have a prima facie obligation to do a certain deed. Often we are also justified in believing that something is currently our overriding end. If I see a child about to ignite a curtain, I would normally be amply justified in believing I must (overridingly) intervene.

In many cases, however, I would not have a practical problem if I could easily discern my overriding end, or what, on balance, is my overriding obligation. I may be comparing recreational prospects, so the question may be mainly what I most want (or should want in the light of what I enjoy). A week at the beach would be relaxing, but might be too slow; a week in a favorite city would be too expensive; and there may be several other options. If I decide that, all things considered, the country would be best, I might be neglecting other prospects, or wrongly appraising my own reactions to the envisaged situation itself. The mere possibility of a mistake does not undermine my justification for settling on the country, but the point is that an avoidable and unjustified mistake is possible here.

This point can also be illustrated with respect to obligations, as where one must devote time and resources to one child as opposed to another, or to a parent rather than a spouse.

It is easy to go astray in such cases and unwarrantedly conclude our reasoning. And just as we sometimes correct an earlier stance, or retrospectively admit an unwarranted view, regarding what we wanted on balance, we may revise our views on what we are obligated to do.

It is one thing to point out basic kinds of mistakes that can be made in holding the major premise; it is another to give criteria for the degree (if any) of the unjustifiability of holding them. No simple formula suffices, and a case can be made for any of a number of standards ranging from demanding to permissive. One plausible standard, however, deserves immediate consideration: we should meet a higher standard where more is at stake. Making a change of career is far more important than choosing a birthday cake.

Regardless of how important the goal is for the agent, if the major premise does not represent it as overriding, the risk of mistake in believing it is reduced: its claim is weaker. However, if the reasoning is undertaken in the normal way in the course of answering a practical question, then even if the words I use, or would use if I voiced the reasoning, do not indicate an overriding end, the belief I actually would express by the words in the context commonly does indicate one. I may say simply "I believe I'd better concentrate on the older child's problems today" to express the difficulty of being certain what I should, on balance, do, but my belief may well be to the effect that so doing is my overall obligation. The proposition that it is my overall obligation is thus a good candidate for my major premise. Similar points apply to the use of expressions like 'I want', 'my aim', and 'I really should', in expressing practical reasoning. Their common modesty of tone may obscure their frequent unconditionality of intended content.

In assessing S's justification for the minor premise, the task is simpler where the premise represents A-ing as necessary for the end. In that case the question is S's justification for taking certain instrumental or constitutive relations to hold. However, we commonly conclude practical reasoning in favor of actions that we do not consider necessary conditions for realizing our end, but regard only as something like our best bet, or good, or adequate, for achieving this end. In the latter case, in which we do not take the means to be necessary for the end, there are at least three criteria. They parallel those cited for the major premise: we may overlook a relevant feature of the action, say its unpleasantness; we may fail to see one or more relevant consequences of it, such as its eliminating the chance of realizing some other end of ours; and we may neglect a consequence for something that, on reflection, we would want.

The general point here about evaluation of actions as means to one's ends is that where S does not consider the action necessary for the end, and particularly where S believes that it is not necessary, the question of its suitability is comparative. This holds whether or not S actually makes a comparison. We do not have to make a comparison of one means with another in order to be properly judged by our selection among alternatives. Thus, from errors of either commission (such as foolish preference for an inefficient means) or omission (such as negligently ignoring better means), S may unjustifiably believe that the action is, say, a good way to realize the end, hence fail to be justified in believing the minor premise.

6 THE DEFEASIBILITY OF PRACTICAL REASONING

If we consider examples carefully and bear in mind the frequency with which competing ends and contrasting beliefs affect our thinking, it becomes plain that practical reasoning of a kind that is normally satisfactory may often be defeasible. By this I mean roughly that even when our reasoning expresses a good underlying argument, we may fail to be justified on balance in holding the conclusion. This point is epistemic; it applies not to practical arguments, whose logical status as abstract structures is invariant, but to reasoning processes, which, even with the same content (or at least the same kind of content), can yield different degrees of justification in different circumstances. The defeasibility of practical reasoning, then, is determined by both inferential and other epistemic criteria.[6]

Defeasibility may be exhibited by practical reasoning whose underlying argument is valid as well as by its inductive counterparts. Even in the (deductive) case of an optimality pattern, at least some of S's justification for believing the premises may fail to be transmitted to S's believing the conclusion. One instance occurs where no justification is transmitted because S believes the conclusion for an inadequate reason rather than on the basis of the premises.

In the other cases where defeasibility occurs despite a valid underlying argument, even if S's justification is entirely transmitted, it may not be sufficient to outweigh all the considerations counting against the conclusion. It is not that, when outweighed by conflicting considerations, S's justification is eliminated. The analogy of a two-tray balance scale is apt here: the lesser weight rises in the air, but retains its absolute value. Similarly, one does not lose outweighed justification; it simply fails to counterbalance other considerations that may emerge or lie in the background. Defeat may occur where one's justification is either overridden by considerations making some alternative preferable, or undermined by factors that reduce it to a level such that one is no longer justified on balance in holding the conclusion.

Consider, for instance, the justification of S's concluding practical judgment that S should chair the committee. This justification might be overridden by S's realizing that it would be better to urge Ann to chair it. The justification might be undermined where, though S gets no counterevidence, such as evidence favoring a different kind of service instead, he discovers reason to doubt whether his judgment is warranted by his reasons, say to doubt the adequacy of the grounds for thinking he is competent to chair the committee. Both kinds of factors might be known to S—presumably tacitly—at the time S draws the conclusion; they may also come to mind just as, in a self-critical mood, he is drawing his conclusion; and they may come to light thereafter and do their undermining work then. Indeed, a self-critical agent may often seek such factors before acting on practical inferences.

Our justification for holding a practical conclusion is especially likely to be defeated where—as is common in practice—the conclusion is not qualified by 'prima facie', 'other things equal', or some comparable cautionary notion. We may, after all, have overlooked a superior means, such as a third gift far more likely to please than the two that we considered. We may have failed to take account of other things we want; say to

avoid evoking jealousy in someone else who will envy the gift. We may also have good reason to believe we ought not to want the end, or ought not to believe the minor premise.

These points about the justificatory protection afforded by qualifying our concluding judgment do not imply that, if we draw only a prima facie conclusion, our justification for believing the qualified proposition (and for judging it to be true) may not itself be defeated. The protection falls far short of invulnerability. Drawing a conclusion, say that prima facie I should A, which allows that if other things are not equal then, on balance, I should not A, does not prevent my being mistaken in believing this apparently weak conclusion. The difference is between defeat of the obligation expressed in the judgment—which the prima facie qualification provides for—and defeat of the justification of the judgment itself—which it does not provide for. Both kinds of defeat are possible for a single judgment. Nonetheless, prima facie conclusions, on any of the plausible interpretations of "prima facie," require less for their justification than their unqualified counterparts.

7 COMBINATION AND COMPOSITIONALITY IN PRACTICAL REASONING

There are still other kinds of factors that defeat S's (overall) justification for believing the conclusion; but rather than consider more of these I want to describe a contrasting kind of case, in which S believes the conclusion on another basis as well as on the basis of the practical reasoning in question. This additional basis may include different practical reasoning for the same conclusion. Here as elsewhere justificatory overdetermination may occur. Both reasonings may independently warrant the conclusion. If the reasoning is good, then believing the premises should be both a sufficient rational basis for one's believing the conclusion and a sufficient psychological basis of one's believing it. This may hold where one has two independent sets of premises.

Suppose, however, that my believing the premises is not sufficient to justify my believing the conclusion, but still exercises some influence on that belief. This might occur where I believe the conclusion on the basis of two independent practical reasonings jointly sufficient to produce my belief but neither sufficient by itself. We then get a number of cases. For instance, the two reasonings might or might not be individually necessary for my believing the conclusion; and, in various ways, one piece of reasoning could be more influential than the other in producing or sustaining my belief of the conclusion.

How should the reasoning be assessed in such cases? I suggest that, other things equal, S's believing the conclusion of one such piece of reasoning is justified in proportion to two factors. One is the degree of influence of that reasoning as a basis of the belief, roughly, the extent of its (non-wayward) causal support of it. Weak support would be illustrated by the reasoning's merely inclining S to hold the belief, and strong support by its fully explaining why he does hold it. The second factor is the degree to which S's premises justify the conclusion, roughly, how good a ground they provide for it. The latter variable concerns the quality of S's justificatory basis; the former concerns the extent to which S's concluding judgment rests on that basis and can thereby derive justification from it.

The case is quite parallel, I think, to theoretical justification, say for believing a scientific hypothesis on the basis of inference to the best explanation. In each case, the degree of our justification in believing the conclusion varies with both the degree of the belief's inferential dependence on our premise beliefs and the quality of the evidence they express.

Granted, as the number of reasonings for the same conclusion mounts up, the "proportion" of our justification for it received from each of them diminishes, even if their absolute "quantity" of evidential support for the conclusion is equal. But there need not be, and in practice there apparently never is, a point at which one reaches either justificatory saturation or maximal belief strength.

One further distinction is needed in this section. Once we realize that the belief expressed in the concluding judgment of practical reasoning, say that one should vacation in the country, may be based on other factors than S's beliefs of the premises, we can see that the belief's overall justification may largely derive from other sources. Where all of these sources are beliefs which themselves express premises in practical reasonings for the relevant conclusion, then provided they collectively justify that conclusion, we may say that S's holding it is justified by S's practical reasoning. It may not, however, be justified by any one instance of this practical reasoning, since no single piece of such reasoning need be sufficient for S's justification.

To be sure, we can combine the distinct practical arguments in question, as we can theoretical arguments. We would then have a single argument whose major premise expresses the several goals to which the action in question is a means, say the goals of relaxing, reading, fishing, and so on. That shows why it is plausible to say that the conclusion in favor of A-ing is justified by practical reasoning in general even if no single inference of S's justifies it; it is reconstructively justified by a single piece of practical reasoning to which S is at least prima facie committed, one whose premises are the conjunction of the entire set of the premises of the various arguments S instantiates for the conclusion.

Notice, however, that human psychology being as it is, one may actually go through a sequence of practical reasonings, each giving some support to one's A-ing, and then conclude in favor of A-ing without deliberative composition of all the considerations into one complicated premise. The relevant conjunction might even be too involved to entertain. It also might be psychologically unsuitable to serve as a single premise: a tediously long list of desiderata may, if entertained at once, strike one as an uninviting hodgepodge.

Even without deliberative composition, I might believe that in virtue of the list as a whole I have good reason to A, and might thereby judge that I should. But this is a different (and rather odd) case. It is not judging in favor of A on the basis of a conjunctive good reason; it is judging on the basis of the conviction that the conjunction expresses a good reason. I would act, moreover, not for the conjunctive reason, but in order to do what I have adequate reason to do.[7] Fortunately, neither the motivational power nor the justificatory force of the separate premises in relation to the single conclusion they support requires their incorporation in a single piece of practical reasoning. Indeed, if they are sufficiently numerous, such deliberative composition might reduce their psychological influence and perhaps even their justificatory force.

To meet the specifically epistemic conditions for cogent practical reasoning, then, S must at least justifiedly believe both premises, and must conclude, on the basis of them, with a practical judgment which they warrant. This may indeed be a sufficient condition, with two provisos: first, that the justification in both cases is justification on balance, and so is undefeated; and second, that cogency is not a kind of absolute indefeasibility, such as Cartesian certainty, but simply the sort of warrant in reasoning which, given true premises, normally yields knowledge of the conclusion. If the condition is not sufficient for cogency, that could be because S might justifiably but mistakenly take the premises not to warrant the conclusion, yet draw it anyway, say where it is something S very much wants to believe and S draws it from a kind of weakness of will.

There is some unclarity over whether such warranted but mistaken condemnations of our own reasoning must vitiate our justification for believing our conclusion. I fear that they would, but otherwise the stated conditions seem necessary and sufficient for fulfilling the basic epistemic conditions on cogent practical reasoning. There are, however, many problems in determining just when the various kinds of premises that can occur in practical reasoning are justifiably believed by the agent. The question of when such premises justify a practical conclusion, especially an unqualified one, is also difficult. But these problems are not peculiar to practical reasoning, and we have in any case indicated what sorts of difficulties they present and some proposals for their resolution.

8 RATIONALITY AND RELATIVITY

In discussing the assessment of practical reasoning, I have spoken as if such appraisal were culturally neutral. The logical criteria are neutral. To be sure, in the case of inductive criteria, it may be more plausible to doubt whether there are cross-culturally sound standards than in the deductive case. In any event, it is the epistemic criteria that should concern us most here. May we really speak as if there are objective, cross-culturally sound criteria for the justification of beliefs, particularly beliefs about what constitutes one's overriding end, where this can include moral considerations? This is a large issue which will be discussed in some detail in Chapters 9 and 10.

If one thinks that epistemic criteria are in some sense relative to culture or subjective outlook, one can still employ the account of the assessment of practical reasoning given here. One need only embed the relevant criteria in the specific framework to which one thinks them relative. For instance, if moral obligation is determined simply by the demands of the culture in which it arises, then the relevant cultural criteria for moral obligation can be used both in assessing S's belief that S has a moral obligation and in appraising the degree of support this premise gives to an unqualified moral conclusion S draws. The framework of assessment developed above will apply, but the specific criteria used in it will vary across cultures.

In saying that the epistemic criteria of appraisal suggested above can be accommodated to a kind of relativity, I am not talking about relativity in the sense illustrated by my obligation to check up on a friend's flat being relative to my promising to do so, or by my duty to recommend students being relative to my role as teacher, as opposed to being, say, intrinsic to my condition as a rational person, like a Kantian duty

of self-improvement. That quite familiar kind of relativity is relativity of content. The central idea is uncontroversial: relativism as an affirmation of this phenomenon, contentual relativism, is simply the (widely recognized) view that what we are obligated to do, the content of our obligations, depends on, and is in that sense relative to, such factors as our previous behavior, our circumstances—cultural as well as interpersonal—and our opportunities and limitations.

My own view is that there are objective standards of rationality.[8] But even apart from this assumption, practical reasoning may be conceived as understood in this book, and its evaluation can be governed by the kinds of criteria described in this chapter: logical, material, inferential, and epistemic. The logical and material criteria apply directly to the underlying practical argument; the epistemic and inferential criteria apply directly to the reasoning that inferentially tokens that argument. We have seen many forms that rationally adequate practical reasoning may take.

What is at issue concerning the justification of practical judgments is quite different. It is relativity of status, and its affirmation is epistemic relativism, the view that what justifies a moral (or other normative) judgment even when circumstantial variables are taken into account—is relative to, in the sense that it depends on, such variable factors as culture. Thus, even when the conditions to which the content of my obligation is relative are specified—say a prior promise and an ability to carry it out—it cannot be unqualifiedly true that I am justified in my belief that I ought to fulfill my obligation. I am justified only within my cultural setting. Indeed, my justification is cultural, as opposed to universal, though, by virtue of its subject matter or at least its function, it may be moral in the same sense of "moral" that applies to justification rooted in the same way in a different culture. On this view, there are different notions of justification applicable in different cultures, or at least in different frames of reference, whether the principle of distinction is cultural or of some other kind. The different notions are analogous, but not governed by the same criteria.[9]

Epistemic relativism may be combined with the ontological view that it cannot even be unqualifiedly true that I ought (morally) to do something. I consider the latter view less plausible; but perhaps it too can be largely accommodated by the framework of this book, by reinterpreting the schemata for practical reasoning accordingly and suitably relativizing the criteria for its appraisal. For so far as I can tell, all the plausible frameworks for the representation and assessment of practical reasoning will employ both the kinds of schemata I have set out and criteria of the main sorts I have introduced: logical, material, inferential, and epistemic. This applies particularly to its means-end structure and its appraisal as adequate or inadequate in terms of the agent's beliefs about, roughly, the value of the relevant end and the suitability of the envisaged means. The main difference would be that, on the noncognitivist view I have in mind, normative conclusions cannot be supported by their grounds in a sense implying their truth. But they might still be supported in a way implying that it is reasonable to endorse them and act accordingly; and the criteria for such support might be quite similar to their counterparts in my cognitivist account of what justifies practical judgments.

This chapter has explored three interrelated dimensions of assessment for practical reasoning and four kinds of criteria for its appraisal. The first dimension is argumental: it concerns the corresponding argument conceived abstractly, and we have noted several patterns of argument, representing necessity, optimality, two kinds of adequacy, and

cogency. The argument corresponding to practical reasoning may be appraised both by logical criteria, whether deductive or, in a broad sense, inductive, and by material criteria, which concern the truth or falsity of the constituent propositions. Second, assessment occurs in the inferential dimension: the reasoning process itself may be appraised by inferential criteria. These concern both the conditions for justifiably drawing the inference and the requirements for justifiably holding the conclusion in virtue of believing the premises. And third, there is the epistemic dimension: the agent's beliefs of the premises and conclusions may be appraised by epistemic criteria that may or may not concern the reasoning process or corresponding argument. These criteria concern both what (if anything) justifies the agent's beliefs and what might defeat that justification. These epistemic criteria leave open whether any of the beliefs are inferentially justified, through either practical or theoretical reasoning.

Ideally, good practical reasoning expresses a valid underlying argument with premises that are true and justifiably believed, and with a conclusion which is both justifiably inferred from them and justifiably held on the basis of them. This ideal may actually be quite often fulfilled or approximated. When an agent makes a practical judgment on the basis of practical reasoning that fulfills or approximates this ideal, that judgment and action on the basis of it will tend to be rational. But they need not be, and the conditions under which they are or are not hold great interest. Those conditions will be a main focus in the remaining chapters.

Eight
General principles of practical appraisal

We have explored several dimensions in which practical reasoning may be assessed, and we have formulated a number of broad criteria for its general appraisal. These criteria leave open a number of questions concerning what principles of practical rationality should guide us. Many have been proposed as governing both practical reasoning and action. Some of these are moral; others are more general. A major question that any theory of practical reasoning must address is whether moral principles have any privileged or otherwise special status in the appraisal of practical reasoning and rational action. Those principles can be of enormous importance whether or not that is so. That will be clear in Chapter 10, which will explore some definite moral principles in application to practical reasoning and ethical decision. Here, however, I want to consider the status of moral reasons in general in relation to practical reasoning and then to proceed to some substantive principles we might hold in guiding that reasoning.

1 THE NORMATIVE POWER OF MORAL REASONS

Are moral practical reasonings always rationally of the highest authority, in the sense that when they are cogent, the moral practical judgments they justify always provide overriding (normative) reason for action? If, with Kant, we regard moral judgments as, when properly grounded, deriving from reason and expressing its full legislative authority, then it will be natural to hold that an unqualified moral judgment is always overriding. It need not be motivationally overriding, as we have seen in discussing Kant's resources for dealing with weakness of will, though it must, for Kant, have at least substantial motivating power, since if reason cannot motivate in some significant way, it cannot be fully practical.

It is the normative status of moral judgment which we should briefly consider. Normatively, a Kantian framework implies a preponderant role for moral judgment: moral judgment is normatively overriding, in the sense that it provides both the strongest kind of justification for action and in fact a kind even stronger than any combination of other sorts, such as pragmatic and aesthetic justification. Call this the Kantian moral priority thesis.[1] I will return to it in Chapter 9; the question here is whether an account of practical reasoning should presuppose this thesis, or indeed any priority relations among kinds of reasons and judgments. I shall make just two points now.

First, the question of normative priority relations belongs to the theory of practical reason, not specifically to the theory of practical reasoning. As noted in Chapter 4, the question of what constitutes such reasoning is distinct from the question of what constitutes a good reason for action (though that question does arise implicitly for the assessment of practical reasoning and will be pursued further in this and the final

chapters). The parallel question of motivational priority belongs to the theory of motivation. Kant was especially concerned with practical reason. Both the normative and the motivational domains are relevant to understanding practical reasoning, and both are therefore discussed at a number of points in this book. But our account of what constitutes practical reasoning is properly neutral with respect to the moral priority thesis. If that thesis is true, this bears on what S is normatively committed to in drawing his conclusion. But it does not necessarily affect what that conclusion is, and the truth of the thesis is consistent with S's taking the thesis to be false. If it is true, however, it bears importantly on the epistemic assessment of reasoning. This brings me to my second point.

Suppose the moral priority thesis is true and that I justifiably and truly judge that my overall moral obligation is to check up on my friend's flat. Then (by the priority thesis) I have an objective and overriding moral obligation to do it. Imagine, however, that I do not believe the priority thesis. I may instead justifiedly believe that there is an overarching rational point of view which takes priority even over the moral point of view. In that case, I could be justified (by this conflicting priority thesis) in believing that what, overall, I should do (in the sense of what reason demands of me) lies elsewhere; for my deepest justifiedly held views and aims might demand believing this. Perhaps, then, despite the truth of the moral priority thesis and my consequent objective moral obligation to do the promised job, I could still fail to meet the epistemic conditions for justifiably holding the conclusion that I ought to do the job. For I would rationally (though mistakenly) believe, of my actually sufficient moral grounds expressed in the premises, that they do not entail an overriding conclusion. The point is that what justifies my belief of my conclusion as to what I must do is determined by what I justifiedly believe, or am justified in believing, and not by the priority thesis, which (though far from self-evident) we are assuming is objectively true.

The case shows that we may justifiably take ourselves to have a moral obligation, without being justified in believing that it is (rationally) overriding—even if, as the moral priority thesis says, it is overriding. Thus, even if this priority thesis is true, it need not commit every rational agent to giving precedence to moral obligations over all others; its truth would imply at most that it would commit ideally rational agents to this position. To be sure, if the moral priority thesis is true, ideally rational agents would normally see this and hence take their moral conclusion to be (overridingly) binding. The point is simply that even if the priority thesis is true, its acceptance is not a condition for rational agents' either countenancing or acting on moral obligations. It also need not be presupposed by moral agents in doing moral practical reasoning.

The crucial items to be assessed in the epistemic appraisal of practical reasoning are the premises and conclusion we actually believe, together with other relevant propositions we might be expected to believe or consider, including alternative premises or conclusions. But we are not logically omniscient; hence, there can be propositions—such as that on balance we should keep a promise—which, though entailed by what we believe, we nonetheless do not believe, and should not be expected to believe under the circumstances. It would thus be a mistake to assess our practical reasoning on the assumption that whatever we are logically committed to is always relevant to appraising that reasoning. In this sense, then, I am construing the epistemic appraisal of practical reasoning as agent relative; for this appraisal is to be made in relation to the agent's

epistemic situation. In our concrete situation, we might believe propositions that adequately support a moral priority thesis but, because we cannot (without special help) see that they do, we might not be bound to accept the thesis or take it as a constraint on our reasoning.

This approach is consistent with granting that there may be an objectively correct normative priority thesis which ideally should be reflected in assessments of practical conclusions. Suppose an agent takes a prudential ground to be overriding, thinking, in an egoistic moment, that self-interested reasons are the only ones that matter. If moral reasons in fact override prudential ones, this would be a mistake; and if we accept the priority of the former, we are likely to question the justification as well as the truth of the agent's concluding judgment, for example that one s career should have priority over obligations to one's parents. Nonetheless, in an adequately reflective agent the judgment, even if mistaken, could be sufficiently well-grounded to be justified. The epistemic assessment of practical reasoning, then, should be based on what agents conclude in the light of their reasons, together with what it is reasonable to expect them to believe given their total situation. If the reasoning runs contrary to a correct priority thesis, as where considerations of prudence are wrongly taken to override moral ones, it is not fully cogent. But given the agents information and capacities, it may for all that express a reasonable answer to a practical question; and certainly so conceiving it will yield a better sense of how a rational agent answers a practical question, and of how practical reasoning guides action, than expecting practical judgments to reflect correctly whatever normative priority relations there may be. We can explicate what it is for practical reasoning to be normatively adequate without committing ourselves on what kind of reasons, if any, are ultimately overriding.

2 A RANGE OF SUBSTANTIVE PRINCIPLES OF PRACTICAL REASON AND PRACTICAL REASONING

Many philosophers have proposed standards governing reasons and reasoning. I want to consider some of these that bear on all the dimensions of practical reasoning considered in this book, but particularly on the inferential and epistemic dimensions. I will formulate the standards mainly as principles that do not essentially refer to reasoning. This is because the normative (e.g. evidential) relation between one set of beliefs (or judgments) and another is not affected by the difference between reasoning from the content of the first set to that of the second and, on the other hand, simply holding the second set of beliefs (or judgments) on the basis of the first set. Reasoning from one belief to a second, for instance, yields justification for holding the second if and only if it satisfies the conditions for being justified in holding the second belief on the basis of the first.

My main point here concerning the practical domain is that if a practical reason justifies believing one should A, it does so whether one simply believes this on the basis of that reason—thereby having a belief for a reason—or whether one engages in practical reasoning from a proposition expressing the reason to that belief—thereby having a reasoned belief, one based on an inferential process (an inferential tokening) of an argument. A belief (or practical judgment) can have the same foundation whether one has

climbed to it by the ladder of inference or reached it more directly, simply propelled, as it were, by the force of the evidence.

It may seem that we are better justified in the former case because, having earned our conviction through reasoning, we are better positioned to justify it. Perhaps we are often better able, or more readily disposed, to justify a belief when we have reasoned to it than when we have simply formed it on the basis of a reason; but this is a contingent matter. We can forget a premise from which we reasoned, for instance, and we can often readily see what belief of ours grounds one whose justification is queried even if we did not arrive at the latter by reasoning. Memory has its losses and its deep recesses that are not easily plumbed, and the search for a path we have unconsciously taken can sometimes succeed faster than looking for one we have consciously followed.

Given that the principles governing the normative support that various considerations provide for practical judgments does not depend on whether the agent reasons from the former to the latter, we can consider principles of practical appraisal initially in the simplest cases of such support, in which no reasoning occurs. A good place to start in identifying some basic kinds of practical principles is with Kant s famous hypothetical imperative.

3 HYPOTHETICAL IMPERATIVES

In one version, this imperative might be called a principle of the scope of the will in rational persons: they who will the end will the (necessary) means, at least so far as reason has decisive influence on them. This may be plausibly called an imperative because it implies that if willing an end is not accompanied by the corresponding instrumental willing, one is in some way deficient in rationality. Kant also says, "[W]hoever wills the end wills also (necessarily according to reason) the only means to it which are in his power" (see the Groundwork, esp. sections 417–18). Both formulations lack temporal variables. Suppose, however, that (as it appears) Kant means to include cases in which we reflect on what to do, or we will an end, before being aware of a means. These cases are common, and we need a standard for them. We should add temporal variables that allow the principle to apply across time.

A plausible candidate would be the following temporally and cognitively relativized hypothetical imperative: if, at (time) t, S wills an end, E, then, for any necessary means to E which, at t, S (a) considers and (b) takes to be a necessary means in S's power, S wills that means at t.[2] We may assume that the reference is to means that are not merely necessary, as with flipping one of two switches jointly required to turn on a light; here presumably S would will to flip both. The principle is plausible only on the assumption that S takes the means in question to have a significant chance of realizing the end. Kant is apparently also thinking of cases in which we are following through on something like an act of will or an occurrent intention. Thus, we might call this relativized version of the hypothetical imperative a Kantian principle of volition transfer, since it describes volition s passing from an end to a means (it seems broadly Kantian even if it is not exactly coincident with one of the principles Kant had in mind).

There are other versions of the hypothetical imperative. On one recent account of it,

> [W]illing an end just is committing yourself to realizing the end…to give oneself a law, hence to govern oneself…. What about Kant's own formula? If it is to be like my first formula, the one that works [i.e. "if you have a reason to pursue an end, then you have a reason to take the means to that end"], then… you must think that the fact that you will an end is a reason for that end.[3]

This passage suggests (though it does not entail) a principle connecting willing ends with willing means—call it the volition transfer principle. It is to the effect that if, at t, S wills an end, E, and believes that the fact that S wills this is a reason to pursue the end, then, for any necessary means to E which S (a) considers at t or over an interval beginning at t and (b) takes to be a necessary means in S's power, S wills that means at t or by the end of that interval.

The volition transfer principle might seem to imply a subjectivist grounding principle for reasons: that believing there is a reason entails that there is one. But this broad subjective principle is not implied by the volition transfer principle. Its implication here is apparently that this belief is required for willing an end to generate (rationally) willing a means and to ground the imperatival character of such principles, in virtue of which those who will the end but not the instrumental means are in some way deficient in rationality.

A counterpart Humean formulation represents reasons for action as arising more directly from a motivational state. Consider this means/ends rule (M/E): "If you desire to A and believe that by B-ing you will A, then you ought to B."[4] Viewed as a kind of imperative, this is most plausible if the desire is taken to be predominant. For (as Chapter 2 explained) if one had merely a weak desire to A, massively outweighed by desires for things one knows cannot be achieved if A occurs, "ought" would be unwarranted even for a Humean (and perhaps even understood as prima facie).

A Humean principle suggested by this qualification would be this: if, at t, S has a predominant desire for a state of affairs, E, and believes that A-ing will realize E, then, at t, S has reason to A. One might claim that this or something similar is a basic principle of practical inference and indeed that "Someone who does not accept the M/E principle cannot be given reasons of any sort."[5] Such a claim is more plausible if intention is appealed to rather than desire. The resulting claim would be doser to the hypothetical imperative. Call that claim the principle of the normative requirement of intention: "[I]f you intend to do something and you do not repudiate this intention, your intention normatively requires you to do what you intend. Unrepudiated intentions normatively require to be acted on."[6] The idea here is that one must either cease holding an unrepudiated intention or do the intended thing. It is not implied, however, that even unrepudiated intentions generate reasons for action.[7]

Neither M/E nor the unrepudiated intentions principle is temporally qualified. This is important, particularly if reasoning cannot be instantaneous. For then there will be a major difference between normative principles governing practical reasoning and those practical principles simply applicable to agents at a given time, which may govern practical reasons but not practical reasoning. A reason can be implied by or grounded in another reason instantaneously; reasoning apparently cannot be instantaneous. I will return to temporal considerations. We should first explore a different dimension of normative assessment.

4 THREE KINDS OF NORMATIVE PRINCIPLE

Normative principles differ in a way that is not yet clearly in view. To bring this out, let me contrast two kinds of case, first in the theoretical domain—with belief as our analogue of intention—and then in the practical realm. There is much to be learned from exploring the parallels and differences between the practical and theoretical realms.[8] Suppose belief is taken as an analogue of intention: the former may be conceived as a kind of commitment of the intellect; the latter as a kind of commitment of the will. Then a theoretical analogue of the Kantian hypothetical imperative is this: if, at t, S believes both that p and that p entails q, then, at t (so far as reason has "decisive influence" on S), S also believes q. Call this the principle of closure of belief (in rational persons) under believed entailment ('closure' is used because the principle states conditions under which the domain of a normal person s beliefs remains closed when the "operation" (believed entailment) is applied to it).

This closure principle can be instructively compared with a related (though false) one superficially like the normative requirement of intentions principle: if, at t, S believes both that p and that p entails q, then, at t, S has reason to believe q. This is not, however, a closure principle but a cognitive generation principle. It does not give conditions under which a belief set is closed. It says in effect that beliefs generate (normative) reasons for other beliefs via a believed entailment between their objects. A reason for a belief need not be accompanied by that belief, but it is natural for a belief to arise in response to the pressure of a reason for it. There are many beliefs that might be claimed to be accounted for by the cognitive generation principle.

If we want to apply the cognitive generation principle to reasoning, then (on the assumption that reasoning at least typically requires time), we should formulate a plausible cross-temporal counterpart. A plausible candidate would be this: If, at t, S believes both that p and that p entails q, then if, at or immediately after t, and with an awareness of holding these beliefs, S considers whether q, S has prima facie reason to believe q. (The awareness condition is needed mainly because we must rule out S's forgetting the "premises" before considering the conclusion they entail.)

In appraising these three principles concerning belief, it is helpful to distinguish them in relation to time. Call the first two (and other principles applying at a given time) synchronic. Call the third, which applies across time, diachronic. Let us appraise them in turn. None will survive scrutiny.

Consider a time, t, at which S (already) believes that p and forms the belief that p entails q. The closure of belief principle allows a possibility that shows its inadequacy, namely that (a) both beliefs are irrational, and (b) S might, on considering q (which we may assume S can do at the same time), justifiedly find q implausible and thereby acquire a reason not to believe it, a reason stronger than any reason S has to believe p. Why, then, must S's belief that p, which is irrational, give S any reason to believe q? One answer would be that S rationally must (is rationally required to) believe q, given S's believing that p and that p entails q, and that this rational 'must' is the basis of the reason-generating power of the "premise" beliefs in the two generation principles. Is that so?

This answer is easily taken to be plausible if one does not distinguish such generation principles from a principle in this vicinity—a coherence principle—that clearly is true. At any given time, there is reason not to believe the inconsistent triad: that p, that p entails q,

and that not-q. But this coherence principle (which we could also call an incoherence principle) implies nothing about whether the beliefs that p and that p entails q normatively support believing q. The coherence principle simply prohibits a kind of incoherence. It says nothing about what one has positive reason to believe. Indeed, the coherence principle holds even though it allows that p might be obviously false. Moreover, its falsity might be discovered by considering its entailment of q, which one might already take to be false or might readily see to be false upon thinking of the content of q as one considers that entailment. This point, in turn, helps to show why the two generation principles are false. Once we allow for one's considering q, or even just thinking of q in a way that gets its content before the mind, the possibility arises that, through doing it, one will come to have reason for disbelieving q that outweighs whatever reason one has for believing p.

Is practical reason different from theoretical reason on the points that have now emerged? I do not think so. Consider a practical counterpart of one of our generation principles—call it an intentions-as-reasons principle: if S intends to A and believes that B-ing is necessary and sufficient for A-ing, then S has reason to B. Sufficiency is, to be sure, a closer counterpart of entailment than necessity and sufficiency combined. But since, where B-ing is not necessary for A-ing, some other sufficient means to A-ing could be vastly preferable, we have, in the intentions-as-reasons principle, a more plausible standard than we would without the double-barreled condition.

In any case, are there not the same kinds of considerations here that apply to the generation principles for beliefs? It is true that there is a kind of practical incoherence in simultaneously intending to A, believing that B-ing is necessary and sufficient for A-ing (where one takes it that one can B),[9] and, aware of the intention and belief, intending not to B (or perhaps even failing to intend to B). But the implicit practical coherence principle is purely negative; it is an avoidance principle, not an endorsement principle, and it implies nothing about what specific acts one has reason to intend to do.

One might think that the prospects would be better for the diachronic counterpart of the intentions-as-reasons principle: if, at t, S intends to A and believes that B-ing is necessary and sufficient for A-ing, then if, at or immediately following t, and with an awareness of having this intention and belief, S considers whether to B, S has reason to B. This diachronic intentions-as-reasons principle does not rule out the possibility that the intention to A, or the related instrumental belief portraying B-ing as a means to A-ing, is irrational. In this case, then, it may be false that S has a reason to B. S also might, on considering whether to B, find the act highly objectionable and thereby acquire an overriding reason not to intend to A instead of an intention to A by B-ing.

5 TWO KINDS OF INFERENCE

We can now see the importance of the distinction between synchronic and diachronic principles. The former apply to a time slice of the agent; they take no account of change. Incoherence is possible at a given time, and there are sound principles that prohibit it; but considering a proposition or prospect and forming a belief or intention on the basis of it is at least normally not possible at a single time. In this case the mind may have to pause a moment on one step—or on the ground—before taking another step. Instantaneity is

certainly not possible for reasoning if we take reasoning to include a very common case, particularly when reasoning occurs in the course of practical thinking: the case of beginning to consider a proposition, or prospect, as where it occurs to one that bringing something about would be good, and then, on that basis, inferentially forming the relevant belief or intention. Call this case episodic inference. This is the kind that constitutes a tokening of practical reasoning in at least the normal cases of such reasoning. By contrast, it does seem possible at a single time to draw a conclusion while still considering a belief or prospect that had already come to mind. Call this instantaneous inference. Here the premise set is already in mind, possibly even long reflected on, and we focus just on the formation of a conclusion on the basis of it. The inference is a momentary movement of thought, not a process of which that is a part.[10]

If it turns out that reasoning need not involve episodic inference and is barely possible at a single time (a matter that can be left open here), the common kind of inference that qualifies as at least a minimal case of reflection is not. It is such reflection that is a characteristic element in practical thinking; and at least the vast majority of our practical reasonings either occur as part of a stretch of practical thinking (even if a short stretch) or at least require time to consider one or more propositions and, on that basis, conclude in favor of some action.

An important general point that emerges is that consideration of a possible action or, especially, of one's options may lead to change, and change, in turn, may alter the rationality status of an intention. This bears on standards governing practical reasoning. It is doubtful that reasoning is commonly instantaneous, if it ever is. It is certainly not instantaneous if we think of a piece of reasoning as at least a minimal case of reflection, as opposed to just the constituent inference conceived as a passage of thought from the premise (s) to the conclusion. But suppose a piece of reasoning can be instantaneous. This would still allow that at the very moment one considers B-ing in the light of intending to A and of believing that B-ing is necessary and sufficient for A-ing, one could have the thought that B-ing is morally repugnant just as quickly as one could form the intention to B. How much the mind can do, or respond to, at a given time, is largely a contingent matter. But if a mental element as complex as reasoning can be instantaneous, so can the occurrence of the thought that B-ing is morally repugnant together with ceasing to intend to A.

More generally, if it is theoretically possible for reasoning to be instantaneous, it is also theoretically possible that, at the relevant time, a thought or realization can occur to an agent and provide reason not to form the intention, or do the deed, in question. This bears on how one can avoid the kinds of incoherent triads of propositional attitudes we have been considering. If concluding practical reasoning in the usual way that favors the act figuring in the minor premise can be instantaneous, acquiring a reason to reject one of the premises that favor so concluding can be also.[11] The need to avoid inconsistent triads does not by itself favor one pattern of reasoning over the other.

There is another way to put one of my conclusions. Even if reasoning need not be diachronic, it is (in ways described in Chapter 6) dynamic. It entails a developmental change, at least when it is belief-forming. That change can bring with it new reasons, as where we arrive at a new justified practical judgment. These in turn can alter what the agent ought to intend (or believe). There is a sense, then, in which the assessment of

reasoning is holistic. This is why so many criteria figure in its proper assessment and why it is defeasible in the light of new considerations.

6 TOWARD SOUND PRACTICAL PRINCIPLES

What principles might we rely on in appraising practical reasoning? There are many (including some for each pattern of practical reasoning considered above), but close analogues of simple deductive closure principles do not seem adequate. What the sound principles are can be seen only in the light of the four kinds of evaluative criteria sketched in Chapter 7. The first two concern practical arguments conceived as abstract structures. We have noted several patterns of argument, representing necessity, optimality, adequacy, and cogency. The arguments corresponding to episodes of practical reasoning may be appraised by logical criteria, whether deductive or, in a broad sense, inductive, and by material criteria, those concerning the truth or falsity of the propositions in question. Third, assessment occurs in the inferential dimension: the reasoning process itself may be appraised by inferential criteria. These concern both the conditions for justifiably drawing the inference and the requirements for holding the conclusion in virtue of believing the premises. Fourth, there is the epistemic dimension: the agent's beliefs of the premises and conclusions may be appraised by epistemic criteria that may or may not concern the reasoning process or corresponding argument. These criteria concern both what (if anything) justifies the agent's beliefs and what might defeat that justification. These epistemic criteria leave open whether any of the beliefs is inferentially justified, through either practical or theoretical reasoning.

Ideally, good practical reasoning expresses a valid underlying argument with premises that are true and justifiably believed, and with a conclusion that is true and both justifiably inferred from them and justifiably held on the basis of them. No one manageably simple principle for assessing practical reasoning takes account of all the variables just noted. But we can discern two principles that are implicit in what has been said and cover a considerable portion of the common kinds of practical reasonings. The first is suggested by a synchronic theoretical counterpart. It is a principle of closure of practical reasons under instrumentally justified belief (actual or hypothetical): if, at t, (1) there is a (normative) reason for S to realize a goal, G, and (2) S has a justified belief, or justification for holding a belief, that A-ing will realize G, then, at t, there is a reason for S to A. This principle is particularly relevant to appraising practical reasoning having a sufficiency pattern. I have stated the principle schematically. To get a substantive principle, we might put in, for G, reducing pain and for A-ing, applying an ice pack. A similar procedure may be followed to formulate substantive principles for any goal taken to be normatively authoritative: it might be enhancing the pleasure of one's friends, avoiding lies, keeping a promise, or something as general as fulfilling a moral obligation. Various substantive goals will be explored in Chapters 9 and 10.

One counterpart synchronic principle for reasoning would presuppose that inferential and epistemic criteria are met; and a stronger counterpart (of greater interest here) would also presuppose the logical and material soundness of the practical reasoning. The latter would yield a principle of the deductive transmission of justification in practical reasoning: if, at t, S does valid practical reasoning, from true premises which S justifiedly

believes, to a practical conclusion (say a practical judgment) which, at t, is held on the basis of them, then, at t, S justifiedly holds that conclusion.[12] Often, however, we have mistaken premises or reason in informal or even loose ways falling short of validity. We thus need a principle applicable to those common cases. Let us explore the prospects.

Where truth and validity are not presupposed—as they often cannot be in appraising practical reasoning—we are forced to be less nearly precise. We might perhaps say that if, at t, S does practical reasoning, from premises S justifiedly believes, to a practical conclusion which those premises adequately support, then, at t, if S holds this conclusion on the basis of those premises, S justifiedly holds it. Call this the justificational principle of transmission for practical reasoning—justificational because it requires only justification for the premises and for the inference from them to the conclusion, and because it transmits justification. It is synchronic; but it differs from the deductive transmission principle in not requiring either the truth of the premises or their entailing the conclusion.

Diachronic versions, allowing temporal passage, require further qualifications. Since reasoning normally occurs over time, we must take account of what may happen if we consider the propositions and prospects in question after the time at which we form (or begin moving toward an inference based on) our beliefs of the premises. A candidate for a principle for overall practical reasoning might be this diachronic justificational transmission principle: if, at t, S does practical reasoning, from premises S justifiedly believes, to a practical conclusion which those premises adequately support, then if, at or after t, S holds this conclusion on the basis of those premises and does not acquire grounds which defeat that support, S (on balance) justifiedly holds it.[13]

This principle will be useful only insofar as we understand what kinds of elements defeat the support supplied by the premises. But for a full understanding of practical reasoning, we need a theory that clarifies that in any case, and a good indication of the kinds of considerations that are needed has been provided in earlier chapters and will be extended in the final two. Whether we have such a theory or not, even synchronic principles like the two just formulated provide critical standards that are of considerable help in appraising practical reasoning.

Given that reasoning is a kind of inference, and given the strong association of both with logical standards, it is quite natural to begin seeking principles of practical appraisal with the idea that they mirror principles of logic. Thus, just as, if one proposition entails a second and the first is true, then the second is also, the truth of the premises of good practical reasoning might be thought to guarantee the truth of its conclusion. This will be so for valid practical reasoning with true premises. But just as there are good theoretical arguments that are broadly inductive and hence not strictly valid, there are good practical arguments that do not satisfy the logical criterion of validity. Moreover, for any kind of reasoning, we must understand how the normative status, say the rationality or justification, of the beliefs of the premises may be transmitted to (or otherwise supports) the belief or practical judgment which constitutes the concluding element. This second concern has been primary in this chapter.

To address the question of substantive appraisal of practical reasoning, as opposed to practical argument in the abstract, it is essential to distinguish closure principles from generation principles. The former concern what "operations," such as entailment, keep us within a set of elements, such as beliefs. The latter cite grounds for reasons: what

justifies, generates, or sustains them. We have also distinguished synchronic from diachronic principles in both of the above categories. Since practical reasoning normally occurs over at least a small interval of time, diachronic principles are most pertinent; and since our concern in doing it is in part to arrive at conclusions that are at least minimally rational, we must consider principles that guide us in achieving this end. The justificational transmission principles formulated in Section 6 are a good beginning. They call on us to seek true premises, to believe them only on good grounds, to reason cogently from them to a practical judgment, and to hold that judgment on the basis of such materially and epistemically adequate elements. There is no formula for doing this; practical wisdom is not codifiable. But clarity about the elements of rational practical judgment and about how they should be combined is a major step toward doing what reason demands.

Nine
Practical reasoning and moral judgment

Part of the interest of the topic of practical reasoning lies in its major role in ethical theory. Ethical standards are meant to guide action, and they often do so by supplying premises for practical reasoning on particular occasions of moral decision. They also do this through their integration into practical reasoning that pervasively affects the agent's conduct, as where we decide on how to deal with a relationship or a responsibility This chapter will explore these aspects of practical reasoning. The theory I have presented in earlier chapters describes how a practical judgment, including a moral one, must be related to the premises of practical reasoning on which it is based if it is to be rational in the light of them, and how an act, in turn, must be related to all of these elements if they are to support its rationality But although the theory clarifies the status of normative practical judgments, it does not specifically address moral ones. But practical reasoning has a major role in generating and supporting ethical decision and moral action. This chapter concerns this generation and support role. A framework of principles important for evaluating moral actions will also be introduced. I will not, however, explore their evaluation separately; on the basis of earlier chapters, I will assume that if a decision to A is rational at a given time, so is A-ing on the basis of that decision at that time.[1]

To achieve clarity and concreteness, and to provide a normative framework that is readily usable in making or evaluating ethical decisions, I will introduce the core of a normative ethical position. Its constitutive principles—and some strategies for resolving conflicts of obligations that may occur in applying them—will be good material with which to explore both the nature of practical reasoning that yields ethical decisions and the standards we might use in assessing such decisions.

1 MORAL JUDGMENT AND MORAL DECISION

One problem faced by any treatment of moral judgment or moral decision is the difficulty of specifying the moral point of view. This is not the place for a comprehensive account of that notion. We should, however, sketch some important sufficient conditions, such as a judgment's being one concerning justice or fairness. Clearly judgments and decisions essentially applying these notions represent the moral point of view. Similarly, we can plausibly say that such acts as cheating, defrauding, and exploiting people are paradigms of what is morally wrong; hence, a judgment that an act instantiates one of them is (in force, at least) moral. This approach to understanding the moral point of view depends on finding moral terms. This approach has some value, but in numerous cases whether a term is moral tends to be controversial. I propose, then, a wider approach to finding rough sufficient conditions for a moral judgment or moral decision, one that proceeds, as in the examples just given, with reference to grounds of moral judgment. Let me explain.

Moral judgments and decisions range widely. But they commonly employ the concepts of what is right or wrong, or of what we ought or ought not to do. There is, to be sure, a non-moral sense of 'right', for instance one applicable from the point of view of self-interest. Not only is this point of view different from the moral point of view; the latter is in part to be understood as a point of view capable of conflicting with that of self-interest and even prudence. As one anchor for the notion of the moral ought, I have been presupposing that we ought not to do injustices or be unfair. But to determine just what counts as an injustice one must make a moral determination. The same holds for other moral notions, such as being an act of reparation, or of making amends, for wrong-doing and—to shift to descriptions of character—for being virtuous or vicious. I now want to suggest that we can identify moral judgments and decisions in part in terms of non-moral grounds for them—"facts," in a common sense of the term. This is a very important matter when it comes to explaining and justifying moral judgments. Their grounding in facts is perhaps the major reason for their objectivity and universal applicability. Let us consider some crucial factual domains.

One pertinent domain of (non-moral) facts is that of harm and injury: for instance killing, raping, burning, and beating. I suggest that a judgment that an act-type is wrong simply on the ground that it has one of these harm- or injury-properties is moral in content. Related to this, a judging, i.e., holding of a judgment, that an act-type is wrong is (prima facie) moral if it is held on the ground that it has one (or more) of these properties.[2] An important difference here is that the former is a case of an ascription of a moral property and a ground for it, whereas the latter is a case of a cognition that actually rests on the relevant ground. The same applies to judgments of either kind that are expressed (or held) in terms of a notion equivalent to that of wrongness, for instance what we might call ought-not-to-be-done-ness. The idea also applies (with some obvious adjustments) to judgments regarding act-tokens.

There are other domains besides harming and injury in which factual affirmations enable us to identify moral judgments and moral decisions, and to determine that they represent the moral point of view. One is veracity A judgment that an act is wrong because it is a lie is (prima facie) a moral judgment. A judgment that an act is obligatory

because it is the keeping of a promise is also moral. The same holds for a judgment that it must be done because otherwise a person who can be saved will die. In my view, we may also add such judgments as that it would be wrong to do something because it would bypass a good route to self-improvement and, by contrast, that one must do something else to express gratitude for good deeds voluntarily done for one. Note that we take as morally deficient people who are slothful or are ingrates. As that suggests, and as proponents of virtue ethics would likely stress, terms designating types of persons may also serve as partial anchors of the moral point of view. Consider the force of calling someone a liar, hypocrite, cheat, fraud, traitor, rapist, or murderer.

There is no denying an element of vagueness here, particularly because the point of view of prudence or even of self-interest can give rise to non-moral uses of normative terms like 'ought' in non-moral ways. This is one reason why, even when someone cites a fact that constitutes a ground for a moral judgment, it does not strictly follow that a judgment made on that ground is moral. There is also disagreement about just how far the moral point of view goes. It is plausible to hold, however, that taking that point of view implies a willingness to universalize, in the sense of taking grounds relevantly similar to those on which one's judgment rests to justify the same judgment in any other case.[3] If I say that what someone did (say accept a bribe to vote for a candidate) was morally wrong, I am committed to saying the same of another person who did the same thing in the same circumstances. This point goes some distance (but not the whole distance) toward distinguishing the moral from the prudential point of view: not the whole distance because, if the two agents are exactly alike and in exactly similar circumstances, prudence would imply the same commitment; but a considerable distance because many differences rele-vant to prudential decisions, such as personal preferences, financial interests, and even irrational fears, are either not relevant to moral decisions at all or, in the special cases where they may be, not relevant in the same way.

We have, then, a way of characterizing moral judgments and decisions in terms of content and in terms of basis or both. It should be clear from earlier chapters (especially Chapter 5) that, on a purely self-interested basis, someone could make a judgment which is moral in content, yet fail to judge morally because the person is only referring to a ground important in the moral point of view but not judging from that ground. A person's use of moral terms such as 'right', 'wrong', and 'ought', then, does not by itself discriminate between someone merely invoking the moral point of view and someone genuinely taking it. The distinction goes with and is clarified by one made earlier, between the rationality of A-ing on the basis of a ground for it and rationalizability of A-ing by appeal to a ground for it.

Several further points are needed in this section. I am taking it that we may say of moral decisions much the same things I have said about moral judgments. Roughly, if a decision favoring A-ing on a ground is moral in content, so is a decision, made on that ground, to A; and if judging, on a morally sufficient ground, that an act is wrong is moral, so is deciding, on that ground, to avoid it. There seems, to be sure, one important difference. Consider my making a judgment whose content is that A-ing is wrong on the ground that it is a lie. Here the ground is part of the judgment; both the wrongness of the act and the ground for it are before the mind, and if I act on the basis of the judgment, it is plausible to suppose I also act on the ground, say perform the action in order to avoid lying. But suppose I may be properly said to decide to avoid A-ing on that ground.

Should we think that when I am so described the ground of my decision is in the content of my decision? This is doubtful. As I suggested in discussing Kant, it is doubtful that one can (at least successfully) will to A-on-G, where G is a ground, whereas one can will simply to A.[4] Deciding is like willing in this: what we cannot will to do we cannot decide to do. But just as, on a ground for A-ing, we can will to A, we can decide, on a ground, to A.

The point here is that what is, as it were, before the will as an object of volition—what is properly speaking willed—is action but does not contain grounds of action. Granted we can—and often should—get the ground for a projected action in mind in our expressions of a moral decision to perform it, even if we are expressing the decision just to ourselves; that may help us to decide, and to act, on the ground. But even if I could will to-A-on-ground-G, deciding to do this would not guarantee that I made the decision on that ground or that I will be acting on the ground if I do the deed I decide on. In this, moral decision is like moral judgment: their content is one thing, and the ground on which they rest is another.

My final point here is that although 'moral' usually suits the purposes of this chapter better than 'ethical', they are sometimes interchangeable. The term 'ethical' is, however, broader and I will occasionally use it to express the idea of something's pertaining to the discipline of ethics. The latter term includes, moreover, a concern with non-moral intrinsic goods and evils. If those are included, as they usually are, in the ethical point of view, the latter is wider than the moral point of view as I have been characterizing it, and where, as is often the case, I have this wider context in mind, I may use 'ethical' in preference to 'moral'. A judgment of intrinsic value, say that doing a service for someone would be intrinsically good, may of course be a ground of a moral judgment, but many non-normative, non-ethical facts may be also.

2 A FRAMEWORK OF MORAL PRINCIPLES

Given what has been said about the moral point of view and the need to reach a general understanding of the role of practical reasoning in moral judgment and decision, a good way to proceed is to formulate principles common to many moral theories. There is disagreement on the justificational status of the principles I have in mind, but their role as partly constitutive of any plausible set of moral standards is less in dispute. The principles in question can be seen to be harmonious with, and arguably rationalizable by appeal to, for example, Kant's Categorical Imperative and certain kinds of consequentialism.[5]

Here we do well to begin with W D.Ross's famous list of prima facie duties from The Right and the Good (Oxford, 1930), which I represent in a slightly different way:

1 Justice: the positive obligation to prevent and rectify injustice as well as the negative obligation not to commit injustice;
2 Non-injury: roughly, the obligation to avoid harming others;
3 Fidelity: the two obligations here are promise-keeping and avoidance of lying (both types of conduct constitute kinds of fidelity to our word);
4 Reparation: the obligation to make amends for wrong-doing;

5 Beneficence: the obligation to do good deeds for others, especially to contribute to their virtue, knowledge, or pleasure;
6 Self-improvement: the obligation to better oneself;
7 Gratitude: the obligation to express appreciation for good deeds toward us.

I would add two other kinds of prima facie duty—again using the perhaps wider term 'obligation'—as having a similar status in moral reasoning:

1 Liberty: the obligation to preserve and enhance it;
2 Respectfulness: obligations of manner (roughly, of respectfulness); these concern how we do what is obligatory as opposed to what we must do in some way or other—our obligations of matter.[6]

To each obligation (or duty) cited, there corresponds a principle to the effect that we (morally) should fulfill it. The 'should', however, like 'duty' as Ross used it, does not designate the presence of a final, i.e. overriding, moral obligation, but rather that of a morally significant ground for action which will yield a final obligation if not outweighed by any equally strong or stronger set of moral grounds. This point explains why the term 'prima facie' is appropriate (and does not mean "merely apparent," since the ground in question commonly does yield a final duty). A prima facie moral obligation is roughly a moral reason for action which has sufficient normative force to render the action obligatory. When it does so, the agent has what may be called a final obligation. The obligation is still prima facie; it is simply not merely so.

I take these principles to be plausible from the point of view of unbiased moral reflection, but that is not to deny in the least that they may be rationalized, or even in some way derived from a more comprehensive moral principle or set of principles. With this point in mind, I have (elsewhere) developed a Kantian integration of these principles with a version of the Categorical Imperative. Even if they are self-evident, this integration can succeed: what is self-evident does not stand in need of evidence, but this does not preclude its being evidenced by something else, such as something more comprehensive.[7]

It should be clear that these principles correspond to the kinds of grounds that are sufficient to render a judgment (or other cognition) moral. I have addressed most of the relevant ones already and have distinguished those, such as justice, whose identification requires exercising a moral concept, from those, such as lying, whose identification may be (non-morally) factual. What should be added here is an indication of how the grounds of the liberty and respectfulness obligations may be identified.

Consider first a case of child-rearing as one in which enhancing freedom could ground a moral judgment. Suppose I find out about a possible new job that my daughter might try to secure. On the ground that pointing it out would enhance her options and freedom of choice, I might judge that I should mention it to her. One might think that obligations to enhance freedom are derivative from those of beneficence or justice combined. The former obligation may certainly be inferable from the latter; but even apart from grounds of justice or beneficence, which commonly overlap the former kinds of grounds, my judgment could be morally grounded in the relevant kind of considerations of liberty. I might even judge that the new job would not be as good as the one my daughter has, but still think I should point out the option.

Respectfulness represents a category of what might be called adverbial duties. To understand it, then, we should look to manners of action rather than act-types. May we not judge a person to have acted wrongly because of something done (say) crudely, insensitively, or condescendingly? It might be a type of act that is permissible or even obligatory, say helping a patient to get into a high bed. There are ways to do this that are wrong, such as doing it resentfully complainingly, or violently. Some of these terms may also be applied to verbal acts such as informing someone of a deficiency in performance at a job. These terms cite grounds for moral judgment and decision regarding how something has been done (an act-token) or is to be done (an act-type).

Similarly, we may judge that since a deed would, in the relevant circumstances, be done in the wrong way, it should not be done at all. This confirms the point that adverbial facts may be grounds of moral judgment or decision. If we can find no right way to do what seems the right thing, we should reassess whether it in fact is the right thing or whether now is the time to do it. To be sure, we can also give a name to an act performed in a certain way, say calling a haughtily and condescendingly delivered endorsement of a person's proposal "patronizing" the person. This verbal possibility does nothing to change the point that there is a difference between appraising an act as right or wrong and appraising its manner of performance as right or wrong.

3 MORAL PRINCIPLES AS CONSTITUENTS IN PRACTICAL REASONING

With or without a mention of motivation in expressing it, a moral principle can be put forward as governing a piece of reasoning. For instance, I may begin a stretch of practical thinking about the coming weekend with the thought that I have promised my daughter that I would take her to an opera. I may or may not reconsider this, say by thinking about proposing something else to her if she would accept an alternative. Suppose no alternative is salient in my thinking and I feel satisfied with the current plan. I may then simply presuppose that I ought (on balance) to take her to an opera. Perhaps I have two options to consider. I may reflect on which operatic option is preferable and conclude that I should (or that I will) buy tickets for The Pearlfishers.

I have also mentioned practical reasoning as having different kinds of conclusions in regard to the strength of the ought (or other normative notion) figuring in them. This element of strength is related to content of the premises. If, for instance, my premises are that I have a prima facie obligation to bring about G and that A-ing will do it, I may conclude that, prima facie, I should A. If our model is the Rossian principles, then if only one such principle figures as a premise, the conclusion will be prima facie if it is to follow. But a Rossian model allows that one begin with a sense of overall obligation, as is common when one finds it clear that a particular obligation is overriding. Take the operatic example. I may have set aside all other obligations on a free Saturday afternoon and reason from the premises that the one thing I must do that afternoon is something that will greatly please my daughter and that only taking her to The Pearlfishers will succeed. I may then conclude that I must (overall) do that.

It may seem to be very different with Kant or Mill, who hold master principle theories. Master principles, as I use the term, can support final moral obligations in a way no

single prima facie principle can. On master principle theories, any principle of the latter kind owes its authority to the support it derives from the master principle. Promise-keeping, for instance, might be considered (prima facie) obligatory solely in virtue of its tendency to promote happiness. But how often do master principles guide ethical decision without the aid of prima facie principles of the Rossian kind we are considering? Consider Kant's injunction to treat persons as ends and never merely as means. What if I cannot do something for both of my children on a given Saturday, since they have such different needs? I can flip a coin and promise to make it up to the loser during the next week, but this procedure is a recognition that the decision problem is soluble only by adopting a subsidiary principle perhaps one calling for equal treatment (a prima facie requirement of just treatment). Apart from that resort, one can discern conflicting prima facie obligations to each child—conceived as an end—much as one can do using the Rossian framework. One might think that a utilitarian approach would not present this problem; but when the relevant probabilities and values are calculated, plainly two options can appear equally good. One might then want a procedure like flipping a coin, just as one would on any other plausible moral standard.

We find, then, that moral considerations can conflict. This is a major problem that occurs in practical reasoning. We also know that moral considerations can conflict with self-interested kinds. One of the most important problems in ethics is how practical reasoning can properly deal with conflicts of obligations or with conflicts between moral and non-moral considerations. Master principle theories purport to provide a way to deal with such conflicts, say using the Categorical Imperative to arrive at a rationally universalizable resolution. On my view, the best approach combines the Categorical Imperative with the principles specified above and uses practical wisdom, guided by consideration of the values that can be served in the context of decision, to assess alternative resolutions of conflicting prima facie obligations.[8] Such moral thinking can and often does provide to practical reasoning a premise that expresses overall obligation.

In some cases, however, we do not begin practical reasoning with a premise that results from resolution of any conflict of obligations we have faced. Sometimes we must do practical reasoning in order to resolve such a conflict. In one such case, having done theoretical reasoning to determine which duty, if any, prevails, we go on to reason about the best mode of fulfillment. In a different kind of case (or one that may occur side by side with theoretical reasoning), our practical reasoning may be hypothetical. I may make the supposition that I want to bring about G, that A-ing is necessary for this, and that I thus will A. I may then think about how unpleasant A-ing is or about its bad consequences. This may lead me to modify my goal. I may then repeat the procedure, with B-ing in place of A-ing. There is no limit to how long this may take. Moreover, a mature moral agent will often, in determining whether to do a deed, consider how the projected deed will have to be done.

It may happen, then, that as I think of various ways to A, I find most of them fraught with adverse elements. I may do further (hypothetical) practical reasoning concerning how to do something I already intend to do and not just what act-type to perform. The concern of the reasoning is still practical. Indeed, it still concludes in favor of action; it simply indicates both the favored action and its projected manner of performance. We can, to be sure, give an action-name to a way of A-ing—as where we speak of constructively criticizing someone as "redirecting" the person—the manner of action is

something we can aim at and often quite finely control. But providing an action-name for an action as performed in a certain way should not be allowed to obscure the point that the agent often faces two questions: what to do and how to do it. The latter is in a way less basic, since we can do a deed (an act-type) in a particular way only by doing that deed in the first place; but the manner of action may be no less morally important than its matter.

4 NORMATIVE HIERARCHIES

Our account of practical reasoning in relation to moral judgment (and indeed any kind of practical judgment) would be simplified if we could identify hierarchies of reasons. Consider the Rossian duties as a case in point. Can we order them from strongest to weakest? This idea needs clarification. In outline, one might hope for a complete linear ordering, in which all the duties are lined up in order of strength. Failing this, one might have certain pairwise order ings (one cannot have a complete set of pairwise order ings without a complete linear ordering, since the former implies the latter). We might begin with the basic question whether there are unexceptionable pairwise orderings.

One idea—an invariant priority view—would be that for one obligation (or duty), say the obligation not to kill or not to break a promise, to be stronger than another, say the obligation to save from death and obligation of beneficence or the obligation to improve oneself, is for the first always to take priority over the second. Thus, one would (on this strong priority view) always have to keep a promise rather than do something to improve oneself. Another idea—a variable priority view—would be expressed by putting ‘typically’ in place of ‘always’. A more complicated idea—a contextual priority view—would distinguish kinds of cases of conflicting obligation and specify one or more kinds in which the first obligation takes priority over the second.[9]

Reflection on the complexity of moral life indicates that we are unlikely to find pairs of obligations for which the invariant predominance view holds. But there are limited generalizations that assist practical wisdom in cases of conflicting obligations. The best known may be the view that by and large the obligation of non-injury is prior to that of beneficence. In medical practice, for instance, killing a terminally ill patient by lethal injection is commonly taken to be worse (a more serious prima facie wrong) than not saving the patient from a heart attack that would bring death in about the same amount of time as a lethal injection.[10] This view goes well with the injunction to do no harm, which is often taken to express our most important single moral obligation.

A case can be made for the invariant priority view in relation to the obligation not to kill and the obligation to save from death, but this is apparently less plausible than its counterpart for the obligations of non-injury or justice as opposed to that of gratitude. Still, can we say—as the invariant priority view requires for this pair—that no obligation of, say, gratitude can outweigh an obligation to avoid a minor injury or even a minor injustice? Consider a dying friend. And consider an injustice I can make amends for, such as making a substantial donation in the friend’s honor at the cost of failing to give an employee a merited bonus. This may be my only way to fulfill a duty of gratitude, whereas I cannot give deserved bonuses to my employees (say of $500 each) if I make the donation. This seems a minor injustice, but if I can make amends by giving a slightly

larger one later, and if the friend did a risky deed that saved my life when doing it was not even obligatory, perhaps I should do the one thing that matters to my friend in preference to paying the bonus. That I should in such a case seems plausible. I would be criticizable if I did not see this and for a deficiency that surely goes beyond etiquette.[11]

The picture may be different if we consider two or more obligations in conflict with one, as where both a promise and a duty of gratitude to an old friend conflict with a duty of justice. On the assumption that every prima facie obligation has some weight, there is a better case here for invariant priority than in a pairwise conflict.[12] But it is still not self-evident that there are any triples of types of obligations such that in every conflict between two of them with the other, the former two have priority. Exploring this possibility—or the cases in which we have three or more in conflict with one—is not possible here. The main point is that practical wisdom, guided by our best theories, must be brought to bear in dealing with conflicts of obligations. Practical wisdom tends to resist invariant priority principles. It seems that if there are any pertaining to the pairs of obligations derivable from the list we have considered, they concern at most a limited range of cases falling within these pairs. The issue is not different in principle, though it becomes more complicated in practice, if we consider triads of obligations as against single ones, and so forth.

So far, we have explored the relative weights of obligations (and implicitly of the strengths of grounds for action) within the moral domain. But the theory of practical reason must also consider conflicts between moral reasons and other kinds. Some philosophers, particularly a number of Kantians, have taken moral reasons to be invariably overriding relative to other kinds of reasons.[13] Are they?

Discussions of this issue have not always distinguished between two quite different possibilities. One is that there is always better overall reason to do what morality requires than to do anything incompatible with that. I call this the thesis of moral supremacy.[14] It says that moral requirements are supreme. Thus, they have normative priority over all others, collectively or individually. The second view is that a specifically moral requirement always overrides any single competing non-moral reason. I have called this (in Chapter 8) the moral priority thesis; it says in effect that a morally overriding reason (one that is overriding from the moral point of view, whether or not that point of view exhibits any kind of hierarchy) is superior to any such competing non-moral one. The priority thesis can hold even if the supremacy thesis does not. A moral reason might prevail over any other kind of reason taken by itself, but might be overridden by a coalition of non-moral reasons of different kinds.

There is an important related view that has not generally been distinguished from the two just considered and can be invoked to support at least the priority thesis. I refer to the view that moral reasons are paramount, in the sense that they are the best kind of reason to act on when the same action is indicated by a moral reason and one or more other kinds of reason. Suppose that both motives of love and motives of promissory fidelity support the same action. The moral paramountcy view implies that it is better to do the deed from fidelity, hence in fulfillment of a moral obligation. If the paramountcy view is sound, then even if moral reasons can be overridden, still, so far as we can affect how much we are motivated by moral and other reasons for the same acts, as where duty and love cooperate, we should cultivate the moral motive over others. Someone who thinks moral virtues are the normatively highest kind might hold this thesis and would praise

morally motivated good deeds more than the same actions based on non-moral motivation. Proponents of certain theological views, or of an ethics of love, would reject it—possibly in favor of their own paramountcy thesis.

Neither the paramountcy of moral reasons nor any other strict hierarchy of kinds of reasons is implied by a sound theory of practical rationality. On my view of rationality, each kind of moral reason for action must be judged on its merits. The supremacy view might seem to follow from the plausible thesis that the "function" of morality is to regulate our conduct against any conflicting inclinations. But even if this thesis is true, the supremacy view does not follow except on the assumption that this function is supreme in the order of practical reasons. That assumption is far from self-evident, though it may seem self-evident to those who are committed to the moral life as their fundamental goal.[15]

On the side of the moral priority view, there is one argument in particular that, related to my conception of reasons for action, is quite forceful. Consider a typical case of conflicting reasons, one represented by a moral obligation to do a burdensome promised deed and the other represented by a desire to do something personally very rewarding, such as joining friends on a weekend of skiing. A rational person in the disadvantaged position would commonly want the moral thing to be done, and, arguably, not doing it represents a preference for oneself over others, one that cannot be justified on the basis of a sound theory of practical reason. If I would (rationally) want you not to break a certain kind of promise to me on the kinds of grounds I now have for breaking such a promise at your expense, then my wanting to break it, even if rational, should almost certainly not override my obligation to keep it. Indeed, I very likely have better impersonal (hence interpersonal) grounds for keeping it.

This argument has much plausibility, but it is far from clearly sound. Here are two difficulties. Suppose I believe, on plausible grounds, that moral reasons are not supreme and that self-interested ones are. Second, imagine that I have a rational desire to do something that I simply cannot do if I keep my promise, and that this desire is much stronger than my moral and altruistic ones concerning the promise. These difficulties deserve separate treatment.

Regarding the first difficulty, beliefs about the status of a reason one has do not affect it in any simple way: they may defeat it or strengthen it, but they may not affect it significantly at all. A student emerging from a lecture with a hastily reasoned belief that skepticism is true and that there is thus no justification for believing in external objects is—I think—scarcely less justified than before in believing that there was an instructor making the case. A major question here is how well-grounded the second-order belief is by comparison with how well-grounded the moral reason is; another question is how the second-order belief applies to this particular case. Not every second-order doubt about the status of moral reasons in comparison with others need affect the moral reason one now has. As to which doubts do and which do not, although some generalizations are possible, there is no substitute for wisdom in deciding such matters. Much the same holds for justified second-order beliefs, regarding one's defective reasoning, that it meets a criterion for adequacy, where the criterion is correct but the belief is false. Such a belief, being rational, tends to justify the reasoning, but does not.[16] It might be excusatory in, say, freeing the agent from blame for acting on the reasoning, but that is a different point.

Concerning the second case, in which we have powerful rational desires that are of a kind important to us and cannot be satisfied if we meet an obligation, morality allows rational persons a certain latitude. If my life would be significantly altered by keeping the promise and you would be only inconvenienced by my breaking it, then my breaking it, while prima facie wrong, may be excusable. Here, of course, a rational person would perhaps not want it kept—or at least would not unselfishly want that. It is as if morality were designed to protect itself against being rationally overridden and so excuses truly rational lapses from its standard directives. (This would be expected, of course, if, as many philosophers have thought, the standards of morality are grounded in those of rationality in the first place.)

It seems to me not clear whether in the end we must say that moral reasons always have priority over any other kind of practical reason. I cannot see that a good theory of rationality or of morality must imply this priority thesis, though I find it plausible. In any case, I suspect that even if moral reasons have priority over any other kind taken by itself, moral reasons are not always supreme and that the moral supremacy thesis is thus mistaken.[17] A good theory of practical reason must, however, make it plausible to believe, even if it need not enable us to prove, that there are good reasons to hold moral principles and to act in accord with them. A good moral theory should go at least this much further. It should explain how it can be rational to have specifically moral intrinsic desires: how they can be rational, as opposed to rationally cultivated as a means to producing non-moral results, such as enhanced human happiness. But it need not yield a general result, applicable to every case, concerning the status of moral reasons versus non-moral ones.

What we may tentatively conclude about rational conduct in relation to moral conduct is that a rational person, when suitably informed and adequately experienced, will tend to act morally. But it does not follow (and is not true) that such a person always actually does the morally required thing. The least controversial reason is that there are errors of memory and of calculation that, while they yield moral violations, need not bespeak deficient rationality. One might argue that a fully rational person will always act morally. But even leaving aside the question of just what constitutes full rationality, this is at least not obvious. It may be true that it is never irrational to act morally, but that is a different and weaker point.[18]

We have seen that practical reasoning is pervasive in arriving at moral judgment, moral decision, and moral action. Granted that action for a reason, even in a case of difficult moral choice, does not entail the agent's doing practical reasoning, such reasoning is highly probable in cases of conflicting moral obligations and almost always desirable in such instances. It enhances the likelihood of reflection, and it increases the chance that all of the important variables will come under the eye of consciousness. Moreover, if practical reasoning is not always necessary for sound moral judgments and decisions, these judgments are probably more likely to occur when grounded in it than otherwise. They certainly tend to be more readily explained and easier to justify to others. There are highly plausible moral principles that help in setting the ethical goals that can properly guide practical reasoning. These goals cannot be ordered hierarchically, but there are ways of making informative pairwise comparisons between them in particular cases of conflict. Hypothetical practical reasoning can help in resolving such conflicts. Once they are resolved, an overall obligation can be identified and practical reasoning

can figure both in identifying a good means to its fulfillment and in producing judgment and decisions that guide action. Action in fulfillment of such judgments can be well-grounded both in adequate moral reasons that justify it and in reasoning in which those reasons inform moral thinking.

Ten
Practical reasoning in ethical decisions

We have seen how practical reasoning supplies premises for ethical judgment and for moral action. We have also seen how difficult it can be to deal with conflicts of obligations. One problem is that we cannot establish any a priori hierarchy among our obligations that allows us to give automatic greater weight to any one kind of obligation over another. Difficult moral decisions typically involve conflicting obligations. If we cannot find a formula for making them by simply establishing a hierarchy, and if, as I believe, we also cannot simply resort to utilitarian calculations or any other apparently objective and universally applicable formula, are there any models that at least facilitate bringing practical reasoning to bear on such decisions? That is the main question this chapter addresses.

1 THE STATUS OF MORAL PRINCIPLES

In addition to recognizing the dim prospects for establishing an a priori hierarchy among basic moral principles, I will also follow Chapter 9 in making no commitment to the common assumption that moral reasons always have priority over any other kind of practical reason. I have granted, however, that a good moral theory should explain how it can be rational to have moral intrinsic (hence non-derivative) desires and why a rational person, when suitably informed and adequately experienced, will tend to act morally. I cannot provide a full explanation here, but I will make a number of points about the status of moral principles of the kind introduced in Chapter 9 and show how they provide part of the needed account.

Many philosophers have held that certain moral principles are self-evident. I take a (true) proposition to be self-evident when it meets the following twofold condition. (1) Adequately understanding it—which may require reflection—is (1) sufficient to justify believing it (though, as skepticism illustrates, such understanding does not entail that one does believe it), and (2) such understanding is also sufficient for knowledge of it, provided one believes the proposition on the basis of so understanding it.[1] Ross and other ethical intuitionists are representative proponents of the view that basic moral principles are self-evident.[2] The self-evident need not be obvious; moral principles of the kind Ross formulated are far from obvious and indeed are understandable only on the basis of considerable reflection, possibly including the abandonment of either stereotypical conceptions of the self-evident or mistaken views in ethical theory or both.

This view of basic moral principles is a rationalist position because it takes substantive propositions to be a priori: roughly (as in the case of self-evident propositions as just described), knowable through the use of reason independently of reliance on empirical evidence. But contrary to stereotypes concerning the self-evident, this rationalist position

does not invite dogmatism in ethics and is not committed to holding that those who do not accept a self-evident principle are deficient in rationality[3] The idea that a principle may be seen to be true on the basis of adequate understanding does not imply that even extensive and comprehending reflection will always produce conviction or that rational persons may not—perhaps on the basis of a competing theory—suspend judgment regarding it or even reject it.

Everything I have said about ethical matters in relation to practical reasoning is compatible with the thesis that the Rossian principles are self-evident or with the weaker view that some moral knowledge is a priori.[4] Moreover, once it is seen that many beliefs capable of direct (non-inferential) justification can also admit of inferential justification—that many foundations can be buttressed by deeper or wider foundations—these views need not be puzzling. More generally, one can ground both the justification of moral principles and the rationality of moral desires in a theory of practical reason without denying that ethics has a kind of epistemic autonomy: that moral principles can, in their own terms, be seen to be true on the basis of adequate reflection on the concepts that figure in them—concepts such as that of a person, a promise, a duty of fidelity—and on the kinds of human situations to which the principles apply[5] This is a kind of epistemic autonomy because the principles can be justifiedly believed and indeed known in their own terms. It is compatible with the common view—which the Rossian principles formulated in Chapter 9 presuppose—that moral properties, such as being obligatory, depend on non-moral facts, such as that one has promised or that one can readily save a child from drowning in a nearby stream.

It is, however, a further step, though a very natural one, to the conclusion that moral reasons for action, such as the consideration that an action is required by fidelity, are, on their own account rather than just instrumentally, good reasons for action. To derive this conclusion one needs a theory of the grounds of rational action, and that, in turn, requires at least a partial account of rational desire. It may be true that a person who believes a moral principle can be motivated to act accordingly, i.e. to take considerations of the kind it indicates as grounds for moral action as constituting reasons for the kind of conduct in question. But even if it were impossible to believe such a principle and fail to be so motivated, it would not self-evidently follow that an intrinsic (and in that sense basic) desire to act accordingly is rational; this would depend on the overall conditions for the rationality of desire.[6]

Much of our critical discourse about both moral principles and human conduct suggests that we do tend to view ethics consistently with the picture of it I am presenting. We offer moral reasons, such as that one must keep a promise, as if they were both basic and rationally compelling; and we talk as if certain moral principles are common knowledge: children are often said to have known that lying is wrong and to have had no excuse for it. We often treat moral considerations as normatively decisive quite apart from the support of self-interest or even the overall well-being of those affected, as where we keep a promise to repay a wealthy creditor even though we think more good would be done were the money given to charity.

At other times, as where we try to explain to children why they should not lie or break promises, we may cite facts about the well-being of us all or considerations concerning the aversiveness of being manipulated by lies. These appeals may be understood as invoking the obligations of non-injury and beneficence in support of those of veracity and

promissory fidelity; but they may also be (and may be seen as) appeals to considerations more general than any of the Rossian duties, such as considerations of respect for persons or for their dignity as rational beings with the capacity for critical thought and autonomous agency. That one moral principle can derive support from another or from a comprehensive standard of value, and that morality as an institution embodying many principles can derive support from elsewhere in the realm of practical reason, does not imply that either the moral principle or the institution of morality itself lacks credibility of its own.

One further point should be made in this section. In many places in this book, I have presupposed a cognitivist view on which moral principles and judgments, even if they have an essential expressive function, are true or false. This is one reason why I have not endorsed motivational internalism, according to which, in a generic form, it is intrinsic to holding (or in some way endorsing) a moral judgment that one have some degree of motivation to act accordingly. This view is far less plausible on cognitivist assumptions, since it would appear quite possible to grasp the truth of any particular proposition (hence to cognize it) without thereby having to have any specific desires (or other motivation). We may, however, leave this open. Moreover, here as elsewhere I have tried to make my case so that as many of my main points as possible can be accepted, with little or no modification, by noncognitivists.

2 SKETCH OF A MODEL FOR MAKING DIFFICULT ETHICAL DECISIONS

Plainly, ethical decision often requires sensitive assessment and maturity of judgment. I say “often” because not every ethical decision is at all hard. Moral agents typically have no difficulty deciding to keep promises that have become burdensome—most of us make and keep promises aware that this can happen. The burden may, however, be heavier than one thinks the promisee would like one to bear, or there may be an unexpected prospect of harm to a third party if it is kept. Given the complexity we have now seen in the assessment of practical reasoning and of its role in generating and supporting moral judgment, is there any kind of model that can assist us in reasoning concerning difficult cases?

If the Rossian principles formulated in Chapter 9 are even close to constituting a complete indication of our moral obligations, and if their use can be integrated with various ethical theories, they provide a good starting point. Suppose they are our starting point. How might we approach a difficult ethical decision? What follows will be a model (in a non-formal sense of the term) for proceeding on the basis of the commonly presupposed, intuitive ethical framework I have sketched. In part because the ethical standards it embodies figure almost universally in major ethical theories, it will be evident that the model is largely adaptable to Kantian or utilitarian approaches, indeed to virtue-ethical approaches, though less readily.

i Classification

A moral problem normally arises for us because we become aware of certain facts: that two people we care about are making conflicting demands on us, that we must break a promise if we are to help a loved one, that we must either lie or hurt someone's feelings, that we must either risk losing a business or lay off a loyal employee to reduce expenses, that we must either return a favor to someone who has helped us or miss out on a good opportunity, that we must either allow someone whose old parked car we have lightly scratched to deal with the problem alone or confess to carelessness and probably pay the substantial repair costs; and so forth.

Such facts as these present moral problems precisely because they ground conflicting obligations (at least on the assumption that obligations of beneficence and self-improvement are pervasive). It is facts of that kind that we particularly need in making ethical decisions. One reason is that morality as an institution is plainly concerned with the impact of our actions on human beings and, if to a lesser extent, on other living beings and even on our environment, which is important for human life quite apart from any value it may have in itself. Another reason is that facts of these kinds enable us to view our options in relation to major morally relevant categories. In the light of such facts, we can classify a problem as concerning, say, issues of justice, of reparation, of fidelity as opposed to beneficence, and so on for the full set of obligations described in Chapter 9.

We may or may not have all the facts we need when confronted with a problem. To increase the chance that we do, we may intelligibly ask, regarding each basic obligation and any context in which we face a moral problem, whether that obligation is present. One question, then, is whether there is a matter of justice at stake. Another is whether someone would be harmed depending on what we decide. Still another is whether we have made commitments (most obviously through promises or contracts) that affect the matter. Some kinds of obligations will be obviously irrelevant; obligations of gratitude, for instance, rarely raise a problem for certain people, if only because they live largely isolated, uneventful lives. For some, obligations of reparation arise only infrequently: injuring or otherwise wronging others may be quite rare for these fortunate people. There is no limit, however, to the variety of ways in which the basic obligations can generate conflicts that challenge us.

We normally do not have to go through all the questions corresponding to the basic obligations in order to see which obligations are relevant. It is often quite clear. A mature person may in fact see the relevant conflict (s) virtually immediately on considering the question of what to do. But none of the questions can be ruled out a priori as irrelevant; reason alone does not tell us that our situation is one in which only one Rossian obligation is relevant. Moreover, commonly, considerations of beneficence and, on the other side, non-injury are relevant at least to moral decisions that affect (as many do) the life prospects of one or more persons involved. Such decisions by their very nature have the potential to produce significant good or bad effects. Once we have brought the relevant questions to bear we can determine what prima facie obligations apply. This will enable us to classify our problem in relation to the obligations that figure in it.

ii Identification of conflicts of obligations

If our classification of relevant obligations is adequate, we should be in a good position to articulate, or at least conceptualize, any conflicts between sets of those applicable to our case. With any difficult moral decision we face, there will be conflicting considerations, if only in a single category, as where there is a choice between recognizing one rather than another excellent employee with a promotion or between two good charities that each serve the needy in ways one is committed to supporting. Even where there is no conflict about the best general course of action to take in order to fulfill one's overall obligation, there might remain problems about what specific acts will best accomplish this goal, which may involve self-sacrifice, great effort, or ill effects, such as resentment on the part of a meritorious person not advanced. Consider the many dimensions of a promotion. There are questions of timing, salary increment, conditions of the new position, and others.

When one or more specific actions emerge as best, then, there may still be an ethical problem regarding the right manner in which to carry them out. The search for the right way to do something intended is analogous to the search for a good means to do it at all, and it can be equally substantive. Helping a proud person to accept a loan may be one's means to fulfilling an obligation; how to do it without offense or wounding the person's pride may be a great challenge. And if we are to promote only one of two good candidates for a position, what, if anything, should we say to the one not promoted? It is commonly presupposed that practical moral problems, or what are often called "ethical dilemmas" concern what act to perform, such as offering a loan or making a promotion. But everyday life is full of cases in which it is the manner of an action that is in question: some ways of doing the right thing are wrong, and sometimes the right thing should be delayed, reconsidered, or revised in the light of the possible ways we can realistically do it.

iii Ethical assessment of the obligations

We should appraise the importance, in the context, of each obligation involved. Tentative numbers may be used to "quantify" for this purpose, for instance representing the importance of the consequences of, say, breaking a promise by comparison with those of helping others instead. But we normally cannot have strict quantification; rather, numbers can be a good way to represent the intuitive importance of one or another consideration. A sense of typical preponderance, as opposed to automatic priority, may also be useful here, as where we consider breaking a promise to be in general preferable to letting a very sick person get worse. But even here, we must be tentative and seek reflective equilibrium in which our overall factual beliefs are in balance with our moral judgments.[7]

Given how commonly an ethical assessment requires comparison of conflicting prima facie obligations of the kinds we have been exploring, it may be desirable to formulate a working principle that incorporates the comparison. It might be rough, say to the effect that when one has to choose between retention of a loyal employee and risking loss of the business, avoiding the latter is the greater obligation. But it might also be far more detailed. One might have studied two competing candidates for a single position in detail,

and one's principle—meant to be usable in justifying the decision—could indicate that when two are alike in (say) experience, productivity, support from their peers, and replaceability in case of resignation, then minority status should tip the balance until a certain diversity level is reached in the organization.

A comparative principle of this kind can figure as a major premise in practical reasoning; and a judgment favoring the action it indicates can be based on the comparative reason it expresses. The decision and action that accord with that judgment can also be based on that reason. But, as we have seen in considering forms of practical reasoning, the emerging judgment may express what the agent sees as a prima facie obligation, and no decision need arise from the associated prima facie judgment favoring a particular action. A competing practical argument may quickly follow, perhaps noting a large number of other appointments now being made to enhance the proportions of minority persons. One may also decide to review the facts in order to find other, less controversial differences between competing candidates, even if one judges minority status to be sufficient justification.

iv Selection of options

The kind of practical reflection we are considering may go on for a long time and may not be concluded in a single day or even in a longer period. But if the problem is to be solved, then in view of the best comparative assessment we can make, we should seek the morally best alternative (s), and formulate a way to do the thing in question. Here duties of manner may come in, possibly yielding a further moral problem. It may seem clear that, for example, my obligation is to give someone a negative performance evaluation. But suppose the person in question is psychologically weak and highly vulnerable; I may find no way to fulfill the obligation without violating a strong obligation of non-injury. If, however, I note and adequately articulate the obligation to do the evaluation delicately and supportively, I may be able to fulfill the obligation without unacceptable injury (a duty of manner). Here hypothetical practical reasoning may be indispensable. I may have to draw several hypothetical conclusions from my major premise—that I must give a negative evaluation—before I am ready to draw a conclusion that constitutes a practical judgment which will yield my decision and guide my action.

I have described moral problems as characteristically embodying conflicting prima facie obligations, and I have indicated how comparisons may yield practical principles that provide major premises for practical reasoning. But particularly for experienced people, reflection on the facts may sometimes lead to favoring one option. It may be clear on reflection that one obligation is primary. A principle may or may not be formulated in the light of reflection. Just as a literary critic can judge a poem without formulating the criteria that guide the judgment, a moral person of practical wisdom can frame a judgment that is grounded in moral reasons whether or not it is reached by an episode or practical reasoning with premises in which they figure. This seems possible particularly for people who combine moral virtue and long experience.[8] More commonly, however, moral problems cannot be resolved without comparing options and engaging in practical reasoning in which one or another moral consideration figures. But how often this occurs relative to cases in which reasons more directly yield judgment is a contingent matter.

v Decision on a course of action

If only one option emerges in considering the problem, a decision may be reasonably made immediately. But where competing options remain after initial reflection (as is more common), the need at this final stage is to formulate a resolutive judgment either as a basis for action or as a premise for final practical reasoning, i.e. as a judgment that indicates which obligation prevails—or, perhaps, specifies a new obligation that adequately reflects the values generating the conflict. I might, for instance, realize that a proxy could do the evaluation I am obligated to do without the bad consequences I would produce myself. Such an idea might arise as I consider instrumental questions to find a good means to the goal governing the reasoning. The search for means may alter the end. This instrumental search may help with a moral problem by leading us to modifying the end, as where one decides that a proxy could fulfill the basic values underlying the obligation to do the evaluation.

If the search for means may alter the end, the entire process of reflecting on a difficult moral case may lead to a twofold course of action. We may decide both to promote one candidate—thereby solving the initial decision problem—and, for the sake of the entire staff, to provide the other with new privileges or special training. Indeed, we might have a threefold (or manifold) strategy. The consequences of a decision we envisage making may call for further decisions. These decisions can be made in stages, say as the employees develop. They may also be conditional; one might decide to provide special training for a candidate if the person complains. As some decisions require warm-up, others require follow-up. The anticipation of either kind of need may reasonably alter what one decides.

In some cases, the search for means may also eliminate the problem, at least for a substantial time. As we saw in considering substantive practical principles, considering means may lead to forswearing the end—say to deciding that no evaluation need be done for some months, which leaves time for improvement in the record and may obviate the negative review. In any case, once the conflict of duties is resolved, we can choose the option best supported by reflective judgment (or one of a set of equally acceptable alternatives). This will figure in our practical judgment as the concluding element in our reasoning. In some cases, we may now act on the judgment straightaway.

vi Universalization

Where the matter is very important or we want enhanced confidence or ability to explain the decision, we should consider the decision as precedential. (In a way, every ethical decision is in principle precedential, but we commonly just presuppose this.) If we do explicitly consider the decision as precedential, we may want to formulate a covering principle that is rationally universalizable. Clearly, Kant's Categorical Imperative (in its universalizability form) is reflected here, but we need not be Kantians to realize that if a decision to A is morally sound, then any relevant similar judgment must be sound and that, in an important matter, we may be setting a precedent and may certainly have to explain or justify our decision and our action based on it. Consider a punitive action like levying a fine for misconduct in fulfilling a contract. There might be a rule violated, a prior warning ignored, and a certain damage done to the client. If a second person errs

under the same conditions, the fine should be the same (the 'should' is still prima facie, but there would be a strong presumption favoring equal treatment).

Universalization can be especially important in cases where a decision is made in an intuitive way without formulating the reasons on which it is based. Granted, one can always say that in any case that is (e.g.) "like this promotion" one would do the same thing, but this similarity description is too thin to provide explanation or justification. The remedy is not to string fact after fact together in the hope of capturing the important variables in the process; it is to ascertain what is morally relevant and state it as best one can. One may still have to use such vague terms as 'more productive than anyone at the same level', 'loyal service over ten years', or 'an inspiring team leader', but at least these connect with such moral standards as justice, fidelity, and beneficence, and we know how to clarify them. They are also the kinds of variables that an experienced person considering granting a promotion can take into account in reviewing a record without having to articulate them in a piece of reasoning. The effort to articulate them, however, and to formulate a principle governing the decision, may lead to formulating relevant variables that were omitted or, sometimes, to altering the decision.

Actual universalization, then, is not a requirement for an ethically sound decision in a case of conflicting obligations; but a kind of universalizability is. The effort to find a universally acceptable rule may lead to revising one's decision, to carrying it out better, to formulating principles one would not have thought of that apply to the case at hand or other cases, and to increased ability to communicate the basis of one's decision. All of these outcomes tend to be desirable.

Given the proposed overall perspective on reasons for action, it should be no surprise that the decision procedure just outlined has important limitations. First, it is of course non-algorithmic. This is explained by, among other things, the non-hierarchical character of the prima facie principles of moral obligation. Second, the procedure is non-conclusory. To be sure, a prima facie reason can be very strong and may be obviously overriding. But even when we quite reflectively arrive at a final duty, we may lack grounds for certainty that we have identified one.

The second point goes well with a third. The procedure is fallible. It is, however, indefinitely repeatable, and in that way it provides for gaining better and better grounds for a moral judgment and, correspondingly, for a moral decision that it indicates. Finally, although I have presupposed that there are objectively correct answers in ethics, I have not endorsed the idea that morality commits us to the existence of only one good option. The procedure is, then, non-exclusive: there is not always a single act that constitutes the best resolution to a moral or other practical question. Two or more options may be each right and equally good.

If two or more options are equally good, something important about morality comes to the fore. If a unique answer is one specifying a single act, there may be no unique answer to the question "What ought one to do?" If, however, a unique answer can specify a disjunctive act, such as A or B, then where we have two or more alternatives that are equally acceptable morally, we do have a unique answer. The main point is that there is no deficiency in the moral point of view if it enables us to arrive at manageably small sets of equally good alternatives. Indeed, it is desirable for us to have alternative ways of doing what we ought. One of two options that are equally good morally may require less effort than the other; one may also be more in keeping with the kind of conduct the agent

personally prefers toward others. Morality may allow considerable latitude even where its basic requirements are definite. That there may be no one right way to fulfill a quite definite obligation does not entail that there is no right way at all.

3 PRACTICAL REASON, ETHICAL DECISION, AND MORALLY JUSTIFIED ACTION

This is a good place to reiterate that, just as action for a reason need not be reasoned action, decision for a reason need not be reasoned decision. Still, in hard cases we typically do practical reasoning rather than just act, or even meditate without actually reasoning, and then act in the light of the sense of obligation emerging from the pattern of elements figuring in our meditation. This reflective approach is particularly likely for deliberate people, or for anyone who expects to have to explain or justify an action. A good proportion of rational agents are in at least one of these categories—or enter them when faced with a difficult moral decision. How does practical reasoning help us to meet the criteria of morally justified action?

The points made in Chapters 7 and 8 apply here. A morally justified action is, in general terms, morally well-grounded. Where practical reasoning is essential in its basis, that reasoning must be adequate in the overall way outlined in Chapter 7. In addition, we can distinguish justification from minimal rationality, and we should take both notions to admit of degree. We may accordingly treat some moral decisions and the actions based on them as more rational, or better justified, than others. If there is no conflict of obligations, an action that fulfills the relevant obligation(s), and is well-grounded in the agent's moral reasons that accord with recognizing that set of obligations, is morally justified. But suppose there is a conflict of obligations, as where one must decide whether to lay off a loyal senior employee. We must consider how well that conflict is resolved before determining whether the action is, say, barely acceptable from the moral point of view or fully justified. An action may be fully justified even if, because of an inevitable trade-off, it is regrettable. Laying off a loyal employee can be like this.

I have not so far mentioned how moral rights may come into practical reasoning. The suggested framework does not appeal to them. Even if for some kinds of moral issues, they are, at least in practice, indispensable, I have wanted to avoid taking them to be, in principle, morally basic. If, however, the framework presented here makes no essential appeal to them, it also does not ignore them. Rights correspond, in complicated ways, to the obligations we have explored. All that must be said here is that rights to be treated in a certain way generate prima facie reasons, as do obligations, not absolute obligations that cannot conflict with other obligations. There is an important difference, however: an obligation to do something entails a reason for doing it, whereas a right to do something does not entail that its possessor has a reason to do it—though it does entail that others—the addressees of the right—have an obligation (hence a reason) not to prevent it.[9]

In a certain negative sense, rights justify an action they protect: they provide a defense against the claim that it was morally prohibited. But it does not follow that they show that such action is morally desirable, or even overall reasonable. The justification may thus be of a minimal kind. Some exercises of rights, such as doing a negative performance evaluation when it would severely depress the recipient, are morally criticizable even if

they cannot be morally prohibited.[10] Whether we bring obligations or rights into our practical reasoning, the moral reasons that go with them are not absolute, but defeasible. These reasons have, however, high normative authority. I am inclined to hold that their normative authority is such that fulfilling an overall moral obligation is never irrational, even if it may sometimes be less rational than some other option. If the point of view of practical reason ever permits violation of such an obligation, it apparently never eliminates fulfilling it from the realm of rational options.

We have seen that practical reasoning is pervasive in arriving at moral judgment, moral decision, and moral action. Granted that action for a reason, even in a case of difficult moral choice, does not entail the agent's doing practical reasoning that favors it, such reasoning is very likely to occur in cases of conflicting moral obligations and almost always desirable in such instances. It enhances the likelihood of fruitful reflection, and it increases the chance that all of the important variables will come under the eye of consciousness. Moreover, although practical reasoning is not a necessary precondition for making sound moral judgments and decisions, these judgments and decisions may well be more likely to occur when grounded in it than otherwise. They certainly tend to be more readily explained and easier to justify.

There are highly plausible moral principles, such as those described in Chapter 9, that help in setting the ethical goals that can properly guide practical reasoning. These goals cannot be ordered hierarchically, but there are ways of making informative pairwise comparisons between them in particular cases of conflict. Hypothetical practical reasoning can help in resolving such conflicts. Once they are resolved, an overall obligation can be identified and practical reasoning can figure both in identifying a good means to its fulfillment and in producing judgment and decisions that guide action. Action in fulfillment of such judgments can be well-grounded both in adequate moral reasons that justify it and in reasoning in which those reasons inform ethical thinking.

Eleven
The rationality of action and the plurality of value

The assessment of practical reasoning concerns standards for practical arguments in the abstract and, even more, for the process of justifiably concluding upon an action in virtue of one's beliefs of the premises of the argument. Justified conclusions of these kinds yield reasons for action. We have examined both practical reasoning and reasons for action conceived in relation to it. But practical reasoning and reasons for action are important in part because of their bearing on rational action, conceived as conduct distinct from any practical judgment that guides it and as capable of being motivated by any of a huge range of values. That bearing is the main subject of this chapter.

1 THE CONNECTION BETWEEN PRACTICAL REASONING AND RATIONAL ACTION

If inferentialism is mistaken for the sorts of reasons given in Chapter 5, and hence not all intentional actions are based on practical reasoning, then not all rational actions are so based either. This conclusion is also independently plausible. We act automatically, yet rationally, in speaking, in gaming, in driving, and in doing myriad routine tasks. In speaking, we automatically adjust our volume to compensate for surrounding noise. In driving, we habitually stop for red lights. On country walks, we spontaneously pause to hear birds. Unlike these actions, on the other hand, much of our rational action is based on practical reasoning. This is particularly likely if such action emerges from deliberation. But it is also quite possible where we simply consider what to do, note a means to doing it, and, on that basis, quickly decide to take that means.

How is a rational action based on practical reasoning? We have seen that action so based cannot be merely rational action of the kind favored by the conclusion, even if it occurs immediately after the conclusion is drawn. For the action might still be only behavior in accordance with the reasoning rather than based on it. Nor is it enough that the action be caused by the reasoning or even by the motivational and cognitive elements it embodies. For the causal relation may be of the wrong sort, as where it leads to the right action by accident. For instance, if I conclude that I should break into a conversation with a visible gesture, my aroused desire to speak and my belief that I must break in to do so may cause me to let my briefcase slam shut and, as a result, to make a startled gesture just at the time I judged I should gesture. Here I have done the right thing at the right time, but neither on the basis of my reasoning nor even intentionally.

What the case indicates is that action based on practical reasoning, and certainly rational action so based, must be performed for a reason expressed in that reasoning, roughly, in order to realize the want represented in (or suitably underlying) the major

premise. My gesture in reaction to the slamming of the briefcase may not be made for a reason at all, though there is a (non-motivational) reason why I make it. It is certainly not made for my original reason. It is an effect of that reason; but unlike an action performed for that reason, it is not a response to the reason.

The proposed condition—being performed for a reason expressed in the premises—is, however, only a necessary one. If that were not so, then acting on the basis of practical reasoning would collapse into simply acting for a reason. It would thereby include automatic and spontaneous intentional actions that are not reasoned at all. A functional account of practical reasoning might allow this assimilation of action based on practical reasoning to action for a reason; but I have argued against this. If practical reasoning is an inferential process, then the additional condition we need is an element of the sort discussed under the heading of the dynamics of practical reasoning. Above all, there must be an appropriate causal connection between events constituent in the reasoning and the action. There are at least two basic cases in which an action is based on practical reasoning.

First, it may be sufficient, for an action's being based on practical reasoning, that the concluding element, the making of a practical judgment, trigger the action (in the normal way illustrated in Chapter 6). Second, it may also be sufficient that the making of that judgment dispose S to do the thing in question and that S then do it as an actualization of this disposition, provided the disposition is suitably sustained by the making of the judgment, for instance traceable to it rather than to a different judgment supporting the same action. Imagine, for instance, that I judge that I should gesture when the speaker reaches the end of a sentence, and, on the basis of my holding this judgment, my realizing that this time has come elicits my action. I am then carrying out my practical judgment.

As this case suggests, there must be an unbroken causal line from the judging to the action. If, for instance, I had forgotten my judgment, yet later I again judged that I should make the gesture, then in making that gesture I would not be acting on the basis of the original practical reasoning. This holds even if the same wants and beliefs produced the second judging by analogous practical reasoning, again giving rise to a judgment that I should gesture when the speaker reaches the end of a sentence. The causal line from my original judgment to my disposition to act accordingly has been broken by my forgetting that judgment. My action is traceable—in the relevant causal sense—only to the later judgment. It is possible, of course, for an action to be based on two or more practical reasonings, provided it is appropriately traceable to each. But as a particular event, an action based on practical reasoning is grounded in a particular reasoning process only if it is linked, in the way just illustrated, to that particular process. Linkage to a reasoning process of the same type is not enough.

At least one other condition can connect an action for a reason to practical reasoning which expresses the reason, and here we may have some cases significantly different from the two previously specified kinds of action based on practical reasoning. As noted in Chapter 6, the causal role of a practical judgment may be that of a directive force. Suppose that either the practical judgment or the affirmation of one of the premises plays such a causal directive role and thereby guides the action in one of three common ways: first, where one reminds oneself that one has judged (or one believingly repeats the judgment) that one must do this, say write a letter of solicitation; second, where one stands in a similar relation to one's affirmation of the minor premise, say in recalling

one's having determined that the action is sufficient for one's end; and third, where one bears a similar relation to the major, as in encouraging oneself by recalling that the goal it expresses is highly desirable. It is not sufficient that the propositional objects in question come to mind: that would at most imply guidance by the relevant want and belief, and would not distinguish the guidance involved in simply acting for a reason from that which occurs in actions for a reason which are also based on practical reasoning. On my approach, practical reasoning is viewed as a real psychological process, and its effects must be tied to events constitutive of that process.

Regarding the connection between rational action and practical reasoning, I contend that an action is rational by virtue of practical reasoning corresponding to it only if the action is based on that reasoning. This thesis—which I shall call the causal correspondence view—is not universally accepted. It has been maintained, for example, that "the action is rational when it fits the specification in the outright evaluative conclusion,"[1] where this means roughly that it is the kind in favor of which the agent has concluded. This latter view may have been defended in depth only in its epistemic counterpart concerning justified belief (and knowledge).[2] I shall not argue against it in detail here. Instead, I want to distinguish between normal and rationalizational practical reasoning. In that light, the causal correspondence view will seem considerably more plausible than its rivals.

2 PRACTICAL REASONING AND RATIONALIZATION

Whatever else one says about rationalization, it contrasts with explanation of them (in the success sense of 'explain', not in the mere attempt sense). With this in mind, I suggest that we may conceive a rationalization, by S, of S's A-ing, as a purported account of this action, given by S, which (a) offers one or more reasons for S's A-ing, (b) represents A-ing as at least prima facie rational given the reason (s), and (c) does not explain why S A-ed.[3] Examples may come from any domain in which the agent sees some normative consideration as a reason, but, as Kant apparently saw, it is common for moral reasons to be offered in rationalizations. Three clarifications should be added here.

First, 'purported account' is intended broadly, but the common cases are attempted explanations and attempted justifications. Second, 'rationalization' need not be disapprobative, as it usually is in the Freudian sense. I include cases in which one quite properly rationalizes an intuitive decision by reconstructively citing good reasons there were for it which one could have adduced had one needed them. Third, the formulation is meant to suggest that rationalizations are normally—and often self-protectively—motivated behavior. A rationalization need not, however, be intended as such or even given for any self-protective purpose. The conditions for rationalization can be satisfied by a purported account which S does not give in order to represent the action as rational. We may, for example, simply forget our real reason for doing something and cite another perfectly ordinary one we had for it. Surely we can, under various circumstances, produce an unintentional rationalization.

One further complication must be addressed. How should we construe cases in which S offers an account of A-ing by appeal to several reasons, where some are reasons for which S acted—actuating reasons—and some are merely reasons S had for acting? Surely

S is to some extent rationalizing. This is, after all, committing oneself to at least a partial account of one's action by appeal to the reasons one merely had. Call such mixed accounts partial rationalizations, since they are in part rationalizations and in part (successful) explanations.

We need not conclude that partial rationalizations only partly rationalize or partly explain. They might adduce a reason S merely had which is nonetheless sufficiently cogent to rationalize the action fully, i.e. roughly, to make it appear fully rational; and they might also cite a reason for which S acted, sufficiently powerful in producing his action to provide a full explanation for it. We must be careful, however: given over determination, what fully explains, or fully rationalizes, may not yield the whole explanation, or whole available rationalization. Other factors may also be sufficient to explain or to rationalize the action. The full explainers or rationalizers are thus still incomplete: although they do not merely partially explain or partially rationalize, they are only part of what explains or part of what rationalizes.

We can illustrate both how rationalization can enter into practical reasoning and why actions are not rational merely by virtue of accord with rationalizational practical reasoning, if we consider self-deceptive practical reasoning. In the two main cases, rationalization can help to screen off self-deception from consciousness, as where I rationalize a deed I am ashamed of, such as slighting a rival in a self-deceptive effort to make myself seem meritorious. In one kind of rationalizational practical reasoning, the reasoning rationalizes a practical judgment; in the other it rationalizes an action. The former kind was discussed in Chapter 7 in relation to appraisal of the reasoning.

To illustrate how practical reasoning may be a mere rationalization of an action that accords with it, imagine that Susan judges, on the basis of practical reasoning, that she should send congratulations to a friend just honored. Suppose, however, that she envies the friend and is averse to sending congratulations. Self-deception might keep her from being conscious of the envy and lead to incontinent failure to act on her practical judgment.[4] It could be, however, that she also realizes that she must seem appreciative. Suppose it is this self-interested desire that actually produces her sending the congratulations. If, as she sends off the note, she repeats the original practical reasoning—a recollection that would help to veil her self-deception about her own envy—this instance of the reasoning would be rationalizational with respect to the action.

The point is quite general: just as any value that motivates the agent can lead to practical reasoning on which the agent acts, any value the agent considers a source of genuine reasons can figure in a rationalization. The sense of moral obligation is particularly likely to yield rationalizations; for bringing into consciousness reasoning in the service of morality can be an excellent protection from realizing that the motivating reason for the action thus rationalized is self-interested. Being focused on a positive picture of one's conduct, the eye of consciousness does not easily see below the surface.

An action may, then, be both self-deceptively motivated and supportable by practical reasoning to which the agent can appeal as a rationalization. Can the action still be rational? It may;[5] for it may be performed for a perfectly legitimate, if embarrassing, reason of self-interest. But if it is rational, surely that is by virtue of this reason and not through its coincidence with the (non-causative) practical reasoning. To parody Kant, an action not done from reason has no rational worth.

To be sure, an action that accords with (good) practical reasoning is, in the light of that reasoning, a rational kind of thing to do. But if the action—the concrete doing of the thing favored by practical judgment—is itself rational, it derives its actual rationality from the generative want and belief (or at least from a sustaining set of them, if this is different from the set originally producing the action, as it may be in the case of actions whose performance takes enough time to allow their initiation for one reason and their continuation for another). So far as practical reasoning is relevant, it is the reasoning corresponding to the underlying practical argument that carries the justificatory weight. This is the argument corresponding to the generative (or sustaining) want and belief. It is not just any argument the agent has expressed in practical reasoning that favors the action.

As we have seen, some practical reasoning may serve mainly as a smoke screen that obscures what really does move S to action. The action is rationalizable by appeal to such reasoning and, in our example, is in fact rationalized by S through a self-deceptive appeal to it. But rationalizability does not imply rationality. What makes the action rational is the explaining reasons: those that are, as it were, its psychological premises as well as normatively sufficient grounds for it.

Granted, at times either S's making a practical judgment or S's performing an action is explainable in part by appeal to one set of factors and in part by appeal to another, say a moral desire and one of self-interest, each desire combined with a belief that the action will realize it. If the rationalizing elements are a partial explanation of the relevant judgment or action, but are not sufficient to explain them, then we have a partial rationalization. In one case, the action is rationalized by the practical reasoning favoring it; in another, the judgment concluding that reasoning is rationalized by the beliefs of its premises. If the rationalizing factors are essential in a correct explanation of the item, then the reasoning (or beliefs of the premises) may be as much an explanation as it is a rationalization; for although the reasoning contains rationalizing elements, they are also indispensable to its success as an explanation. What rationalizes may not merely do so; it may in some cases also explain. Explanatory and (merely) rationalizing elements can be mixed in a variety of ways. Some cases defy easy classification and make the assessment of the rationality of the action quite complicated. This section indicates the kinds of variables crucial in such assessment. The next section develops further the importance of causal connections in appraising actions.

3 REASONED ACTION, ACTION FOR REASONS, AND NORMATIVE GROUNDS

On the view developed in this book, an action that accords with practical reasoning is rational in virtue of that reasoning only if the action is based on the reasoning. Otherwise, while it may be rational for S to perform the action, the action is not—so far as that reasoning goes, at least—a reasoned action, which is the kind of rational action based on practical reasoning. Moreover, apart from other motivation, it is not rationally performed, just as an action that is moral for S, say keeping a promise, need not be morally, as opposed to prudentially or accidentally, performed. The counterpart thesis holds for non-moral values: a loving kind of act, such as tending a wound, may be motivated entirely by

self-interest; it is then not lovingly performed (though it may appear loving), and the agent deserves no credit for it as such. But what are the sufficient conditions for the rationality of action so based?

In answering this, I want to guard against intellectualizing rational action. There is even more temptation to do this than to intellectualize intentional actions. Consider first how, even when conditions seem unfavorable to rational action, for instance where S is acting self-deceptively, rationality need not be vitiated and a basis of action in practical reasoning is not precluded. Suppose that Steve, a single parent, unconsciously wants to avoid facing his loneliness upon his last child's leaving home. This leads him to consider various ways of occupying himself, since he believes that doing so will help him deal with the dreaded prospect. As he thinks about what to do when the child leaves, it occurs to him that visiting friends abroad would occupy him, and he concludes that he should visit them, self-deceptively telling some relatives (and himself) that he is eagerly looking forward to his long-delayed holiday abroad. The reasoning may be considered self-deceptive because the motivating want, to occupy himself, is grounded directly in his unconscious desire to avoid facing the expected loneliness, which is in turn part of his self-deception with respect to the child's departure.

Broadly speaking, Steve is reasoning in the service of his self-deception and thereby keeping from consciousness his dreaded loneliness. Still, if he now makes the visit, on the basis of this reasoning, say in responding to its conclusion and on the basis of the motivation and cognition expressed in its premises, is there any reason to think he acts irrationally? I believe not. His action may be a good way of dealing with his problem; and even if an agent who is more rational overall likely would have squarely faced the problem, this does not undermine the rationality of his action in the context.

If Steve's self-deception were causing him to overlook a better alternative, or if his wanting to occupy himself were itself irrational, that would be another matter. But if the visiting is his best way to occupy himself and his wanting to do so is rational, why not suppose his action is rational? It is true that his wanting to avoid thinking of his impending loneliness underlies his wanting to occupy himself; but that desire is not irrational, it is simply unpleasant to entertain. Here, then, self-deceptive practical reasoning is not the tail that wags the dog. It apparently serves a useful, rational purpose in Steve's psychic economy, and may in fact do so as well as the non-self-deceptive alternatives.

It is interesting to compare Steve's case with that of Sandra, who does the same thing on the basis of precisely parallel practical reasoning, but wholly without self-deception or unconscious reasons. Would she be acting more rationally? There is an inclination to say so. But that may be due to her apparently greater rationality as an agent. Moreover, certainly she is likely to be able to justify her action better, since, unlike him, she can readily trace it deeper in her hierarchy of rational desires, whereas he must lift the veil of his self-deception before he can see the real basis of his action. Other things equal, then, she has better second-order justification than he, or at least readier access to a good second-order justification for believing her action to be rational, than he has for believing his to be rational. We might say that, as a result, her action also has greater reflective rationality than his, in the sense that hers is, or at least readily can be, grounded in fuller reflection.

We should grant the importance of these contrasts between the overall positions of Sandra and Steve as rational agents. But it does not follow that her action itself is more rational than his in the primary, unqualified sense. I doubt that it is, since I am inclined to understand rationality here as a matter of the sorts of reasons that actually explain the action in relation to S's overall situation, including, for example, S's readiness to change course if new information favors it.

In the dependence of its rationality on well-groundedness in reasons, action is like belief: normally, the rationality of a belief is chiefly a matter of factors in which it is grounded, not of S's ability to marshal such factors in defending it. Such elements as unconscious perceptual cues, which one cannot, without special reflection, know one is using, may ground rational belief even if one is no more able to appeal to them in justifying the belief than Steve is to invoke his unconscious desire in justifying his going abroad. One can justifiably believe that a voice is tense without being in a position to say any more by way of justification than that one hears its tenseness. To be sure, we may often have a more articulate grasp of the grounds of our rational action than of the grounds of our justified perceptual belief. But the supporting work of our grounds does not depend on our capacity to articulate them or to specify how they support our beliefs or actions—certainly not on a capacity to do so without careful self-study.

I suggest, then, that what carries the greatest weight in determining whether an action is rational is the degree of its normative grounding, conceived as a kind of rational support, which it derives from the reason(s) for which it is performed. This does not imply that practical reasoning is unimportant in judging rational action. Practical reasoning remains a major route to acting for a reason. Indeed, it is our most explicit route: when we take it, we tend to be more aware of our reasons, and of their influence on us, than when we act for a reason without it.

Should we conclude that, other things equal, an action based on practical reasoning is more rational than one simply based on the relevant set of wants and beliefs? I do not believe so. Perhaps, however, the often critical process of drawing a conclusion in favor of an action, even if it does not give one a better ground for performing it than one would otherwise have, focuses our ground in a way it need not be focused for us if we act on it automatically. Moreover, since the making of this judgment itself, as well as other events constituent in the reasoning, may play a triggering and guiding role with respect to the action, the action has a causal connection to the reasoning as well as to the crucial want and belief. Finally, the practical judgment may have a normative content, say that one morally must do the deed. This judgment implies a belief that one need not have simply in acting for the corresponding reason. If, in order to fulfill an obligation, I do something I have promised to do, say help a colleague move furniture, I take it to have that normative ground: being a fulfillment of my obligation. But if this action were a matter of habitual proper conduct and not based on practical reasoning, I might not actually hold—though I might be disposed to form—the belief that I must do it.

When one acts on the basis of such moral practical reasoning, the reasoning itself is part of both the psychological and normative foundation of the action. These points may help to explain why Kant seems to take as his paradigms of moral actions those arising from practical reasoning, indeed reasoning whose force is vividly before us because it is part of what helps us resist contrary inclination. A reasoned action performed for an

adequate reason is more than an expression of rational motivation and cognition; it is the climax of a rational process.

The above case in which the reasoning concludes in a normative practical judgment (a moral one) deserves further comment. A normative judgment can provide additional reason, not expressed in the premises, supporting the action. If, for instance, one reasons from a desire to fulfill one's promissory obligation and a belief that A-ing will do so to the conclusion that one will A, the action's being based on the reasoning seems no more supportive of its rationality than its being grounded in the relevant reasons without the inferential process constituting the reasoning. It is when we conclude that, say, we are obligated to A and we A in part for that normative reason that the action seems to have additional rational support. But in this case other things are not equal: the premises have led to a normative judgment, and that is something beyond the resolutive conclusion that one will A.

To be sure, if the only ground the agent has for this judgment is the premises, it is not clear that the action it favors gains any support beyond what it would receive from the motivational and cognitive elements indicated in the premises. But this is not the only common case; the judgment itself may be intuitively plausible or, on being formed, may derive support from standing beliefs or other considerations that immediately come into play. As a real psychological process, practical reasoning may do more than focus on motivation and instrumental elements, and lead to a conclusion from them; it may place that concluding judgment—or even the former elements—in a context in which, given the agent's rational beliefs and sound values, they derive further support, psychological as well as normative.

4 ARISTOTELIAN, HUMEAN, AND KANTIAN VIEWS OF RATIONAL ACTION

I have argued that the sufficient conditions for rational action include its being based on one or more (fully) adequate reasons, even if not on practical reasoning. In exploring what sorts of reasons these are, we would do well to return to Aristotle, Hume, and Kant, and to compare their views both with what may be the most commonly held current standard of rational action, the maximization of expected utility conception, and with my own view. Since I am considering them mainly for limited comparative purposes, and I am presupposing the points made in Part I, my sketch will be very brief.

In approaching their conceptions of rational action, it is safe to make one general assumption: that for all of them rational action is such in part because it is linked, by what I have called a purposive chain (as where I give a medicine to relieve pain, relieve pain in order to help my patient, and help my patient in order to fulfill my medical role, which is an intrinsic, and in that sense basic, end of mine). They differ in their conceptions of such a chain and in the normative elements in which they take it to terminate in the case of rational action. All of them seem to countenance instrumental links; each views rational action as fitting this basic pattern, and their reasons for doing so seem to derive from the plausible—and historically fundamental—notion of both practical reasoning and rational action as structurally instrumental. If this assumption is correct, then we may hope to

arrive at a broad characterization of their conceptions of rational action in part by looking to their notions of the ends it must serve.

Aristotle clearly takes happiness (flourishing, in a certain sense) to be both our actual final end and appropriate for this role: appropriate at least in fulfilling our proper function in the teleological order of nature. Happiness is, then, both the motivational and the normative foundation of our actions: any path from an intentional action to its ultimate motivation will, by a purposive chain, reach an intrinsic desire that is, in the broad sense, appropriate to happiness as an activity concept, a desire for happiness. But the concept of happiness, as opposed to that of some activity constitutive of it, need not figure in the object of the desire; and any complete justification of an intentional action will trace it, by way of the agent's beliefs, to some contribution to happiness.

Not just any belief will do: "That we must act according to right reason is generally conceded and may be assumed as the basis of our discussion" (NE: 1103b31–2).[6] There is no formula for so acting, however: "there are no fixed data in matters concerning actions and questions of what is beneficial" (1104a3–4). What it is to act according to right reason is closely tied to the notion of virtue, which in turn is understood in relation to the person of practical wisdom as exemplar: "virtue or excellence…consists in the mean relative to us, a mean which is defined by a rational principle, such as a man of practical wisdom would use to determine it" (1106b36–1 107a2).[7]

Roughly, then, rational action must ultimately subserve the end of happiness in a way that accords with right reason. It is true that Aristotle is easily read as interpreting happiness intellectualistically, but in some passages he appears to take only the highest happiness, and not happiness in general, to consist in intellectual activity. In any case, his overall eudaimonistic conception of rational action is what I am emphasizing. Within this framework, one can diversify the basic varieties of rational action in accordance with one's account of what constitutes happiness.

In Hume, rational action is instrumentally conceived: it is action with an appropriate purposive link to one or more basic desires. But whereas we find, as in Aristotle, motivational foundations—which in many parts of Hume seem to be composed wholly of hedonic desires—we do not find normative foundations. Hume does not hold that it is rational to desire even pleasure or the absence of pain; rather, those desires are presupposed in characterizing rational action, for which—with certain qualifications—he might have preferred the term 'reasonable'.

Moreover, for Hume we find an unrestricted pluralism: there are no constraints (or at least no a priori constraints) on what we may desire for pleasure or on any intrinsic desires. Desires admit of rationality only instrumentally, as where their objects are one's best means to one's intrinsically wanted ends. Unlike Aristotle or Mill, for instance, Hume provides no way of conceiving the pleasures of intellectual activity as a better end than those of intoxication.[8] Reason can show us what will give us pleasure, and it may condemn, as irrational, actions foolishly believed to lead to pleasure, or misbegotten because they lead to less than one might readily have obtained. But reason provides no basis for the view that we ought to want any given kind of thing for its own sake.[9]

This instrumentalist perspective still leaves room for a critical use of the Humean notion of rational action. For what we do in the service of our intrinsic desires may be irrational owing to mistakes about its tendency to satisfy them, even if they themselves are not appraisable as rational or irrational. No desires are intrinsically rational; desires

are at best natural. But our basic desires are the masters that action does and ought only to serve. Its rationality is functionally conceived in terms of how well it does this.

For Kant, rational action (or at least objectively rational action) must at once accord with rational norms and be appropriately motivated by them. The moral case, which he treats as the most shining example of rational action, illustrates that Kant not only postulated normative foundations of rational action, but also gave those foundations both a priori status and motivational power. Practical reason is autonomous: it enables us to see what we ought to do; and it motivates us, by virtue of our grasping categorical imperatives, to act accordingly, even if we have no independent desire to do so.

Kant's view leaves room for non-moral rational ends, since Kant apparently countenanced non-moral intrinsic goods, such as intellectual and aesthetic ones. Again, we have the notion of rational action as traceable, by a purposive chain, to basic ends. But the ends need not involve desire—at least not a desire for anything independent of them, as opposed to a desire to do one's duty, conceived as grounded in the judgment that it is our duty and not as an independent force that moves us to be moral. This intrinsic motivating power of moral judgment is a special case, indeed the central Kantian case, of practical reason as motivationally practical.

Kant did not, of course, take all our desires to be normatively grounded. We have natural inclinations, including desires directed towards happiness, that are rational, and some of these may be normatively grounded practical reason. But even these desires do not automatically generate rational action: given the priority of moral reasons over other kinds, action in the service of natural inclinations must be morally permissible in order to be rational. By contrast with Hume, then, Kant imposes normative constraints on how a psychologically basic end can generate rational action. Moral ends are not the only suitable ones, even though normatively paramount; but clearly Kant is Aristotelian in regarding only some potential objects of intrinsic desire as appropriate to supply normative foundations of action, and even these things need not all be unconditionally good.[10]

All three of these views are plausible, and all remain influential. But of the three, only Hume's position seems close to the maximization of expected utility view of rational action. For that view puts no constraints on the sources of utility—roughly, of desirability—whereas Aristotle and Kant do not allow just any desires (or motivational values) of the agent to play this role. Even Hume, however, might insist on revising the view to incorporate, as it commonly does not,[11] the causal requirement that an action rational by virtue of maximizing expected utility be based on the cognition and motivation yielding the utility and probability values.[12] He might also hold, for reasons suggested in Chapter 2, that the rationality of action may be affected by certain hypothetical desires (a point that also can be incorporated into a maximization of expected utility framework). Given these qualifications, however, much of what Hume says in laying out his conception of rational action can be expressed in, or at least reconstructed in, the maximization of expected utility framework. My conception is very different, and, as the next section will show, closer to Aristotle's and Kant's.

5 A PLURALISTIC CONCEPTION OF RATIONAL ACTION

On my view of rational action, the maximization of expected utility framework is deficient for many of the reasons one might formulate from an Aristotelian or Kantian point of view, among others. For one thing, while it is at least in the spirit of instrumentalism to recognize that an intrinsic desire can be irrational because its object is impossible to realize, the instrumentalist view wrongly supposes that there are no substantive criteria for the rationality of intrinsic desires. Moreover, I hold that it may be rational to do something that, though quite satisfactory, does not maximize one's expected utility One may, for instance, unreflectively but rationally take a readily available means to an end, thinking simply that it will easily realize the end, and having no beliefs about either its probability of attaining it or about the specific probabilities of its various outcomes.[13]

There are, to be sure, questions of degree. Suppose A-ing is well-grounded in this way, but S should have seen that B-ing would be far better given everything relevant in the context. This does not imply that S's A-ing is irrational, but there is a kind of mistake: choosing B would have been better. Must we, then, maximize some value, to act in a fully rational way? This does not follow. It may seem to follow because, if we are choosing between two otherwise equally acceptable options and it is plain that one conduces more to (say) human flourishing, as where a charity is more efficient than its competitor with the same concerns, then we should choose the better one. That we need not always be maximizing does not permit us to ignore opportunities to advance the good that present themselves in the course of our everyday activity or our performance of ordinary duties.

It would be a serious mistake to infer, from the defeating role of the clear inferiority of an option in conducing to flourishing (or any other value), that we are obligated always to maximize some value or even that we must always positively aim at maximizing some value.[14] Commitment to a preferential standard in making concrete choices does not entail commitment to adopt a maximizing standard as either a criterion of rightness or a general policy of deliberation. It is one thing to avoid choosing a lesser alternative when we consider options; it is quite another to take maximization as governing our choices and deliberations at the outset.

Let me conclude this section with one other point of contrast between my view and a Humean instrumentalism. Kant may well have been right in thinking that certain standards of rational action are knowable a priori, though I would give happiness as an intrinsically valuable end a larger role than Kant does. Though I will not argue the point here, I suggest that it may be an a priori constitutive principle of practical reason that it is rational to want one's happiness, construed in an Aristotelian fashion, for its own sake. This might seem a narrow ideal, but it accommodates as great a plurality as is manifested in the ways one can achieve happiness by exercising one's distinctively human capacities. Even if there are no such a priori principles, however, there are other ways to establish constraints on the rationality of intrinsic desires, such as exposing them in an appropriate way to facts and logic: using theoretical reason, as it were, to establish the foundations of practical reasoning.[15]

Given what I take to be the structural unity of practical and theoretical reasoning, I find it natural to employ a concept of rationality in general, and of rational action in particular, that reflects this unity. On this view rationality is well-groundedness. This conception is quite general; it applies not only to all the propositional attitudes, but also to actions, whose rationality derives from their relation to propositional attitudes, most notably believing and wanting. As applied to actions, the basic idea is this: rational actions are grounded in the right kind of way in the right kind of reason. The right kind of way is being performed for the reason(s) in question; the right kind of reason is (undefeated) rational motivation, guided by (undefeated) rational belief.

Defeaters of the rationality of wants include conflicting wants of equal strength and rationality; defeaters of the rationality of beliefs include both one's awareness of counterevidence concerning them and one's having reason to doubt the plausibility of one's grounds for holding them. Being undefeated does not require indefeasibility. An action may be rational on the basis of a ground even if it is not impossible that anything defeat the rationality of that ground, or of grounds of that kind. It may yet be true that some grounds for action are indefeasible, as Aristotle and Kant apparently thought; but this view is not essential to my position.

What in particular is it rational to want intrinsically? My conception is pluralistic and, in the ethical realm, incorporates the idea that all of the basic prima facie obligations described in Chapter 9 are good candidates to indicate ends worthy of intrinsic desire. Here are some other, perhaps less controversial, central cases. One's own happiness is a paradigm of one such thing. But rational motivation need not be limited to self-interested desires: it may well be that it is also rational to want others' happiness for its own sake. Perhaps it is also rational to want, for its own sake, the flourishing of philosophy, science, and all the arts.

In countenancing this diversity of possible intrinsic goods, my view is apparently more pluralistic than Aristotle's, though clearly he took the constituents of happiness to be so various that what is put forward with the sound of a eudaimonistic monism may be better regarded as a hierarchical pluralism with intellectual activity at its pinnacle. Moreover, I agree with Aristotle and Kant that some of the things it is rational to want for their own sake may be rationally considered better than others, though I leave open (as at least Aristotle apparently did not in the case of happiness) whether there are some ends that cannot (or cannot rationally) be wanted instrumentally. There are surely some ends, however, including one's own happiness, that are not naturally wanted for the sake of something further.

Let me simply illustrate the well-groundedness conception as applied to actions. Some rational actions are well-grounded directly, i.e. they are performed in order to realize a basic rational end, say for the pleasures of intellectual activity, in the light of a rational belief that the action will achieve that end. Other actions are well-grounded indirectly, by virtue of being based on at least one basic rational end through at least one purposive chain (rather as certain inferential beliefs are well-grounded in justified non-inferential ones).

There may or may not be actual practical reasoning as a mediator in the grounding relation, but since the connecting links are means-end relations, practical reasoning is always reconstructively available to the agent as a device for tracing a rational action to its ultimate motivational ground. There are also epistemic requirements on well-

groundedness. If the crucial instrumental beliefs, such as the belief that lively conversation will promote one's happiness, are unjustified, this tends to undermine the rationality of the action in question. I say "tends to" because there are complications. For instance, one might justifiedly believe, of such an unjustified belief, that it is justified, and acting on it might then be rational. As this suggests, some rational actions may be better grounded, and thus more rational, than others.

Action based on practical reasoning need not be rational; but clearly, rational actions, conceived as well-grounded, are of a kind that always can be so based. The constraints on what constitute rational grounds set the standards for assessing the motivation expressed in the major premise; the constraints on what constitute justified means—end beliefs determine the standards for assessing the cognition expressed in the minor. The process of practical reasoning, moreover, can be seen in this framework to be a route to discovery, not just to retrospective explanation or justification, or to self-encouragement. For in setting oneself an end and seeking a means, one often discovers—by reflection or association or luck or whatever—a good means to that end.

Given the conception of practical reasoning and its relation rational action sketched in this chapter, we can see why it is natural for a rational agent to engage in practical reasoning to answer a practical question. Above all, the concluding practical judgment can bring a good reason to bear on action and thereby answer that question. The judgment is justified provided it is well-grounded in the agent's acceptance of the premises. Such grounding implies that the agent justifiedly believes the conclusion on the basis of justifiedly believing the premises.

If, in addition, the premises are true and the underlying argument is valid, or of sufficient inductive strength, the reasoning is cogent. If the end and connecting belief they express are well-grounded, and the agent acts for that reason, i.e. in order to achieve that end, the action is prima facie rational. It is more rational in proportion to how well-grounded the underlying motivation and cognition are, and how thoroughly it is based upon them. It can be seen to be rational in the light of this underlying motivation and cognition.

If the action is actually based on practical reasoning expressing the underlying motivation and cognition, then its rationality is, in addition, inferential, focused, and supported by practical judgment. The action fully realizes the corresponding practical argument and thereby responds to the practical problem at hand. If the reasoning is successful, then the response is a rational approach to the practical problem. If the problem remains intractable, the agent is not successful. But if the action is optimally well-grounded, then failure here is not the agent's fault. The action is still fully grounded in practical reason.

Conclusion

Practical reasoning is a major element in human life. We do it in dealing with all manner of problems that require action. We appeal to it in setting out our reasons for acting. We look to it for understanding of intentional action in general, including even incontinent action. It constitutes an inferential process that, in many cases, mediates between our reasons and our actions based on them. It provides a structure in which the rationality of actions can be seen in relation to the reasons for which they are performed. And partly in virtue of its parallels to theoretical reasoning, it shows us as rational beings having a responsiveness to reasons for acting that is highly analogous to our responsiveness to reasons for believing. We are influenced by both practical reasons and theoretical reasons; and though we can respond to a reason of either kind without drawing it from a process of reasoning, it is often through practical and theoretical reasoning that reasons of both kinds have their most characteristic effects on our actions and beliefs.

All of these points apply to practical reasoning as Aristotle understood it. He conceived it as pervasive, inferential, explanatory, causative, justificatory, and broadly logical. If he did not take it to underlie every action for a reason, he at least saw all such action, and probably all voluntary action, as understandable in terms of what, in the light of the instrumental structure of intentional action, the agent's practical reasoning was or might have been.

Like the structure of our action itself, practical reasoning for Aristotle is appraisable in relation to happiness as our proper and final end. Here he is foundationalist, motivationally, behaviorally and normatively: for every intentional action, there is a purposive chain connecting it with an intrinsic desire that is in some way directed towards happiness; and any complete justification of an intentional action will link it, through the agent's beliefs, to some envisaged contribution to happiness. Practical reasoning may accompany any link, or every link, in such a chain; and if, as is often so, the chain is deliberative, its concluding segment will commonly be constituted by practical reasoning that issues in action.

Hume's conception of practical reasoning is apparently like Aristotle's in taking such reasoning to have an instrumental structure and to be capable of playing the same range of motivational roles Aristotle attributed to it. But there is a vast difference in their conceptions of practical reason and hence in their view of the normative appraisal of both practical reasoning and action itself. Hume shares only some of Aristotle's foundationalism. For Hume, the role of reason in relation to action seems wholly instrumental: its role is to subordinate actions to basic desires. We find, as in Aristotle, motivational foundations; we do not find normative foundations. Reason can show us how to satisfy desires, but it provides no basis for criticizing actions as performed for an unreasonable basic end.

Practical reasoning, as Hume conceives it, guides action relative to basic—and typically hedonic—desires which, at least apart from internal inconsistency, do not admit of assessment as rational or irrational. If in Aristotle we find a eudaimonism taken to be a

constitutive commitment of practical reason, in Hume we find what is more nearly a motivationally sovereign hedonism that places basic desires beyond the scope of rational assessment. On the Humean instrumentalist view of reason, its role is wholly to serve desire. But this limitation should not be exaggerated. Desire is blind, and reason is its only sighted servant. Reason can arouse desires by heralding the presence of their objects, extinguish desires by pronouncing their objects unobtainable, and direct desires by leading the way to their gratification.

To be sure, if we take Hume at his word when he calls pleasure and pain "good and evil," and if we take rationality to require desire for the former and aversion to the latter, then we may view Hume's theory of practical reason as not wholly instrumentalist. Reason will have the normative authority to set goals for basic desire as well as the motivational power to arouse desire. I have left open how important this normative strain in Hume is for understanding his overall account of action. However important it is for his overall notion of practical reason, his conception of practical reasoning may still be viewed, as we have seen, as an instrumental process conception.

For Kant, as for both Aristotle and Hume, practical reasoning is structurally instrumental. But Kant differs markedly from Aristotle in taking practical reasoning to be governed, at the most basic level, by general prin-ciples rather than, as we might say, virtues as elements in practical wisdom. Moreover, unlike Aristotle, he explicitly asserts that such principles, in themselves, have strong motivational force: commitment to one is normally sufficient to produce action on it. Rational action, moreover, must not only accord with norms discoverable a priori, it must also be done from that commitment.

This view leaves ample room for practical reasoning to play a dynamic role, but Kant seems less concerned with that role than either Aristotle or Hume. Furthermore, Kant resolutely rejects externalism regarding the motivational power of reason and instrumentalism concerning rationality. Kant not only recognized normative foundations of rational action, he also credited them with both a priori status and motivational power. Practical reason is autonomous: it enables us to discern our duties; it legislates principles governing their fulfillment; and it can move us to act on these principles, whether or not we are independently inclined to do so. Again, we have the notion of rational action as connected, by a purposive chain, to basic ends; but the ends may be given by practical reason alone and need not involve independent desire. If Hume's position represents the inevitable supremacy of desire in human action, Kant's view represents the rightful, and in rational agents quite possible, supremacy of reason.

The view defended in this book is in many ways Aristotelian and, beyond that, more Kantian than Humean. But I have tried to develop a more detailed account than is offered by any one of them and, in part through it, to provide a framework for ethical decision that employs moral principles intuitively plausible in their own right. The overall theory of practical reasoning proposed takes practical reasoning as an inferential process with both motivational and cognitive premises. It corresponds to a practical argument, which, in turn, is a kind of argument appropriately produced in answering a practical question. Practical reasoning is indeed an inferential realization of such an argument. Such reasoning may be conceived as a response to a practical problem, and it concludes in the making of a practical judgment. In both content and causal potential, practical judgment is directive. It calls for one's doing what it favors, and making it disposes one to carry out that action. A practical judgment thus provides a reason for action. When practical

reasoning yields a justifiedly held conclusion the reason it provides is normative; it is a reason for the agent to act and so counts toward the rationality of action based on it.

Agents may or may not act on their practical reasoning, whether because of inability, change of mind, incontinence, or some interference; and an intentional action may or may not be based on such reasoning. But practical reasoning is reconstractively available to the agent for at least partial explanation, and at least prima facie justification, of any intentional action performed for a further end, and probably for any intentional action at all. This holds even when no such reasoning genetically underlies the performance of the action; the reconstructive availability of practical reasoning derives entirely from the structure that intentional action has regardless of its particular genesis. Not all intentional action is inferentially grounded in practical reasoning. But all such action is connected, by a purposive chain, to motivation and belief of the kind that normally do underlie practical reasoning.

Moreover, practical reasoning plays an important role in the dynamics of action. It often serves both to guide an action based on it and to strengthen the agent's motivation to perform that action. The reasoning process or some element in it may also explain both how an intention is generated and why it is executed when it is. Yet despite this guiding, motivational role, an action based on practical reasoning may exhibit weakness of will. Neither the motivation expressed in practical reasoning nor the practical judgment in which it concludes need prevail in action, or even in leading the agent to decide, or form the intention, to do the thing favored by the reasoning. Incontinence may occur when the motivation that underlies competing practical reasoning prevails instead. But a standing desire not associated with practical reasoning, or even a sheer impulse, may also outweigh the original practical reasoning. Once we realize that intentional action can have a basis other than practical reasoning, we can see that a weak-willed action may have many kinds of origin, including many that do not require reasoning that supports the incontinent deed.

The full appraisal of practical reasoning requires logical, material, inferential, and epistemic criteria. The logical and material standards concern the corresponding practical argument, conceived as an abstract prepositional structure. Here we must apply both deductive and broadly inductive standards, as well as material criteria for the truth or falsity of the premises and conclusion. The inferential standards concern the reasoning process. They chiefly express conditions for rationally inferring the conclusion from the premises, for justifiably believing it in virtue of them, and for the belief of the conclusion to be psychologically based on the beliefs of the premises. The epistemic standards concern the agent's justification in believing each constituent proposition. Appraising these propositions requires both criteria of instrumental rationality and criteria for assessing the rationality of principles, moral and other, that might underlie acceptance of the major, or indeed might be implicit in accepting it, as where adherence to a moral principle is one's overriding goal. The assessment of epistemic standards also raises problems of defeasibility, such as how to specify conditions under which the prima facie justification of a practical conclusion remains undefeated.

The four kinds of standards for appraising practical reasoning are each applicable to the links of a purposive chain connecting a rational action to its ultimate motivational basis. For the most part, these standards apply even if the chain is non-inferential and the rational action in which it terminates is thus not connected to that ground by any actual

reasoning. This is in part why the reconstructive role of practical reasoning is so important in the explanation and justification of action. That role is not only fundamental in understanding the human agent, whether in relation to motivation or belief or reasoning or action itself; it also provides an explicit tool for evaluation of agents and their actions. Even without playing a part in the genesis of an action, practical reasoning can be invoked in its explanation and justification.

Given the criteria of evaluation for practical reasoning, we can frame general principles of practical appraisal that may be used in determining whether an instance of such reasoning adequately meets them. This task requires distinguishing between principles that describe the generation of positive good reasons for action and those that simply prohibit incoherence. We have also seen that normative principles cannot be simply modeled on logical ones. Logic tells us that what is entailed by a true proposition is itself true; practical reason does not tell us that what is required to fulfill a desirable end is itself desirable. The criteria for good practical reasoning must take account not only of this negative point but also of the point that what counts as a desirable end for an agent may alter with even a short passage of time or even at a single instant in which the agent sees the consequences of doing a deed. This is in part why practical reasoning is characteristically defeasible. In the course of doing it, we may discover that we have better reason to avoid the action in favor of which it concludes than to realize the end that motivates that action.

Practical reasoning is nowhere more important than in making moral judgments and moral decisions. Here we have seen a plurality of ethical principles that provide basic materials for practical reasoning. The principles of obligation formulated in Chapter 9 each express ends suitable to figure in major premises of practical reasoning. Each of the principles provides a substantive basis of appraisal, but we again found that the reasoning we do on the basis of any one of them is defeasible in the light of possible conflicts with one or more others. One might think that we could at least conclude that moral reasons take priority over any other kind and hence sound moral practical reasoning could yield indefeasible reason for action. But just as we find no a priori hierarchy among basic moral principles, we find no such priority—at least no clear priority—of moral reasons over every other kind that may conflict with them.

Pluralism and defeasibility, however, do not imply anarchy. Far from it. Given the manageably small number of familiar basic moral considerations that seem sufficient to account for our obligations, there is a framework of decision-making that can guide ethical decision and practical reasoning in moral matters. Conflicts of obligation cannot be avoided; but reasonable comparisons among the conflicting considerations can be made, and comparative principles of resolution can be incorporated in practical reasoning. There is still no formula for reaching sound final decisions, but we know both what guiding principles to use in determining plausible options and how to universalize our results to enable us to judge them from a wider perspective. On this basis, rational decisions in ethics seem both possible and defensible in the light of the reasoning that underlies them or may be used to justify them.

Rational decisions and rational actions are often based on practical reasoning, but they need not be: they need not be reasoned at all. When they are based on practical reasoning, their rationality can also be conceived in relation to their well-groundedness. They are well-grounded when, broadly speaking, they are based in the right kind of way on the

right kind of reasons. In the light of my conception of the structural unity of practical and theoretical reasoning, I construe this general idea as one would in the epistemological case of rational belief. The right kind of way for a rational action to be grounded is constituted by the action's being performed for the reason(s) in question; the right kind of reason is expressed by (undefeated) rational motivation that is guided by (undefeated) rational belief.

I have made only quite general assumptions about what sorts of motivation are rational. This applies to moral motivation, and parallel points hold for moral decision. I see no reason to doubt that a number of kinds of potential objects of intrinsic desire, most obviously one's own happiness, can be rationally wanted for their own sake. I also see no reason to doubt that intrinsic other-regarding desires can be rational or to doubt that desires to fulfill moral obligations can be as well. Regarding the beliefs that guide action, they include not only beliefs about what is worth pursuing and beliefs of moral principles but also the sorts of beliefs that can express the minor premises of practical reasoning even if the action in question does not arise from such reasoning. They represent the agent's operative conception of what means will realize the end that governs the reasoning.

Practical reasoning is a pervasive element in successful deliberation; and, frequently as an unintrusive process of reaching a decision, it guides many of our everyday actions that do not arise from deliberation or reflection. It occurs, often in cogent forms, in our answering of practical questions and in our making ethical decisions. It connects both our normative and our motivating reasons with our actions. It is a major element in our reaching ethical decisions. It gives rise to actions that are based on our ends and on means that it sets out for us. And it connects many of our actions with grounds in virtue of which they can be seen to be rational. Practical reasoning is an explanatory framework, a rational structure, a unifier of reason and desire, a central manifestation of rational agency, and an indispensable resource in making ethical decisions. We are pervasively reasoning beings, and our capacity to engage in practical reasoning, and to act on the reasons it provides us, is partly constitutive of what we are.

Notes

ONE

1 Note, however, that according to G.E.M.Anscombe "'practical syllogism' in Greek simply means practical reasonings." See Intention, 2nd edn (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1963), p. 79.

2 David Gauthier, in Practical Reasoning (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1963), apparently takes deliberation to be equivalent to practical reasoning; see, e.g., p. 25. A similar interpretation of the notion as occurring in Aristotle is suggested by John Cooper; see Reason and Human Good in Aristotle (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1975), p. 70.

3 Nicomachean Ethics, 1112b2–20. This is from the translation by Terence Irwin (Indianapolis, Ind.: Hackett, 1985). References to the Ethics, hereinafter to be given in the text, will be to this translation unless otherwise indicated. Irwin published a second edition of this translation in 1999, and the more recent translation differs from the earlier one in some places. I do not believe these affect my interpretation, but readers may wish to compare the two or to consult Irwin's more recent notes. I will follow Martin Ostwald's useful translation (Indianapolis, Ind.: Bobbs-Merrill, 1962) in one part of the passage just cited and sometimes speak, as he does, of the first link in the chain of causation and the last step in the order of discovery.

4 In Ostwald's translation (cited in note 3), for instance. See esp. 1113a1–14.

5 The notion of volition is interpretable in a variety of ways and volition is probably not best considered an act in any sense. I have discussed various conceptions of its nature and of its role in the theory of action in "Volition and agency," in my Action, Intention, and Reason (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993).

6 For a detailed development of this idea, see Alan Donagan, Choice: the Essential Element in Action (London and New York: Routledge, 1987), esp. chs 5 and 6. Much of what Donagan says about volition and intention, however, can be detached from the kind of self-reference which, following John R.Searle, Intentionality (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), esp. ch. 3, Donagan includes in his account of volition and immediate intention, e.g. the idea that in raising one's arm one chooses that one's arm go up and that its going up be explained by that very choosing. In any case, Aristotle can be read as holding a volitional account of action without being committed to such self-reference. For further discussion of a volitional approach, in both Aristotle and, especially, Aquinas, see Donagan's "Thomas Aquinas on human action," in Norman Kretzmann et al., The Cambridge History of Later Medieval Philosophy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981).

7 He says, e.g., that "the last premise is a belief about something perceptible and controls action" (1147b9–10); Ostwald's translation suggests that Aristotle went even further in the direction I am suggesting: "The final premise, consisting as it does in an opinion about an object perceived by the senses, determines our action." See also De Motu Animalium 701a8–15.

8 I do not suppose it self-evident that moral judgments are true or false ('cognitive'); but if not, much of what I say could be preserved. For instructive presentations of noncognitivism, see Allan Gibbard, "A noncognitivist analysis of rationality in action," Social Theory and

Practice 2–3 (1983) and Wise Choices, Apt Feelings (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990).

9 David Charles's translation also supports my reading here: "When one proposition emerges from these two (major and minor premises), it is necessary then for the soul to assert it immediately, and in cases productive of action to do it immediately. For example, if the major premise is 'Taste all sweet things' and the minor is 'This is sweet,' it is necessary for the man who is able and not prevented straightaway also to do the action" (1147a26–31). Here it is a proposition that emerges from the premises—as the conclusion from them—and the action is represented as separate from the conclusion. See Aristotle's Philosophy of Action (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1984), p. 91. Roger Crisp's translation is also supportive here: "If, for example, everything sweet must be tasted, and this is sweet, in that it is one example of sweet things, a person who is capable and not prevented must act on this immediately." See Roger Crisp, trans., Nicomachean Ethics (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 124. This translation also captures the intuitive idea that we act on the conclusion of practical reasoning.

10 There are other, related forms of weakness of will, e.g. the formation of intentions to perform acts which are against one's better judgment and thereby themselves incontinent. For an account of weakness of will which covers a variety of cases, see my "Weakness of will and practical judgment," Noûs XIII (1979), pp. 173–96. For a related discussion, see Alfred R.Mele, Irrationality (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), pp. 18–20, 25–7, and 34–44.

11 See Norman O.Dahl, Practical Reason, Aristotle, and Weakness of the Will (Minneapolis, Minn.: University of Minnesota Press, 1984) for an account which emphasizes the importance, in Aristotle, of integration of the agent's knowledge of the minor into that agent's motivational system. See, e.g., pp. 188–204.

12 This is controversial, however. David Charles, for instance, argues that Aristotle does allow clear-eyed weakness of will, op. cit., esp. ch. 4, pp. 191–3. For a detailed treatment of Aristotle on incontinence which, on many points, supports mine, see Alfred R.Mele, "Aristotle on Akrasia, Eudaemonia, and the psychology of action," History of Philosophy Quarterly 2 (1985).

13 Anscombe, op. cit., p. 60.

14 Cf. Cooper, op. cit. Perhaps because it is not clear how an action can be a conclusion, he denies that the practical syllogism is reasoning; see esp. pp. 51–5.

15 For a detailed discussion supporting the view that the conclusion of Aristotelian practical reasoning is prepositional rather than actional, see Charles, op. cit., esp. pp. 90–5. Cf. Martha Nussbaum, "Practical syllogisms and practical science," in her Aristotle's De Motu Animalium (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978).

16 If we follow Gerasimos Santas in holding that "Aristotle does not really distinguish a teleological explanation from a practical inference," we can account for the plausibility of the action-as-conclusion view without taking it to be Aristotle's considered position. He says:

> The conclusion of a teleological explanation…is an action in a straightforward sense…. But in the corresponding piece of practical inference, best stated in the first person (though of course I can go through a piece of practical inference about what other people should do), "I want to make M healthy and I can't make him healthy unless I rub him, so I will rub him," the conclusion is, by no stretch of the imagination, an action (unless it be supposed to be some species of "mental act"—which cannot be taken in the context to be what Aristotle has in mind—it is tasting the sweet he is talking about).

("Aristotle on practical inference, the explanation of action, and Akrasia," Phronesis XIV, 2 (1969), pp. 175–6)

17 The means need not be instrumental; it may be constitutive. For discussion of this difference, see Cooper, op. cit, pp. 21–2. (Cooper attributes the distinction to L.H.G.Greenwood.)

18 See, e.g., 1139a31–3, where Aristotle says that "the origin of an action—the source of the movement, not the action's goal—is decision, and the origin of decision is desire together with reason that aims at some goal." But note that even if he took voluntary action as typically intentional, this passage may not apply to all intentional action. For one thing, something done on the spur of the moment can be voluntary yet not grounded in decision: "the actions we do on the spur of the moment are said to be voluntary, but not to express decision" (111 1b9–10); yet such an action would presumably be intentional. On the other hand, if it is intentional, there remains the question whether it must arise from practical reasoning. That intentional and even voluntary action does, in some way, arise from it is held by a number of commentators. Mele, for example, contends (referring to the hekousion) that "for Aristotle, all voluntary and intentional actions have a practical conclusion as a cause." See Alfred R.Mele, "Aristotle on the proximate efficient cause of action," Canadian Journal of Philosophy, supp. vol. X (1984), p. 149.

19 I have argued for this in "A theory of practical reasoning," American Philosophical Quarterly 19 (1982). Much supporting argumentation is provided in my "Acting for reasons," Philosophical Review XCV, 4 (1986), pp. 511–46.

20 Anscombe seems to hold the correspondence thesis, op. cit., p. 80. My reference to at least one piece of practical reasoning is to allow for overdetermination of the kind exhibited by A-ing for two independent reasons, each motivationally sufficient to lead one to A.

21 See, e.g., 1177a20-b5, for Aristotle's treatment of pleasure as intrinsic to the relevant activity in the way I have suggested.

22 Cooper, op. cit., prefers 'flourishing', which I, too, often prefer both for its apparent pluralism regarding the constituents of eudaimonia and for its implicit reference to activity; but there is no translation universally agreed on, and for convenience I follow Ostwald and others. For a more recent extensive treatment of Aristotle's notion of happiness see Julia Annas, The Morality of Happiness (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993).

23 J.O.Urmson, for instance, speaks of "the view, shared by both Plato and Aristotle and many since, that nobody aims at lower-order goals without aiming at some such higher-order goal [as the good and the pleasant]." See "The goals of action," in A.I.Goldman and J.Kim (eds), Values and Morals (Dordrecht and Boston: D.Reidel, 1978), p. 141. There are certainly passages that easily give this impression, and no doubt Aristotle is committed to the view that, for a rational, reflective agent, at least, having a first-order aim implies having a higher-order one. But aiming, in the usual sense implying doing something in order to achieve an end, is too strong a notion to describe Aristotle's minimal commitment to the motivationally fundamental role of happiness. For helpful discussion of both how the good is to be understood in Aristotle and how agents aim at it, see Nicholas P.White, "Goodness and human aims in Aristotle's ethics," Studies in Philosophy and the History of Philosophy 9 (Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 1981).

24 In "Intending," Journal of Philosophy LXX (1973), pp. 387–403, I have argued that there is a suitably broad sense of 'want'.

25 Cf. Alasdair MacIntyre's thesis that "Aristotle's logic in practical argument is the same deductive logic employed in theoretical argument." See Whose Justice? Which Rationality? (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1988), p. 141. My claim here allows that inductive standards as well as deductive ones be, for Aristotle, appropriate to some practical arguments. This question and the logic of practical reasoning in general will be considered in some detail in Chapter 4.

TWO

1 David Hume, A Treatise of Human Nature, ed. L.A.Selby-Bigge (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1888), ed. P.H.Nidditch, 2nd edn (1978), pp. 459–60. Cf. Aristotle's apparently externalist remark that "Thought by itself, however, moves nothing; what moves us is thought aiming at some goal and concerned with action" (NE 1139a36–7). Here the goal is presumably something the agent desires or, in some way that is not purely cognitive, is motivated to achieve. References to the Treatise will hereinafter be given parenthetically by page number in the text, and some spellings are modernized.

2 David Hume, An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals, ed. P.H.Nidditch (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975), reprinted from 1777 edn, p. 293. In the following paragraph, too, Hume sounds hedonistic. Note also that the end he posits is apparently construed as final in something like Aristotle's sense.

3 Clearly, Hume is not here being skeptical. There is of course much controversy about just how skeptical he is overall.

4 One might, of course, allow normative terms in the expression of Humean practical reasoning and give the process a noncognitivist reading on which the major premise or conclusion or both are normative and, though not true or false, do imply motivation. I believe, however, that a cognitivist interpretation yields a better overall reading of most of the Treatise.

5 This is the kind of claim that leads Philippa Foot (and others) to call Hume a subjectivist in ethics. See her "Hume on moral judgment," in David Pears (ed.), David Hume (London: Macmillan, 1963), p. 71. One might also note that the way Hume's point is put here makes a moral judgment sound like a statement about causal relations and thus in the scope of reason in whatever way such judgments are. For another valuable discussion see Nicholas Sturgeon, "Hume on reason and passion," forthcoming.

6 Here I differ from Penelhum, who takes Hume to hold that reason "cannot generate any [desires or aversions] on its own account." See Terence Penelhum, Hume (London: Macmillan, 1975), p. 126.1 would also qualify Penelhum's point that judgments generated by reason "have no power to initiate actions" (p. 128), though most of what Penelhum says about Hume's position on reason and passion is quite consistent with my understanding of Hume. See esp. pp. 122–30.

7 My reading of Hume here differs from Barry Stroud's. He emphasizes 'prefer' and takes Hume to be speaking of a comparative judgment; I take Hume to be speaking of passion and to be simply making a comparison of desire strengths, as where we speak of preferring reading to television not because one has compared them and ranked the former higher, but because one likes or wants the former more. My reading enables Hume to avoid a problem Stroud points out (though related problems remain however we read the passage). See Barry Stroud, Hume (London and Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1977), p. 166.

8 Norman O.Dahl maintains that for Hume there is no practical reason. See Practical Reason, Aristotle, and Weakness of the Will (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), pp. 23–34. Further discussion of this is provided by Garrett Cullity and Berys Gaut in their introduction to their collection, Ethics and Practical Reason (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997). See also Christine Korsgaard, "The normativity of practical reason," in Cullity and Gaut.

9 A detailed account of the varieties and plausibility of motivational internalism is provided by my "Moral judgment and reasons for action," in my Moral Knowledge and Ethical Character (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), reprinted in Cullity and Gaut, op. cit., which also contains other papers bearing on the same topic.

10 See An Enquiry, pp. 293–4. Cf. the preceding paragraph, in which desirability also seems to have a normative force not due solely to what is actually desired for its own sake.

11 See A.J.Ayer, Hume (New York: Hill & Wang, 1980), p. 88.

12 My "Weakness of will and practical judgment," Noûs XIII (1979), reprinted in R.Jay Wallace (ed.), Reason, Emotion, and Will (Aldershot: Dartmouth Publishing Co., 1999),

distinguishes between acting against, and merely inconsistently with, practical judgment, and discusses how practical judgment may figure in the mind at the time one acts against it.

13 In a useful essay which generally supports the interpretation of Hume I have given, Michael Smith does not deal with constitutive means in interpreting Hume and also attributes to him a stronger condition than I do on the relation of an intentional action to the agent's good: that if one were to perform it, one would realize the relevant good. See "The Humean theory of motivation," Mind XCVI (1987).

14 See An Enquiry, p. 65, and for discussion of the way in which Hume is a volitionalist see Penelhum, op. cit., ch. 6.

15 For a valuable short treatment of a Humean instrumentalism developed in this decision-theoretic direction, see David Gauthier, "Reason and maximization," The Canadian Journal of Philosophy IV (1975). For a more extensive treatment see Richard Fumerton, Reason and Morality (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990).

THREE

1 Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals, trans. Lewis White Beck (New York: The Liberal Arts Press, 1959), p. 9 (393 in the Akademie edition). References to this book will hereinafter be given parenthetically in the text, using the Akademie numbering.

2 I think, moreover, that the view is plausible: even if one could fail to deserve to be given a good will, once one has it taking it away would be wrong; nor could one now be such as not to deserve to have it. Kant may also have thought that good will, by itself, could not have evil effects—as opposed to, say, causing unhappiness when combined with misinformation. For extensive discussion of Kant's doctrine of the unqualifiedly good will, see Karl Ameriks, "Kant on the good will," ch. 7 in his Interpreting Kant's Critiques (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003). For a very different interpretation, on which "we conclude that there is nothing good in itself, that there is therefore no valid theory of the objectively good to be found," see Robert Paul Wolff's commentary, The Autonomy of Reason (New York: Harper & Row, 1973), p. 132 and esp. ch. 2.

3 The term 'from' seems causal, though not in a sense implying determinism. In any case, if the term indicates an explanatory relation—as I believe—we can leave open in what sense Kant could allow the relevant kind of explanation to be causal. Perhaps, however, we need not read him here as taking freedom and determinism to be incompatible. For a treatment of this issue see Allen W Wood, "Kant's compatibilism," in Allen W Wood (ed.), Self and Nature in Kant's Philosophy (Ithaca, NY, and London: Cornell University Press, 1984). Wood says at one point, "Kant does not in general hold that freedom is incompatible with causal determinism or even necessitation of the free being's actions…a holy will is free even though its acts are necessitated, because they are necessitated from within reason" (p. 82). For related discussion of Kant's conception of action, see Ralf Meerbote, "Kant on the nondeterminate character of human actions," in William L.Harper and Ralf Meerbote (eds), Kant on Causality, Freedom, and Objectivity (Minneapolis, Minn.: University of Minnesota Press, 1984). Meerbote ascribes to Kant an "anomalous monism regarding actions, with the compatibilism which this view entails" (p. 140), where the monism is that of Donald Davidson, which Meerbote describes in part as the view that action descriptions do not "yield…determinability of actions in either space or time. It of course does not follow from this that actions are not in space or time, or that they cannot be inferable and spatiotemporally determinable by means of other descriptions" (p. 156). They may indeed still have causes in the sense Davidson indicated in "Actions, reasons and causes," Journal of Philosophy LX (1963).

4 Paton does appear to think Kant is open to the objection that "since we cannot summon up motives at will, it cannot be our duty to act on them" (H.J. Paton, The Categorical Imperative (London: Hutchinson, 1946), p. 117). If there are passages inviting such an interpretation, others do not, and Kant's overall view can be kept intact without commitment to direct voluntary control of what motives we have or which we act on. Granted, Kant may take it that we can at will act on one of two conflicting motives that are about equally strong; but the issue here is our direct control over which of two or more aligned motives—motives inclining us towards the same conduct—we act on. In any case, he is apparently not committed to the stronger view that our basic duties are to-act-from-motives. Cf. the strong claim that "What we do, and what we choose, is to-do-x-for-the-sake-of-y." See Henry Richardson, Practical Reasoning about Final Ends (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 62.

5 In "Acting for reasons," The Philosophical Review XCV (1986) I offer a detailed account of acting for a reason which may well fit Kant's notion. That paper also considers cases in which the agent acts mainly but not entirely for a reason. Whether Kant would allow that any motive other than duty may influ-ence an action having moral worth I cannot discuss; but it would make sense to use such considerations to assign degrees of moral worth to actions.

6 Kant provided other formulations of the Categorical Imperative. One is this: "Act in such a way that you always treat humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of any other, never simply as a means, but always at the same time as an end." There is dispute over whether this intrinsic end formula (or Formula of Humanity) is equivalent to the universalizability one quoted in the text; in any case, I doubt that any plausible interpretation of it undermines my points on Kant's conception of practical reasoning. For short statements bearing on how to interpret Kant's intrinsic end formula, see, e.g., Onora O'Neill, "Ending world hunger," in Tom Regan (ed.), Matters of Life and Death, 3rd edn (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1993), reprinted in Louis P.Pojman (ed.), Ethical Theory, 4th edn (Belmont, Calif.: Wadsworth, 2002); Karl Ameriks, "Kant on the good will," cited above; Paul Guyer, "Ends of reason and ends of nature: the place of teleology in Kant's ethics," Journal of Value Inquiry 36 (2002), pp. 161–8; and Jens Timmermann, "Value without regress: Kant's formula of humanity revisited," forthcoming in the European Journal of Philosophy. A more detailed and very instructive account of both Kantian formulas, with discussion of a number of contemporary views on the topic, is provided by Derek Parfit in his Tanner Lectures, Climbing the Mountain, forthcoming.

7 There has been controversy over whether the sort of motive Kant takes to be internal to moral judgment is a kind of desire. If so, it is not inclination, but desire to do the duty in question for its own sake. As Kant said in one place, "Certainly the will must have motives; but these are not particularly pre-established ends…they are nothing but the unconditioned law itself, and the will's receptivity to finding itself subject to it as to an unconditioned constraint is called the moral sense" (Perpetual Peace and Other Essays, trans. Ted Humphrey (Indianapolis, Ind.: Hackett, 1983), p. 67). Such motives are grounded in reason so as to be "a priori desires," as Ralf Meerbote puts it. See his "Kant on freedom and the rational and morally good will," in Wood, op. cit., p. 64. Cf. Stephen L. Darwall, "Kantian practical reason defended," Ethics 96 (1985), esp. p. 93.

8 In the De Anima, for instance, Aristotle says that

> the mind is never found producing movement without appetite (for wish is a form of appetite, and when movement is produced according to calculation it is also according to wish), but appetite can originate movement contrary to calculation, for desire is a form of appetite…it is the object of appetite which originates movement…. That then such a

> power in the soul as has been described, i.e., appetite, originates movement, is clear.
>
> (433a23-b1; Oxford translation [cf. Nicomachean Ethics 1139a36–7])

9 That reason is constitutively normative is suggested by such declarations as that a rational being "obeys no law except that which he himself also gives" (435), and that "Reason must regard itself as the author of its principles, independently of foreign influences" (449). On the other hand, however creative reason is in giving moral laws, their correctness is meant to be an objective matter determinable by applying the Categorical Imperative. For pertinent discussions of some of the main issues raised by these points, see Christine M. Korsgaard, "Skepticism about practical reason," Journal of Philosophy LXXXIII (1986) and Thomas E.Hill, Jnr, "Kant on the rationality of moral conduct," Pacific Philosophical Quarterly 66 (1985).

10 Broadie has suggested that Aristotle was like Hume in giving practical reason no power to "set the ultimate values by which we act." For her discussion of this see Sarah Waterlow Broadie, "Practical thinking in Aristotle and in Hume," delivered at the Central Division Meetings of the American Philosophical Association in 1986. This point seems correct if the intent is to deny that Aristotle took practical reason to be legislatively or, especially, constitutively practical. But if epistemic normativity is intended (as I doubt), then I believe that Aristotle and Hume do differ.

11 Lectures on Ethics, trans. Louis Infield (London: Methuen, 1930, and New York: Harper & Row, 1963), p. 1.

12 This is argued in detail in my "Doxastic voluntarism and the ethics of belief," Facta Philosophica 1, 1 (1999), pp. 87–109. Reprinted in Matthias Steup (ed.), Knowledge, Truth, and Duty (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

13 In the Lectures Kant speaks of logic, as providing (what I take to be inferential) "rules concerning the use of the understanding" (p. 2); and in other places as well he speaks as if reasoning were an important part of theoretical philosophy.

14 Cf. Lewis White Beck, A Commentary on Kant's Critique of Practical Reason (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960):

> He [Kant] mentions the danger of taking the words "practical reason" as if the 'object' of practical reason were comparable to an object of theoretical reason, i.e., as an epistemological object and not as an object of desire or volition. We should be warned by this against taking "practical reason" to denote merely the faculty by which we gain knowledge of right and wrong, though we should not forget that practical reason does have this cognitive function. It provides the cognitive factor in the guidance of action whose dynamic is impulse.
>
> (pp. 39–40)

15 Perhaps if a motive of duty is necessary and sufficient, Kant would grant that one of inclination might play a significant supporting role. Given the character of his contrast between actions from duty and from inclination, this is not clear. But his overall theory allows such a role; Kant says, e.g., that "a factor whose removal strengthens the effect of a moving force must have been a hindrance; consequently, all admixture of incentives which derive from one s own happiness are a hindrance to the influence of the moral law on the human heart" (Critique of Practical Reason, trans. Lewis White Beck (Indianapolis, Ind.: Bobbs-Merrill, 1956), p. 160). There may be an important contrast implicit in the passage, between a hindrance and a nullifier. The passage also indicates that Kant is not taking the motivational cooperation (or presence) of incentives to count against an action's moral worth on the ground that it prevents knowing the action is done from duty. He did hold some such

restriction on self-knowledge, however; as he says in Perpetual Peace, "no man can with certainty be conscious of having performed his duty altogether unselfishly" (p. 68).

16 I leave open an option Kant has been thought not to have. Arguing against Ross's claim that one can have an inclination to do something "yet do it simply because it is our duty," Beck contends that "There seems an open contradiction in saying: I have two motives A and B; each would lead me to do action C; I do perform C, but I do so purely and simply from motive A alone…. Kant would say this was the merest cant" ("Sir David Ross on duty and purpose in Kant," Philosophy and Phenomenological Research XVI (1955), p. 171). There is surely no obvious contradiction here, but the imagined self-congratulation is groundless if, as Beck suggests, it presupposes direct voluntary control over which of two aligned motives one acts on.

17 For some clarification of how action on a moral imperative actually takes place, see Barbara Herman, "The practice of moral judgment," Journal of Philosophy LXXXV (1985) and Henry E.Allison, "Morality and freedom: Kant's reciprocity thesis," Philosophical Review XCV (1986).

18 Kant may have viewed both the explainability and the rationality of actions in the broad framework of a kind of motivational foundationalism. He said that

> since there are free actions there must also be ends to which, as their object, these actions are directed. But among these ends there must also be some that are at the same time (that is, by their concept) duties.—For were there no such ends, then all ends would be valid for practical reason only as means to other ends; and since there can be no action without an end, a categorical imperative would be impossible.
>
> (The Doctrine of Virtue, Part II of The Metaphysics of Morals, trans. Mary J. Gregor (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1964), p. 43)

It is true that Kant is referring to normative ends, "objects man ought to adopt as ends" (p. 43); but in the same context he speaks of such ends motivationally, for instance in saying, "An end is an object of free choice, the thought of which determines the power of choice to an action by which the object is produced" (p. 43). His view may be that when we act for a reason we have (ultimately, at least) a non-instrumental end (a foundationalist position, even if combined with the constructivist idea that reflection may lead us to give up one non-instrumental end and adopt another in its place); and when it is an end we ought to have, we act morally.

FOUR

1 Here and elsewhere in this chapter I draw on my paper "A theory of practical reasoning," American Philosophical Quarterly 19 (1982), pp. 25–39.

2 G.H.von Wright, Explanation and Understanding (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1971), p. 107. He recognizes that many schemata can represent practical inference (which he

apparently considers equivalent to practical reasoning—e.g. on p. 96); but this is his final formulation. (His variables have been altered to match mine.)

3 Alvin I.Goldman, A Theory of Human Action (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1970), p. 105.

4 Cf. Aristotle's cloak example, De Motu Animalium 701a16–23.

5 Paul M.Churchland, "The logical character of action-explanations," Philosophical Review 79 (1970), p. 228. For detailed critical discussion of Churchland's schema and a defense of a similar kind of schema, see Rex Martin, Historical Explanation (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977), esp. ch. 9.

6 David P.Gauthier, Practical Reasoning (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1963), p. 44 (his 'x' has been replaced by 'A'). For a more recent case to the effect that rationality requires only such desirability, or 'satisficing,' judgments as opposed to judgments to the effect that A-ing is one's best option, see Michael Slote, "Moderation, rationality, and virtue," The Tanner Lectures on Human Value (Stanford, 1985). D.S.Clarke, Jnr, also addresses this issue in detail, e.g. in Practical Inferences (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1985), ch. 2.

7 Donald Davidson, "How is weakness of the will possible?" in Joel Feinberg (ed.), Moral Concepts (London and New York: Oxford University Press, 1969), p. 110. He says of practical reasoning that its "minimal elements…are these: the agent accepts some reason (or set of reasons) r, and holds that pf(A is better than B, r), and these constitute the reason why he judges that A is better than B" (p. 110). (Davidson's variables have been altered to match mine.)

8 Hector-Neri Castañeda, Thinking and Doing (Dordrecht and Boston: D.Reidel, 1975), p. 15. A special element—"Jones to A"—is omitted from this schema for simplicity; this should not affect what I say.

9 This last item Castañeda treats as expressing volition understood to imply something like a commitment of the will; the agent is not simply expressing intention to do the thing at some time or other or, above all, just predictively asserting she will do the deed. For a later statement of his views, with replies to critical essays, see his "'Conditional' intentions, intentional action, and Aristotelian practical syllogisms," Erkenntnis 18 (1982), and his chapter, "Human action: intention and obligation," in James E.Tomberlin (ed.), Agent, Language, and the Structure of the World (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1983).

10 Myles Brand, Intending and Acting (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1984), p. 129. A similar view is expressed in Gilbert Harman, "Practical reasoning," Review of Metaphysics 29 (1976). For later statements of Harman's conception of reasoning, see his Change in View (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1986), and Harman and Sanjeev Kulkarni, "The problem of induction," Rutgers Epistemology Conference, May 2005.

11 The point here is that we sometimes simply seek to achieve a particular goal, as opposed to seeking one in contrast to another or trying to decide between one and another. But even when we seek just one goal, its value, in an objective sense, may be understood comparatively and we may be disposed to compare it with something else (or its value with that of something else). Practical reasoning may, then, be potentially comparative even where the agent neither makes a comparison nor entertains a comparative thought. For a different and stronger "comparativism," see Ruth Chang, (ed.), Incommensurability; Incomparability, and Practical Reason (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1997), especially her introductory essay, which treats the organic element in reasons and values.

12 For instance, in "A theory of practical reason," Philosophical Review 74 (1965), Robert Binkley holds that "the conclusion of practical reasoning is decision" (p. 432). Anthony Kenny sees Aristotle as taking the conclusion to be, in some cases, a decision. See Aristotle's Theory of the Will (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1979), esp. pp. 142–4.

13 A detailed treatment of directly vs. indirectly voluntary control, particularly in relation to belief and judgment, is given in my "Doxastic voluntarism and the ethics of belief," Facta Philosophica 1, 1 (1999).

14 In 'Intending,' Journal of Philosophy LXX (1973), pp. 387–403. I have argued that there is such a broad, non-technical sense of 'want'; and in "The concept of wanting," Philosophical Studies 21 (1973), pp. 1–21, I explicate wanting in this sense. A (purely) intrinsic want for x is roughly a want for it simply for its own sake; a (purely) extrinsic want for it is one based entirely on one's wanting something else: roughly, wanting it for a further reason, the typical case being wanting something just as a means to something else. I have offered a related account of the relevant notion of belief in "The concept of believing," The Personalist 53 (1972), pp. 43–62.

15 G.F.Schueler combines the descriptive and evaluative tasks I here distinguish. He says, e.g., "Practical reasoning is about what I (or someone) should do, all things considered; that is, it is about what I have the best reason or the most reason to do." See Reasons and Purposes (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2003), p. 99 (emphasis added). He thus objects to the conception of practical reasoning represented (in part) by my schema: "it is a mistake to think, from the fact that one has such a goal directed [sic] mental state and that there is a way or best way of satisfying it, that is of achieving the goal it specifies, that one should act so as to satisfy it, at least if by 'should' we mean 'has a good reason'" (p. 96). But, even apart from the narrowness of the suggested conception of practical reasoning, why should one think that my schema makes no room for bad—or purely hypothetical—practical reasoning, as in certain cases of theoretical reasoning? (Chapters 7 and 8 will take up related matters concerning the appraisal of practical reasoning.) Beyond this, I do not think that even practical reasoning with a normative major premise need embody the notions of best or of most reason. (It is also doubtful whether the italicized "that is" above is warranted; even apart from whether 'should' has the suggested force, reasoning about what one has best reason to do might, for all that is said here, be theoretical.)

16 For comprehensive account of social practical reasoning, see Raimo Tuomela, A Theory of Social Action (Dordrecht and Boston: D.Reidel, 1984) and The Importance of Us (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995).

17 Nicomachean Ethics 1147a1–10. If the want cited is too narrow in content, it is at least plausible in the context to think that the agent is supposed to have some want regarding the food.

18 I do not assume that these must express the same proposition. Castañeda has plausibly argued that they would not. See, e.g., Thinking and Doing, pp. 158–9.

19 See, e.g., James D.Wallace, "Practical inquiry," Philosophical Review 78 (1969), pp. 442–3; and notice von Wright's speaking of "first-person practical syllogisms" (The Varieties of Goodness (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1963), p. 170). Clarke, in the work cited in note 6 of this chapter, also countenances second- and third-person practical reasoning (pp. 63–7).

20 Castañeda (in Thinking and Doing and elsewhere) uses 'practition' for the object of a conative attitude and develops an extensive logical framework for dealing with the connections among practitions themselves and between them and propositions.

FIVE

1 See, for instance, Donald Davidson, "How is weakness of the will possible?" and Gilbert Harman, "Practical reasoning," Review of Metaphysics 29 (1976), p. 451; cf. p. 442. Davidson says, e.g., that intentional actions are "geared directly to unconditional judgments like 'It would be better to do A than to do B,'" and that "Practical reasoning does…often

arrive at unconditional judgments that one action is better than another—otherwise there would be no such thing as acting for a reason" (p. 110). Since he regards intentional actions as performed for a reason, and apparently holds that the latter arise only through practical reasoning, he seems committed to the view that all intentional action arises in some way from practical reasoning. Cf. pp. 79–80 of Anscombe's Intention and Joseph Raz's introduction to his anthology Practical Reasoning (London and New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), esp. pp. 2–5.

2 A number of writers have noted that recitation is not needed for practical reasoning. Alvin I.Goldman, e.g., says, of the propositions of a typical practical inference he cites, "I do not recite these propositions to myself as I assent to them," op. cit., p. 103. He does not say, however, what, short of recitation, is required for assenting.

3 Goldman would say that the want must be occurrent at the time of action; but if so, I believe this does not require more than S's being appropriately aware of the relevant object, and perception seems to suffice for that in the sorts of cases at issue here.

4 I argue for this in detail in "Belief, reason, and inference," Philosophical Topics XIV, 1 (1986), pp. 27–86, reprinted in my The Structure of Justification (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

5 Granted, there are empirical questions about what occurs in consciousness in various cases when a person reasons, and there is apparently no sharp distinction between these and conceptual questions about what constitutes reasoning. My aim has been to formulate a conception of reasoning that does justice to examples and distinctions we should accommodate without encroaching on matters left open by the concept of reasoning.

6 This is argued in my "Acting for reasons," Philosophical Review XCV (1986). There the explaining beliefs and wants are called reason states. While that terminology is in most respects preferable, there is no harm in here calling the states themselves, as opposed to their objects, reasons, and such terminology is common.

7 Judith Jar vis Thomson, for instance, has said that "It certainly seems as if 'I want x' implies 'I have a reason for trying to get x.'" See her review of Gauthier's Practical Reasoning, Journal of Philosophy LXII (1965), p. 186. Cf. David Milligan's view that "A prima facie reason consists of a feature-want together with a belief that the action being explained satisfied the featurewant" (Reasoning and the Explanation of Actions (Brighton, Sussex: Harvester Press, and Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1980), p. 122). For other views concerning reasons, and much discussion of reason and desire, seeE. J.Bond, Reason and Value (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), esp. ch. 2; and Bernard Williams, "Internal and external reasons," in his Moral Luck (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981).

8 This and the next two paragraphs follow my "Acting for reasons," cited in note 6 of this chapter.

9 This is a point that at least one writer on the topic, Elijah Milgram, apparently missed. For discussion of his view see Candace Vogler, Reasonably Vicious (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2002).

10 Here and in the next five paragraphs I draw on my "Self-deception and practical reasoning," Canadian Journal of Philosophy XIX (1989), pp. 246–66.

11 For an account of self-deception along these lines, with a number of references to relevant literature, see my "Self-deception, action and will," Erkenntnis 18 (1982), pp. 133–58. For a different account of self-deception, though one that also avoids postulating subagents, see Alfred R.Mele, Irrationality (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), esp. chs 9 and 10, and Self-Deception Unmasked (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001).

12 For a more extended example of weak-willed action that is nevertheless rational and a theoretical account of the possibility of rational action against one's better judgment, see my "Weakness of will and rational action," Australasian Journal of Philosophy 61 (1990), pp.

270–81, reprinted in my Action, Intention, and Reason (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993).

13 To be sure, we always act against the background of beliefs, expectations, and, very commonly, dispositions to fit our intentional actions into a pattern even if they were not performed as part of one. If planned action is essentially action for which this holds, then perhaps every intentional action, as well as all action based on practical reasoning, is planned, or at least part of a plan. For a theory of plans and their relation to both intentional action and practical reasoning, see Michael E.Bratman, Intention, Plans, and Practical Reason (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1987).

SIX

1 The sort of causal account of action I find most plausible is set out in my "Acting for reasons," Philosophical Review XCV (1986). For related, and in important ways similar, accounts, see Goldman's Theory of Human Action; Raimo Tuomela, Human Action and Its Explanation (Dordrecht and Boston: D.Reidel, 1977); Irving Thalberg, "Do our intentions cause intentional actions?" American Philosophical Quarterly 21 (1984); Myles Brand, Intending and Acting (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT, 1984); and Alfred R.Mele, Motivation and Agency (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003). For contrasting views, see Carl Ginet, On Action (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990) and Hugh J.McCann, The Works of Agency (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998). On the nature of intentions and their causal relation to action, see also J.David Velleman, "Practical reflection," Philosophical Review XCIV (1985). For a different conception of intending—though one that, like Velleman's, construes it as a kind of belief-see Donald Davidson, "Intending," in his Essays on Actions and Events (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980).

2 As Hector-Neri Castañeda puts it, "there must be some event to at least mobilize energy already available potentially" ("Conditional intentions, intentional actions, and Aristotelian practical syllogisms," Erkenntnis 18 (1982), p. 253).

3 For an account of volition and its importance for action, see Hugh J.McCann, "Volition and basic action," Philosophical Review LXXXIII (1974). Cf. Wilfrid Sellars, "Volitions re-affirmed," in Myles Brand and Douglas Walton (eds), Action Theory (Dordrecht and Boston: D.Reidel, 1976); Bruce Aune, Reason and Action (Dordrecht and Boston: D.Reidel, 1977), esp. ch. 2; and Lawrence Davis, Theory of Action (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1979), esp. pp. 15–26. For the most part, McCann characterizes volition intrinsically. Others, including Davis, characterize it functionally. For a volitionalist view with a careful phenomenological account of some important volitional processes, see Carl Ginet, "Voluntary exertion of the body: a volitional account," Theory and Decision 20 (1986). My own account is provided in "Volition and agency," in Action, Intention, and Reason.

4 I am here allowing that reasons for action may be contents of prepositional clauses—those expressing truth-valued elements—as well as of infinitive clauses, which express a kind of state of affairs that is not truth-valued. I show how this difference is significant in "The grounds and structure of reasons for action" (forthcoming). I do not think that reasons proper are always facts (or factive, as are true propositions), and here it is noteworthy that the paradigmatically practical attitudes, intention and action-desire, are not said to be true or false. In epistemological literature, something at least close to this facticity view has been affirmed as early as 1975. Peter Unger said that "[I]f someone's reason for something is that p, then it follows that it is true that p." See Ignorance (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975), p. 208. Cf. Timothy Williamson: "Although we may treat false propositions as evidence, it does not follow that they are [evidence]…. If e is evidence for h, then e is true." See Knowledge and Its Limits (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 186 and 201. In

the domain of practical reason, Dennis Stampe has held, "Reasons are what we mean to reason from, and reasons are facts…. Thus the sailors who, believing that the earth is flat, declined to sail with Columbus had in that belief no reason to decline: since the earth is not flat, its being flat was no reason." See "The authority of desire," Philosophical Review 96 (1987), p. 337. Cf. Derek Parfit, "Reasons and motivation," Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society Supplementary vol. (1997) and Jonathan Dancy, Practical Reality (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), esp. ch. 5.

5 In "Acting for reasons," I have gone some distance toward a detailed explication, emphasizing (among other things) that an action under the control of reason is discriminative and thereby responsive to S's beliefs and perceptual information.

6 See, e.g., Donald Davidson, "Actions, reasons, and causes," Journal of Philosophy LX (1963); and the works by Goldman and by Tuomela, cited in note 1 of this chapter.

7 See, e.g., Donald Davidson, "Mental events," in his Essays on Actions and Events (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1980); and Jaegwon Kim, "Self-understanding and rationalizing explanations," Philosophy Naturalis 21 (1984).

8 I have developed this in "The concept of wanting," Philosophical Studies 21 (1973) and defended and developed the account in "Wants and intentions in the explanation of action," Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour 9 (1980), pp. 227–49.

9 See the Treatise, p. 419.

10 "Moral responsibility, freedom, and compulsion," American Philosophical Quarterly 11 (1974), pp. 1–14 and "Modalities of knowledge and freedom," both in Action, Intention and Reason. For a contrasting view see Peter van Inwagen, An Essay on Free Will (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), to which I have made a partial response in a review in Faith and Philosophy 3, 2 (1986), pp. 213–20; and Robert Kane, The Significance of Free Will (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998). A view complementary to mine is developed by John Martin Fischer and Mark Ravizza, S.J., in Responsibility and Control: A Theory of Moral Responsibility (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

SEVEN

1 For an interesting theory along these lines, see Robert Binkley, "A theory of practical reason," Philosophical Review LXXIV (1965). See also Castañeda's Thinking and Doing. Cf. Anthony Kenny, "Practical inference," Analysis 23 (1966) and R.M. Hare, Practical Inferences (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1972).

2 Such an argument is illustrated in Chapter 4, section 1. The other schemata referred to in this paragraph are also illustrated there.

3 A detailed account of reasonable, including the contrast between it and rationality, is provided in my Architecture of Reason, esp. ch. 6. Other detailed accounts are provided by John Rawls, Political Liberalism (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), esp. pp. 48–54, and T.M.Scanlon, What We Owe to Each Other (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1998), pp. 191–7.

4 For an account of what is required to act from duty (with or without the help of practical reasoning), see my "Acting from virtue," Mind 104 (1995), pp. 449–71.

5 I do not suppose it self-evident that moral judgments are true or false ('cognitive'); but if not, much of what I say could be preserved. For a short presentation of noncognitivism, see Allan Gibbard, "A noncognitivist analysis of rationality in action," Social Theory and Practice 2–3 (1983) and, for a detailed statement, his Wise Choices, Apt Feelings.

6 I have treated defeasibility in detail for theoretical reason in chs 1 and 2 of The Architecture of Reason and ch. 8 of Epistemology (London: Routledge, 2003); defeasibility in regard to practical reason is discussed in detail in ch. 5 of the former. The view taken there can be

fruitfully compared with the conception of practical rationality (and practical defeasibility) in Michael Smith, The Moral Problem (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993). See also Joshua Gert, Brute Rationality (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

7 The possibility indicated here bears on the assessment of what Scanlon (op. cit.) calls the "buck-passing view," roughly the view that apparent reasons for action (say that the action would be best) that do not specify a grounding fact (such as that an act will relieve pain) pass the buck to such facts, which constitute reasons proper. Here it appears that one can act for a reason of a higher-order kind; its existence guarantees that there are reasons of the "ordinary" ground-level kind, but it is not itself of this kind and arguably can have force even if one loses sight of the facts originally leading to its formulation.

8 This view is set out (with many references to related literature) in Architecture and, for the moral case, in my The Good in the Right: A Theory of Intuition and Intrinsic Value (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004).

9 For a view of practical reasoning which conceives it as more deeply grounded in a particular culture than my view suggests, see Alasdair MacIntyre, Whose Justice? Which Rationality? (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1988).

EIGHT

1 That Kant held this is argued by Nelson Potter in "The argument of Kant's Grundlegung," Canadian Journal of Philosophy supp. vol. 1, pt 1. As Potter puts Kant's priority thesis, "Moral value always outweighs any other kind" (p. 75). Three of the philosophers who have discussed the moral priority thesis extensively are Kurt Baier, William K.Frankena, and Alan Gewirth. See, e.g., Frankena's Ethics, 2nd edn and "The ethics of right reason," The Monist 66 (1983); Baier's "The social source of reason," Proceedings and Addresses of the American Philosophical Association 51 (1978) and "The conceptual link between morality and rationality," Noûs XVI (1982) (which suggests a version of the moral priority thesis); and Gewirth's Reason and Morality (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978).

2 Although t represents a particular time, it is psychologically unrealistic to take it to be a mere durationless instant. We should take it to be long enough for volition (in some appropriate sense) to occur, and I assume that at times like this there is mental space for both willing and considering a proposition, such as that an action would yield the willed end.

3 Christine Korsgaard, "The normativity of practical reason," in Garrett Cullity and Berys Gaut (eds), Ethics and Practical Reason (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 245.

4 James Dreier, "Humean doubts about the practical justification of morality," in Cullity and Gaut, op. cit., p. 93 (his variables have been altered to correspond with mine).

5 Dreier, op. cit., p. 98. Cf. Peter Railton's comparison of G.E.Moore's "h is true but I don't believe it" with "E is an end of mine, but that's nothing to me in my deliberation," in Railton's "On the hypothetical and the non-hypothetical in reasoning about belief and action," in Cullity and Gaut, op. cit. (p. 68). Here I would put 'good' or something like it in parallel with 'true'. More tellingly, he says that

> E is an end of mine;
> Means M would secure E;
> So: there is that much to be said for my doing M, or against my having E
> (p. 77)

is a valid schema and defends it by Lewis Carroll's point. Railton does not raise the question whether having an end provides a normative reason and thereby licenses inferences. It would seem to provide some reason—something "to be said for" doing M. If it does not, we at best have a case for a prohibition against simultaneously having the end, the belief, and no desire (this would give ends deliberative weight only in a psychological sense).

6 John Broome, "Are intentions reasons? And how should we cope with incommensurable values?" in Christopher Morris and Arthur Ripstein (eds), Practical Rationality and Preference: Essays for David Gauthier (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 112.

7 Broome specifies (op. cit., p. 106) that the conditional is material, an important point in distinguishing the principle from the superficially similar one that takes an intention to generate a reason for the action constituting its object. Further pertinent discussion of the kind of principle at issue here is found in his "Normative requirements," Ratio 12 (1999).

8 My Architecture of Reason explores the scope and significance of this parallel extensively in Parts Two and Three.

9 It would be possible to fail to take it that one can B; but if one intends to *A* and believes B-ing necessary for this, yet fails to take oneself to be capable of B-ing, this would in itself imply some prima facie deficiency in rationality.

10 Such a movement of thought may be the most natural referent of 'inference', and what I am calling episodic inferences may be better called simply reasoning. But they do entail inference, apparently of the momentary kind I describe as instantaneous.

11 In the vocabulary of logic, the point here is that we can instantiate modus tollens just as quickly as modus ponens, and considering a proposition entailed by one we already believe can lead to the former just as fast as to the latter. The counterpart holds for considering a means to satisfying an intention we already have.

12 take S's justification in this and the principles to follow to be defeasible, but it may still be justification on balance and may be quite strong.

13 Suppose there is a long interval between the reasoning and the time in question. How can we tell whether the conclusion is held on the basis of its premises? It is not sufficient that the conclusion be held on the basis of (belief of) the relevant propositions; the reasoning process itself must in some way figure in the basis or we will have only a judgment based on the same reasons, but not the same reasoning. How to tell is a challenge both to philosophical theory and empirical inquiry, but the task seems possible.

NINE

1 I here take action on the basis of a decision to be closely parallel to action based on (for) a reason, a notion explicated in my "Acting for reasons." I should add that I am distinguishing between the rationality of a decision to A and of causing oneself to decide to A. It can be rational to cause oneself to decide to A, as where one is highly paid to do so, even when it is not rational to decide to A.

2 In rare cases such a judgment might not be moral; but we need a qualifier like 'prima facie' to allow for the possibility that someone says an act is wrong because it injured a person when 'wrong' is used merely prudentially, as it might be by a prison guard who aims to intimidate

without injuring and is otherwise amoral. This kind of case shows that a full-scale analysis of what makes a judgment moral is a major task beyond what is needed in this book.

3 William K.Frankena forcefully made this point in Ethics, 2nd edn, pp. 113–14, and it is probably not controversial. How far the moral point of view extends, however, is controversial; e.g. Bernard Gert does not take morality, as opposed to prudence, to imply an obligation of self-improvement. See "Two concepts of morality," forthcoming in Mark C.Timmons, John Greco, and Alfred R.Mele (eds), Rationality and the Good. For a short treatment of the moral point of view, see Mark C.Timmons, Moral Theory (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2002).

4 The scope of willing and a case for the view that it does not include A-ing-on-a-ground are explored in my "Doxastic voluntarism and the ethics of belief."

5 A detailed case for such an integration with a broadly Kantian ethics is made in ch. 3 of The Good in the Right. For an analogous case supporting a consequentialist integration, see Brad Hooker, Ideal Code, Real World (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

6 These are proposed and clarified in The Good in the Right, ch. 5. It should be noted that the manner of an action, as understood here, is roughly behavioral and is logically independent of its motivation. Granted that feeling, e.g., grateful is likely to lead to acting gratefully, either can occur without the other.

7 These points are all developed in detail in The Good in the Right, esp. chs 2–3.

8 My approach is developed in detail in The Good in the Right, ch. 3 and further supported by "Treating persons as ends," forthcoming.

9 For a view that contrasts markedly with mine, see Jonathan Dancy, Ethics without Principles (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004). Critical responses to this view are provided in Brad Hooker and Margaret Little (eds), Moral Particularism (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000) and in my "Ethical generality and moral judgment," forthcoming in James Dreier (ed.), Contemporary Debates in Ethics, (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006).

10 Detailed discussion of this question is found in my "The moral rights of terminally ill," in John W Davis, Barry Hoffmaster, and Sarah Shorten (eds), Contemporary Issues in Biomedical Ethics (Clifton, NJ: The Humana Press, 1979), pp. 43–62, and in Warren Quinn's work on positive and negative duties. See esp. his Morality and Actions (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), chs 7–9.

11 To say that there are obligations of gratitude that go beyond requirements of etiquette does not imply that the two do not overlap, and surely one can violate both by a single act. For an extensive treatment of the nature and ethical significance of gratitude, see Terrance McConnell, Gratitude (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1993).

12 Some particularists in ethics deny that prima facie duty always has some weight—invariant valence. A prominent one is Jonathan Dancy (op. cit). My response to such a strong particularism is summarized in "Ethical generality and moral judgment."

13 It is not altogether clear to me where Nicholas Rescher stands on this issue, but his approach appears top-down in a way mine is not, even if it is perhaps methodologically so rather than substantively so in a way that commits him to invariant priority relations among the kinds of obligations treated in this chapter. See Sensible Decisions: Issues of Rational Decision in Personal Choice and Public Policy (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003), esp. ch. 7.

14 Here and in the next few paragraphs concerning priority relations among moral and other standards, I draw on ch. 6 of Architecture of Reason.

15 The supremacy view will also seem plausible to those who hold the strong motivational internalist thesis that if one judges that all things considered one ought to do something, then one has overriding motivation to act accordingly; for to them it will seem that failure, in practice, to give supremacy to the moral point of view would bespeak a kind of inconsistency between belief and action. For an informative discussion of how the moral life may be compared in reason-giving force with other kinds of lives, see Thomas Nagel, The View from Nowhere (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986). Also pertinent to the issue of

paramountcy is Susan Wolf, Freedom within Reason (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990).

16 This is a partial reply to what Richard Foley, in "Audi on practical reasoning," Behavior and Philosophy 19, 2 (1991), calls "Fumerton's puzzle" (p. 67). The puzzle is how to construe the rationality of a piece of reasoning for which the criterion of success is C, when the agent falsely but rationally believes C is met by the reasoning.

17 This has been widely discussed. See, e.g., Frankena's Ethics, R.B.Brandt's A Theory of the Good and the Right, Thomas Nagel's The View from Nowhere, Gert's Morality, and Bruce Russell, "Two forms of ethical skepticism," in Louis P. Pojman (ed.), Ethical Theory (Belmont, Calif.: Wadsworth, 1989).

18 See Bruce Russell, "Two forms of ethical skepticism," for a case against even this claim and Gert, Morality, for a defense of it.

TEN

1 The notion of self-evidence I am using is drawn from my "Self-evidence," cited earlier. The understanding need not be temporally immediate; hence, not everything self-evident is luminous in the way simple logical truths are. Nor is it implied that what is self-evident cannot also be known inferentially

2 See esp. Ross, The Right and the Good, ch. 2. It should be noted, however, that what Ross calls self-evident are propositions to the effect that there are prima facie duties, e.g. to keep one's promises, not to the effect that one has an actual duty, say to keep a promise to return a weapon one borrowed. Moore's Principia Ethica (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1903) is also highly relevant, as is Henry Sidgwick's The Methods of Ethics, 7th edn (1907) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962), e.g. Book I, ch. 8, and Book III, ch. 1.

3 Nothing said here implies that taking basic moral principles to be, in the relevant way, self-evident enables us to eliminate all moral disagreement given adequate discussion among disputants, nor should it be denied that certain kinds of persisting disagreements constitute a challenge for the view that such principles are self-evident. These questions are explored in some detail in The Good in the Right, esp. ch. 2, and the challenge is developed—partly in connection with Henry Sidgwick's intuitionism, by Roger Crisp in "Intuitionism and disagreement,' forthcoming in Timmons, Greco, and Mele (eds), Rationality and the Good.

4 I have defended this view elsewhere, e.g. in "Moral epistemology and the supervenience of ethical concepts," Southern Journal of Philosophy XXIX Supplement (1991), pp. 1–24 (reprinted in Moral Knowledge), but it is not essential to the theory of rationality being developed. The unified, foundationalist, experiential conception is at least largely neutral between empiricism and rationalism.

5 This broadly rationalistic epistemic autonomy thesis regarding certain moral principles is argued in detail in The Good in the Right, esp. chs 1 and 2. One could frame an empiricist notion of epistemic autonomy, but I doubt that such a notion would do justice to the intuitive concept of epistemic autonomy in question.

6 Conditions for rational desire and their bearing on moral reasons are discussed in detail in Architecture of Reason, esp. chs 4–8.

7 An interesting attempt to assign prima facie comparative weights to Ross's set of prima facie duties is made by Betsy Postow in "A particular application procedure for Ross's ethical theory," Journal of Philosophical Research 29 (2004).

8 Moral emotions, too, can play a role in grounding moral judgments, with or without their providing premises for practical reasoning. On the cognitive power and moral aspects of emotions, see Robert C.Roberts, An Essay in Aid of Moral Psychology (Cambridge:

Cambridge University Press, 2003) and Linda Zagzebski, Divine Motivation Theory (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

9 I am taking moral rights to be like prima facie obligations in not having absolute authority: like obligations they can conflict, though we do not properly ascribe a moral right unless the obligation not to prevent its exercise is strong. For discussion of this point and an indication of the complexities surrounding rights (as well as references to standard literature on rights), see my "Wrongs within rights," Philosophical Issues 15 (2005).

10 This view is illustrated and argued in my "Wrongs within rights."

ELEVEN

1 D.F.Pears, Motivated Irrationality (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), p. 121. He apparently also holds a similar non-causal view for theoretical reasoning.

2 For a plausible defense of this view, see Keith Lehrer, Knowledge (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1974), pp. 122–6 and Richard Foley, "Epistemic luck and the purely epistemic," American Philosophical Quarterly 21 (1984). I have replied to Lehrer in "The causal structure of indirect justification," Journal of Philosophy LXXX, 7 (1983), pp. 398–415 and, in part (though indirectly), to Foley in "Rationalization and rationality," Synthèse 65, 2 (1985), pp. 159–84.

3 This formulation is developed and defended in "Rationalization and rationality," cited in note 2.

4 I defend this in a number of places, including "Self-deception, action, and will," Erkenntnis 18 (1982), pp. 133–58; but much of what I say about self-deception in relation to practical reasoning would hold on various other accounts of self-deception.

5 This point is argued in my "Self-deception and rationality," in Mike W Martin (ed.), Self-Deception and Self-Understanding (Lawrence, Kansas and London: University Press of Kansas, 1985).

6 In this and the next two quotations I use Ostwald's translation rather than Irwin's, but nothing I say turns on the choice.

7 Much of this interpretation of Aristotle on rational action is confirmed by points made by William K.Frankena in "Concepts of rational action in the history of ethics," Social Theory and Practice 9 (1983). See, e.g., pp. 17–24. In calling Aristotle's version of eudaimonism a perfectionism, however, Frankena may be giving it a stronger interpretation than I have, at least if the term implies that a rational action—as opposed to an ideally rational one—must be optimal, as opposed to being just a good means to a proper end.

8 On this point, among others, John Stuart Mill apparently followed Aristotle. But Mill's epistemology was even more empiricist than Hume's, and it left Mill with little to say in defense of construing some pleasures as intrinsically better than others. See esp. chs 2 and 4 of Mill's Utilitarianism.

9 For a case defending this interpretation of Hume and an extensive critique of Humean instrumentalism that cannot be summarized here, see my "Prospects for a naturalization of practical reason: Humean instrumentalism and the normative authority of desire," International Journal of Philosophical Studies 10, 3 (2002), pp. 235–63. Cf. Richard Fumerton's Reason and Morality.

10 In the Grundlegung Kant says, "Intelligence, wit, judgment, and the other talents of the mind, however they be named, or courage, resoluteness, and perseverance, as qualities of temperament, are doubtless in many respects good and desirable. But they can become extremely bad and harmful if the will…is not good" (393). Apparently, these are (or can be) intrinsically good, though not unconditionally good since apart from good will they can be bad. If Kant is Aristotelian in allowing non-moral intrinsic goods, he is not Greek, so far as

Frankena is right in saying that "the Greeks tended to be egoists, not only in their conception of rationality, but also in the psychology and in their views about method" (p. 169 of the paper cited in note 7).

11 Take, e.g., Graeme Marshall's view that "Predicating rationality of an act says that an appropriateness relation holds between the events that constitute the agent's act on the one hand and, on the other, his reasons for acting and related beliefs and his sensory information about the acting situation" ("Action on the rationality principle," Australasian Journal of Philosophy 59 (1981), pp. 58–9). The example on p. 59 confirms that non-causal appropriateness is intended.

12 Hume says in Part II, Section I of the Treatise, e.g., that "when we praise any actions…these actions are considered as signs; and the ultimate object of our praise and approbation is the motive, that produc'd them" (477). While the subject in the passage is moral praise, the main idea seems to be that actions are viewed as signs of such underlying motivation. It would be at best puzzling if Hume did not take assessments of rationality in a similar causal fashion.

13 I have given a detailed account of some of my objections to the maximization of expected utility view of rational action in "An epistemic conception of rationality," Social Theory and Practice 9, 2–3 (1983), pp. 311–34 (reprinted in The Structure of Justification), "Action theory as a resource for decision theory," Theory and Decision 20 (1986), pp. 207–21, and Architecture of Reason, esp. ch. 5. As to the point that S need have no probability belief, this is consistent with having a disposition to form one (a much weaker condition). An account of the relevant notion is provided in my "Dispositional beliefs and dispositions to believe," Noûs 28 (1994), pp. 419–34.

14 This possibility is discussed in "An epistemic conception of rationality," cited in the previous note; and the possibility of the relevant kinds of principles being a priori is clarified and defended in my "Justification, truth, and reliability," Philosophy and Phenomenological Research LXIX (1988), pp. 1–29. For a very different conception of rational action, see Bernard Williams, Moral Luck (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), esp. ch. 8, on internal and external reasons.

15 See Brandt's A Theory of the Good and the Right. Other theories that provide criteria for rationality of the naturalistic kind Brandt sought to develop, with special emphasis on rational desire, are found in the work of Michael Smith and Peter Railton. See, e.g., Railton's and Smith's contributions to Cullity and Gaut's Ethics and Practical Reason (cited in Chapter 8). In "An epistemic conception of rationality" I construe Brandt's view of rational desire as a procedural foundationalism, since it conceives rational action as resting on procedurally adequate desires, but imposes no substantive constraints on their content (it might also be called a procedurally constrained instrumentalism if one wants to emphasize the importance of means-ends relations in its account of rational action). This view is also critically appraised in the paper. Cf. John Rawls's view of rational action in A Theory of Justice (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1971), which is in most respects close to the maximization of expected utility conception; see, e.g., pp. 142–50. But note that Rawls does make one important substantive assumption that seems applicable to the rationality of basic ends: that rational persons do not suffer from envy; see, e.g., pp. 530–4.

Index